

# **Motivation and Me: The lived experiences of schoolteachers engaged in a Master of Education programme in Wales.**

**Thesis submitted by:  
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**For the award of Doctor of Education (EdD)**

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# Abstract

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In the context of recent education reform in Wales, new initiatives are focused on the professional learning of teachers, emphasising the importance of being evidence-informed practitioners to achieve positive student outcomes (Welsh Government, 2019a). My research offers insight into teachers' motivations to engage in professional learning by exploring the experiences of schoolteachers enrolled in a Master of Education programme in Wales. Informed by an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology, data was collected through an analysis of personal statements submitted before participants began the master's programme and through semi-structured interviews conducted during their studies. The findings reveal the complexities of schoolteachers' personal and professional lives, where they have an intrinsic desire to improve their professional practice driving their motivation. Participants discussed the strategies that helped maintain their motivation and the influence of peer networks. A key finding was the role of personal support networks, which had a major influence on participants' decisions to apply for postgraduate study and their motivation to stay engaged with their learning. However, a concerning finding emerged from the interview data as participants reported a notable lack of support from their teaching context, including advocacy and reinforcement of their learning in a Master of Education programme. This finding is especially troubling, as extant literature consistently highlights the vital role of such support for teacher professional learning and professional growth.

If teachers do not perceive that their professional learning from a Master of Education programme is valued by their workplace, this could present challenges for the Welsh education sector in building a culture of learning within schools. If unaddressed, these challenges could undermine teachers' intrinsic motivation to pursue ongoing learning, leading to feelings of being undervalued and creating negative working environments, which may in turn contribute to a decline in teacher quality. Research findings suggest that the Welsh Government must continue to support the development of a strong learning culture where teachers, schools and universities collaborate to enhance professional learning for schoolteachers. Support is essential for providing teachers with the guidance and resources they need to succeed in their professional learning and to positively impact their teaching practice. In turn, this would improve classroom practice and student outcomes. Failing to address these challenges risks undermining the progress of education in Wales, despite the Welsh Government's commitment to its improvement.

*Key Words: Teacher Motivation, Teacher Professionalism, Professional Learning, Teacher Well-being, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Communities of Learning*

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## Abbreviations

<i>AGT</i>	<i>Achievement Goal Theory</i>
<i>BERA</i>	<i>British Educational Research Association</i>
<i>CoL</i>	<i>Communities of Learning</i>
<i>CoP</i>	<i>Communities of Practice</i>
<i>CoR</i>	<i>Conservation of Resource</i>
<i>CPD</i>	<i>Continuous Professional Development</i>
<i>EWC</i>	<i>Education Workforce Council</i>
<i>GDPR</i>	<i>General Data Protection Regulations</i>
<i>HE</i>	<i>Higher Education</i>
<i>HEI</i>	<i>Higher Education Institute</i>
<i>INSET</i>	<i>In-service Training Days</i>
<i>IPA</i>	<i>Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis</i>
<i>JD-R</i>	<i>Job Demands-Resources</i>
<i>MA</i>	<i>Master of Arts</i>
<i>NPEP</i>	<i>National Approach to Professional Learning</i>
<i>NPLE</i>	<i>National Professional Learning Entitlement</i>
<i>NSERE</i>	<i>National Strategy for Education Research and Evidence</i>
<i>OECD</i>	<i>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</i>
<i>PD</i>	<i>Professional Development</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Professional Learning</i>
<i>PLC</i>	<i>Professional Learning Communities</i>
<i>QAA</i>	<i>Quality Assurance Agency</i>
<i>SDT</i>	<i>Self-determination theory</i>
<i>SET</i>	<i>Self-Efficacy Theory</i>

<i>SLO</i>	<i>Schools as Learning Organisations</i>
<i>SLT</i>	<i>Senior Leadership Team</i>
<i>SST</i>	<i>Social Support Theory</i>
<i>SRT</i>	<i>Self-Regulation Theory</i>
<i>WG</i>	<i>Welsh Government</i>

# Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore the motivations of schoolteachers engaged in a Master of Education programme in Wales. This research derives from my experience of leading master's programmes and delivering teacher professional learning initiatives in Wales. Drawing on my experience working directly with teachers and leading master's level study, I have engaged in numerous discussions with teachers about the reasons for pursuing further studies and the support required beyond the demands of daily practice. As discussed in chapter two, the literature highlights that teacher professional learning is fundamental in shaping their evolving roles. Given the challenges of their workload (Gavin et al., 2020), it is essential to explore what motivates teachers to engage in professional learning beyond the classroom.

This chapter outlines the rationale, main and subsidiary research questions, the researcher's positionality, an overview of the Master of Education programmes at one university, the research design, and the Welsh education context. It concludes with an outline of the thesis' chapters.

## 1.1 Rationale for my research

As the programme leader of Master of Education programmes at a Higher Education institution (HEI) in Wales, I work closely with postgraduate students from diverse educational backgrounds. Having spent 18 years in early years and primary education before moving to higher education (HE) in 2015, I have witnessed the influence of professional learning on teachers' practice and collaborated on initiatives to enhance pedagogy, supporting teacher development and promote a culture of continuous learning within the sector.

My experience working with children and supporting their learning has informed my approach to teaching in higher education. I strive to provide a supportive and nurturing environment to assist and guide students in their learning, and approach programme leadership and learning with both my head and my heart, always considering the needs of others to enhance their learning experience. In striving to be an empathetic leader who understands and is sensitive to the feelings, perspectives, and experiences of others (Ward, 2022), my aim is to connect with students and create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. As a result of my approach, I often find myself looking for ways to provide further support and explore innovative ways to engage and sustain student motivation in their learning.

Drawing on my experience in leading and delivering the Master of Education programmes in my context, as well as my knowledge of the Welsh educational landscape, I am driven to explore the motivations of teachers who participate in such programmes to gain insight into how their motivations influence their personal and professional learning. Therefore, through this exploration, my research aims to make a valuable contribution to my practice and to the existing body of knowledge on teacher learning and motivation, with the potential to inform the design and delivery of future master's programme and policy discussions in Wales.

Research indicates that teachers who engage in professional learning report higher levels of job satisfaction and effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, Bergmark, 2020; Strom and Viesca, 2021). The discourse surrounding teachers' continuing professional learning has a historical background dating back to the early 20th century. In this context, Dewey's (1904: 34) significant contribution to the field advocated for the necessity of preparing teachers to be 'thoughtful and alert students of education.' He asserts that, without engaging in continuous professional learning to refine their skills, teachers' potential for professional growth is severely limited (Dewey, 1904). This perspective has been reinforced by contemporary scholars (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Hattie, 2003; Timperley, 2008; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Netolicky, 2020; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2021), who collectively advocate for continuous, embedded professional learning to enhance teaching practice and student outcomes.

In Wales, professional learning has been positioned as a priority within national education policy (Welsh Government, 2021, 2023). The Welsh Government's National Mission to Raise Standards strategy (2018) and Furlong's (2015) *Qualified for Life: An Education Improvement Plan* commit to sustained professional learning to strengthen teachers' professional capital. The introduction of a National Master of Education programme (see 1.4) aligns with this vision, aiming to provide a structured pathway for professional learning and development. However, the success of such initiatives depends on teachers' motivation to engage in master's study, without a deeper understanding of teacher motivation, the strategy is flawed.

Teaching is an inherently demanding profession (Felstead et al., 2023), and while national strategies encourage professional learning, they often overlook the specific motivations and barriers that influence teachers' participation. Recent development in Wales emphasise the importance of professional learning in improving educational outcomes (Hutt et al., 2024).

This research will provide insight into schoolteachers' motivations for pursuing a master's degree, informing the design and delivery of master's programmes to support sustained engagement. Disseminating the research findings within the broader educational sector will

contribute to the development of mechanisms that promote and sustain teacher motivation in professional learning.

## 1.2 The positionality of the researcher

As a senior lecturer in education within the Faculty of Social and Life Sciences at a university in Wales, I am responsible for overseeing three Master of Education programmes. These programmes are designed to equip students with knowledge and skills in educational practice, curriculum development and educational research for those working in the education sector in Wales and beyond.

In addition to my role as Programme Leader, I am a member of the new National Master of Education Executive Board. As a member, I collaborate with colleagues across the higher education sector in Wales to explore and develop resources for external professional learning projects, such a new National Master of Education programme, designed and delivered collaboratively with a national team of highly experienced experts in education. Alongside, additional enquiry projects such as, the National Professional Enquiry Project (NPEP). Through these experiences, I have identified key areas for further exploration for my practice, including student engagement, motivation and the impact of professional learning on practice. This reflection on my positionality is crucial in relation to the political, social and cultural factors that may influence the research context (Creswell, 2016).

As a practitioner-researcher, I recognise that this research is motivated by my desire to gain insight into the challenges faced by students and to ensure that their learning on the master's programmes equips them with the necessary tools to succeed in their learning. Bourke (2014) identifies the limitations of the neutral and objective researcher, suggesting instead that researchers are situated within their own social, cultural, and political contexts, which shape their approach to their research. As a researcher, I acknowledge that my perspective and positionality will influence the research process (Yip, 2023). Therefore, it is my intention and responsibility to engage in reflexive practices, employ rigorous research methods, to be transparent in order to avoid undue influence on the research process and to promote ethical and responsible research practice (Smith and Nizza, 2021). By acknowledging my positionality, I can critically reflect on my assumptions and biases, thereby effectively mitigating potential power imbalances between myself and my research participants (Holmes, 2020). This approach promotes ethical and responsible research practice by encouraging awareness, transparency and ethical integrity (Yip, 2023). It reflects Silverman's (2011)

emphasis on identifying and clarifying the philosophical assumptions embedded within the interpretive framework of my research, which is explored in more detail in chapter three.

This research has empowered me to identify and critically examine my underlying philosophical assumptions regarding teachers engaged in master's-level study. This reflective process has led me to recognising a key ontological viewpoint, whereby reality is understood as a construct, shaped and interpreted through the lens of individual experience and engagement with the world (Gray, 2014). My perspective acknowledges the existence of multiple realities, each shaped by the unique experiences and interactions of individuals. This understanding is reflected in my epistemological stance, which acknowledges that these interactions significantly influence how teachers construct knowledge and how they are motivated in both their practice and their learning.

The motivations of the participants in this research are shaped by what I refer to as their individual wants and desires, which reflect their drive and aspirations. Their interpretations are inevitably shaped by their active role in the social construction of their own lives. Acknowledgement of these philosophical assumptions and perspectives allows for a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex phenomena of teacher motivation and engagement in master's study.

### 1.3 Main research question and subsidiary questions

The aim of this research is to explore the motivation of teachers engaged in master's study. My main research question (MRQ) is: What are the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in a Master of Education programme in Wales?

In addressing this MRQ, I will gain a deeper insight into motivational factors that influence teachers to apply for and engage in master's level study. This will enable an in-depth insight into the individual lived experiences of teachers applying for and studying for a Master of Education programme in Wales. Drawing on the principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, my research will explore the experiences that will have an impact on an individual's life (Smith and Nizza, 2021). The aim of my research is to gain insight into the experiences and perspectives of a specific group of individuals within a particular context, examining their actions, thoughts and feelings related to their motivation to study. The purpose of the research is to:

- enable schoolteachers to reflect on their motivations that led to and supported them during their engagement in a Master of Education programme
- gain an insight into the different perspectives of schoolteachers who are engaged in master's in education study
- gain insights into the support structures that enable schoolteachers to succeed in a master's programme
- use the findings to inform and suggest recommendations for future research and future practice.

In the context of my research, I prioritised the exploration of lived experiences, seeking to understand how individuals perceived and made sense of their unique situations. Following guidance proposed by Smith and Nizza (2021), I formulated broad research questions to facilitate an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences. This approach allowed me to capture a range of perspectives and identify key themes, respecting the complexity of participants' narratives and providing a comprehensive analysis that accurately reflected their diverse realities.

A distinctive feature of IPA methodology was its interpretive (hermeneutic) process, in which I actively engaged with participants' narratives to uncover deeper meanings (Zimmerman, 2016). This involved an iterative interaction between myself and the data as I interpreted participants' experiences while taking into account my own preconceptions. This reflexivity enhanced my understanding and provided insights into how participants constructed meaning in their lives. Additionally, the idiographic nature of IPA distinguishes it from other qualitative methods by emphasising detailed, case-by-case analysis of individual experiences to capture these comprehensively. Unlike broader qualitative approaches, IPA acknowledges the unique perspective of each participant, leading to deeper insights into the phenomenon under study (Smith et al., 2022).

In my research, I was particularly interested in the phenomenon of teacher motivation in the context of master's level study, which led me to develop the following subsidiary research questions (RQs). These questions were designed to explore the specific meanings and interpretations that individual teachers ascribed to their experiences, thereby maintaining a clear focus throughout my research and subsequent presentation of the data:

RQ1: What research has been conducted on the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in master's programmes?



RQ2: What are the motivations that influence schoolteachers' decisions to engage in a Master of Education programme?

RQ3: What motivating factors influence schoolteacher's decisions to continue with their master's level studies?

RQ4: What personal and professional support motivates schoolteachers when they are engaged in a Master of Education programme?

RQ5: What are the strengths and limitations of the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in a master's programme?

The following chapters aim to address the RQs. To provide some context to the master's programmes I lead, the next section provides an overview of the three Master of Education programmes in which participants are enrolled.

## 1.4 The Master of Education programmes

In my practice, there are three overarching Master of Education programmes, each encompassing a range of pathways that highlight the diverse options available for teachers pursuing postgraduate studies. The participants in my research were recruited from these MA Education programmes. Each programme utilises a distinct mode of delivery: in-person, blended, or fully online. These delivery methods offer students the flexibility to choose the option that best fits their circumstances and needs. However, although participants were drawn from the different modes of study, this distinction was not significant for the research, as the research focused on participants' motivations for engaging in a master's programme, rather than on specific modes of delivery.

A brief overview of the master's programmes will provide contextual information that clarifies the master's environment in which the participants are studying.

The MA Education programmes were gradually introduced to the university, beginning with the in-person programme as the initial mode of delivery. However, as a consequence of the 2020 launch of a fully online MA Education programme and the subsequent introduction of a National MA Education programme in 2021, recruitment to the in-person programme has been temporarily suspended due to the university's recognition of the necessity for a more flexible approach to learning, which can be achieved through a blended or online mode. To recruit participants for my research, I contacted students enrolled on all three master's programmes to avoid focusing on a specific programme or mode of delivery. This was to ensure that I

gained insight into broader perspectives of schoolteacher motivation while also aligning to the participant selection criteria outlined in chapter three.

Each programme offers high-quality content that focuses on work-based practice, where students can consider the theoretical underpinnings related to what they do and how they do it in their practice. The programmes ensure students have the opportunity to build on prior learning to challenge and extend their critical thinking, deepen understanding and knowledge of the content and theoretical foundations of this subject area, and encourage critical reflection of practice (Setting, 2024). Regardless of the format of delivery, the programmes are structured in such a way as to instil the critical and independent thinking skills that the QAA (2020a) identifies as being essential for postgraduate study.

The QAA (2020a) state that students engaging in master's level study should show originality in their application of knowledge and understand 'how the boundaries of knowledge are advanced through research and gained on the completion of a taught course, programme of research, or a mixture of both' (QAA, 2020b: 8). The QAA (2020a) document on characteristics of master's level study, identifies the research component as a fundamental purpose of this level of education and state that master's degree programmes are organised into three areas which are research, advanced study and professional practice. If teachers engage in accredited professional learning, such as a master's programme, these core elements could influence their knowledge and skills, helping them to critically reflect on and transform their practice, which in turn, could motivate them to engage in professional learning opportunities.

#### 1.4.1 Accreditation, master's study and professional learning

Throughout my research, I explore participants' engagement in Master of Education programmes and refer to this in conjunction with their professional learning. Although these can be distinct areas of study, the master's programmes are regarded as an accredited professional learning opportunity by the Welsh Government (2023) and are situated as such in my research.

It is worth noting here that professional learning for teachers can include a multitude of learning opportunities either accredited or not. When learning is accredited, there is a process of maintaining standards and quality assurance of any higher education programmes aimed at assessing, evaluating and improving standards (British Accreditation Council, 2020). Accredited professional learning provides a pathway for professionals to complete a course or programme and gain accreditation that indicates they have engaged in learning that meet

specific standards and quality (Yr Athrofa: UWTSD, 2018). As a result of teacher engagement with accredited professional learning opportunities, teachers and school leaders can build research capacity, which aligns with the strategies adopted by the Welsh Government (2018) discussed later in this chapter.

## 1.5 Research approach

The research design of this study is informed by Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a methodology that enabled the identification and understanding of the experiences and perspectives of participants on a Master of Education programme. The initial stage of the research design involved the identification and recruitment of participants for the research. A purposive sampling approach was used to select participants who have the relevant experience and knowledge related to the research question, namely schoolteachers on a MA Education programme in Wales. Next, participants' personal statements were analysed to gain insight into their reasons for applying to the master's programmes. Following the analysis of the personal statements, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant where the interview guide (Appendix A) was developed from the research MRQ and extant literature and tailored to the experiences and perspectives of the participants. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and then analysed using an adapted IPA framework (see chapters three and four). The data analysis identified themes and patterns that emerged from the data following a process of careful and multiple reading of each transcript and personal statement. The analysis process identified the participants' experiences, perspectives, and meanings associated with motivations and learning. The findings are presented in a narrative format, which reflects the data collected and considers the implications of the findings for the participants and the theoretical concepts of self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985) (see chapter five).

## 1.6 Education in Wales: The current context

Given the ongoing changes in Wales that directly impact my practice, it is important to outline the Welsh context to provide a clear understanding of the research environment.

Wales is a relatively small nation within the United Kingdom, comprising approximately one-sixth of the total land area of the UK (IWA, 2023). Since the enactment of devolution in 1999, Wales has maintained a separate education system that is distinct from those of England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland (Jones and Evans, 2023). With a small population of 3.1 million, Wales is home to 1,463 educational establishments and just over 35,000 schoolteachers (EWC, 2023). It is notable that the majority of teachers are female (75.5%)

(EWC, 2023), which provides context for the gender distribution in my research sample, consisting of one male and nine female participants.

In Wales, policy implementation is predominantly devolved, with responsibility distributed across three tiers. Jones and Evans (2023) provide a clear overview of the tier system: Tier 1 comprises the Welsh Government, which is responsible for overseeing the planning process and policy development, ensuring accountability and promoting system improvement. Tier 2 currently includes 22 local authorities, which have been grouped into regional consortia namely: Gwasanaeth Effeithiolrwydd (GwE) for North Wales, Education Through Regional Working (ERW) for South-West and Mid-Wales, the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (CSC) for Central South Wales, and the Education Achievement Service (EAS) for South East Wales. It is the responsibility of the consortia to facilitate improvements in schools by delivering professional learning and development resources in collaboration with other organisations, including higher education institutes (HEI). Their role is to 'facilitate and support the sharing of best practice and collaboration with a view to improving learner outcomes' (Welsh Government, 2017: 10). Tier 3 encompasses schools. Schools are encouraged to collaborate to enhance the learning and well-being of children, young people and professionals (Jones and Evans, 2023).

In recent years, Wales has seen significant changes in the educational system where new initiatives have been introduced that directly influence teachers in their practice (Hutt et al., 2024). These changes have led to a new national curriculum for schools, new professional standards for teachers, the introduction of the National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL) and the introduction of professional learning offers. Initiated from poor comparative performance results of the Programme for International Students Assessments (PISA) in 2009, there has been a range of policies and initiatives to improve educational outcomes in Wales, spanning from 2009 to 2021 (Beauchamp et al., 2021). In response to a series of policy directives aimed at reforming what was perceived as a failing education system, the then Minister of Education issued a series of responses between 2009 and 2013 (Andrews, 2014). From 2014, the Welsh Government commissioned a series of high-level reviews from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which provided analysis and recommendations based on international best practices, and as a result, developed an all-Wales improvement plan (2014). There was an agreement that a systemic educational change was needed.

Comparing international education systems, the plans set out long-term policy recommendations to improve the curriculum, qualifications and teaching in Wales (OECD,

2014, 2017, 2020a, 2020b). The improvement plan identified four priority areas, however, considering all four areas would be beyond the scope and scale of my research. Therefore, to align with the rationale for this research, the focus here will be on one area: *building professional capital through collective responsibility*, a concept explored further in chapter two. As a direct result of the OECD (2014) report, the Welsh Government introduced a National Strategy for Education Research and Evidence (NSERE) vision, committed to establishing a national infrastructure to oversee educational research and enquiry. The NSERE vision strived for change to the educational landscape in Wales, with the aim of building an effective evidence-informed teacher workforce (Welsh Government, 2017; Welsh Government, 2019a; Welsh Government, 2022). The NSERE initiative from the Welsh Government aimed to bring together researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to 'assist knowledge-sharing and mobilisation', and to create 'a truly collaborative system, where universities and schools work in robust partnership, recognising the importance of research' (Williams, 2017: 1). Although the Welsh Government recognised the autonomy of HEIs in Wales with regard to their own respective agendas and research strategies, the intention was for these institutions to work collaboratively with one another, with the objective of supporting schools in developing high-quality research capital across the education sector. This was to be achieved with a particular focus on the process of informing policy objectives and their subsequent implementation (Welsh Government, 2017; Tyler et al., 2018).

In 2019, the then Education Minister addressed higher education settings around Wales asking for input and cooperative approach where individuals and institutions work together, share their insights, and contribute to building an effective education system. This collaborative effort would involve schools, HEIs and local consortia engaging in open dialogue, sharing best practices and build a sense of partnership to improve educational outcomes for all. Discussions with education professionals have taken place nationwide, building an alliance to meet key directives, whereby colleagues from HEIs, local authorities, consortia and schools are working together to build on expertise in research and professional learning with a focus on implementing change (Welsh Government, 2019b). The Welsh Government has identified an opportunity for interdependence and diverse thoughts across the sector through the embedding of a collaborative approach. This approach is designed to instil change in the education landscape (Welch et al., 2022) and to facilitate the development of new policies and the transformation of current practices among teachers (Welsh Government, 2021). The Welsh Government (2021) proposed that the autonomy and regulation inherent in this collaborative partnership will ensure equal participation, thereby enabling the co-construction of knowledge within partnerships to effect the necessary changes and to fulfil the requirements identified by the OECD (2014). Nevertheless, this approach may not be without its problems

and challenges. The undertaking of national and local commitments is accompanied by a corresponding obligation to fulfil these commitments and to account for the fulfilment. Therefore, the necessity to succeed may have implications for the workforce, including increased responsibility, expectations, and pressures. With greater responsibility comes greater accountability, which can lead to pressure on performance, time management, expectations, decision making, and ultimately increase stress (Jerrim and Sims, 2021). The introduction of additional responsibilities in an already demanding role could have a significant impact on the quality of teaching and the well-being of teachers. Drawing on my research findings, and a recommendation detailed in chapter six, it will be essential to provide effective support to facilitate these changes and ensure that teachers have sufficient time and space to engage in professional learning opportunities if these initiatives are to be sustainable in everyday practice.

Williams (2017) describes the improvement process as a way of working to set an 'international' example to raise standards for all pupils in Wales. This notion is also identified in the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Welsh Government, 2015: 3), which shares a long-term plan for public bodies to join up their thinking to meet seven well-being goals for the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales and to ensure a 'globally responsible Wales.' The fundamental idea surrounding the collaboration initiatives within Wales, and specifically the vision for the education system, is to ensure that educational practitioners build a learning community (Welsh Government, 2021). In their initial discussions about collaboration and evidence-informed practices for educators in Wales, Ranson (2019) and Harris and Jones (2019a) found that establishing professional learning communities within a broader learning community enables teachers to create specific opportunities for collaboration and to identify a shared purpose. This enables them to assume shared responsibility and to collaborate effectively in order to develop their own potential and that of their students.

When reflecting on the proposed changes and new initiatives to build professional capital, it is apparent that the aim is to support teachers in becoming evidence-informed and research-led practitioners to build knowledge, expertise and enhance quality (Sant, 2019). Effective school improvement and positive student outcomes are fundamental to the vision and will align with the initial improvement plan presented by the OECD (2014), the NSERE vision and the National Mission introduced in 2018 and led by the Welsh Government. Nevertheless, it is difficult to avoid the fact that the vision and mission were created by individuals who are not directly involved in the day-to-day teaching practices. Therefore, it is important to further explore the wants and desires of teachers in order to gain their perspective on the most

effective methods for developing their practice, which in turn will inform the development of the system as a whole. This notion led to questions about teacher motivations to engage in further learning opportunities and how they are supported in the process.

In consideration of the Welsh Government initiatives, Estyn (2018), the education and training inspectorate for Wales, has highlighted that there is insufficient evidence to clearly link research-informed practice with direct improvements in teaching quality and student outcomes. While the use of research in education is encouraged, Estyn recommends that more support is needed to help teachers effectively apply research to enhance learning in the classroom. Although an area worthy of exploration, this is an area to consider for future research as it would need a detailed, measurable and longitudinal approach that observes changes in practice and impact on learning, an approach outside the scope and relevance of my study. Similar to Estyn, Tripney et al. (2018) found that teacher engagement with research evidence is limited, sharing that this is predominantly due to the individualised approach that teachers take when carrying out any research in their practice. The lack of clear evidence linking research-informed practice to improvements in teaching quality and student outcomes may directly affect teacher motivation to engage in professional learning. Without a strong connection between research and noticeable improvements in their classrooms, teachers might question the value of such professional learning, leading to lower engagement and enthusiasm for continuous learning. This reinforces the need for a focused culture of learning on a national level where there is long-term vision (Tripney et al., 2018), namely a national approach to engage teachers in a research-engaged education system. It is therefore apparent that, if the government is to ensure that teachers are research-informed practitioners, it is essential that barriers are identified effectively, and steps are taken to reduce them. Nevertheless, it is also worth considering the practical implications of initiating a long-term vision led by policymakers. From a pragmatic perspective, it is essential to consider how any new initiative, vision, and/or mission is perceived and adopted by teachers and school leaders in their practice. It is important to consider how this will be sustained and managed to ensure that the vision has the necessary focus and commitment to achieve the desired impact.

The establishment of an appropriate culture will cultivate a sense of connectedness, which in turn will strengthen relationships and build trust (Baker-Doyle, 2023). In consideration of the Tier model in Wales, the partnerships between HEIs and schools should serve the wider public by effectively building professional capital through engagement in educational research and professional learning. Nonetheless, engaging in research may challenge long-held values or habitual practices. Therefore, it is crucial that the focus is not on the qualities or deficits of the teacher, but rather on the supporting mechanisms to encourage and motivate teachers to

engage in professional learning in order to meet the needs of their learners (Dickhäuser et al., 2021).

As a result of new education initiatives and to build professional capital for its teachers, in 2019, the Welsh Government worked closely with eight universities in Wales to develop a new National Master of Education (Wales) programme. Given this new initiative, which is based on the NSERE vision, it was proposed that through a collaborative university network across Wales, university practitioners will design and deliver a level seven programme which considers government education priorities and the needs of the wider education workforce. The aim was to develop effective learning content and methods to engage and motivate practitioners in an accredited professional learning programme. Furthermore, the objective was to engage practitioners across Wales in reflections, discussions, and examples of best practice, with the aim of effectively developing collaboration opportunities across and within the education system, therefore building a national community of learners. To support teachers to finance their engagement with the new master's programme, the Welsh Government has provided 500 fully funded places for teachers who work in Wales. Although there will be funding criteria for leaders and specialists, the focus will be on recruiting early career teachers who are in three to six years of their practice.

As a member of the design and development team for the new national programme, I have reflected on my role as the MA Education programme leader and engaged in extensive dialogues with colleagues and students from various institutions across Wales. These discussions have revolved around understanding the needs and desires of practitioners, with a specific emphasis on the significance of the new master's programme in enhancing research capacity among teachers in Wales. My initial reflections during these conversations highlighted the essential question of what motivates schoolteachers to pursue master's level studies while balancing their teaching and other responsibilities. While the design and development teams acknowledged the needs of teachers within the broader educational landscape, including the school environment, the students, and the wider community, further exploration was necessary to uncover the personal and professional factors that drive schoolteachers to apply for and commit to master's study.

Aligned closely with the IPA framework, my research emphasises understanding the lived experiences of teachers, considering the contextual factors that influence their motivations, and exploring the deeper meanings behind their engagement with a Master of Education programme. By delving into the subjective experiences of teachers and reflecting on how these experiences shape their professional learning opportunities, the aim was to gain



valuable insights that can inform the development of postgraduate studies and mechanisms to maintain schoolteacher motivation throughout their studies.

While the Welsh Government's vision is to create collaborative networks to develop a high-performing education system, consideration of how will teachers manage to engage in a master's programme alongside their day-to-day practice is needed. Participating in studies offered by HEIs to become evidence-informed professionals will require teachers to consider the time and space needed for their studies. Additionally, this engagement could impact their performance and accountability measures, and most importantly, it may affect their well-being. These considerations are especially relevant to the focus of my research. By gaining an insight into these motivations and the challenges that teachers face, this research will identify ways to support their engagement in their professional learning.

## 1.7 Overview of the chapters

This thesis consists of five chapters with the introductory chapter providing a synopsis of the research that includes the rationale, the main research question (MRQ) and subsidiary research questions (RQ), and research context. To aid in understanding the terminology used throughout my thesis, a glossary of terms is provided in Appendix B. The glossary can be referred to for definitions and explanations of key terms.

The following chapters will present a detailed examination of the literature review, research methodology, approach to data analysis, findings and discussion and the conclusion and recommendations. These are as follows:

### *Chapter two: A Review of the Literature*

Chapter two is a review of the relevant literature, critically analysing past and current sources and theoretical concepts relating to professional learning, teacher motivation, learning communities and teacher well-being that are relevant to the MRQs and conceptual framework. This chapter provides a thorough assessment of previous research and situates the current research within the broader context of existing knowledge, identifying gaps, inconsistencies and areas for further exploration. In doing so, it provides a foundation for the subsequent chapters, justifying the need for my research and highlighting the contribution that my research will make to the field.

### *Chapter three: Research Methodology and Methods*

Chapter three outlines the conceptual framework and methodology adopted in this research. This chapter presents, the philosophical foundations of the research, research design, research sample, research process and the ethical considerations relating to the research.

#### *Chapter four: Approach to Data Analysis*

Using an adapted Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) framework for analysing the data, chapter four outlines the steps taken for analysis. This short chapter provides an overview of the approach to the analysis of the data collected from seven participants' personal statements and ten semi-structured interviews.

#### *Chapter five: Findings and Discussion*

Chapter five presents the findings and discussions which are discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter two. There is an overview of the findings, how the findings address the RQs, followed by a brief conclusion and additional insights.

#### *Chapter six: Conclusion and Recommendations*

The concluding chapter of the thesis presents a synthesis of the key arguments and findings while also acknowledging the research limitations. There are recommendations for my practice, school leaders, and policymakers by providing insights into how the findings can be applied to improve professional learning, teacher motivation, and well-being. Furthermore, this chapter outlines potential future orientations and my final thoughts and reflections.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

*‘Professional learning must be purposeful and intentional, appropriately resourced, and valued [...] a teacher who knows that their commitment to professional learning is recognised by senior leaders has the potential to inspire’ (Gordon, 2024).*

### 2.1 An introduction to the literature review

The aim of this chapter is to explore concepts surrounding teacher motivation for learning and to identify gaps that I will address in my research. By adopting a thematic approach, the analysis encompasses existing literature on motivation, professional learning, communities of learning and well-being in relation to the teacher. As the review of literature developed, it became clear that the various themes were interlinked, with motivation identified as an integral factor in this interconnection. Robust engagement with literature highlighted that motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, is evident across all areas of the literature sourced, including professional learning, communities of learning, and well-being. With this understanding in mind, as illustrated in Figure 1, the role of motivation is placed at the centre, linking the concepts. In my view, motivation is the glue that holds these concepts together in relation to teacher professional learning.



*Figure 1: Four themes identified in the literature review.*

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive exploration of the themes, see Figure 1, by addressing the following three aims:

1. Exploring motivation, professional learning, communities of learning and well-being in relation to the role of the teacher.
2. Identifying theories and concepts relevant to these areas.
3. Highlighting gaps in the existing research regarding teachers' motivation for learning.

To address these three aims, this literature review will firstly examine motivation, synthesising relevant theories that underpin this concept. As motivation is a vast and multi-dimensional concept, for the purpose of my research, the focus is on teacher motivation and motivation for learning, where I strived to understand the 'want' that encourages teachers to engage in master's level studies. The second theme is professional learning where I explored teacher identity and professionalism and their relevance to professional learning to determine what motivates teachers to engage in professional learning opportunities, such as a master's programme. Here I also considered transformational professional learning, the importance of building professional capital and the role of school leadership to gain a greater perspective on the factors that influence professional learning for teachers. The third theme is focused on communities of learning within educational settings. Through this theme, I explore the impact of social learning and the significance of communities of learning in encouraging a collaborative environment that promotes teacher learning and development. In the final theme of well-being, I explored the potential influence of the context on a teacher's self-efficacy and motivation for learning. Finally, I will conclude by summarising the findings and highlighting final questions raised by the literature review in relation to my research.

## 2.2 Motivation: needs, drives and agency

Motivation refers to the needs and drives that shape an individual's behaviour, influenced by a complex interaction of external and internal factors (Hattie et al., 2020; Anderson, 2020; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2021). Locke and Latham (2013) assert that clear goals can help individuals focus their efforts and sustain motivation. However, they contend that the effectiveness of goal achievement is influenced by an individual's underlying needs and drives. Building on this, Latham et al. (2016), and later Locke and Latham (2019), suggest that individuals should prioritise setting learning goals over performance goals. This aspect of motivation is viewed by Vansteenkiste and Soenens (2023: 124) as 'wantivation', where individuals find meaning and value from an activity, recognising its importance and experiencing a sense of ownership over its initiation and execution. Taking ownership by setting personal goals can be highly beneficial to an individual's sense of personal accomplishment, confidence, personal growth and overall happiness (Locke and Latham, 2019; Vansteenkiste and Soenens, 2023). These intentional behaviours were identified in the seminal work of DeCharms (1968), who introduced a distinction between two categories of intentional behaviours: extrinsic and intrinsic. Within the context of personal causation, individuals believe that their efforts and actions directly influence their outcomes (Weiner, 2010). For teachers, this belief in their ability to influence practice and student achievement stems from a sense of personal agency, a belief that will empower individuals to take control

of their lives, make informed decisions and pursue their aspirations (Larsen and Allan, 2021). Recognising personal agency and responsibility, along with the interrelations between motivation, behaviour and emotion, can provide an insight into human understanding and the relationships individuals form (Slemp et al., 2020).

Seminal research by Deci and Ryan (1985) identified the impact of emotions on motivation and acknowledged that an individual's intrinsic drive involves a high level of personal investment. They claimed that this drive is fuelled by personal interest and satisfaction, which leads to more adaptive behaviours and positive emotional experiences. The authors recognise that understanding one's motivations, actions and emotional experiences contributes to increased self-awareness, which is essential to promoting autonomy and personal growth. Deci and Ryan (2000) categorised three psychological needs of self-motivation: autonomy, competence, and relatedness which support my conceptual framework (see 3.2). Their work emphasised the importance of autonomy and competence in driving intrinsic motivation, maintaining that people are motivated by their choices and actions, aligning motivation with their thoughts and behaviours. This contrasts with early motivation theory, influenced by Freud (1966), which suggested that motivation is a complex interplay of unconscious drives, emotions and instincts that drive individuals towards certain actions or behaviours. In his psychoanalytic theory, Freud (1966) asserted that the underlying forces driving motivation stem from the unconscious mind, contrasting with Deci and Ryan's perspective that motivation aligns with personal values and goals. Although these theories differ, a commonality between the two lies in the role of an internal force that fundamentally guides behaviour. This concept is comparable to Mullins' (2014) analysis of conscious cognitive processes, which reveal the influence of needs, goals, beliefs, and self-efficacy on guiding behaviour and action. Mullins (2014) proposed a three-stage model of motivation: goal setting, planning, and execution, noting that clear, specific, and achievable goals increase the likelihood of success, signifying the importance of structuring goals effectively, as the clarity and attainability of goals can play a key role in enhancing motivation and achieving desired outcomes.

A similar argument can be found in Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2021) work, which posits that motivation is a complex cognitive process involving initial planning, goal setting, forming intentions, generating tasks, executing actions, controlling actions and evaluating outcomes. This recognises that motivation is not a simple or linear concept but rather a complex and evolving process. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) further clarify motivation by defining it as the underlying reason for engaging in an activity, the persistence with which individuals continue it, and the intensity of effort they are willing to invest. While engagement reflects what an individual does, motivation reflects why they do it. Gaining insight into schoolteachers'

engagement in a master's programme requires both the stages of motivation and their sustained commitment.

The challenge of maintaining motivation to achieve the desired outcome can be found in the works of relevant scholars on motivation, discussed further in 2.2.1. What is evident is that motivation and motivational behaviours are driven by a physiological need (Freud, 1966; Deci and Ryan, 1985; Mullins, 2014), with these behaviours being influenced by short-term and long-term goals (Wright and Wiediger, 2007). Within a work setting and in consideration of professional learning opportunities, Wright and Wiediger (2007) claim that motivation has a positive impact on an individual's performance as it drives them toward goal attainment. However, a disclaimer in their paper recognised the importance of an organisation's role in supporting and encouraging motivation, implying that internal commitment from employers plays a significant role in individual motivation and goal attainment in their working practice.

The essential element of organisational behaviour is also discussed at length in the work of Mullins (2014), where he affirmed that employees are most likely to be motivated to achieve high standards when clear goals are in place, they are rewarded for their performance, they feel empowered, and they receive regular feedback. Empowerment and feedback are essential motivational factors in this process, raising the question for my research of how the participants were supported when engaged with their master's studies in their setting.

To gain a deeper understanding of how individuals are motivated, it was essential to explore motivational theories which offer a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of teacher motivation, as examined in the next section.

## 2.2.1 Exploring motivation theories

Theories of motivation are complex and diverse. However, one of the most prominent theories of motivation is Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Deci and Ryan (1985) affirm that the psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness, which they propose as key to gaining an understanding of how motivation is initiated and sustained. However, SDT also recognises that motivation is influenced by a wider range of factors that do not always fit neatly into these three basic needs (Van den Broeck et al., 2019). This recognition acknowledges the complexity of human motivation, as individual differences, cultural contexts and situational factors can all play a role in shaping motivational experiences (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Measuring these needs can be challenging due to the subjective nature and variability across individuals (Martela and Ryan, 2019). These limitations of SDT include its potential to

oversimplify the complex nature of motivation and its inability to fully account for cultural and situational influences (Chirkov et al., 2003; Deci and Ryan, 2008; Vansteenkiste et al., 2018). For example, concepts like autonomy and self-determination may not align with the individual goals and values of certain cultures and educational systems (Chirkov et al., 2003; Gagné and Deci, 2005; Vansteenkiste et al., 2018). This variability indicates the intricate nature of motivation, as reflected in Ryan and Connell's (1989) continuum framework, which positions motivation on a spectrum ranging from amotivation to intrinsic motivation.

While intrinsic motivation is often seen as the ideal for an individual's inherent drive to succeed, Gavin et al. (2020) propose that external pressures, such as professional demands and institutional constraints, can significantly shape motivational experiences. These systemic factors, such as workload and organisational demands, were particularly relevant in my research, highlighting potential challenges teachers face in balancing their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Although intrinsic motivation is associated with better outcomes, extrinsic motivators, such as career advancement opportunities (Gavin et al., 2020), also play an important role in sustaining engagement, especially relevant for schoolteachers undertaking master's study.

In consideration of teacher motivation in professional learning, Goal Theory (Locke and Latham, 2002) offered an additional motivational framework, suggesting that individuals are compelled to attain their objectives by establishing specific, demanding, yet achievable goals to improve performance. The literature on Goal Theory (Dweck and Leggett, 1988; Ames, 1992; Elliott and McGregor, 2001; Locke and Latham, 2002; Hulleman et al., 2016) indicates that individuals with a clear, specific and ongoing goal are more likely to experience a sense of purpose and autonomy, aligning with intrinsic motivation as discussed earlier. This highlights the importance of goal setting in shaping motivation in relation to the pursuit of specific outcomes. Achievement Goal Theory (AGT) (Elliot, 2005) builds on this by examining how mastery-orientated goals, which focus on learning and understanding, promote personal growth and development. The intrinsic focus on personal growth aligns with the pursuit of knowledge-driven goals, strengthening self-efficacy and building self-confidence (Anderman, 2020), vital for participants undertaking new challenges, such as a Master of Education qualification.

Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) offers a complimentary perspective by exploring the role of individuals' beliefs in their capabilities and the influence of these beliefs on motivation (Bandura, 1977a; Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2021). Factors such as past experiences and social influences shape self-efficacy, which in turn affects personal and professional growth

(Bollinger et al., 2021). Through the development of self-efficacy, Bollinger et al. (2021) claim that individuals will see a significant impact on personal growth, professional growth, achievement and well-being. For this reason, self-efficacy, as an important aspect of motivation, will be explored in more depth in the well-being theme in section 2.5.3.

Other frameworks, such as Self-Regulation Theory (SRT) (Zimmerman and Schunk, 2011) and Grit Theory (Duckworth et al., 2007) also recognise the active role individuals play in their own motivation. SRT focuses on goal setting, effort management, and sustained engagement in learning activities (Zimmerman and Schunk, 2011). Grit Theory, on the other hand, emphasises perseverance and passion for long-term goals, signifying the importance of sustained motivation even in the face of challenges (Duckworth, 2016). Although there are limitations to both theories, such as the need to consider cultural and contextual factors, they are valuable in the exploration of motivation and goal attainment, and fundamental in supporting ideas about how individuals are motivated, as they provide insight into universal aspects of motivation in order to best support individuals in achieving their goals.

Cultural and contextual factors further shape motivational theories, influencing how individuals engage with their learning and set goals. Schunk (2012) affirms that cognitive and constructivist theories identify motivation as an expectation of reward rather than the reward itself that drives behaviour. Here, individuals are actively involved in their learning, and their motivation is driven by the desire to understand and make sense of their experiences. This understanding of motivation aligns with Hull's (1943) seminal perspective, which viewed motivation as a process that can be strengthened or weakened as a function of the individual's drive. This drive is a behaviour that obtains reinforcement to meet the need, for example, 'Need → Drive → Behaviour' (Hull, 1943: 226). The concept of needs has been a recurring theme in motivational literature and theory to date. After reviewing the literature on motivation theory, it is evident that motivational factors interact with individuals and their contexts in a complex way. It was therefore essential to establish the participants' personal interpretation of the term 'motivation' in my research (see 5.2).

## 2.2.2 Motivation in teaching: external and internal influences

Teacher motivation is primarily influenced by the extent to which their psychological needs are met, self-determination, and both internal and external factors (Richardson et al., 2014). Central to this is the extent to which teachers perceive a sense of control over their actions, which can significantly influence their professional engagement. Richardson et al. (2014)



contend that motivation is influenced by various pressures from a range of directions: policy and government initiatives (above), expectations from pupils, parents, or the community (below), and the teacher's own intrinsic motivations, values and goals (within). Gaining an insight into how these pressures interact can provide a deeper understanding of the factors that drive and challenge teachers' ability to stay motivated, particularly when engaged in professional learning. In this context, Brandon and Derrington (2019) state that teachers' qualities, such as commitment, focus, and student-centredness, serve as intrinsic motivators, driving their dedication to student success. However, their focus on internal qualities overlooks the external factors, such as pressures to enhance teaching practices through postgraduate study, which are also significant in motivating teachers to engage in continuous learning. To address teacher needs effectively, it is essential to examine the various influences, strategies and considerations that affect their motivation to engage in professional learning beyond their immediate classroom experiences, affirming the need for my research.

The importance of a teacher's willingness to learn was recognised by Shulman and Shulman (2004) as a key element of motivation, as they emphasised the importance of teachers being open to continuous learning, underlining its important role in the continuous improvement of teaching practice. This continuous learning closely links to autonomous motivation, as it reflects teachers' intrinsic desire to grow and enhance their skills (Roth et al., 2007). This implies that teachers who are internally motivated to learn are consistently engaged in enhancing their teaching practice, which aligns with Brandon and Derrington's (2019) initial ideas of prioritising student success. Similarly, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) offer a framework for understanding teacher motivations, identifying four key components: intrinsic motivation, contextual influences, temporal dimension, and demotivating factors. They explain that these components interact to influence teacher engagement, highlighting the importance of contextual factors in maintaining motivation. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) affirm that school leaders can play a pivotal role in shaping environments that nurture intrinsic motivation by understanding the factors that either enhance or hinder teachers' engagement. They further identify the temporal dimension of motivation, which emphasises lifelong commitment, while acknowledging that negative influences, such as work-related stress or lack of support, can act as demotivating factors. Moreover, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021) advocate for further exploration of demotivation to gain insight into the relationship between teachers' self-concept and their work environment. My research builds on their work by including interview questions that explore the factors leading to teachers' demotivation, offering new insights into their experiences and challenges.

Hattie et al. (2020) identify the importance of aligning teachers' goals with their perceived outcomes, stating that teachers make continual, moment-by-moment decisions about the value of their tasks based on their goals and expected outcomes. When teachers perceive a congruence between their efforts and the potential success, they are more likely to engage in the task (Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2020). However, challenges such as low self-confidence or perceived barriers can diminish motivation. Phillips et al. (2021) further support this view, asserting that teachers' decisions to persist or disengage are influenced by a network of social and psychological factors, including advocacy and reinforcement from colleagues and school leaders. Jones et al. (2018) also recognise the role of social interactions in motivation, asserting that shared understanding and a sense of community are essential for sustaining engagement. A collaborative school culture, where teachers feel supported and valued, can encourage sustained engagement in professional learning opportunities (Jones et al., 2018). Similarly, Gavin et al. (2020) recognise key factors affecting teacher motivation, such as workload management, autonomy, collegial and leadership support, professional learning and recognition. Addressing these factors is vital to improving motivation and job satisfaction. Worth and Van den Brande (2020) further highlight the role of school leaders and policymakers in providing opportunities for teachers to develop their professional practice in ways that meet their individual needs, while also creating a supportive school culture. They suggest that teachers with greater autonomy are more satisfied with their work and are less likely to leave the profession (Worth and Van den Brande, 2020). While these insights offer valuable theoretical foundations for teacher motivation, findings from my research suggest that such support is not always evident in practice, which in turn could potentially hinder teachers' engagement in further professional learning, such as master's study.

Slemp et al. (2020) expand on the importance of teacher autonomy, suggesting that it enhances motivation and teaching effectiveness. They assert that both autonomous and controlled motivation can be enhanced through practices such as reinforcing professional development opportunities, building supportive environments, and implementing fair and transparent evaluation systems. Their meta-analysis highlights the importance of balancing these forms of motivation to create a responsive and self-motivated learning environment (Slemp et al., 2020), signifying that teachers who feel empowered to contribute their ideas and take ownership of their professional learning are more likely to experience sustained motivation.

Similarly, Daumiller et al. (2021) examined the relationship between teachers' achievement goals and self-efficacy, finding that teachers who prioritised learning goals over performance goals exhibited higher levels of self-efficacy. While they acknowledge the importance of

promoting learning goals to improve self-efficacy and classroom effectiveness, they also identify additional demotivating factors, such as the financial burden of further learning including tuition fees and potential loss of earnings. Although participants in my research did not raise financial concerns, challenges related to balancing work and family commitments did emerge, as discussed in chapter five. Daumiller et al. (2021) recommend that policymakers and school leaders establish a supportive environment for further learning, ensuring clear pathways for career progression, a notion I also consider in the concluding chapter of my research (see chapter six). They further call for research into the factors that motivate and demotivate teachers, with the aim of informing the design of effective professional learning opportunities. This recommendation supports my justification for exploring the individual motivations of schoolteachers engaged in master's study. While intrinsic motivation is a key factor in the literature, it operates within a broader system of social and institutional factors that can either support or undermine a teacher's ability to maintain their motivation. This is important for gaining insight into how teachers navigate and commit to professional learning opportunities.

Ryan and Deci (2020) suggest further investigation into teacher motivation and continuous learning to identify the connection between autonomy and the motivation that teachers need to achieve personal growth. An alternative view considered by Al-Haq et al. (2016) is that teachers can lack intrinsic motivation because of overwhelming workloads and job stress, which can lead to teachers feeling exhausted. In some instances, a lack of support from their school or colleagues can exacerbate this issue (Day and Gu, 2007), leading to demotivation. Boylan et al. (2018) characterised this as a negative school climate where staff relationships are poor, collaboration is limited or the working environment is hostile, which can further demotivate teachers and reduce their desire to engage with learning opportunities. In contrast, Weston and Clay (2018) and Parr et al. (2021) suggest that creating a positive learning culture where teachers feel supported and valued can increase motivation and engagement in their professional learning, which can build a sense of collective success. This focus on collective success creates a positive learning culture and encourages collaboration and innovation where teachers grow and learn together as part of their professional practice (Weston and Clay, 2018).

A review of the literature on motivation emphasises its deeply personal nature while acknowledging the need for further research to better understand the individual perspectives. In relation to teacher motivation, the literature provided valuable insights into intrinsic motivation for learning, such as autonomy, competence and relatedness, and how extrinsic motivation can play a role in teacher motivation for learning. It also highlighted, however, the

complexities inherent in the term motivation. As a result, there is a gap in understanding the nuanced meaning of motivation for each participant. To address this, targeted questions were included in the interview process to uncover personal interpretations and emotional associations with motivation (see 5.2).

Building on the exploration of teacher motivation, the next sub-section explores professional learning and how motivational factors influence professional learning and teaching practices, in line with the MRQ of my thesis.

## 2.3 Professional Learning: definitions and concepts

This section explores the definition of professional learning, first outlining my interpretation of the concept. It also introduces teacher professionalism and teacher identity, highlighting their relevance to understanding professional learning. Although these areas are broad, their brief outline provides a basis for exploring how professional learning relates to teachers' work practice and its significance in the context of master's study.

### 2.3.1 Definition of professional learning

The theme of professional learning is important in this research, as it is embedded in the notion of enhancing teacher agency and building professional capital through engagement in professional learning opportunities, such as a Master of Education programme. While professional learning can encompass various experiences of teacher development, such as continuous professional development, my view on professional learning aligns with Timperley's (2011) definition which is in congruence with Jones' (2016) work. Both view professional learning as an active, ongoing process through which practitioners acquire new knowledge, skills, and competencies. Jones (2016) further states that professional learning is focused on enquiry, reflection and action, developing a collaborative and interpretive approach rather than a linear progression. This perspective situates master's level learning as a critical component of professional growth, particularly within the context of the Welsh educational landscape. The Welsh Government (2021) describes a Master of Education programme as a recognised route for advancing teacher professional learning which facilitates advanced problem solving, encourages critical thinking and promotes the pragmatic application of knowledge. These principles are reflected in the core characteristics of a Master of Education degree, designed to provide education practitioners with the expertise to positively impact student learning and contribute to the broader field of education (QAA, 2020a). Importantly, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (2020a) acknowledges the diversity in motivations,

strengths and aspirations among master's students, highlighting the importance of practice-based learning, as a key element of these programmes. This recognition underpins the importance of gaining an insight into the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in master's study to identify ways to support and enhance their overall learning experience and potentially, their impact on children's learning over time.

#### 2.3.1.1 From professional development to professional learning

The shift in terminology from professional development to professional learning reflects a change in how teachers' ongoing education is conceptualised. While both terms are often used interchangeably, they carry distinct meanings. Professional development is often characterised by in-service activities that are typically one-time events designed to enhance specific skills within the education workforce (Zepeda, 2012). In contrast, professional learning extends beyond these activities, representing a continuous process motivated by desire for improvement and improve outcomes for others (Easton, 2008; Timperley, 2008; Timperley, 2011; Jones, 2016). Unlike professional development, professional learning is self-directed and personalised (Jones, 2016), aligning with the notion that it is driven by intrinsic motivation to reflect on and refine practice (Ryan and Deci, 2020). Rodman (2019) suggests that this process can lead to personal growth and fulfilment by offering opportunities for self-discovery and reflection, both of which are essential in sustaining motivation. Mockler (2013a; 2013b; 2020) also situates professional learning as a fundamental aspect of professional becoming, driving transformative changes in knowledge, practice and identity. These transformations are underpinned by motivation, as teachers engage in learning experiences that reshape their professional identity and reinforce their commitment to their roles (Netolicky, 2020). As discussed in section 2.3.4, understanding the transformation is important for examining how teachers view themselves and their evolving responsibilities within the educational landscape. The motivation to engage in professional learning not only enhances their sense of agency but also strengthens their commitment to continuous improvement, further aligning with their aspirations with their professional goals (Jones, 2016).

#### 2.3.2 Teacher identity and professionalism

When exploring teacher professionalism, it is important to consider teacher identity, as this shapes perceptions and approaches to professionalism, which in turn can influence teachers' engagement with professional learning and their development in their practice (Trent, 2019; Toom, 2020) Given the important role teachers play in the education system, significantly influencing the lives of students, families, and the wider community (Olsen, 2016; Burroughs

et al., 2019; Suarez and McGrath, 2022), a strong teacher identity not only influences perceptions of professionalism but also enhances motivation. Teachers who deeply identify with their roles are driven to engage in professional learning and development, motivated by their commitment to improving their practice for the benefit of others (Suarez and McGrath, 2022).

#### 2.3.2.1 Teacher identity

In an era of rapidly evolving teaching contexts, shaped by educational reforms, societal shifts, technological advancements and global challenges, Suarez and McGrath (2022) assert that teachers require a well-developed professional identity that reflects their beliefs about their teaching to ensure high-quality outcomes. This professional identity is not only central to their role but also closely linked to motivation, as teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes about themselves and their work influence their drive and engagement in their workplace (Day et al., 2006; Rensijing and Hongbiao, 2023). Understanding this connection is essential for exploring how a teacher's identity, professionalism and motivation interact to support their engagement in professional learning.

Beijaard et al. (2022) and Rushton et al. (2023) indicate that the concept of teacher identity is frequently underestimated within the domains of teacher education and educational policy. Their research emphasises the significance of the relationship between professional learning, motivation and professional identity. Beijaard et al. (2022) advised that there is a need to gain a holistic view of how teachers develop professionally and how they form their identities, stating the importance to both the internal processes and the broader educational context in this process. Similarly, Skinner et al. (2021) identified a clear link between policy context, identity and motivation, recognising teacher autonomy and policy development as dominant factors. Their findings suggest that policymakers and school leaders should expand their focus from professional practices to include professional values and identity. This shift could promote a learning culture that supports teachers' motivation to enhance their practice, as explored further in section 2.4.3 and later in chapter six.

The literature on motivation and teacher identity reveals that teacher identity is an ongoing process shaped by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include teachers' subjective experiences and beliefs, akin to intrinsic motivation, while external factors encompass societal expectations and the broader, demanding educational context (Beijaard et al., 2000). Zhao (2022) observed that teachers' professional identity becomes more defined with experience, influenced by interactions with students, colleagues and contextual demands.

Likewise, Kelchtermans (2017: 14) affirms that as teachers' progress in their careers, their 'personal interpretative framework' continually evolves. This framework consists of the 'professional self' and 'subjective educational theory' (Kelchtermans, 2017: 14). In his research, Kelchtermans (2017) stresses the need to understand teachers' ongoing learning, not only in relation to pedagogical practices but also in gaining insight into the individuals enacting these practices. Mockler (2020: 9) further argues that greater awareness of 'who they are and what they do' strengthens teachers' professional identity development, enabling adaptable, flexibility, and openness for transformational change. This raises a key question for my research regarding how teachers' motivation to engage in professional learning influences their ongoing development and their ability to enhance both their practice and student outcomes. This question relates to the concepts of transformational change discussed in section 2.3.4.

With changes to policy and their implications for practice, Sachs (2016) proposed that teachers need to develop a robust professional identity to effectively navigate the evolving demands of their profession. This notion resonated with participants in my research as they prepared their personal statements, as discussed in section 5.1. Sachs' (2016) work affirms that teachers must understand their role in shaping students' lives and contributing to society more broadly. This perspective highlighted the motivational drive teachers need to manage and meet the demands placed on them, specifically in relation to their engagement in professional learning. Akkerman and Meijer (2011), Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) and Trent (2019) also emphasised the fluidity of teacher identity, framing it as an adaptive and ongoing developmental process. This perspective is important for understanding teachers' motivations to engage in professional learning, as their identities evolve in response to their experiences and contexts. Timperley (2011) and Jones (2016) further suggest that professional learning not only reshapes teachers' skills but also reinforces their evolving identities and strengthens their motivation to grow and adapt to the demands of the profession.

#### 2.3.2.2 Teacher professionalism

Teacher professionalism has undergone a meaningful change, from the focus on occupational values, such as trust, competence, and professional identity, to an emphasis on practical knowledge (Sachs, 2014; Olsen et al., 2022; Rushton et al., 2022). During a teacher's professional life, there are occasions where they will need to react and respond to social change (Sachs, 2014) which will have an overall influence on their motivation and their practice. Professionalism now includes an expectation of continuous skill and knowledge enhancement throughout their careers. Even amid significant social change, teachers are

committed to providing quality education (Welsh Government, 2019b). As highlighted in chapter one, teacher quality is a political priority in Wales, especially with the introduction of curriculum reform. Both, the OECD and the Welsh Government have identified the need to develop new professional standards to positively impact student learning. However, Day (2021) posits that professionalism, and quality cannot be reduced to simply meeting these standards or adhering to evidence-based practice alone. Instead, he suggests that a systemic strategy that actively enhances teacher professional learning is essential (Day, 2021). This would involve creating a supportive environment that values teachers' professional learning to not only meet standards, but also to motivate teacher learning and innovation in their teaching.

Netolicky's (2016) narrative study, explored the lived experience of 14 educators and acknowledged how professional learning experiences have a significant impact on shaping teachers' professionalism and practices. The study emphasised that professional learning is not solely about the teacher's role but also about their identity. It found that a one-size-fits-all approach to professional learning is inadequate and that it is a transformational process that affects the teacher's knowledge and ways of knowing. Netolicky (2016) claimed that teachers and school leaders need to consider what is required to transform the learning environment, what motivates the need for professional learning, and who is responsible for selecting and guiding the professional learning process. The study highlighted the importance of developing personalised and transformational approaches to professional learning, a concept previously examined by Mockler (2013a). While Mockler's focus was on identity formation, Netolicky's (2016; 2020) attention is on the shift toward transformational professional learning that creates meaningful and lasting change in schools. The approach proposed by Netolicky involves engaging teachers in reflection, collaboration and hands-on learning experiences that are directly relevant to their own teaching practices, claiming that this, in turn, will improve teacher efficacy and enhance student outcomes. Both perspectives recognise the importance of changes to practice, whether through personalised changes that affect teachers' identity or through transformational approaches to professional learning that aim to enhance teachers' professionalism.

It is clear that teacher professionalism is an evolving concept. While the literature on teacher professionalism provides a valuable insight into the role of teachers in society, it does not emphasise the importance of their motivation to engage in professional learning opportunities such as a Master of Education programme. However, key themes drawn from the literature (Day et al., 2006; Whitty, 2000; Sachs, 2016; Mezza, 2022; Suarez and McGrath, 2022) explore several critical aspects of teacher professionalism which are of relevance to my research. These factors include the importance of having a strong foundation of knowledge,



allowing teachers to use their own judgement in their teaching methods, and the significance of their ongoing professional learning. Nevertheless, Forde and McMahon (2019) highlight challenges to teacher professionalism, including the increasing bureaucratisation of education, which can leave teachers feeling disempowered and micromanaged. Additionally, a culture of high stakes testing, along with perceptions of being underpaid and undervalued, further contributes to these challenges (Forde and McMahon, 2019). The difficulties encountered by education practitioners in reconciling fundamental principles with the ever-changing landscape of education are further compounded by the challenges of stress and retention (DfE, 2018; Felstead et al., 2023). Subsequently, attributes such as integrating and applying their knowledge to inform practice, autonomy, professional development, accountability and social responsibility play an essential role in empowering, effective, and resilient educators (Frost, 2017; Skedsmo and Huber, 2024). Extending these principles to the concept of professional learning highlights the ongoing need for teachers to be motivated to develop and enhance their skills, knowledge, and attitudes in order to effectively navigate the challenges they face in the teaching profession.

As demonstrated in this section, teacher identity and professionalism are inherently linked to professional learning and teacher motivation, recognising the influence of opportunities for reflection, learning and growth (Beijaard et al., 2004; Bergmark, 2020; Beijaard et al., 2022). Professional learning influences teacher identity by exposing educators to new ideas and methods that enhance their practice and future prospects. This continuous development is not only recognised in increasing teachers' motivation but also creates a sense of purpose and commitment to their role. Therefore, a deeper exploration of professional learning for teachers is necessary as it serves as a catalyst for evolving identities, sustaining motivation and creating a culture of lifelong learning.

### 2.3.3 Professional learning for teachers in Wales

Within the Welsh education context, professional learning for teachers is identified as ongoing learning that has a significant impact on student outcomes (Welsh Government, 2018). A similar finding appeared in earlier work of Easton (2008: 756), who claimed that teachers should not be passive participants in their development but actively reflecting on their practices where they 'possess both knowledge and wisdom' and continually engage in learning to 'enhance their skills and adapt their teaching practices'. As noted earlier, Jones (2016) proposed that professional learning requires a process of critical thinking amongst teachers, whereby they engage with and expand their knowledge to become informed practitioners. This perspective is evident in Welsh Government (2018; 2019a; 2021; 2023) literature where it is

recognised that professional learning requires continuous self-reflection, critical thinking, and a willingness to adapt to changing circumstances in the educational environment.

In consideration of the Welsh Government's perspective, there is a risk that professional learning initiatives may be controlled by improvement agendas (Stevenson, 2019) rather than being shaped by the education practitioner's own drive and willingness to enhance their practice, therefore done to them rather than by them (Kennedy and Stevenson, 2023). This is an area of focus in the current context where education reform is taking place and the Welsh Government is sharing new enquiry focused initiatives to encourage schoolteachers to focus on their professional learning, for example, a National Professional Learning Entitlement (NPLE) which is aimed at creating time and space for practitioners to engage in professional learning (Welsh Government, 2023). This initiative has a clear focus on educational agenda items, with content prescribed, in-service training days (INSET) and funding provided (Jones, 2016). As noted in chapter one, this tension recognises the importance of ensuring that professional learning remains practitioner-led, as advocated by Scott and Armstrong (2019), who assert that professional growth should focus on self-determined change rather than on meeting political demands. However, building a systemic approach to professional learning is likely to reinforce the support from school leaders. This perspective is particularly relevant given the Welsh Government's initiative encouraging teachers across Wales to enrol on a national master's programme, supported by funding incentives. While this initiative seeks to balance government objectives with teachers' extrinsic motivation to advance their professional learning, embedding a sustained culture of practitioner-led learning remains essential (Scott and Armstrong, 2019).

Jones et al. (2018) explored the benefits of policy-driven professional learning, particularly its active nature focused on inquiry, critical thinking and collaboration. Their report, funded by the Education Workforce Council (EWC), examined professional learning and the professional learning blend in Wales, aligning with the findings I shared earlier by Kennedy and Stevenson (2023). Jones et al. (2018) argued that professional learning should be practitioner-led rather than directed by schools or policies. They found that teachers engaged in professional learning needed to reflect on their experiences to translate learning into practice effectively and have the autonomy to create their own learning opportunities. While these studies address professional learning structures and implementation, they overlook the important role of schoolteacher motivation in initiating and sustaining their engagement in such programmes. This gap reinforces the need to explore how motivation influences participation and outcomes in professional learning, particularly in the context of master's programmes.

### 2.3.3.1 Professional learning as an ongoing process

The literature describes professional learning as an ongoing process for teachers, one that builds their knowledge and skills to improve practice and enrich student learning (Boeskens et al., 2020; OECD, 2020b; Mooney Simmie, 2023). However, the self-regulatory notion of professional learning needs to be embedded for teachers to become leaders of their own learning. As part of the mastery process, Timperley et al. (2008: 14) emphasised the importance of feedback recognising the need for teachers to receive 'feedback on their efforts to learn'. As identified in the theme of motivation, Timperley (2008) also affirmed the idea that clear goals should be in place to monitor the learning process and its impact on practice. This notion is similar to the transformative aim of professional learning proposed by Netolicky (2020) and Kennedy and Stevenson (2023). In order to gain insight into the potential for professional learning to be 'genuinely transformative,' Kennedy and Stevenson (2023: 581) undertook a review of relevant literature with a view to identifying ways in which 'abstract and conceptual thinking' can be connected with 'practical actions capable of bringing about real change'. The authors suggest that, while this change may challenge current perspectives, it is essential to recognise that transforming teachers' professional learning requires additional practical support to ensure they are motivated to achieve effective outcomes. This notion is identified in the findings of my research, where teachers expressed a lack of support from their workplaces, highlighting a disconnect in theoretical concepts and their practical application in supporting teachers engaged in master's studies (see chapter five).

The concept of effective professional learning for teachers, as proposed by Appova and Arbaugh (2016), can be defined as professional learning that has the potential to enhance teacher effectiveness, student achievement and school improvement. Another key component of professional learning, as identified by Easton (2008) and later by Jones (2016), is active engagement. Although identified as an essential aspect of a teacher's development, active engagement requires teachers to commit and interact in their learning to build their research capacity and ensure that student outcomes remain at the forefront of their teaching practice (Harris et al., 2017). Stoll et al. (2012) posit that this engagement transforms teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and practices towards continuous learning, which in turn leads to improved student outcomes, reinforcing the connection between effective professional learning and effective pedagogy. Yet, Estyn as noted in chapter one, claims that the concept of professional learning to improve student outcomes has not been thoroughly explored to confirm the direct impact that teacher learning has on student outcomes. Stoll et al.'s (2012) findings were also comparable with those of Dagenais et al. (2012), who assert that teachers may face several barriers with professional learning opportunities, including time constraints, limited access to

support, and difficulties in interpreting findings to identify desired outcomes in the classroom setting. Furthermore, they acknowledged that teacher motivation to implement research evidence can be influenced by various factors, including self-efficacy and self-determination, key areas that my research identify in chapter five.

Hall and Wall (2019) highlight the challenges teachers face in professional learning, including navigating frameworks and accessing appropriate tools. They stressed the importance of teachers' dedication to the process of professional learning and the necessity of continuous work-based support to ensure its success. Therefore, it is summarised that professional learning demands a persistent effort, where the motivation and readiness to engage in self-reflection and continuous improvement is at the forefront. This raises questions about how professional learning experiences affect teachers personally and professionally, and how these experiences influence schoolteacher motivation and determination to succeed in their studies.

In an early study conducted by Arthur et al. (2006), they identified motivational and inhibitory factors that influences teachers' engagement in their learning, subsequently affecting their ability to complete postgraduate awards. While there are similar findings to the positive aspects of professional learning, Arthur et al. (2006: 215) assert that personal commitment, workplace culture, and HEI organisation all 'impact on the chances of successful completion of awards' by teachers. They discussed the cultural gap in the support that teachers needed in schools and suggested that organising collaborative enquiry and providing in-school support were necessary for supporting teachers to succeed in their learning. In their concluding remarks, the authors emphasise the significance of purposeful communication between the individual, their teaching context and the HEI, to facilitate teacher enquiry and enhance teacher success in postgraduate study, a key consideration I also discuss in chapter six. Although this source may be dated, this holistic perspective warranted further consideration. It underlines the importance of ensuring that teachers feel fully supported in all aspects of their professional lives. My observations as programme leader of master's programmes suggest that the absence of a robust support framework such as, the HEI and the school, has negatively impacted some students enrolled in the master's programme. At times, students have struggled to balance their professional responsibilities with the demands of postgraduate studies, which have hindered their motivation and success in achieving their qualification. Arthur et al.'s study and this observation of practice raises the question of how motivation influences schoolteachers' ability to balance their work, study and family commitments.

The literature reviewed here identified the influence of teacher professional learning, emphasising the transformational changes involved as result of this process. However, limited research addresses how teachers' motivation is sustained throughout this process. In this context, Winch et al. (2013) and Appova and Arbaugh (2016) contribute to the discourse on effective professional learning by emphasising the importance of personalised and transformational approaches. Their findings align with those of other scholars, highlighting the three-fold nature of teacher professional knowledge, which comprises situated understanding, technical knowledge and critical reflection. Winch et al. (2013) suggest that while each element of professional learning is essential, they alone are insufficient to determine its impact. They recognised the need for further research into the role of teacher decision-making in shaping their learning experiences. In their conclusion, the authors advocate for bridging the gap between researchers and practitioners to motivate teachers towards reflective and evidence-based practices, which can drive teacher growth and sustained engagement in transformational professional learning.

#### 2.3.3.2 Personalised and transformational professional learning

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) build upon the concept of personalised and transformative approaches to professional learning, offering an international comparative perspective on teacher quality and professional learning systems across seven distinct areas. Their findings highlight the importance of linking teachers' induction processes to professional learning, curriculum systems, and ongoing development to ensure that teachers are well-prepared and supported in their professional growth. They advocated for tailored processes that address the specific needs of teachers, promote teacher research and encourage the sharing of good practice. However, as identified earlier in this literature review, and addressed by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), caution is needed when teacher learning initiatives are shaped by a politically driven school improvement agenda. Such an agenda may lead to a narrow focus on specific approaches, potentially overlooking alternative methods that could better support teacher learning. Furthermore, political priorities may emphasise short-term gains over long-term professional learning needs, leading to instability and inconsistency in educational policies and practices (Forde and McMahon, 2019). Ensuring effective professional learning requires a sustained commitment to evidence-based practices and alignment with the long-term goals of teachers and students. Personalised and self-directed professional learning approaches may therefore be essential to sustain teacher motivation.

Netolicky's (2020) research on teachers' lived experiences supported this perspective, emphasising the need of a shared vision to guide professional learning and measuring

success by teacher growth. Similar to the work of Mockler (2020) on positioning professional learning, findings from Netolicky suggest that effective professional learning should consider the teacher's identity to help them work toward who they are, and who they will become. These insights draw attention to the need for personalised, transformative, and self-directed professional learning approaches that resonate with teachers' identities and values, contributing to the success of the educational system (UNESCO, 2021). However, Boylan et al. (2023) affirm that any transformational change requires both motivation and time to realise its potential impact. Achieving meaningful improvement through changes in practice is a long-term endeavour requiring sustained dedication and commitment. Nevertheless, as Winch et al. (2015) assert, this process is often hindered by institutional and structural barriers that impede the effective integration of research into practice.

#### 2.3.3.3 Professional learning and practice

In the literature reviewed so far, it is evident that professional learning is a vital component of effective teaching, enabling teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills to deliver quality education. While its importance in improving teaching practice is well-established, the barriers identified by Winch et al. (2015) signify the complexity of determining the exact relationship between the amount of professional learning teachers need and the resulting effectiveness of their teaching. Similar to the views discussed in 2.3.2, Opfer and Pedder (2011) argue that professional learning must be based on understanding the professional identities of teachers and school leaders. Their research acknowledges the intricate combination of individual, social and contextual factors that shape a teachers' learning experiences, advocating for professional learning to be viewed as a 'complex system of thinking' (Opfer and Pedder, 2011: 328).

Cordingley et al. (2020) and Jones (2022) recognise the holistic nature of professional learning and its influence on practice. They emphasised the need for teachers and leaders to encourage a dialogue around professional learning and create conditions that support learning, leading to positive outcomes in classroom practices. Jones (2022) contends that leaders influence professional learning, and therefore, they should provide opportunities for professional learning to take place. Cordingley et al. (2020) recommend several key actions for school leaders to support teacher professional learning. These include 'modelling and promoting evidence-rich professional dialogue, embedding and reinforcing openness to professional learning in school systems, and utilising specialist knowledge to identify the contribution of specialist expertise' (Cordingley et al., 2020: 5).

The role of leadership in professional learning is further discussed in section 2.3.6. Current research on school leadership (Fenwick, 2014; Porrit et al., 2017; Harris and Jones, 2019b; Fancera, 2020; Jones, 2020) identified four consistent themes: leadership facilitates professional learning, promotes collaboration and enquiry-based practices, provides resources and evaluates the impact on student learning. This emphasises the importance of school leaders creating opportunities that encourage schoolteachers to engage in professional learning as part of their practice to help to contribute to a positive learning culture.

A professional learning culture offers significant benefits, including enhancing teacher motivation for professional growth and development (Daly and Ahmetaj, 2020). By creating a culture of continuous learning and improvement, teachers are encouraged to be up to date with the latest research and good practices, which can help them to become more effective in their teaching. Daly and Ahmetaj (2020) found that collaborative work environments enable teachers to share expertise and collectively address challenges, building a sense of community that enhances motivation. This culture also has the potential to positively influence pupils' motivation, although investigating this connection lies beyond the scope of my research and noted as a potential area for further study in chapter six. Daly and Ahmetaj (2020) and Baldinger (2022) further assert that organisations must embrace a learning culture as a strategic imperative for success. Baldinger (2022) further emphasised the importance of adopting a positive learning mind-set, suggesting that teachers in such cultures are more adaptable and resilient. This aligns with the concept of transformational professional learning, where motivation plays a key role in teachers' ability to engage, adapt and thrive in evolving educational contexts.

The literature on teacher professional learning identifies its role as a positive and motivating concept, demonstrating that purposeful engagement builds teachers' knowledge and empowers them to address the complexities of their practice. By embracing growth opportunities, teachers are motivated to maintain their autonomy, navigate external pressures, and uphold the ideals of professionalism. This relationship between teacher identity, motivation, professionalism and teacher professional learning reinforces the notion that continuous transformational learning is integral to professionalism in teaching. As a result of this, transformational professional learning will be examined in the next sub-theme.

#### 2.3.4. Transformational professional learning

When addressing transformational learning, it is essential to recognise the role of motivation in driving teachers' engagement, particularly in the context of master's study. Research offers

valuable insights into the role of reflection in professional growth (Boud et al., 1985; Boud and Walker, 1998; Boud et al., 2006; Mooney Simmie, 2023), demonstrating how it connects with organisational change. These studies demonstrate that factors such as context, work environment and subjective experiences influence the effectiveness of reflection as a learning tool, further linking motivation to the success of transformative learning processes. In this context, the motivation to engage in reflective practices becomes a key driver of teachers' professional learning, shaping their continued development both within and beyond the school setting. This insight suggests that transformational professional learning transcends the acquisition of new skills; it reshapes how teachers approach knowledge and their motivation to participate in the education community (Boylan et al., 2023).

#### 2.3.4.1 Key components of transformational learning

Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory affirms that learning involves reshaping beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives to challenge existing assumptions, concepts not dissimilar to those aligned to the principles of professional learning. This process of transformation is closely linked to motivation, as teachers are driven to critically reflect on and adapt their perspectives. Liu et al. (2019) suggest that this deep engagement leads to a more sustained commitment to professional learning. Transformational learning, as described by Mezirow (2009), transcends the simple acquisition of knowledge; it enables individuals to engage in deep, meaningful learning that encourages critical reflection and a conscious understanding of their own lives. This perspective is echoed in the work of Netolicky's (2020) and Boylan et al. (2023) who highlight the importance of linking professional learning to larger social movements and addressing broader societal issues. In this context, earlier work by Shuler et al. (2017) and later by Boylan et al. (2023) highlight the importance of a shift in professional identity and practices for successful transformational professional learning. For this kind of learning to occur, professionals must not only change what they know but also how they see themselves and their roles (Nolan and Guo, 2022). This concept is in line with Netolicky's (2020) perspective, where professional learning is integrated into the framework of transformative learning. Similarly, Mooney Simmie (2023) outlines the key components of transformational professional learning as professional learning, reflective practice, adaptability and collaboration. In particular, reflective practice is a core aspect of motivation and is often embedded in master's programmes to encourage continuous development. Together, these elements are essential for enhancing teachers' expertise and improving the quality of education they provide. This perspective supports building professional capital by highlighting the importance of moving beyond performance measures, advocating for a deeper, transformative experience in which teachers engage with the broader cultural dimensions of



their practice. Drawing on the work of Mooney Simmie (2023), I believe that for this transformation to occur, teachers need to take ownership of their learning, where there is space for teachers to be engaged in learning and developing. Reclaiming teacher education as a transformative possibility, particularly in a world of uncertainty, requires further exploration of its holistic and cultural dimensions (Mooney Simmie, 2023).

### 2.3.5 Building professional capital for professional learning

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) claim that building professional capital for schoolteachers has become increasingly vital, particularly in the context of professional learning. They contend that professional capital is essential for teachers as it directly impacts their classroom effectiveness, student outcomes, and overall well-being. Melesse and Belay (2022) further support this perspective, affirming the role of motivation in shaping these perceptions and positioning within the teaching profession. Investing in professional learning and collaborative opportunities not only enhances teaching practices and keeps educators abreast of current research but also serves as a powerful motivator, enabling teachers to adapt to evolving educational initiatives (Demir, 2021).

#### 2.3.5.1 The role of confidence and motivation

Nolan and Molla (2017) examine the intricate connections between teachers' self-confidence, professional practice, competence and effectiveness. Their study explores how teachers' perceptions of their own competence and self-assurance in their roles affect their overall professional effectiveness, similar to earlier research by Ross (2011) who observed that teachers engaged in professional learning opportunities are more likely to report increased confidence in integrating new or evolving practices. These findings suggest that professional learning that equips teachers with new skills, knowledge, and insights, may build their confidence and, in turn, could reinforce their motivation to continue learning. Motivation, therefore, becomes a key factor in shaping their professional capital. Nolan and Molla (2017) further suggest that investing in teachers' professional learning can increase their confidence, effectiveness, collaboration, decision-making and autonomy. They assert that policymakers and school leaders should prioritise such investments to strengthen teacher agency, which in turn could empower and sustain teachers' motivation for professional learning.

Belay et al. (2022) examined the positive relationship between professional learning and job satisfaction, particularly through collaborative practice such as professional learning communities, peer mentoring, coaching and team building. Collaboration emerges as a dual-

force strategy: it facilitates professional learning and serves as a source of motivation, empowering teachers to engage more deeply in their learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This suggests that the factors influencing teachers' professional growth are directly linked to improving student outcomes, a concept consistently highlighted throughout the literature and central to the Welsh Government's initiative to engage teachers in a national master's programme and build professional capital.

Earlier findings from Hargreaves (2003) and later by Fullan (2015) explored the concept of professional capital for teachers. Hargreaves (2003) argued that teachers need autonomy to make decisions about their learning, an intrinsically motivating factor that encourages ownership of professional learning. In collaboration with Fullan (2012), Hargreaves further emphasised that creating a culture of professional learning encourages teachers to take risks, experiment, and reflect on their practices. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) proposed that a balanced combination of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital is essential for transforming education, highlighting the relevance of motivation in driving this process. Their work also stressed the need for policy and systemic changes that support teacher development, which I also recommend in chapter six based on the findings from my research. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) detailed the essential role of school leadership in creating an environment that encourages professional learning, which can motivate teachers to improve their practice. Fullan (2015) affirms that leaders must create the conditions that allow teachers to improve their practice, provide opportunities for ongoing learning, and create an environment that supports collaboration and continuous improvement. This broader collaborative network plays a key role in maintaining teachers' motivation and capacity for growth, reinforcing the notion that teacher learning cannot be achieved in isolation. Given Hargreaves' emphasis on promoting collaboration among teaching practitioners and Fullan's focus on effective leadership to facilitate professional growth, it was important that my research identified the support participants had within their practice while engaged in master's level study to gain insight into the influence it had on their motivation. To explore this further, the sub-theme of leading professional learning will now be discussed.

### 2.3.6 Leading professional learning

Harris et al. (2017) stress the significance of leadership in creating a culture of professional learning that supports and motivates teachers to engage in ongoing learning opportunities. They acknowledged that effective school leadership involves creating a shared vision, providing continuous support and resources for professional learning, and encouraging a culture of collaboration and shared learning among teachers. This notion was also recognised

in the work of scholars exploring professional learning communities (Stoll and Louis, 2007; Wood, 2007; Watson, 2014; Thomas, 2022) who affirm that teachers need the necessary support and opportunities to create an effective learning community, confirming that building a professional learning culture in schools is essential to ensure the continuous improvement of teacher motivation and learning practices.

Netolicky (2020) proposed a distributed leadership approach to professional learning, attesting to the importance of cultivating a culture of trust within educational institutions, using research and data in guiding teacher learning while challenging policies that prioritise competition over authentic growth and collaboration. This approach recognises how creating a supportive, collaborative environment is important for motivating teachers and promoting professional learning. Similarly, Killion and Harrison (2017) recognise the role of leadership in facilitating successful professional learning communities, a point echoed by Guskey (2020; 2021), who stressed that leaders could motivate teachers by creating a supportive culture that encourages continuous learning and empowers teachers to improve their practice. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) also emphasised that effective professional learning, driven by leadership, positively impacts school leadership, classroom practices and student learning, requiring a commitment to ongoing, personalised and supportive environments. This raises the question that if professional learning is at the heart of teacher development and community impact, how do school leaders ensure that teachers are supported in their professional learning. The literature does not explicitly address how school leaders can specifically support teachers' engagement in professional learning opportunities that take place outside their practice, such as a master's programme. If this support is not demonstrated in schools, it is important to explore the motivations of teachers who continue with their learning, further confirming the relevance of my research.

### 2.3.7 Professional learning summary

The exploration of professional learning revealed numerous studies detailing its substantial benefits for teachers. However, the evidence lacked specificity regarding the extent of support mechanisms within the workplace that could motivate and sustain teachers' engagement throughout the process. To address this gap, it is essential to lead a professional learning culture that ensures the presence of structured support, one that actively nurtures teacher learning. Such a collaborative approach can serve as a catalyst which instils confidence in their skills, teaching strategies and evolving professional identities. The connection between confidence and collaborative practices is identified in my findings presented in chapter five.

The motivations for engaging in professional learning, such as master's study, extend beyond individual factors. Research exploring professional learning for teachers identifies the significance of a collaborative approach to support learning. I have also reflected on this, as I have observed the communities that form during master's programmes, where students work in groups, exchange contact details and build relationships to support each other through their studies. Therefore, the concept of collaborative approaches and communities of learning are explored further.

## 2.4 Communities of Learning: togetherness and belonging

The process of learning within a community is inherently social, encompassing communication, conversation, the learning environment and the relationships that facilitate learning (Wenger-Traynor and Wenger-Traynor, 2020). In reviewing the literature on communities of learning, the concept of communities of practice (CoP) emerged as a prominent theme. Lave (1991) introduced the concept of CoP as a theoretical framework for the analysis of learning processes within social contexts. Building on Lave's work, Wenger's (1998) seminal text identified key factors that are essential to comprehend the role of communities in learning. This was achieved by expanding and refining the concept, introducing a more structured framework that includes elements such as domain, community, and practice (Wenger, 1998), which provides a more comprehensive and adaptable model for understanding how CoP operate and facilitate learning in various contexts. Wenger (2000) further emphasised the social nature of learning and the formation of communities where individuals engage collaboratively, leading to the construction of meaning and identity. This insight demonstrated the significance of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared connectedness in the formation of a community's identity. He presented a critical assessment of the traditional perspective of education as an individualistic endeavour and argued that collective interactions hold the potential to facilitate holistic learning experiences. Reflecting on this, it is clear that such collaborative interactions could also play an essential role in motivating teachers to engage more deeply in their professional learning. The shift from an individualistic to a collective approach not only enhances learning but can also foster a shared purpose and intrinsic motivation, which is vital for sustained engagement in professional learning. This notion resonates with my own experiences of leading the master's programme, building a community of learners has been integral. I have found that when students feel connected to their peers and to their tutors, they are more likely to engage actively in their studies, participate in discussions and collaborate on projects. This sense of belonging, I believe, has provided a supportive environment where students feel comfortable sharing ideas and seeking support and guidance when needed as identified in the findings of my research

(see 5.2.3). Virtue et al. (2019) strengthen this view, providing an in-depth analysis of the lasting impact of learning communities on students' academic achievements and sense of belonging. By employing a longitudinal approach, the authors found that participation in learning communities positively affects academic motivation, engagement and success. Their findings challenge the perception of learning communities as short-term interventions, emphasising their importance of building long-term development and sustaining motivation.

The importance of learning communities, both within and beyond the classroom, cannot be overstated. Laverick (2018) posits that the interconnectedness of learning communities is pivotal in nurturing student well-being and academic success. Both formal and informal interactions are proposed to facilitate the development of a sense of belonging throughout the learning journey. Firman et al. (2012: 10) also recognise the significance of supportive networks and collaborative environments, noting that students who felt 'confident and comfortable with their peers and tutors experienced increased motivation and ease of learning'. For schoolteachers engaged in a master's programme, sharing their experiences of their roles and their learning with likeminded peers can help their motivation by broadening their perspectives and refining their teaching practice, as identified in 5.2.3. This sense of camaraderie and shared purpose is also supported by Steyn (2017: 242) who avows that collaborative learning not only promotes teacher professional learning and empowerment but also leads to 'positive changes in teaching practices and student learning'. This highlights the critical role of collaboration in motivating teachers and driving meaningful professional learning, reinforcing the importance of building a supportive learning community.

Together with communities of practice, the concept of learning communities has also emerged in the literature on professional learning communities (PLCs) (Stoll and Louis, 2007) and learning organisations (LOs) (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Senge, 1990), which later evolved as schools as learning organisations (SLOs) (Senge, 2000). Kools and Stoll (2016) state that there is no articulated definition of SLOs. However, Pedler et al. (1989: 1) define a LO as 'an organisation that facilitates the learning of all its members and continually transforms itself', while similarly, Watkins and Marsick (1996: 8) describe it as 'one that learns continuously and transforms itself'. By emphasising the transformative nature of learning in schools as a cultural imperative, it becomes apparent that the essence of a LO lies in its ability to facilitate the continuous development and adaptation of all its members. However, Kools and Stoll (2016) and Harris et al. (2022) assert that there is no clear guidance on how to operationalise these dimensions and strategies for schools, leaders, and teachers to transform their school into a learning organisation. Nevertheless, they suggest that schools that become LO's are better equipped to respond to changes in the learning environment (Harris et al., 2022). Harris et al.

(2022) also emphasise the importance of the individual, team, and organisational learning, and how personal beliefs, values and motivation influence this.

Across the literature on CoL, CoP, PLCs, and SLOs, the notion of cultivating continuous learning and collaboration is key to enhancing teachers' learning and development, which in turn can support teacher motivation and engagement in professional growth. Engagement in a master's programme can potentially provide teachers with valuable guidance and support in developing the essential skills and knowledge required for effective learning. By addressing critical 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions, the programme can help teachers to gain a deeper understanding of their roles and responsibilities, enabling them to contribute to creating a positive learning organisation.

In consideration of collaboration and building a community of learning, exploring social learning theory will strengthen the relevance of building a learning culture. The concept of social learning is of particular importance when considering a teacher's engagement and motivation for learning as it emphasises the value of observing and interacting with peers, reflecting on practice, and integrating new knowledge through collaborative and experiential learning. These principles will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

#### 2.4.1 Social learning theory

The seminal work of Dollard and Miller (1945) proposed that human behaviour is learned through imitation, outlining four principles of learning: drive, responses, cues and reward. They found that an initial drive to learn is essential and that imitation is significantly influenced by reinforcement, where behaviours are rewarded or lead to positive outcomes. They state that only under these circumstances are individuals more likely to imitate such behaviours. Building on this foundation, Bandura's (1977b) social learning theory identifies the cognitive and self-regulated influences of learning. He asserts that direct experiences can 'occur on a vicarious basis through observation of other people's behaviour and its consequences for them' (Bandura, 1977b: 2). This connection reinforces the idea that learning is not solely based on direct experiences but can also be shaped by the experiences of others. Bennett (2017) posits that the social environment serves as a platform for observing, interacting, and modelling behaviours, thereby influencing, and potentially redirecting an individual's motivation for learning.

It is worth highlighting here that Wenger (2000: 227-228) claims that the success of an institution, such as a school, depends on its ability to transform into a social learning system.

Wenger argues that in order to embed a social learning system it is important for individuals to feel a sense of belonging and identifies three modes of belonging which are 'engagement, imagination, and alignment'. This suggests that these modes of learning coexist within every social learning system and affirming that organisations should actively cultivate these modes to facilitate comprehensive collective and collaborative learning.

Building on Wenger's initial thinking, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) explored the influence of value creation in social learning spaces. They suggest that through open dialogue, individuals can share their experiences and collaborate to not only learn from the collective sharing of knowledge but also contribute to the growth of the community. Value creation aligns with an individual's sense of ownership and identity within their community, a social space to receive feedback from their peers and experts (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020). Recognising the progress made enhances the perceived value of their learning efforts, which, in turn, motivates individuals to engage more deeply in the learning process. Within this social nature of learning, individuals can apply what they have learned to the real-world context and see tangible results.

#### 2.4.2 Collaborative learning

Vangieken et al. (2015) affirm that when teachers feel valued and supported, they are more likely to dedicate the necessary time, energy, and resources to their professional learning. This sense of value is important as it creates a culture of support that allows teachers to engage in productive collaboration. Research by Fransson and Norman (2021) further demonstrates that such a culture not only encourages teachers to share their knowledge and skills but also contributes to creating a positive and supportive learning environment for both them and their students. Collaborative learning can help teachers to feel valued and supported, which in turn builds their confidence and motivates them to embrace innovative ideas and approaches for improving their practice (De Jong et al., 2019). However, the literature lacks clarity on the origins of this sense of value; it is unclear whether it arises from their teaching practice or is reinforced within the learning community developed during professional learning opportunities, such as a master's programme. The concept of value emerged in my research findings and will be discussed in chapters five and six.

Of particular relevance to my research, Durksen et al. (2017) explored the relationship between motivation and professional learning, and their findings underlined the critical role of collaborative learning. Collaborative learning emerged as the most important type of professional learning. While this is not a new notion, as previous studies (Hargreaves and

Fullan, 2012; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2013; Beauchamp et al., 2014; Watt et al., 2014; Kachchhap and Horo, 2021) have also acknowledged the significance of collaboration in professional learning, Durksen et al. (2017) stress the importance of providing teachers with sufficient time and space for reflection. This allows for effective sharing of practices and enhances teachers' well-being, aligning with the findings of Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) as noted above. By participating in collaborative opportunities, teachers are driven to establish meaningful connections with their peers, which can encourage a sense of belonging and support to enhance their motivation for professional learning and growth. Durksen et al. (2017) found that effective teacher-learning programmes are built on collaborative learning experiences paired with opportunities for reflective practice. This corresponds with the student engagement framework developed by Kahu and Nelson (2018), which identifies several factors influencing student engagement in their learning. These factors include self-efficacy, emotions, belonging, and overall well-being. Through their cultural lens, Kahu and Nelson (2018) argue that the four psychosocial aspects are critical for student engagement and success, as these factors directly influence students' motivation to actively participate in their learning and achieve their goals.

Literature exploring teacher collaboration (Kelchtermans, 2006; Doppenberg, et al., 2012; Vangrieken et al., 2015; Van Gasse, et al., 2016; Hargreaves and O'Connor, 2017) addresses the influence of collaborative learning while also recognising the challenges and complexities, such as power dynamics, time constraints, and external pressures which can significantly affect teacher motivation. Kelchtermans (2006) suggests that promoting collaboration and collegiality must be navigated within the context of organisational structures and cultural frameworks. He contends that a comprehensive understanding of collaboration at the school level requires integrating cultural and micro-political perspectives, which will be discussed next.

#### 2.4.3 A culture of learning

The concept of culture is not merely a static set of traditions and customs that have been inherited from one generation to the next; rather, it is a dynamic and evolving phenomenon (Varnum and Grossmann, 2017). Mollo (2023) describes culture as an integral aspect of our existence, influencing the way we think, communicate, and behave. Affirming that a culture encompasses an individual's societal norms, values, beliefs, and behaviours, collectively influencing the formation of identity, and the way in which the individual perceives and interacts with the world, which recognises how culture affects both personal and professional lives. In



the context of education and motivation, culture exerts an influence on each and every aspect of the teaching and learning process.

From a macro perspective, learning is viewed by policymakers globally as a pivotal driver of economic growth, social advancement, and individual well-being (Chernyshenko et al., 2018). As recognised in chapter one, the Welsh Government is making a considerable investment in educational resources to equip teachers with the necessary skills to address future challenges effectively, and to maintain the competitiveness of the Welsh teaching workforce (Williams, 2020). From an institutional perspective, learning is at the core of practice, and at this micro level, teachers play a crucial role in supporting and guiding students. However, teachers are also expected to exemplify a lifelong learning ethos by engaging in their own ongoing professional learning (Evans et al., 2022). At the micro level, building a culture that supports teachers' engagement with learning opportunities is vital, and I believe this has significant implications for those making decisions at the macro level as discussed in chapter six.

The importance of building a culture of learning has been recognised a key component of effective teaching practice. Goh (2021) posits that establishing a culture of learning can facilitate a positive attitude toward learning, encouraging risk-taking and promoting continuous improvement. Furthermore, she addresses the role of leaders and organisations in establishing and maintaining a robust learning culture. This requires clear expectations, the development and dissemination of resources, and the cultivation of a constructive learning environment. In this context, two distinct micro-perspectives emerge when working with master's students who are schoolteachers. The initial perspective is focused on the schoolteacher and their learning environment emphasising the importance of creating a supportive and engaging space that enables reflection, informed decision-making and continuous professional learning and development. The second perspective is based on the assumption that teachers are learners in their own right. This perspective acknowledges the significance of teachers engaging in continuous learning and development in order to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. This may involve engagement in professional learning opportunities, such as a Master of Education programme, with the objective of deepening their understanding of their subject area, acquiring new pedagogical insights and improving their overall teaching practice.

Hodkinson (2005) and subsequently Hodkinson et al. (2007) propose a cultural approach to learning viewing culture as a product of human activity. They suggest that culture emerges from the interactions and communications within social practices, influencing the learning experiences of individuals engaged in these practices. When considering culture as a social

practice, the focus tends to be on the agency of individuals, as discussed earlier. However, the concept of a learning culture differs from that of a learning site (Bada et al., 2012). The focus here is on the processes through which individuals learn and are shaped by their engagement with others in social practices. This also coincides with how learning in social spaces is valued (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020).

The concept of a learning culture allows us to rethink the connection between the teacher, the schools and the university in relational terms. The learning of a teacher as a student is shaped by factors within and beyond the confines of a particular learning site, contingent on their location within and between these sites at any given point in time and space. In essence, the two learning cultures are not mutually exclusive, but rather, they overlap.

Research has demonstrated that the micro-perspective is essential for creating a culture of learning within schools and in teacher learning (Harris, 2016). Teachers who feel supported and empowered in their learning are more likely to be effective in their practice and to inspire their students to become lifelong learners. Schools that prioritise ongoing learning for their teachers are more likely to create a positive learning environment for their students, which can lead to improved academic outcomes and greater student engagement, a concept fundamental in the educational changes currently taking place in Wales. Personal epistemologies, as discussed by Hofer (2006) and later by Erixon and Hansson (2022), refer to individuals' beliefs and values about knowledge and learning. These beliefs and values influence how individuals approach learning and how they make sense of their experiences. In a culture of learning, individuals are encouraged to reflect on and challenge their personal epistemologies, leading to deeper learning, growth, well-being and increased motivation for learning (Billet, 2009). By encouraging and reinforcing a supportive environment where teachers can explore their beliefs and values, a culture of learning can nurture both personal and professional well-being as discussed next.

## 2.5 Well-being: theories and the learning process

The concept of well-being, particularly teacher well-being, is intricate and multifaceted. To provide a focused exploration, this section will explore theoretical concepts of well-being relevant to my research. By drawing on these theories and considering the complexities of well-being for teachers, in this section I will explore the role of well-being in postgraduate study, followed by an analysis of teacher self-efficacy and its influence on teacher motivation. Within this theme, I will also consider the well-being of teachers following the Covid-19 pandemic as my research was conducted following participants experience of studying during

this period. Finally, there is a summary of the key aspects identified in this theme, highlighting their significance and implications.

### 2.5.1 Brief overview of theories of well-being

When exploring well-being in general, Ereaut and Whiting (2008: 7) state that ‘the meaning of well-being is not fixed – it cannot be...what it means at any one time depends on the weight given at the time to different philosophical traditions, world views and systems of knowledge’. This is further emphasised when examining the multidimensional nature of well-being, which has been approached from various theoretical perspectives scholars. These include holistic well-being (Leo et al., 2019; Steele, 2020), a hierarchical model (Diener et al., 2009), a relational model (White and Jha, 2023), an interpersonal neurobiological model (Siegel, 2016) and the ecological framework (McCallum, 2020). Each of these frameworks offers a unique lens through which well-being can be understood, contributing to a broader and more diverse conceptualisation of the concept. In contrast, an earlier notion of well-being as an individual concept, presented by Anning and Edwards (2006: 55), suggests that it is ‘something one person has or lacks independently of the well-being of other individuals, family or community’. This view implies that well-being is subjective and intrinsic to the individual, not directly influenced by others’ well-being, highlighting a more isolated interpretation of well-being. Nonetheless, Elliott et al. (2022) advocate for a broader investigation into the influence of social components, emphasising the role of group culture, values, and the impact of external factors in shaping well-being. They suggest developing systematic measures of well-being that can capture both internal and external dimensions, enabling a more nuanced understanding of how others influence individual well-being. In this context, the authors sought to identify the social resources that individuals have access to and the social worlds in which they live. A similar concept is presented later in this chapter by Hobfoll (1998) when considering Conservation of Resource (CoR) theory. These perspectives are particularly relevant when examining the relationship between a teacher’s well-being and their motivation for professional learning. While learning may be viewed as an individual pursuit, the importance of collaboration with colleagues and building a sense of belonging is inherently collective. To gain a deeper understanding of well-being, O’Brien and Guiney (2021: 343) suggest that it is necessary to recognise how it ‘plays out in our world’. The authors posit that an individual’s well-being is profoundly shaped by their capacity to understand themselves and this can be approached from a relational perspective, encompassing concepts addressed earlier such as social support, community and a sense of belonging. Alternatively, it can be approached from a singular perspective, encompassing concepts such as personal

achievements, health and autonomy. This aligns to key concepts raised in SDT and can highlight the perceived benefits that motivate schoolteachers' engagement in master's study.

In consideration of perceived benefits, Lopez (2013) placed emphasis on the role of subjective interpretations and personal meanings in shaping well-being. He proposed that the perception of personal benefits derived from one's experiences, relationships, and activities which serve to enhance well-being, and stated that even unfavourable experiences can contribute to well-being if they are perceived as beneficial in some way. It is noteworthy that a participant in my research disclosed how their fear of failure served as a motivating factor in their learning process. This observation emphasises the importance of considering the emotional and reflective aspect of this point, the fear driving their motivation to succeed in their learning. In examining the influence of emotions on motivation, Fredrickson (1998) identified that positive emotions such as joy, contentment and gratitude exert a broad impact on cognition and conduct, increasing enhanced creativity, adaptability and resilience. This process has the potential to create a virtuous cycle of well-being by strengthening personal capacities and nurturing positive relationships. However, as my participant indicated, it is evident that certain challenges may arise with regard to teacher well-being. This issue will be explored in more detail in the context of the next sub-theme 2.5.2.

Given the extensive body of literature and theories surrounding well-being, my research has focused on the concepts that are most relevant to the topic: Conservation of Resource Theory (COR) and Social Support Theory (SST). Both theories position themselves as relevant frameworks for understanding and enhancing teacher well-being in professional learning contexts. The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory emphasises the importance of teachers investing in valuable resources, such as knowledge and skills, while recognising the potential stressors and resource depletion associated with professional learning. Social Support Theory (SST) on the other hand identifies the pivotal role of social relationships in motivating teachers, emphasising the impact of encouragement, validation, and coping mechanisms within supportive networks. Both COR and SST provide a framework through which to examine the interaction between individual resource considerations and the influence of social support structures, offering practical insights into teacher motivation when engaged in a master's programme.

#### 2.5.1.1 Conservation of Resource Theory (COR)

COR theory, developed by Hobfoll (1998), is a social psychological framework explaining how individuals manage their physical, psychological and social resources. As signified in section

5.1.3 (see chapter five), COR theory posits that individuals have limited resources, such as time, energy, and social support, which must be managed effectively to maintain well-being and achieve goals. Evers et al. (2016) acknowledge that, when individuals face threats to their resources, they experience stress and may become overwhelmed. However, when individuals feel that their resources, such as their knowledge acquisition, are being preserved and enhanced, they are more likely to feel motivated, satisfied and fulfilled (Hobfoll, 2001; Granziera et al., 2021).

COR theory has been applied to a variety of contexts, including work, family life, and health, and has been found to have important implications for individual well-being, performance and stress. Teaching, as a highly stressful profession, presents unique challenges, with Harmsen et al. (2018: 627) identifying key stress factors such as 'high psychological demands' and 'negative social aspects'. They recommend reducing task demands to 'minimise the impact on teaching behaviour and/or attrition' (Harmsen et al., 2018: 638). This raised the question of whether engaging in a master's programme would add to the already demanding role of a schoolteacher, and if so, how can this be managed and mitigated to motivate and support their professional learning.

#### 2.5.1.2 Social Support Theory

Social Support Theory (SST), developed by Cohen and Wills (1985), emphasises the significance of social relationships and support for an individual's well-being. The theory proposes that having positive and supportive relationships with others can provide individuals with a sense of security, comfort and belonging, acting as a protective factor against the adverse effects of stress. As observed in Social Learning Theory, Rotter (1954) acknowledged that social support can manifest in various forms, including emotional, informational and tangible support. Research by Bolenz et al. (2017) and Turner et al. (2022) also highlights the influence of social support on well-being and health. These studies suggest that the type and quality of support can be crucial, as strong social support systems not only help with stress management but also enhance learning and empower the pursuit of personal and professional aspirations. On reflection, this has clear implications for teachers who are engaged in a master's programme, where social support can motivate sustained commitment by helping them to cope with challenges and to achieve their educational and professional goals.

In terms of teacher learning and support, SST aims to reduce feelings of isolation and stress by helping teachers to manage their workload, navigate challenging situations and by promoting their overall well-being. This is consistent with findings identified earlier in this

literature review, which indicated that supportive relationships offer a secure environment for constructive feedback and reflective practice. Nurturing connections and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and resources can contribute to the creation of a more engaged, motivated and effective teaching community. Understanding teacher well-being is particularly relevant for my research, as it provides critical insights into the factors that motivate teachers to engage in professional learning, especially in the context of postgraduate study. Exploring well-being concepts can help to identify how teachers' emotional, social and psychological needs influence their commitment to professional learning and their ability to thrive in challenging academic environments. Although this sub-theme has considered the well-being of teachers, the next sub-theme will explore the role in relation to the learning process.

### 2.5.2 The role of teacher well-being in the learning process

Following a consideration of well-being in general, it is important to define what is meant by teacher well-being. Viac and Fraser (2020:18) proposed a fundamental definition of teacher well-being as follows: 'Teachers' responses to the cognitive, emotional, health and social conditions pertaining to their work and their profession.' While this definition is broad, it serves as an appropriate starting point for exploring schoolteacher well-being in my research, as engaging in professional learning opportunities can help with the cognitive aspect of teacher well-being.

In the context of professional learning, teacher well-being is an important motivational factor influencing engagement in and success with further study. Research by Gu and Day (2013) and Collie (2020) indicate that when teachers are in good health and feel supported in their professional learning and development, they are more likely to maintain their motivation to learn, implement innovative teaching methods, and provide positive outcomes for their students, also discussed in teacher motivation in section 2.2.2 of this literature review. Collie et al. (2017) highlight the difficulties teachers face in managing their workload and balancing work and personal life. Given the increasing pressures on teachers, and the growing concern about their health and well-being, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) found a positive link between job satisfaction and teacher well-being, similar to Day et al. (2020), who also found that job satisfaction is associated with better mental health, higher levels of motivation, and improved teacher-student relationships. A healthy work-life balance is critical for teacher well-being, as it allows teachers to engage in non-work-related activities that support their physical and mental health (Ferguson et al., 2022). Maintaining this balance is important for sustaining motivation, as it helps teachers preserve energy and enthusiasm for both their professional and personal commitments.

Discourse on teacher well-being is informed by a range of theoretical frameworks, most notably the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2017) and Demerouti et al. (2019). This occupational stress model explores how job demands and resources influence employee well-being and performance and considers work pressures, emotional demands and physical workload. Demerouti et al. (2019) discuss key factors influencing teacher well-being, including role conflict, social support, autonomy and feedback. This emphasises the role of job demands and resources in influencing teacher well-being and motivation. In light of these findings, Tummers and Bakker (2021) highlight the role of leadership in the JD-R model, emphasising its capacity to shape employee well-being and performance. They propose that effective leadership serves as a crucial resource, whereas ineffective leadership can precipitate significant stressors for employees. In light of the aforementioned factors, I draw on Day and Gu's (2014) framework of teacher well-being, which includes personal, professional, and organisational aspects. Their framework identifies six dimensions of teacher well-being: physical health, emotional health, work engagement, job satisfaction, resilience and professional learning. However, there is a gap in research on how engaging in professional learning opportunities, particularly within the context of a Master of Education programme, impacts teachers' mental health, overall well-being and motivation. Understanding this connection is important, as positive well-being can enhance teachers' motivation to engage in professional learning and improve teaching practice.

The research reviewed here has demonstrated a complex relationship between organisational support, teacher motivation, professional learning and well-being, identifying these as interrelated yet distinct domains. However, a significant gap remains in identifying the practical implications and supportive mechanisms needed to fully integrate these within professional learning contexts. This integration is necessary, not only for enhancing motivation for professional learning but also for understanding the influence of teachers' families, colleagues, peers and students on the learning process. By supporting and enhancing teachers' motivation, there may be opportunities to enrich learning experiences, which could positively impact teachers, students and the wider community.

#### 2.5.2.1 Personal support networks

Beyond the classroom, focusing on teachers as parents or carers has considerable implications for their well-being. Family support, defined by Dunst (2023) as an informal social support network from a spouse, partner, parents, children, relatives or friends, has been identified as a predictor of teacher well-being. Fiorilli et al. (2019a) found that teachers who

identified high levels of family support were less likely to experience stress, burnout and depression. Although research on teachers and their personal social networks is limited, Turner et al. (2022) examine the concept of social support and its benefits in the workplace. However, social support extends beyond the workplace, with emotional support from family and friends influencing the emotional atmosphere at home (Fiorilli et al., 2019a; Fiorilli et al. 2019b). Notably, there is limited research on how the family then influences teacher engagement in professional learning opportunities, such as the master's programme. More research is needed here as identified in the recommendation for future research in chapter six.

Fiorilli's (2019a: 2019b) studies suggest that teachers receive substantial support from their families, which can help to mitigate teacher burnout, which in turn affects their job satisfaction. However, it is important to acknowledge that the relationship between teacher well-being and family dynamics is complex, as individual circumstances will vary. It can be concluded that the creation of a supportive environment within schools and the recognition of the interconnectivity of professional and personal lives can contribute to enhanced teacher well-being and motivation for learning. This, in turn, could have a positive impact on teachers and their families, as teachers who feel supported and balanced are more likely to thrive as learners themselves, engaging more effectively in professional learning opportunities. The concept of teacher well-being in relation to their role as learner will now be explored in more detail.

#### 2.5.2.2 Teacher well-being as learner

The notion of teacher well-being in the role of a learner suggests that teachers, like their students, are engaged in a process of learning and professional development, for which they require support and resources (Viac and Fraser, 2020). This perspective recognises that teachers, who are responsible for facilitating student learning, must also continue to develop their own skills and knowledge to deliver quality education effectively. McCallum (2021) suggests that teachers who engage in continuous professional learning and have opportunities to learn and grow in their roles report higher levels of job satisfaction and improved student outcomes. Furthermore, investing in teacher well-being as a learner, has been shown to improve teacher retention rates, reduce teacher burnout, and improve overall school climate (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Likewise, Viac and Fraser (2020: 38) affirm that a qualified teaching workforce 'helps to effectively develop students' learning' and that 'the certification, the type of qualification, and the knowledge and skills teachers have matter for student learning'. The authors also note the relevance of social networks in this process.



Several studies have examined the impact of postgraduate learning on teacher well-being, with mixed results. For example, a study by Müller et al. (2020) found that participation in postgraduate studies was associated with increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, and motivation. Similarly, Thomas (2022) claimed that teachers who pursued postgraduate study reported increased job satisfaction and a greater sense of achievement. However, other studies have reported negative effects on teacher well-being, such as increased stress, anxiety, and workload when balancing their studies with their teaching and personal responsibilities (Klassen et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2015). Woore et al. (2020: 103) found that this is a 'complex web of personal and contextual factors' at play, whereby the provision of support mechanisms between schools, universities, and policymakers is required to facilitate teacher learning.

Schools play a significant role in motivating and encouraging teacher learning and can advocate for the development of a research culture. Universities also contribute by supporting the creation of research communities, which can help to 'bridge the gap' (Woore et al., 2020: 103). Additionally, policymakers can address potential barriers such as funding constraints and accountability measures, which may fail to adequately account for the critical role of school support in enabling teachers to engage in research, a point identified in the findings of my research, discussed in chapter five.

Having explored teacher well-being as learners, when starting my research into the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in a Master of Education programme, teachers and schools were significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This created unprecedented challenges for practitioners around the world, leading to increased stress and uncertainty. The next section will briefly examine these effects.

#### 2.5.2.3 Teacher and student well-being during Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic had a profound impact on education systems globally, leading to major disruptions to teaching and learning. Teachers had to quickly adapt to new teaching modalities, remote learning and innovative forms of student engagement, which greatly affected their well-being. Research by Pressley (2021), Pressley et al. (2021), Kim and Asbury (2020) and Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2021) found that teachers experienced higher levels of stress, anxiety and burnout during the pandemic, and reported that teachers described how the increased level of job demands, emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation significantly impacted their mental health and well-being.

The closure of schools and universities, necessitated a rapid shift to remote learning, presenting numerous challenges. These included difficulties with student engagement, adopting new learning methods and limited access to some learning resources (Daniel, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Daniel (2020) and Nguyen et al. (2021) recognised that the pandemic also had a significant impact on student motivation, with students across all levels of learning reporting a lack of motivation and engagement in their studies and their overall experience. Nevertheless, a number of factors must be taken into account, including whether students were full-time or part-time learners. With regard to the participants in my research, they are all full-time teachers engaged in part-time master's studies.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Nasr (2020) discovered that many teachers responded proactively by adapting their instructional and assessment techniques to the demands of remote education. While the pandemic presented considerable uncertainty, it also presented opportunities for teachers to engage in their learning and personal development. As they navigated new teaching methods, developed new skills and gained confidence in their ability to overcome challenges, their self-efficacy grew (Nasr, 2020). This leads into the next sub-theme of teacher self-efficacy.

### 2.5.3 Teacher self-efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy refers to the belief that a teacher has in their ability and confidence to positively influence students' learning outcomes, even in challenging situations (Bandura, 1977a; Zee and Koomen, 2016). According to Bandura's (1977b) work on self-efficacy, he affirmed the vital role it plays in human behaviour, affecting motivation, goal setting, and the ability to overcome obstacles. A key link between self-efficacy and motivation is evident, as self-efficacy determines how motivated individuals are to pursue and achieve their goals. Klassen and Tze (2014) assert that teachers are often intrinsically motivated by their interest and enjoyment of a specific task, rather than motivated by external rewards or pressures. Self-efficacy can also influence the type of goals that individuals set and the strategies they use to achieve them. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more likely to set mastery goals, or goals focused on learning and improvement, rather than performance goals, which focus on achieving a specific outcome (Klassen et al., 2012; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2014). As teacher self-efficacy is associated with teacher enthusiasm, job satisfaction, and instructional quality (Henson, 2002; Gordon et al., 2023), it can be reasonably concluded that teachers who have high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to experiment with new teaching strategies, take on new roles, and engage in professional learning opportunities (Lazarides and Warner, 2020). Teachers with a robust sense of self-efficacy are also prone to

demonstrate resilience when confronted with challenges with Klassen et al. (2014) and Martin and Mulvihill (2019) identifying resilience as a means by which teachers can persevere in their efforts to enhance student outcomes. Perera et al. (2019) affirm that higher teacher self-efficacy is associated with increased confidence in managing challenges such as interactions with parents or guardians, unexpected classroom situations, and meeting diverse student needs. This can lead to a sense of control and efficacy in their work, which is a key component of well-being (Bandura, 2001; Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001). However, when teachers experience low levels of self-efficacy, they may be more susceptible to negative emotions, such as anxiety, stress, and burnout, as previously identified (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2014). When teachers experience negative emotions, it can have a detrimental impact on their confidence in their teaching abilities potentially leading to a self-perpetuating cycle where negativity leads to a reduction in self-efficacy, which in turn can further exacerbate negative emotions (Burić and Macuka, 2018).

Self-efficacy is also an important factor in determining teacher motivation to engage in professional learning, which is central to this research. Educational interventions aimed at enhancing teacher self-efficacy can have a positive impact on teacher engagement, which according to Barni et al. (2019), can yield benefits for both teachers and their students. Teachers engaged in postgraduate study, such as a master's programme, require a high level of self-efficacy to navigate the academic and personal challenges involved, as discussed in chapter five. This includes skills in critical thinking and self-directed learning.

## 2.6 Conclusion

In reviewing the interrelated concepts discussed in the literature and exploration of a range of key theories relevant to my research (see Appendix C), consistent references to the links between motivation, professional learning, communities of learning and well-being emerged. Motivation, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, is a central concept linking these areas. Definitions of teacher motivation and professional learning across studies showed that multiple factors significantly influenced teacher learning which raised relevant questions for my research and subsequently informed the RQs.

Research consistently showed that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors played a key role in teachers' motivation to learn (Richardson et al., 2014; Brandon and Derrington, 2019; Hattie et al., 2020), with a strong sense of efficacy being a critical element. The literature also recognised that support from a wider community of learning is part of this process and that teachers are more likely to devote the necessary time, energy, and resources to their

learning when they feel valued and supported. The sense of value can boost teacher confidence, allowing them to experiment with new approaches, take risks, and develop strategies to enhance their practice (Jones et al., 2018). Through value and support comes collaboration, leading to sharing of knowledge and skills to create a positive and supportive learning environment for all teachers and students. Durksen et al. (2017) consider these factors, highlighting that the most important types of learning are those that involve collaboration.

Although research (Beauchamp et al., 2014; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012; Watt et al., 2014) recognised the importance of collaboration in professional learning, Durksen et al. (2017) also emphasise that teachers need the time and space to reflect in order to engage effectively. This concept, discussed further in chapter five and six, acknowledges that meaningful professional learning requires both collaboration and dedicated time for reflection and development. The literature suggests that when schools prioritise these conditions, they create environments where teachers feel supported in their workplace, contributing to their well-being. Making important connections with others provides a sense of belonging and provides the necessary support network to sustain motivation and professional growth. This notion is further discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

In the quotation identified at the beginning of this chapter, Gordon (2024) highlights critical elements of professional learning for teachers, emphasising the need for structured and supported approaches. Gordon (2024) explains that effective professional learning requires focus, adequate resourcing and recognition of its value. By advocating and reinforcing teacher professional learning, school leaders can inspire and promote a culture of motivation and continuous improvement. However, the success of such initiatives depends on the consistent application of these principles in the workplace rather than their mere recognition in theory, as identified in chapter five and discussed in chapter six.

This literature review has explored the relationships between motivation, professional learning, communities of learning, and teacher well-being, emphasising the importance of teacher professional learning in enhancing teaching practice. However, the extant literature has not fully addressed the individual motivations that drive teachers to pursue master's-level study and raised many questions for my research. This presented a gap in the current research which I aimed to address.

### 2.6.1 Questions raised for my research

The literature review identified a number of key questions central to my research, particularly in the areas of teacher motivation, professional learning, support networks and teacher well-being. These questions highlighted significant gaps in understanding how factors such as support, school culture and teacher identity influence motivation and engagement in professional learning in a Master of Education programme. In addition to the questions identified earlier in the literature review, the following questions were also raised:

- To what extent does a master's programme motivate schoolteachers in their personal and professional learning?
- How does undertaking a master's programme influence a schoolteacher's development as a practitioner?
- How are schoolteachers supported in their workplace when engaged with master's study?

In order to address the questions highlighted in the literature, the semi-structured interview questions were developed from the insights gained. This approach allowed for a focused exploration of how schoolteachers define motivation, the barriers they face, and the role of personal and professional support in sustaining engagement throughout their studies. The research aims to contribute to a deeper insight of what motivates schoolteachers and how this influences their engagement with master's study by addressing these gaps in the literature.

The next chapter outlines the research methodology, including the data collection methods, sample and ethical considerations, demonstrating how these elements were designed to address the MRQ and RQs. Following this, the data analysis process will be presented in chapter four, detailing the approach taken to interpret the data and identify key themes.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods

This chapter outlines the methodological approach employed in my research. It begins by revisiting the main research question (MRQ) and purpose introduced in chapter one, providing essential context for the methodological decisions, and justifying the selection of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) informed approaches as the most appropriate methodology. This is followed by an introduction to the conceptual framework that informed the research, with a discussion of its relevance and application. The principles of IPA are then examined, including its philosophical underpinnings, the rationale for adopting it as my research methodology, and consideration of alternative methodologies. This is followed by an analysis of the research sample, including a detailed justification of the participant recruitment and selection processes, highlighting how these decisions align with the MRQ of my research. I then present a critical examination of the data collection methods, followed by a discussion of the ethical practices embedded throughout the research process. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the strategies employed to ensure quality throughout my research. The data analysis process is explained in-depth in chapter four.

### 3.1 Main research question and purpose

The MRQ for my research was to explore the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in Master of Education programme in Wales. The purpose of my research was fourfold: first, to enable schoolteachers to reflect on the motivations that led them to pursue and sustain their engagement in the programme; second, to gain insight into the diverse perspectives of schoolteachers currently engaged in master's-level study; third, to explore the support structures that facilitate their success within the programme; and finally, to use these findings to inform recommendations for future research and educational practice and policy. The subsidiary research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What research has been conducted on the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in master's programmes?

RQ2: What are the motivations that influence schoolteachers' decisions to engage in a Master of Education programme?

RQ3: What motivating factors influence schoolteacher's decisions to continue with their master's level studies?

RQ4: What personal and professional support motivates schoolteachers when they are engaged in a Master of Education programme?

RQ5: What are the strengths and limitations of the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in a master's programme?

Building on my MRQ and RQs, I developed a conceptual framework informed by key themes from the literature. Drawing on the principles of IPA, this framework allowed me to systematically explore how these interconnected concepts shape the subjective meanings and personal interpretations of teachers' experiences through the theoretical lens of SDT. The conceptual framework will be discussed next.

## 3.2 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework, which draws on key concepts and relationships that informed my research, guided both the research process and the presentation of findings (Ravitch and Riggan, 2017). The framework was informed by key concepts of motivation, professional learning, communities of learning and well-being, relevant to the MRQ and RQs. In developing a conceptual framework for exploring schoolteacher motivation, self-determination theory (SDT) served as a foundational theoretical lens that unifies these four concepts, showing how they interconnect and contribute to overall motivation for teacher learning. SDT has enabled me to develop a holistic understanding of how these elements interact to support teacher learning and their well-being.

As discussed in chapter two, Deci and Ryan (1985) proposed that motivation is driven by the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs. In the context of teachers' professional learning, this was influenced by three key factors: the teachers' experiences of self-directed learning (autonomy), their sense of confidence and effectiveness in their roles (competence), and the connections they established within communities of learning (relatedness), therefore, offering a valuable perspective on the exploration of teacher motivation. This research identified the challenges and opportunities encountered by teachers while pursuing master's level study and the motivational influences that shaped their experiences and engagement during their studies, as discussed in chapters five and six. By situating my conceptual framework within SDT, I present a coherent, theoretically informed argument in highlighting the significance of autonomy, competence and relatedness in schoolteachers' motivation to engage in professional learning.

In order to enhance the clarity and accessibility of the conceptual framework, I have created a visual representation which builds on Figure 1 introduced in chapter two. Figure 2 below serves two purposes; firstly, its aim is to simplify the complex relationships between concepts;

and secondly, it highlights key components that are relevant to this IPA research. Therefore, the figure provides a valuable visual representation of a structured approach to the interconnectivity of concepts within the context of relevance, competence and autonomy.

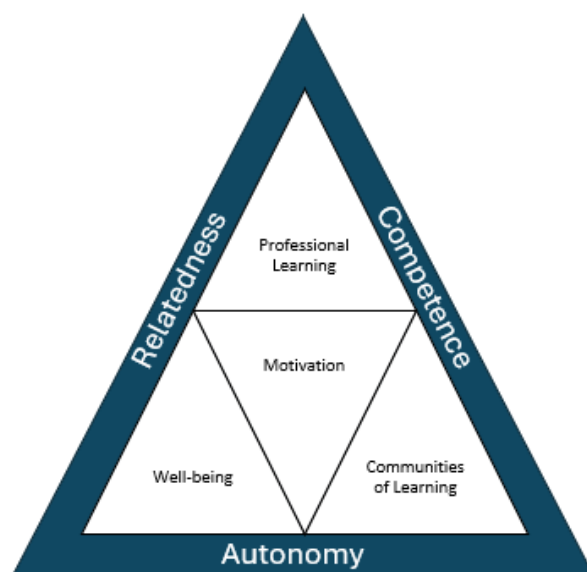


Figure 2: The conceptual framework: Motivation, Professional Learning, Communities of Learning and Well-being aligned with SDT principles of Relatedness, Competence and Autonomy.

The figure reinforces the idea that teachers' motivations and experiences are not isolated phenomena; rather, they are situated within a complex network of influences that shape their professional practice. This understanding aligns with my ontological and epistemological assumptions which emphasise the interconnection between individual experiences and the influence of contextual factors as discussed next.

### 3.3 The philosophical foundations

My ontological position is situated within a constructivist paradigm, viewing reality as a dynamic and fluid construct, formed through the complex interactions of individuals within their distinctive social and cultural contexts (Ignacio and Paras, 2022). In the context of my research, it became evident that each schoolteacher's engagement with master's level study is shaped by the unique influences of their personal and professional environments, as recognised in chapter five. This perspective reflects the idea that there are multiple, equally valid realities, each constructed by the individual's unique position within broader sociocultural structures (Gray, 2014; Cohen et al., 2018).

This research is based on the assumption that teacher motivation and experiences should be understood within their complex social and cultural contexts, rather than in isolation. By



adopting an interpretivist epistemology, I assert that knowledge is constructed through individuals' interactions with these contexts (Gray, 2014). This perspective is consistent with IPA's commitment to exploring how individuals make sense of their lived experiences. In IPA research, knowledge is constructed through a double hermeneutic process: participants interpret their experiences, and I, as the researcher, interpret those interpretations (Smith et al., 2009). This co-construction of meaning demonstrates that the research findings are shaped by the participants' meaning-making processes and my interpretive role. Gergen (2015) further supports this view by affirming that the researcher constructs their understanding through interactions, which serves to reinforce the interpretivist foundation of this research. This is particularly relevant to IPA, as meaning is not discovered but rather co-constructed between the researcher and participants (Nizza et al., 2021).

Throughout my research, I remained reflexive, acknowledging that my positionality inevitably influenced the interpretative process, as discussed in section 3.4.7. By engaging in rigorous self-reflection and maintaining transparency throughout the research process, I made a deliberate and sustained effort to prioritise the understanding and interpretation of participants' experiences from their own perspectives. This approach aimed to prevent the imposition of my assumptions onto the data, aligning with the following principles presented by Nizza et al. (2021). Nizza et al. (2021) suggest that creating a compelling narrative that coherently conveys the experiences of participants, providing a rich account of their lived realities, a detailed analysis of their language, and attending to both convergences and divergences in their accounts, facilitated a deeper understanding of the complexities of their experiences. This methodological rigour aligns with Cunliffe's (2016) assertion that qualitative researchers should strive to capture the richness of participants' experiences while being mindful of their own interpretive influence.

### 3.4 Research design

This section provides an overview of IPA methodology, detailing its key principles and procedures. I will then discuss the philosophical foundations of IPA, highlighting its connections to phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography, which together form the theoretical underpinnings for understanding subjective experience (Smith and Nizza, 2021; Smith et al., 2022). I will also address my methodological considerations, including ethical issues, participant recruitment, data collection techniques, and methods of analysis. By situating these elements within the broader context of my qualitative research, my research aims to highlight the contribution of IPA to the exploration of schoolteacher motivation in a Master of Education programme.

### 3.4.1 Understanding Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

My understanding of IPA was shaped by key works, including those of Smith et al. (2009, 2022), Smith (2015), Smith and Nizza (2021), and Smith and Osborn (2022). These authors collectively emphasise that IPA is more than just a qualitative tool for exploring individual experiences; it is a robust methodology that seeks to uncover the essence of the phenomenon being studied through rich, layered interpretations. The complexity of IPA lies in its dual focus on both the detailed exploration of participants' experiences and the reflective process of interpretation. I recognised that IPA required a careful balance between understanding participants' accounts of their experiences and delving deeper into the meanings they ascribed to those experiences, making it a nuanced and demanding methodology.

IPA, as a qualitative research methodology, is rooted in phenomenology and is designed to explore the lived experiences of individuals through a detailed interpretative process (Smith et al, 2009; Smith et al., 2022). By emphasising the interpretation of personal meanings, my research using IPA facilitated an in-depth exploration of a complex concept, such as an individual's motivation for learning. This methodology provided a structured framework that informed every stage of my research, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation, with a focus on understanding the meanings that participants ascribed to their experiences.

### 3.4.2 Theoretical underpinnings of IPA

Building on the previous discussion of the complexity of IPA, I recognised that IPA is a multi-layered approach grounded in phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. The foundational works of Husserl (1931) and Heidegger (1962) influenced this framework. Husserl's (1931) phenomenology aimed to provide insights into the nature of human experience through an emphasis on consciousness and direct engagement with phenomena. This approach underpinned the IPA methodology's commitment to exploring lived experiences without preconceived notions. Heidegger (1962) later expanded upon this by incorporating hermeneutics, which highlights the interpretive nature of understanding. Heidegger's (1962: 78) concept of 'being in the world' recognises how individuals interpret their experiences based on their contexts, thoughts and actions, which aligns closely with the double hermeneutic in IPA, as discussed next in 3.4.3, where the researcher interprets how participants interpret their world. IPA's idiographic approach, which focuses on the specific rather than the general, further supports the personalised, in-depth methodology (Smith and Osborn, 2022). By paying close attention to each individual case, IPA reflects the idiographic tradition's emphasis on depth over breadth (Smith and Nizza, 2021). Therefore, IPA was the natural outcome given

the combined emphasis on hermeneutics and idiography. It provided a methodological framework that enabled me to explore participants' motivations for engaging in master's level study and valued the depth and individuality of their experiences, essential to idiographic research (Smith et al., 2022). IPA's idiographic nature emphasised the uniqueness of each participant's experience, aligning with the personalised, in-depth exploration central to this research.

IPA typically employs small, context-specific samples that allow for a thorough idiographic examination of each participant before conducting a cross-case analysis of the data (Smith et al., 2009). Thackeray (2015) claimed that this dedication to capturing the diversity and variability of human experience, while also identifying commonalities between participants, can create a tension that, despite its challenges, often facilitates innovative thinking about how to preserve insights from both aspects. Capturing both individual uniqueness and commonalities among participants connects to the concept of double hermeneutics (Zimmerman, 2016). As noted earlier, this involves two levels of interpretation: first, understanding how participants make sense of their own experiences, and second, exploring how I, as the researcher, interpret their interpretations.

### 3.4.3 Double Hermeneutics

The concept of double hermeneutics, as proposed by Giddens (1976), forms the foundation of IPA. This approach recognises the two-way relationship between my interpretations as the researcher and the meanings that individuals ascribed to their own experiences. Unlike traditional phenomenological studies, where the emphasis would be on bracketing the researcher's preconceptions during the analysis process, IPA acknowledges that complete bracketing is not possible (Eatough and Smith, 2017). Instead, it is encouraged by IPA scholars to be aware of my preconceptions as an IPA researcher and reflect on how these may influence my interpretation (Larkin et al., 2019; Nizza et al., 2021). Therefore, my insights and preconceptions are part of the interpretative process rather than entirely bracketed out.

The analysis process and presentation of the findings involved two layers of interpretation. This process emphasised my active role as a researcher, distinguishing IPA from other qualitative methodologies (Smith and Osborn, 2015). Participants articulated their motivations, while I explored the complexities and underlying meanings of their narratives, rather than merely summarising their accounts. This process highlighted my subjectivity as a researcher, as my background and preconceptions inevitably influenced my interpretations. For instance, while participants discussed their motivations for engaging in a Master of Education programme, I reflected on how my own experiences of undertaking a master's programme

shaped my understanding. As a result, I actively engaged in reflexivity, as discussed in section 3.4.7. where I critically examined my biases and assumptions throughout the research process to ensure that my interpretations remained grounded in the participants' perspectives. This commitment to reflexivity was complemented by the concept of double hermeneutics. This double interpretation process revealed how participants constructed their motivations in relation to their studies, offering valuable insights into the complexities of schoolteacher motivation to inform future research and practice.

### 3.4.4 Methodological considerations

This section outlines the methodological considerations and the rationale for adopting Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is particularly suited for exploring the subjective experiences of individuals, especially given the complexity of teacher motivation and the personal nature of their journeys in engaging with a Master of Education programme. By providing a robust framework for an in-depth examination of participants' narratives (Smith, and Nizza, 2021), IPA enabled me to capture the nuances of their motivation effectively.

Philosophical assumptions significantly shaped how I planned, conducted, evaluated, and presented my qualitative research (Creswell, 2016). These assumptions informed my decisions about methodology and research design, leading me to conclude that while a quantitative approach may be valuable for some types of data, it would not offer the depth of exploration and holistic understanding required for my research.

In the planning stages of my research, I considered other methodologies, including grounded theory, narrative inquiry, and mixed methods research. Grounded theory, for instance, is focused on developing a theoretical framework based on data collected from participants (Shava et al., 2022). While this approach would have allowed for a comprehensive exploration of teacher motivation, its emphasis on theory generation does not align with my MRQ of gaining insight into how teachers perceive their own motivations. When considering narrative inquiry, Clandinin (2023) affirmed how this methodology captures the stories individuals tell about their experiences, emphasising the personal and temporal aspects of these narratives, suggesting that narrative inquiry could provide rich insights into teachers' lived experiences. However, it may not delve deeply enough into the interpretative aspects of participants' sense-making, which is central to my research focus.

I also considered mixed methods research, which combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, and allows for a comprehensive examination of research questions (Cohen et al., 2018). However, the inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative data might dilute the

depth of qualitative analysis necessary for gaining an understanding of participants' motivations. My aim was to provide a nuanced understanding of the subjective meanings that teachers attached to their motivations, which could be compromised by the need to balance different approaches. Therefore, after careful consideration, I determined that IPA was the most appropriate methodology for my research, as it facilitated a constructive dialogue that allowed me to make sense of participants' motivations (Smith, 2015). The qualitative and interpretive nature of my research led to the development of knowledge through the subjective experiences of participants (Ravitch and Riggan, 2017). Although all participants were enrolled in a Master of Education programme, their experiences were unique, a distinction I gained through listening to and analysing their individual accounts. The knowledge generated provided valuable insights into how participants made sense of their motivation to study, making IPA an ideal approach for exploring the phenomenon of teacher motivation from their perspectives.

### 3.4.5 Data analysis and interpretation

The transcription and analysis process further demonstrated the complexities inherent in IPA research which is discussed in greater detail in chapter four. As Smith et al. (2022) highlighted, the analysis process proved demanding, requiring a systematic and iterative process of data collection, coding, and theme development. However, despite its complexity, IPA allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the underlying meanings and themes within the participants' narratives. The six-step analysis process, as outlined by IPA authors Smith et al. (2009) and adapted to fit my research, was instrumental in ensuring the reliability and trustworthiness of the findings by providing a structured yet flexible framework for systematically interpreting participants' experiences (see chapter four).

Engaging with IPA not only allowed a deeper understanding of participants' experiences but also allowed for critical reflection on the methodology itself. The systematic nature of IPA provided a clear framework for exploring the motivation of teachers engaging in master's level learning, while promoting transparency and coherence throughout the research process (Smith, 2015; Smith et al., 2022). By focusing on the idiographic and interpretive dimensions, this approach facilitated a holistic exploration of teacher motivation, offering valuable insights into the complexities of their experiences.

### 3.4.6 Emphasis on participants' voices

One of the key strengths of my research was its emphasis on the participants' voices. Through the use of verbatim accounts and direct quotations, the research prioritised the authenticity of

participants' experiences, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings as discussed in section 3.6.8. By allowing participants to share their personal statements and to also speak for themselves (Alase, 2017), I ensured that the interpretations made were directly based on their own words, offering transparency in how conclusions were drawn (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2017). To further ensure that the voices of participants were authentically represented, I adopted a collaborative and respectful approach to interviewing, as discussed in section 3.5.5. This encouraged participants to guide the conversation rather than rigidly adhering to predefined structures (Engward et al., 2022). This flexible approach gave participants the space to express what was meaningful to them, rather than what I, as the researcher, assumed to be important. I also engaged in reflexivity throughout the process, discussed next in 3.4.7. By acknowledging my own positionality and the influence of power dynamics, I made a conscious effort to reduce hierarchical barriers, for instance, by using open-ended questions and validating participants' insights during the interviews. These steps provided a more equal dynamic between me, as the researcher and the participants. By creating this space for open dialogue and reflective engagement, the research enabled a more authentic co-construction of meaning (Alase, 2017). This not only enhanced the richness of the data, but also contributed to a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the participants' motivations and experiences.

### 3.4.7 Reflexivity in research

As an integral component of IPA research, reflexivity acknowledges the active role of the researcher in interpreting data and the inability to maintain a detached observational stance. In IPA studies, Engward and Goldspink (2020) posit that reflexivity is not an optional element of the research process; rather, it is an essential and integrated component and the reason why reflexivity has been discussed at each stage of my research. This process involved a continual reflection of my positionality, biases and assumptions throughout the research (Smith, 2015). For example, when analysing a participant's account of their motivation, I reflected on my own educational experiences to ensure I did not impose my perspective on their narratives. By consistently examining my assumptions, I was able to interpret their experience more authentically, ensuring that my interpretations remained aligned with the participants' perspectives, reinforcing the transparency, depth and rigour required in IPA research (Smith and Osborn, 2022).

To gain further insight into reflexivity, I explored both my personal and methodological reflexivity, considering the potential influence of my background and the methods I employed

in the research, while recognising that I may not have been fully aware of all the possible influences involved.

#### 3.4.7.1 Personal and methodological reflexivity

Reflecting on my values, experiences and assumptions was essential throughout my research as it clarified how they shaped and guided my research and revealed potential challenges and dilemmas (Lichtman, 2011). To address this, I followed Lumsden's (2020) recommendation to consciously step back during the research process allowing for the necessary time and space to reflect on potential influences. In recognition of active participation, it was important to acknowledge my role in promoting openness and honesty (Hammond and Wellington, 2021). As highlighted in this chapter, reflexivity was a key factor influencing every stage of the research, from reviewing the literature and formulating the RQs to data collection, analysis and drawing conclusions. Additionally, Agee et al. (2011) emphasised that reflexivity is an ongoing process, and identified the need for critical self-reflection and self-critique through journaling, peer debriefing, and seeking feedback. However, the authors also discussed the challenges and dilemmas associated with this process, stressing the importance of transparency and reflexivity to ensure the trustworthiness of my research findings. By adopting a reflexive approach and engaging in discussions with my supervisors and colleagues, as well as writing in my field work diary (see Appendix D), I was able to critically reflect on and act upon feedback throughout the analysis and writing process. For example, after receiving feedback from my supervisors on my interpretation of a participant's narrative, I reflected on how my personal influences may have informed my analysis. This reflection led me to re-evaluate my interpretations, ensuring it accurately reflected the participant's perspective rather than my own potential biases.

Methodological reflexivity relates to my reflection on the assumptions I held about the world and the nature of knowledge within the context of IPA. My epistemological stance acknowledged that I was an integral part of the research process and a major contributor to the research. It also recognised that my interpretations shaped the participants' narratives. Consequently, I engaged in continuous reflection at all stages of the research process, recognising knowledge as subjective and that lived experiences as central to IPA's idiographic focus. For example, during the interview process, I was mindful of how my assumptions about teaching might shape the prompts I posed. By reflecting on this, I was able to adjust my approach, ensuring that I prompted participants in a way that allowed them to share their experiences in their own terms, rather than guiding them toward a response that reflected my preconceived ideas.

During the process of data collection and analysis, the use of reflexive iteration enabled me to revisit, connect, refine, and gain a deeper understanding of the data (Mauthner, 2003; Folkes, 2023). Following the three-question framework proposed by Srivastava and Hopwood (2009: 78), I engaged in a process of self-questioning. "What is the data telling me?" "What is it that I want to know?" and "What is the relationship between the data telling me and what I want to know?" By asking these questions, I was able to directly engage with my ontological and epistemological perspectives, ensuring that I stayed focused on the participants' viewpoints while keeping the MRQ, RQs and theoretical concerns in mind. I was aware that my cultural context and personal experiences could influence my interpretations, aligning with the IPA approach that emphasises the researcher-participant relationship and the researcher's perspective in shaping the analysis. I reflected on the assumptions I had made before and during the research, assessing their implications for the findings (Dodgson, 2019). To help with this, I kept a field work diary, to guide and structure my thinking, in line with Watt's (2007) suggestion that such a diary helps in making sense of the entire research process. This tool not only increased my awareness of my thoughts and ideas but also encouraged me to reflect on the process as a whole, as discussed in chapter six.

Both personal and methodological reflexivity were important to my research process. This self-awareness facilitated a critical reflection on my assumptions and any preconceived ideas that might have influenced my interpretation of the data. Furthermore, methodological reflexivity prompted me to contemplate how the selected research approach and methods influenced the data gathered and the subsequent interpretations. This transparency provided insight into my decision-making processes, enabling me to recognise and understand the limitations and strengths of my research. For example, during the analysis, I reflected on how my own academic background and interests might have shaped the focus on certain themes. Acknowledging this potential bias enabled me to critically assess whether the themes were genuinely emergent from the data or influenced by my preconceptions. This approach enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of my findings, particularly within the context of IPA, as discussed in the sub-section 3.6.8. While these reflexive practices reinforced the reliability of my findings, they also revealed inherent limitations associated with IPA, which I will now discuss.

### 3.4.8 Limitations of IPA

One of the key limitations of this research is its lack of generalisability, which is inherent to the idiographic approach of IPA. The in-depth focus on a small number of participants allows for



a detailed exploration of individual experiences but limits the applicability of the findings to broader sample. Whilst this approach has provided a rich understanding of teachers' motivation to engage in master-level study, it inevitably limits the external applicability of the findings.

With a sample size of ten teachers, IPA's focus on depth over breadth means that the findings cannot be easily extrapolated to larger populations. However, it is important to recognise that IPA does not aim for generalisability in the traditional sense. Rather, it aims to provide insights that are specific to the unique contexts and interpretations of the participants (Noon, 2018). This focus provides valuable perspectives on the phenomenon rather than seeking universal truths or broadly applicable findings. Therefore, it could be argued that the non-generalisability of the findings should not be seen as a limitation, but rather as an intrinsic feature of the IPA design, which prioritises rich, contextual insights over broad statistically significant patterns (Nizza et al., 2021). This could be addressed in future research by employing larger and more diverse samples, or by using alternative methodologies as outlined in section 3.5.4, such as a mixed methods approach that incorporates quantitative measures, for example, metric surveys. This may facilitate an examination of teacher motivation and allow researchers to assess whether findings from my IPA research are consistent with, or diverge from, findings from other methodological frameworks.

Additionally, the highly interpretive nature of IPA places a significant burden on the researcher, as they must engage deeply with the data while being mindful of their own biases and preconceptions (Alase, 2017). The process of double hermeneutics can introduce complexities that are difficult to manage, particularly when dealing with subjective phenomena like motivation. While the interpretive element is a strength of IPA, allowing for a deeper engagement with the data, it also poses the risk of researcher bias influencing the findings. To mitigate this risk, I utilised member checking to validate the transcriptions with participants, ensuring my interpretations accurately reflected their experiences. I also documented my research decisions to evidence the process and engaged in ongoing self-reflection to remain aware of potential bias.

In justifying the adoption of IPA for this research, I have demonstrated that it is an effective methodology for exploring complex and nuanced phenomena (Smith et al., 2022). The methods were well-suited for understanding personal, subjective experiences such as teacher motivation, which have been shaped by individual histories, values, and socio-cultural contexts. However, a key challenge in using IPA was ensuring that the research design was methodologically sound and that the findings were robust and trustworthy. This required

careful consideration of several factors. To fully address these, the following section outlines the research process, detailing the methods applied to sample selection, data collection methods and ethical considerations.

### 3.5 Research process

To establish a robust basis for my research, I undertook a comprehensive and meticulous examination of the key elements, including the research paradigm, the formulation of research questions, sampling, recruitment, the data collection methods, the data analysis techniques, and consideration for disseminating the findings. Guided by a constructivist paradigm, I placed particular emphasis on the exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives, in alignment with the idiographic focus of IPA (Nizza et al., 2021). This approach allowed for an exploration of the distinctive motivations attributed by each schoolteacher engaged in master's study. Data collection was conducted through the analysis of personal statements and semi-structured interviews, which were effective for gathering insights into participants' motivation. Following the transcription of the data, an adaptation of the Six-Step Analysis (Smith et al., 2009) was employed to examine how participants interpreted their motivations within their personal and professional contexts, discussed in chapter five. The findings will be disseminated to relevant stakeholders, including participants and the wider academic community, ensuring transparency and encouraging discussions that could enhance future research and practice in teacher education.

Reflecting on my research as a whole, I found that describing the process alone does not fully convey the complexity and ambiguity involved in conducting IPA research (Smith et al, 2022). When developing the MRQ and RQs, I encountered repeated moments of uncertainty that required numerous revisions and refinements to ensure alignment with the exploration of schoolteachers' motivation for learning. At a pivotal point during data analysis, I paused to evaluate my approach before undertaking the demanding task of analysis. This decision was not only methodological but also emotional, as engaging with participants' deeply personal narratives where they reflected on their identity, purpose and professional challenges, required sustained emotional presence and sensitivity. Being entrusted with such experiences brought a sense of responsibility to represent them with care, which at times felt emotionally weighty.

Immersing myself in the data, especially when participants shared moments of their personal and professional lives required a level of attentiveness that extended beyond technical analysis. This demanded thoughtful interpretation and often prompted me to pause and reflect on how best to honour their voices without imposing my own assumptions. To manage this, I

engaged in ongoing reflexivity by journaling in my field work diary, engaging in self-questioning and maintaining continuous dialogue with my research supervisors. These practices helped me monitor how my own perspectives and emotional responses might shape interpretation, as discussed further in 3.5.6. These reflective practices helped me to remain grounded, ensuring that my interpretations stayed close to the participants' lived experiences. By doing so, I aimed to reduce the imbalance in the power dynamic between researcher and participant, allowing their voices to be heard with greater authenticity. These moments of reflection and emotional engagement were essential in recognising the depth of participants' motivations and ensuring that my analysis was both respectful and transparent (Smith et al., 2022).

This decision aimed to ensure that the chosen framework effectively addressed the inherent complexities of qualitative research. These moments of reflection proved crucial in enabling a critical evaluation of the suitability of the chosen methods to elicit the rich and nuanced insights sought. By questioning my approach, I identified potential limitations and explored alternative strategies that might yield more meaningful data. For example, I recognised that while semi-structured interviews were effective in capturing participants' narratives, it was important to ensure that the interview questions were sufficiently open-ended to encourage participants to share their thoughts and feelings in a way that truly reflected their motivations.

### 3.5.1 Participant recruitment and sampling strategy

To gain insights into schoolteacher motivation I focused on the sampling process. To gain insight into the experiences of those engaged in a Master of Education programme, a small purposive sample of participants was selected for this IPA research. In alignment with the guidance provided by Smith et al. (2022) purposive sampling is frequently employed in IPA research, as it allows researchers to select participants based on specific criteria pertinent to their research questions. Although the sample could be perceived as opportunistic or convenient due to my role as programme leader, I employed purposive sampling using specific criteria to ensure that participants were selected on their ability to provide rich and relevant insights into the MRQ and RQs and that the data obtained were of sufficient depth to facilitate meaningful analysis. The criteria for participating in the research was that participants were:

- A schoolteacher in Wales
- Engaged in a Master of Education programme in Wales

The criteria ensured that the data collected reflected the motivations of the participants concerning the research aim and did not limit this to a specific Master of Education programme

or a specific mode of delivery, for example, the National Master's programme, as discussed in chapter one.

In IPA research, the sampling process is crucial as it determines the quality of the data collected and the potential for rich and meaningful analysis (Larkin and Thompson, 2021). The sampling process in my research has been guided by the phenomenon and the research question being explored (Eatough and Smith, 2017). While the sample offered valuable insights into the experiences of schoolteachers enrolled in a master's programme, it is important to recognise its limitations. One limitation is consistent with the idiographic focus of IPA, which emphasises a detailed examination of individual experiences over the broad generalisability of findings (Smith and Nizza, 2021). Future research may wish to consider similar themes with more diverse teacher populations to evaluate the wider applicability of the findings of my research as noted in chapter six.

A total of ten participants were recruited via email, and each individual elected to participate voluntarily. 22 invitations were distributed to all eligible participants who met the inclusion criteria and enrolled in a master's programme at the HEI at which I am employed. Despite the distribution of 22 invitations, only six responses were received during a seven-day period. This was not a cause for concern, Smith et al. (2009), Willig (2013) and as Smith (2015) explain that IPA studies typically involve small sample sizes due to the in-depth exploration of each participant's experience. By the end of the two-week timeframe I gave to potential participants, a further four participants had expressed interest, resulting in a total of ten participants.

The personal statements provided by participants were part of the participants' initial applications to the Master of Education programme. Participants were invited to submit these statements for analysis, but only seven chose to do so, with the remaining three reporting that they had either not written a personal statement or had misplaced it. All ten participants participated in the semi-structured interview process, which allowed for the collection of in-depth insights into their motivations to engage in master's study.

A limitation of the sampling process was the recruitment of a non-diverse range of individuals as the sample was predominantly female, which could be perceived as a gender imbalance. However, the majority of teachers enrolled on the master's programmes are female, as noted in the participant demographic table discussed next.

### 3.5.1.1 Participant Demographics

To provide some participant context, demographical information about where participants are in relation to the years spent in their teaching role and the time they have spent on a Master of Education programme, have been identified in Table 1 below. The information shared, while seemingly minor, offers a significant insight aimed at providing the reader with a clearer understanding of each participant's context.

To ensure participant anonymity and establish a connection between the reader and the subjects, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant. This approach aligns with ethical considerations and addresses the concern raised by Heaton (2022) about potential depersonalisation of the participant from the research. The use of pseudonyms has a dual purpose from my research: to provide anonymity and to humanise participants. This serves as a reminder to the reader that behind every account lies a real individual with authentic experiences.

Participant	Teaching Experience	Year of study	Personal Statement shared	Carried out a Semi-structured interview
Jane	13 Years	Year 3	Yes	Yes
Stella	3 Years	Year 2	Yes	Yes
Rosie	12 Years	Year 3	Yes	Yes
Leanne	5 Years	Year 2	Yes	Yes
Jamie	8 Years	Year 2	Yes	Yes
Delia	9 Years	Year 2		Yes
Carys	24 Years	Year 1		Yes
Georgia	6 Years	Year 2	Yes	Yes
Sally	13 Years	Year 1		Yes
Sian	4 Years	Year 2	Yes	Yes

*Table 1: Participant demographics*

### 3.5.2 Data collection

As previously highlighted, the data for my research was obtained from personal statements participants had written and submitted as part of the initial application to a Master of Education programme. These were provided by seven participants for analysis. Additionally, I conducted

ten semi-structured interviews over a four-month period from March 2022 to July 2022, allowing for the collection of detailed and comprehensive data relevant to the MRQ and RQs. Each participant took part in a single semi-structured interview, a decision made to prioritise depth and data quality. This approach allowed me to capture participants' immediate interpretations without burdening them or unduly influencing their reflections through multiple interactions.

While diaries and focus groups can be employed in IPA studies and initially considered, I selected the analysis of personal statements and semi-structured interviews as these methods captured individual lived experiences. For example, the personal statements allowed participants to reflect on their motivations to study and their experiences in their own words, providing rich, personal narratives, while semi-structured interviews offered flexibility and in-depth exploration in a more open-ended way (Smith et al. 2022). This combination of methods was consistent with IPA's idiographic focus, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the personal meanings attributed to participants' experiences.

I analysed each personal statement and interview separately, following IPA guidelines that prioritise case-by-case analysis before any cross-case examination. Smith et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of maintaining the integrity of individual cases before broader analysis to fully understand and accurately represent each participant's perspective, preserving the depth and richness of the data in line with the idiographic focus. While I prioritised the uniqueness of each participant's experience and avoided generalisations, I did make cross-case comparisons, ensuring that the themes respected individual nuances without diluting the detailed understanding of each case.

The decision to analyse the personal statements independently of the interview data was both methodological and purposeful. The personal statements captured the motivations of the participants prior to the start of the programme, providing insight into their initial expectations and reasons for pursuing master's study. In contrast, the interviews provided a reflective account of their experiences during the programme. Analysing these two forms of data separately enabled me to explore how participants' motivations evolved over time. This approach provided a clearer picture of each participant's progression and their motivations at different stages of their academic journey.

The interview questions were not influenced by the participant statements, as they were provided by the seven participants shortly before their interview date. Instead, the questions were derived from concepts informed by the literature review. By focusing on seven personal

statements and ten interviews, I ensured methodological consistency, prioritising depth over quantity in data collection. The data collection tools will now be discussed in further detail.

### 3.5.3 Personal statements

The data collection began with personal statements to capture participants' thoughts and motivations for applying to the Master of Education programme. This method offered foundational insights into their perspectives and reasons at a specific point in time, paving the way for exploring their experiences once fully engaged in the programme. Unlike the structured guidance typically found in undergraduate applications, the Master's application process involves direct submission through the university's internal system, encouraging students to articulate their goals, experiences and qualifications. While personal statements are a widely used tool in academic admissions, when employed as a method of data collection, they offered additional insights into participants' motivations for engaging in a master's programme. These statements provided rich, reflective data regarding schoolteacher motivations for pursuing further study, aligning well with IPA and its focus on exploring personal meaning-making. By analysing these statements, I was able to capture participants' initial motivations and expectations, which allowed for a deeper exploration of how their motivations evolved throughout the programme. The statements captured the authentic voices of the participants, allowing me to gain insight into their unique perspectives and offering emotional elements that enriched my explorations of their subjective experiences, elements crucial for IPA studies (Nizza et al., 2021). Offering contextual information disclosed their motivation for engaging in the programme from a personal, professional and contextual perspective as identified in chapter five.

Ethically, asking participants to share their personal statements directly, rather than accessing the personal statements myself through the university system, significantly reduced the potential risks of undermining trust and possibly affecting the quality and integrity of the data. Prior to collecting the statements from participants, they were fully informed about the purpose of using their personal statements in the study and that sharing them was entirely voluntary. Informed consent was obtained allowing participants to make an informed decision about taking part. This served to empower the participants by giving them control over what they shared and ensuring that their participation was voluntary. I believe that this transparency helped to build trust between myself and the participants, developing a sense of mutual respect. By asking participants to provide their personal statement, it protected their anonymity and confidentiality, reducing the risk of unauthorised access or misuse of their information (BERA, 2018). Together, these aspects helped to protect the rights and well-being of

participants, while increasing the reliability and validity of the research (BERA, 2024), as participants were likely to feel more comfortable and honest in their responses. The analysis of the personal statements provided detailed information on the thoughts and experiences of seven of the ten participants prior to starting the master's programme.

Although originally intended for submission as part of an application to a master's programme, the personal statements offered a unique insight into the motivations of participants at a specific point in time directly relevant to the focus of my research. By using the data with written informed voluntary consent, I was able to gain insight into an essential source of information that would be difficult to replicate through other means, such as through a questionnaire or focus group, while maintaining ethical transparency (Miller et al, 2012).

### 3.5.4 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a commonly used and effective method for gathering data in qualitative research designs, particularly in IPA studies (Smith et al., 2022). They allow for an exploration of the participants' motivations and an in-depth understanding of their meaning-making processes (Gray, 2014). For this research, semi-structured interviews were chosen as they provided an opportunity to explore the motivations of schoolteachers in more depth. The nature of semi-structured interviews is to formulate a 'conversation with a purpose' (Smith et al., 2022: 54) informed by the MRQ and RQs. For my research, I developed questions during the literature review process, which guided the creation of the interview schedule (see Appendix A). As the interview schedule was pre-designed it acted as a guide throughout each interview. This allowed for consistency in data collection across all participants while allowing flexibility for individual experiences to be explored in more depth. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for probing and the development of prompts that may not have been considered initially, as well as opportunities for clarification (Kumar, 2014). The flexibility of this method allowed for the emergence of individual experiences while maintaining consistency in data collection. Although IPA scholars (Smith and Nizza, 2021; Smith et al., 2022) suggest that a schedule is not always essential, I found it beneficial in shaping the interviews and facilitating open-ended questions. To encourage participants to share their experiences freely, the open-ended questions allowed for a thorough exploration of their perspectives (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018).

Due to practical issues with scheduling time before, during or after participants' work, the interviews were conducted online for flexibility and ease. Since Covid-19, teachers have gained confidence in using online platforms for teaching and communicating (González et al.,



2023), which was evident when scheduling each interview, as this was the participants' preferred method. Similarly, I had enhanced my skills in utilising these platforms to deliver lectures, seminars and tutorials. As a result, I felt proficient enough when using technology to conduct the interviews. Feeling at ease in the process certainly helped me to navigate the system effectively without any technological issues arising.

As with interviews, maintaining confidentiality during data collection required finding a quiet and private location for both the researcher and the participant (Carter et al., 2021). To ensure confidentiality, I used a private room and wore headphones so that I could hear clearly and minimise potential distractions. When contacting participants about the interview process, I advised them to find a confidential space, resulting in all participants opting to be interviewed in their own homes. In addition, I informed participants about the interview and their role in it before asking for permission to record for transcription purposes only. Once recorded using the online platform Zoom, the files were saved directly to my student password-protected OneDrive account and then accessed following the interviews to ensure that all information was captured accurately before recordings were deleted. When analysing the data, as discussed in more depth in chapter four, participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms and places of work or family members names were omitted and marked with an X to ensure confidentiality and anonymity throughout the process.

### 3.5.5 The interview process

As an early-career researcher, I initially approached the interview process with a relatively naïve mind-set, assuming that the interview schedule would provide me with the necessary support to deliver the interview effectively. However, I soon discovered that this was not the case. Despite my previous reading and observation of 'how to carry out an interview' videos, it was only through practice that I was able to gain the confidence I needed to conduct the interview. During the initial interview, I did not feel entirely comfortable or confident, and I hoped that the participant did not detect this. The emphasis was placed more on asking questions than active listening and there were long moments of silence. At times, I found it challenging to refrain from filling any silence, so I made a conscious effort to pause before asking subsequent questions. This approach allowed me to gather my thoughts while also giving participants the necessary time to reflect and formulate their responses in the time they required. By creating a comfortable and relaxed environment during the interviews and allowing sufficient time for each session, I observed that participants were able to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in ways that I believed to be authentic and reflective of their unique perspectives. Participant feedback, including expressions of feeling at ease and

their openness in elaborating on personal experiences, indicated that this approach effectively created a comfortable and supportive interview environment. Nevertheless, I also recognised the potential challenges posed by the online format of the interviews. While the virtual setting allowed for convenience, I noted that building rapport may have been enhanced in face-to-face interactions. In-person interviews could have facilitated the recognition of non-verbal communication cues, established a closer sensory connection, and provided a greater sense of intimacy (Engward et al., 2022). However, I found that rapport could still be established during the online interviews through demonstrating empathy and maintaining clear, concise communication (Carter, 2021). For example, by acknowledging participants' responses with affirmations such as 'can you tell me more about ...' or 'that sounds important,' I was able to create a supportive atmosphere. This approach contributed to creating a welcoming and comfortable environment while also accommodating the needs and preferences of participants.

After reflecting on the first interview, I decided to introduce a personal introduction at the start of the interview. This served as a useful strategy to help reduce initial tensions. By sharing personal information about myself and my reasons for researching the topic, I was able to create a more open, transparent environment. This also helped to build rapport (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018) which, in turn, helped me to approach the interview with a more empathetic and collaborative attitude. By acknowledging and respecting the participants' experience, through empathetic listening, adapting questions, and building rapport, I was able to create a more meaningful and productive dialogue. De Jaeghere et al. (2020) suggest this is a way of improving the quality and depth of the qualitative research. Furthermore, reflecting on any power dynamics also made me more conscious of my own biases and assumptions as noted in chapter one and section 3.4.7, and encouraged me to approach the research process with a more reflective perspective. To help with navigating my assumptions and bias, I recorded key questions in my field work diary, such as 'How might my own experiences influence my interpretation?' and 'What assumptions am I bringing to the research?' (excerpts of my field work diary are presented in appendix D). This helped me to understand myself and my interactions with the participants. As a result, it led to a more nuanced and accurate representation of their reality.

The length of each interview varied depending on the amount of information the participants were willing to share, the shortest interview lasted 45 minutes and the longest 85 minutes. This variation in interview length was due to the participants answering questions at their own pace, without undue interruptions or excessive follow-up questions. Although effective time management was initially a challenge, I made a conscious effort to avoid rushing participants

through the questions and to allow sufficient time for reflection and expression, as advised by Smith (2017). This approach highlighted my interviewing skills and demonstrated my commitment to creating a supportive and respectful environment in which participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences. This was their experience to share, not one that I could dictate or prolong.

After reflecting on the process of conducting the semi-structured interviews, I recognised the importance of acknowledging my limitations as a researcher. Aligned with Smith et al.'s (2022) emphasis that success relies not only on careful planning but also on active listening, reflexivity, and flexibility, these factors were instrumental in achieving the desired research outcomes. The application of this self-awareness allowed the creation of a conducive environment for open dialogue, which encouraged participants to share their experiences freely. Consequently, the approach yielded rich and insightful data, and in my view, significantly enhanced the overall quality of the research.

### 3.5.6 Field work diary

Incorporating a field work diary allowed for additional notes of reflection and to support the data collected from the semi-structured interviews. As field work notes were a relatively new strategy for me, I considered adopting a field note checklist introduced by Spradley (1980) to guide the note-taking process and capture any important details such as space, actor, activity, object, act, event, time, goal, and feelings were recorded. However, this proved challenging due to the tendency to focus too heavily on the checklist rather than engaging deeply with the interview itself. Instead, I found that a more flexible and organic approach to my diary allowed for a richer reflection on the nuances of the interviews and reflect on how my own positioning may have shaped the research process (Miles et al., 2020). These reflective entries became a space to track emerging thoughts, consider contextual influences, and note emotional reactions, which helped to connect different stages of the research in a coherent and thoughtful way. As Clarke et al. (2021) suggest, the reflexive nature of a field work diary can be particularly useful in IPA research, and I experienced this firsthand. The diary became a tool that supported ongoing reflection which helped me refine prompts for subsequent interviews. In doing so, it contributed to greater authenticity by allowing me to remain attuned to participants' narratives and by providing a record of my reflexive engagement throughout the process.

It is important to note that field notes were not used as a method of data collection in this research. Instead, it was used as a tool to aid in the sense-making and reflective process of

the data collection from the semi-structured interviews, an approach particularly useful in considering any biases and assumptions I held.

### 3.5.7 Ethical integrity of the research

In conducting this research, I ensured strict adherence to ethical procedures and compliance with the university's ethical review process as a student researcher. Ethical principles were followed to ensure responsible conduct, in accordance with the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) guidelines (2018) and the ethics application process at St Mary's University (Appendix E). While ethical guidelines provide a framework, they encompass all aspects of research, including the relationships researchers form with participants (Miller et al., 2012; Gray, 2014). To maintain integrity throughout the process, my objective was to remain transparent, clear, and reliable, collecting data for defined, legitimate purposes while ensuring it was securely processed and stored (Braun et al., 2020). I provided participants with clear information by providing a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (Appendices F and G), which ensured informed consent was obtained. Before each interview, I restated this information, allowing participants time to consider their position and reminding them of their right to withdraw (BERA, 2018). To share the ethical adherence and compliance considerations for my research, I will now discuss my responsibilities as a researcher, participant protection, reflexivity and recognising bias, and my reflexive approach in ethical decision-making.

#### 3.5.7.1 Responsibility and my role as a researcher

As both a researcher adopting an IPA approach and the programme leader of a Master of Education programme, I recognised my dual responsibility from the outset of my research. This responsibility extended through all stages: from formulating research questions to considering the purpose, methodology, methods, and reporting of findings (Miller et al., 2012; Punch and Oancea, 2014). In both roles, I had a duty of care, particularly in managing and mitigating any potential risks (BERA, 2018).

To minimise any participant discomfort, I adopted preparatory measures, such as sharing my own experiences and asking introductory questions to build rapport. Whilst this helped ease participants, I was careful to establish professional boundaries by maintaining a neutral yet supportive demeanour during the interviews. I avoided leading questions or over-involvement in personal disclosures and ensured that all interactions were conducted within ethical guidelines, for example, respect, sensitivity and avoiding harm (BERA, 2018). My approach

balanced empathy with respect by actively listening to and acknowledging participants' experiences, while maintaining professional boundaries to avoid becoming overly personal or influencing their responses, ensuring ethical integrity and participant comfort (BERA, 2018). Despite these efforts, I understood that unforeseen emotional responses might arise due to the reflective nature of sharing personal experiences (Head, 2020). To safeguard participants, I equipped myself with knowledge of external support services, should they need assistance following the interviews.

#### 3.5.7.2 Participant protection: Consent, confidentiality and compliance

Recognising the sensitivities inherent in qualitative research, I was mindful of securing ongoing, voluntary consent. Participants were made aware of potential risks, benefits, and their right to withdraw or refrain from answering any questions in the participant information sheet shared during the recruitment process. Additionally, I informed participants of confidentiality and anonymity protocols, explaining legal requirements for data storage following the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (BERA, 2018; UK Research and Innovation, 2023). These details were reiterated at the start of each semi-structured interview, ensuring participants remained fully informed (Cohen et al., 2018).

#### 3.5.7.3 Reflectivity and recognising researcher bias

As part of the educational research community, I committed to conducting my research to the highest standards (Head, 2020). An integral aspect of this commitment involved reflexivity as discussed in section 3.4.7. Throughout the research process, I reflected on my role, the data, and how my assumptions might shape interpretations. Regular discussions with my supervisors and documenting significant moments in my field work diary facilitated this. For example, I noticed that my professional background as a programme leader may have led me to initially consider participants' statements through a leadership lens. Recognising this bias allowed me to take a step back and ensure participants' experiences remained central to the analysis. I also identified assumptions I carried into the research, such as presuming that participants would view certain educational challenges similarly to how I did when studying in a master's programme. By recognising these assumptions early on, I was able to minimise bias and ensure alignment with the core principles of IPA.

#### 3.5.7.4 Reflexive approach in ethical decision-making

Adopting a reflexive approach was not only a methodological consideration but also a key ethical strategy. Ethical research goes beyond just following rules and procedures; it involves

upholding important moral principles like respect for participants' independence, doing good, avoiding harm, and ensuring fairness. These principles help protect the rights and well-being of participants (BERA, 2018; Head, 2020). Reflexivity allowed me to be continually aware of power imbalances inherent in the researcher-participant relationship. For instance, my dual role as both researcher and programme leader could have resulted in subtle pressure on participants to respond in ways they thought would please me. Being reflexive helped me navigate this potential dilemma by encouraging participants' freedom to express their views, to decline questions if they wished, and to ensure the confidentiality of their responses.

Reflexivity allowed me to take deliberate steps to protect participants' privacy, confidentiality, and dignity throughout the research (BERA, 2018). Reflecting on the interview process and checking in with participants afterwards ensured that I was sensitive to their emotional states and that they felt respected and valued throughout their participation (Wiles et al., 2006; Brooks et al., 2014). This commitment to reflexivity provided a foundation for ethical research practice, ensuring the research remained participant-centred while reducing researcher bias.

### 3.5.8 Research quality

In qualitative research, assessing the quality of the research is a crucial consideration. However, there has been considerable debate about the appropriate criteria for evaluation. While reliability and validity are traditionally associated with quantitative research (Clark et al, 2021), the question is whether the same standards should be applied to qualitative research. There are different perspectives on how to define, describe and measure validity in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2016). In response to this ambiguity, Lincoln and Guba (1986) proposed alternative criteria for qualitative research, emphasising trustworthiness and credibility as key measures. Building on this, Yardley (2016) introduced additional criteria such as contextual sensitivity, rigour, transparency and impact. Informed by these frameworks, I ensured that my research adhered to criteria that prioritised rigour, trustworthiness and credibility, in line with the principles of IPA to maintain research quality (Nizza et al., 2021).

#### 3.5.8.1 Rigour

Within this research, rigour has played a significant role in ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of the research process. By adhering to established methodological practices, I aimed to maintain a high standard of quality in data collection and analysis (Levitt et al., 2018). In chapter four, I provide a detailed account of the analytical process I employed. This commitment to rigour not only strengthened the credibility of my findings but also enhanced

the overall interpretative depth of the participants' lived experiences. Furthermore, rigorous attention to ethical considerations and reflexivity throughout the research process contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the complex factors surrounding teacher motivation, as discussed in sections 3.5.7. Therefore, rigour served as a foundational element in shaping the integrity and reliability of the research outcomes (BERA, 2018).

#### 3.5.8.2 Trustworthiness and accountability

The concept of trustworthiness is important in qualitative research as it ensures the value of the research and its ability to represent the phenomenon under study accurately and authentically (Gray, 2014). To achieve this, I employed the data collection methods of personal statements and semi-structured interviews, which allowed for a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences. By conducting both case-by-case and cross-case analysis, I was able to identify themes while maintaining consistence and reliability in the findings. This approach aligns with the view of Opie and Brown (2019), who suggest that employing diverse methods enhances trustworthiness, alongside Lincoln and Guba (2013), who highlight its connection to internal validity, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect participants' experiences.

Another crucial aspect of trustworthiness is accountability. This refers to the researcher's obligation to research participants, gatekeepers, and the broader research community (Brown, 2019). This encompasses academic researchers exploring their practice, all sharing a common goal of conducting research that enhances knowledge and understanding of the world, with the aim of making a positive impact on society (Brenninkmeijer, 2022). The ethical issues surrounding the research process dictate that the researcher has a responsibility and moral obligation to all those involved (BERA, 2018; Iphofen and Tolich, 2018). To ensure accountability, participants were reminded about what, how, and why of the research when carrying out the semi-structured interviews.

In the context of IPA research, trustworthiness is essential to ensure that the interpretations and findings accurately reflect the participants' experiences and perspectives. As such, the use of data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews can help to establish the credibility of the research. This approach is consistent with the phenomenological nature of IPA, seeking to gain insights into the lived experiences and meanings attributed by participants to these experiences (Smith, 2017; Smith et al., 2022). By fully informing participants about the research and its ethical implications, I established a relationship of trust that respected their autonomy while protecting their privacy and confidentiality (BERA, 2018). This

commitment to transparency continued after the interviews, as I emailed each participant with the anonymised interview transcript to allow them to check its accuracy and ensure that their perspectives had been accurately transcribed. This practice is in line with the principles of IPA research, which emphasise reflexivity and ethical rigour (Smith et al., 2022).

### 3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, adopting IPA as a research methodology has enabled a deep and nuanced exploration of the lived experiences of schoolteachers who engaged in a Master of Education programme. The idiographic, phenomenological, and hermeneutic foundations of IPA provided a systematic and rigorous framework for interpreting individual motivations in depth. However, it is important to acknowledge that IPA's focus on small, specific samples limits the generalisability of findings (Smith et al., 2022). Despite this limitation, the richness of the insights gained from the research provides invaluable contributions to understanding the complexities of schoolteacher motivation.

In this chapter, I have justified my choice of methodology and methods for my research that explored the motivation of schoolteachers engaged in a Master of Education programme. IPA methodology is recognised as an effective means of understanding the subjective experiences of individuals and the meanings they attribute to their experiences (Smith, 2015; Smith et al., 2022). This approach was suitable for exploring complex phenomena, such as motivation, a multifaceted construct as discussed in chapter two which would have been difficult to measure quantitatively. My IPA research has allowed me as the researcher, to gain an insight into the participants' experiences and to gain insights into how they make sense of their motivations.

The following chapter will present a detailed account of the data analysis process, focusing on the development and refinement of themes through an iterative coding process.



## Chapter 4: Approach to Data Analysis

This chapter presents the process of data analysis from individual personal statements and semi-structured interviews. In studies on the use of IPA (Smith, 2015; Larkin and Thompson, 2019; Smith et al., 2022), the existing literature does not prescribe a specific method of data analysis. Smith et al. (2022: 75) affirm that there is a 'healthy flexibility' in the IPA analytical process and discussed a common process in which the analytical journey moves 'from the particular to the shared, and from the descriptive to the interpretative'. A hermeneutic perspective was adopted to analyse the data, utilising an iterative and reflexive process to identify themes (Smith et al., 2021) (see Tables 2 and 3 in section 4.2.1). It also explains how these themes are further explored in the subsequent findings and discussion chapter. In addition, this chapter situates me as the researcher and the participants within the research journey, acknowledging our distinct, yet hermeneutic relationship.

### 4.1 Data analysis

By adopting a hermeneutic perspective, I viewed the data as an interpretation that cannot be classified as either true or false, as it represents one possible interpretation among many, emphasising the subjective nature of understanding (Smith and Nizza, 2021). To capture all relevant information during data collection, I recorded the data using an online platform and made some notes in my field work diary to gather key points and contextual information (Punch and Oancea, 2014). I transcribed the data using an adaptation of Smith, et al.'s (2009) Six-step Analysis, as outlined in section 4.2.1.1, to identify, analyse, and report themes. My goal was to identify themes that were relevant and meaningful to the research MRQ and RQs. By following an iterative approach to data analysis, as recommended by Smith et al. (2009) and Smith and Nizza (2021), I was able to familiarise myself with the data as it was gathered, rather than waiting until all data collection was complete. After each interview, I re-listened to the recording and transcribed the data. After making my initial notes, I re-read the transcripts to engage more deeply with the data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of each case before moving forward.

Adopting an inductive approach, this systematic process allowed me to thoroughly examine the transcripts and apply a structured strategy for interpreting the data (Miles et al., 2020). The analysis involved an ongoing, iterative cycle of reflection and review, which enabled me to revisit the data repeatedly, refine my interpretations, and identify codes and emerging themes. This rigorous approach aimed to ensure the trustworthiness and robustness of the findings, allowing me to explore the data, challenge my own biases, and enhance the overall analysis. Throughout the process, I engaged in critical reflection, addressing any potential limitations or

preconceptions that could have influenced the interpretations, following Yardley's (2016: 266) principles of 'sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and finally, impact and importance' to maintain the quality of the research. First, I remained sensitive to the context of the data and participants, appreciating the nuances involved. Second, I committed to high research standards by ensuring a rigorous and systematic process, using established methods for data collection and analysis, and keeping detailed records. Finally, I maintained transparency and coherence by being open about the research process and findings, adhering to established guidelines for qualitative research (Larkin and Thompson, 2019).

## 4.2 The IPA process

In qualitative research, Flick (2013:3) highlights the analysis that 'in a decisive way, forms the outcomes of the research'. This stage moves beyond data collection and requires a deep and careful engagement with the data to uncover codes, themes and meanings. In IPA, interpretation is not simply a summary of what has been observed or recorded; it involves a thoughtful, iterative process of making sense of complex, subjective information. In this section I will outline the key stages of data analysis, from data preparation and coding to the identification of themes, and finally to the development of interpretations and conclusions. It is through this critical engagement with this analytical process that it becomes clear how data analysis has a crucial impact on research findings by transforming raw data into meaningful, interpretable insights (Flick, 2018).

### 4.2.1 The IPA approach to data analysis

In the process of transcribing and analysing the data, I found the IPA approach to be a rigorous methodology characterised by a systematic and iterative process (Smith and Nizza, 2021). The adapted six-step analysis introduced by Smith et al. (2009) proved to be a valuable tool, guiding my thoughts and actions throughout the transcription stage and the subsequent phases of reading and re-reading each case before conducting cross-case analysis. However, it is important to note that Smith et al. (2022: 76) acknowledge there is 'no clear right or wrong way' to carry out the analysis, emphasising the need for a flexible approach. As a first-time IPA researcher, the adapted six-step analysis provided essential guidance throughout this process.

I found that the terminology used by IPA scholars Smith et al. (2009) was similar to Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, which I was familiar with from previous enquiry projects I

had been involved with. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis consists of the terms coding and themes, as opposed to Smith et al. (2009) who use the terms patterns and themes. The use of the term 'codes' in my revised version of the six-step analysis acknowledges the granular level of analysis that comes before the identification of broader themes. It was useful to break the data into manageable components before moving on to higher-level interpretations. In this context, 'themes' represent the recurring ideas that provide deeper insights into the data. This approach improved the clarity and precision of the process while maintaining consistency with an established IPA framework. It should be noted that although I employed familiar terminology, this did not compromise my adherence to the idiographic approach of IPA. Each participant's data was analysed individually before any cross-case analysis conducted. This differs from thematic analysis, which typically treats all cases as a single data set from the outset (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

#### 4.2.1.1 The six-steps of analysis

In undertaking a six-step analysis, I adopted a systematic approach to comprehensively identify and evaluate the motivations of schoolteachers who engaged in a Master of Education programme. Each step served as a strategic phase, contributing to a structured and holistic exploration. The aim was to uncover insights, identify themes, and arrive at conclusions following a systematic approach.

Step 1: The first step allowed me to immerse myself in the data. This process was continuous, extending through both data collection and subsequent data analysis, contributing significantly to my overall sense-making. For the interviews, listening to the recordings opened up new perspectives on how participants interpret the concept of motivation and the ways it has influenced them during their engagement in a master's programme. Listening to the recordings provided a richer and more nuanced understanding than solely reading the transcripts. While the transcripts capture the participants' words, the recordings from the interviews allowed me to get a better sense of the participants' feelings and attitudes. Listening to the participants also allowed me to notice pauses, and areas of importance or uncertainties in their narratives. This contributed to a deeper sense of empathy and connection, enabling me to better understand how their experiences shaped their perceptions of motivation within the context of their master's programme. I felt that the recordings transformed my engagement with the data, enhancing my analysis and enriching my interpretation of the participants' journeys.

Step 2: Making initial notes provided a dedicated time for reflection, allowing the identification of points of interest to make sense of the participants' comments (examples provided in appendices H and I). It is important to emphasise that these initial notes were instrumental in

understanding the participants' perspectives and were not intended for my personal reflections on any topic.

### Step 3: Development of emerging codes for each case

By reading, re-reading and making notes, I was able to identify initial codes from the data which can easily be traced back to the data. Within each statement and transcript, the same code was found in several different passages of the data (see appendices J and K). This iterative process was essential as it allowed me to capture the essence of each participant's perspective before leading to the identification of shared themes.

#### 4.2.1.2 Codes identified from the personal statements

The identification of codes identified in seven participants' personal statements.

Aspirations	Qualifications	Teaching Strategies	Experience	Support
Learning	Passion	Motivation	Teaching methods	Contribution to learning
Change	Pupil outcome	School goals	Growth	Relevance
Leadership	Knowledge sharing	Reflective practice	Encouragement	Time commitment
Commitment	Enthusiasm	Personal goals	Family	Development
Belief				

*Table 2: Codes from personal statements*

#### 4.2.1.3 Codes identified from the interview transcripts

The identification of codes identified in ten participants' semi-structured interviews.

Motivation	Family	Confidence	Practice	Well-being	Professionalism
Learning	Peers	Support	Communication	Responsibilities	Need
Flexibility	Reflection	Time	Development	Feedback	Colleagues
Feelings	Self-belief	Fulfilment	Structure	Balance	Financial
Challenges	Strategies	Aspirations	Empathy	Career	

*Table 3: Codes from semi-structured interviews*

For steps four, five and six, once I had identified codes for each participant (step four), I moved across a cross-case analysis to identify emerging themes (steps five and six) (see an example

in appendix L). By grouping the codes, I was able to identify a thematic summary for the participants as a whole. The themes identified from the codes for the personal statements and interviews are presented below. In order to clarify and differentiate the analysis process, the content of this chapter is divided into two parts with a sub-section to present the themes identified. Part One focuses on the analysis of personal statements, while Part Two deals with the analysis of semi-structured interviews. This approach is also utilised in presenting the findings and discussion in chapter five.

## 4.2.2 Part One: The analysis of personal statement

Part One outlines the process of analysing the personal statements, detailing how three key themes were identified: *I am capable of doing well at master's level, my continuous learning and the importance of support*. This provides a foundation for their detailed presentation of Part One in chapter five.

### 4.2.2.1 Themes identified from analysis of personal statements

Theme one demonstrated the positive mind-set of the participants when applying to a master's in education programme. It communicates the readiness, determination and proactive approach which highlights the participants' preparedness for their studies. This theme was encapsulated in a comment made by a participant which helped in shaping the course of the discussion. The codes collectively convey a motivated attitude, addressing key aspects such as goals, passion, contribution to learning, and a positive approach to challenges. Please see Figure 3 below.

#### Theme 1: I am capable of doing well at master's level

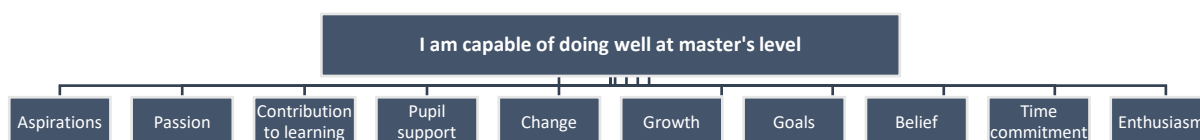


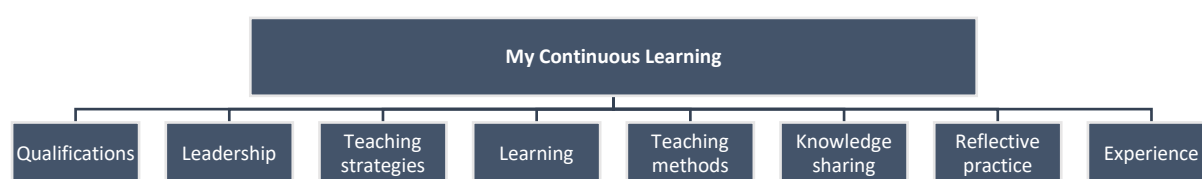
Figure 3: Theme 1: I am capable of doing well at master's level

I created mind maps to illustrate how the data aligned with the codes and themes for each participant, which can be found in Appendix L. This approach was applied consistently across

participants and provided a clear visual representation of how the codes were generated and how they related to the overarching themes derived from the data.

## Theme 2: My Continuous Learning

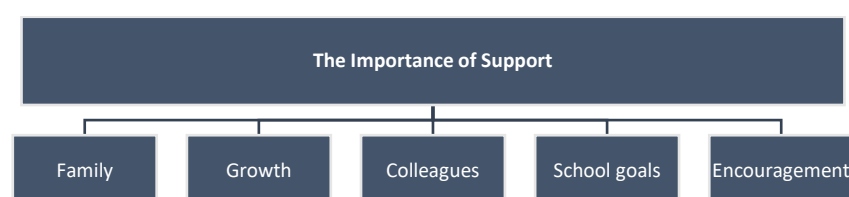
Theme 2 identifies a commitment to continued learning. The emphasis on practical activities and knowledge sharing accentuates the participants' dedication to an ongoing process of personal and professional learning. The codes align with the central theme of 'my continuous learning' (Figure 4) recognising the participants' proactive and multifaceted approach to continuous learning across areas of their practice and expertise.



*Figure 4: Theme 2: My Continuous Learning*

## Theme 3: The importance of support

The final theme of part one considered the importance of support. This theme reflects the various elements that contribute to a supportive environment for participants when they are considering engaging in a master's in education programme. The initial coding (Figure 5) emphasised the significance of support in achieving goals, growth and general well-being in a supportive system.



*Figure 5: Theme 3 The Importance of Support.*

Collectively, the three themes build a holistic narrative of the participant, which extends beyond academic ability to encompass a broader capacity for continuous growth. This growth is nurtured within a supportive network, highlighting their potential to succeed at the master's level. Aligning with key principles of SDT, theme 1 acknowledges capability which resonates with both competence and relatedness, recognising confidence in individual abilities and the

importance of interpersonal connections for their future academic success. The theme of continuous learning is reflective of autonomy, acknowledges a self-directed approach to ongoing learning and aligns with the broader culture of learning. Lastly, the importance of support corresponds to both relatedness in SDT, underlining the significance of social support, emphasising the holistic view of the participant, their practice, their family and future study. These three aspects are integral elements in the application stage of the master's programme.

### 4.2.3 Part Two: Analysis of the interview transcripts

Part Two outlines the process of analysing the semi-structured interviews, detailing how four key themes were identified: *motivation and me*, *the love of learning*, *the support I need*, and *taking care of me*. This provides a foundation for their detailed presentation in Part Two in chapter five.

#### 4.2.3.1 Themes identified from the analysis of the interview transcripts

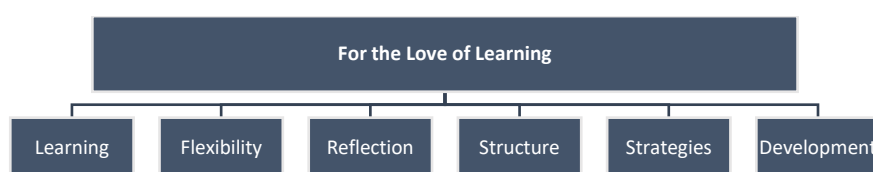
In part two, theme 1 'motivation and me' originated from the recognition of the participants' awareness of what motivation means to them and depicts the complexities of motivation. The codes of motivation, confidence, practice and aspirations highlight a continuous drive to develop (Figure 6). Alongside this, professionalism, career, and financial factors demonstrate that motivation extends beyond personal development to encompass broader professional and financial considerations.



Figure 6: Theme 1: Motivation and Me

Theme 2 considers the 'The love of learning' which captured the reflections of the participants learning in their practice and during the master's programme (Figure 7). The participants identified their need to be flexible, recognising that applying to new opportunities for learning will enhance their practice. The adaptive approach reflects participants' commitment to continuous learning. Participants reflected on how they were engaged in the learning process, where they took an active role rather than a passive one, has given them a framework that

maintains their interest and deepens their enthusiasm over time, underpinning the sustained notion of self-development. This theme highlights the relationship between their passion for learning and the structured pathway that learning provides, recognising how their professional and academic growth rely on both intrinsic motivation and the framework of master's level study. This connection recognises that for schoolteachers, professional learning is not only about acquiring knowledge but also developing a reflective, adaptable approach to their learning that shapes their identity as both teachers and learners.



*Figure 7: Theme 2: For the Love of Learning*

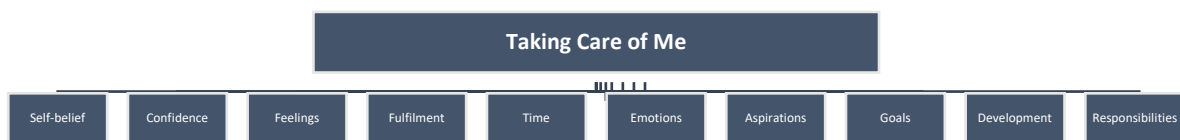
Theme 3 recognises the support systems participants relied on during their time on the master's programme (Figure 8) recognising that these networks are essential for navigating their academic and professional challenges. The theme acknowledges the supporting networks that participants draw on during their study and how guidance and feedback are drivers for their motivation, providing them with affirmation of their growth and progress. This theme highlights how these support networks helped participants stay engaged on the master's programme.



*Figure 8: Theme 3: The support I need*

The final theme, Theme 4, explores the role that internal and external factors play in the well-being of participants. This theme highlights the importance of self-care, which involves actions and behaviours prioritising the participants' physical, emotional, and mental health (Figure 9). It emphasises the need to adopt habits that contribute to overall well-being while engaged in a master's programme.





*Figure 9: Theme 4: Taking care of me*

### 4.3 Conclusion

The analysis of the personal statements (Part One) and the semi-structured interviews (Part Two) has identified key themes that provide valuable insights into the factors influencing schoolteachers' motivation to engage in master's level study. The themes derived from the coding process have offered a structured framework for exploring participants' lived experiences, particularly in relation to their sense of autonomy, relatedness and competence, as outlined in the conceptual framework of SDT discussed in chapter three.

These insights form the context for the next chapter, chapter five, where the findings will be presented and critically discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter two. This discussion will explore the participants' experiences and motivations, situating them within the broader context of SDT. By integrating the findings with extant literature, chapter five aims to contribute to the academic discourse on the motivation of schoolteachers when they engage with master's level study.

## Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the personal statements and semi-structured interviews (outlined in chapter four). I will begin by revisiting the MRQ and RQs to provide context for the analysis that follows.

### 5.1 Revisiting the MRQ and RQs

MRQ: What are the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in a Master of Education programme in Wales?

RQ1: What research has been conducted on the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in master's programmes?

RQ2: What are the motivations that influence schoolteachers' decisions to engage in a Master of Education programme?

RQ3: What motivating factors influence schoolteacher's decisions to continue with their master's level studies?

RQ4: What personal and professional support motivates schoolteachers when they are engaged in a Master of Education programme?

RQ5: What are the strengths and limitations of the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in a master's programme?

The RQs addressed in this chapter:

RQ1 considered what research has been conducted on the motivations of schoolteachers engaged in master's study. Chapter two addressed this by reviewing scholarly work on motivation, professional learning, communities of learning, and well-being, demonstrating their interconnectedness with motivation at the core. The literature identified intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and collaborative learning cultures as key factors in teacher professional learning, within which I position master's study as noted in 1.4.1. While structured and supported professional learning was valued in the literature, a gap remained in understanding the individual motivations of schoolteachers engaged in master's study. The insights from the literature review informed the RQs and interview questions and drew attention to the importance of exploring how professional learning shapes teachers' motivation, identity and practice.

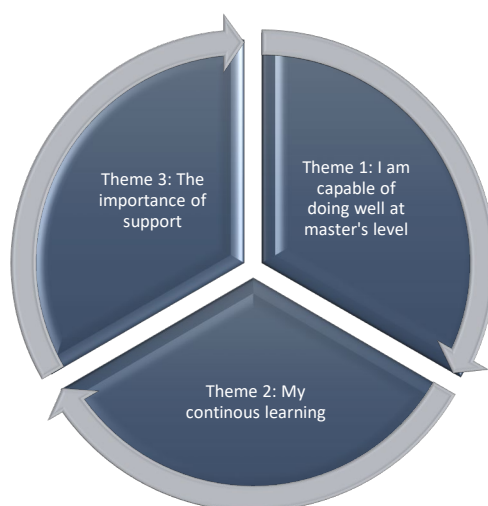
The results discussed in this chapter respond directly to RQs 2 to 5, offering new insights into schoolteachers' motivation to engage in a Master of Education programme in Wales.

## 5.2 Revisiting the themes

In consideration of the MRQ, RQs and to maintain coherence with the data analysis process outlined in chapter four, this chapter discusses the findings in relation to the identified themes. The previous chapter focused on the development of codes and themes derived from the data and was presented in two parts to distinguish between the personal statements and semi-structured interviews. Following the same approach, this chapter also structures the findings into two parts: Part One and Part Two.

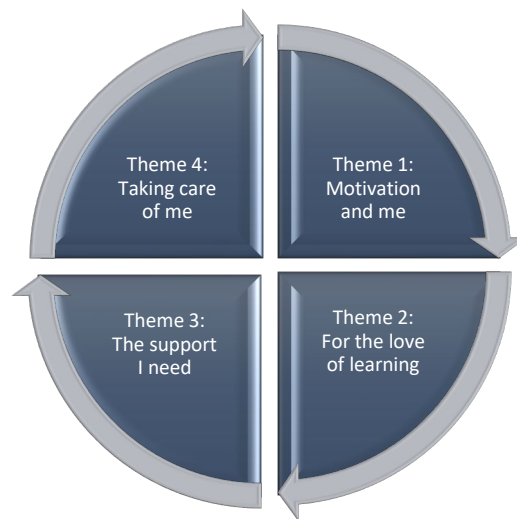
Part One addresses the findings from the participants' personal statements, titled 'Application and Inspiration.' This draws on the initial motivation that led participants to engage with a master's programme. The themes identified from the data are framed within the conceptual framework of SDT, aligned with motivation, professional learning, communities of learning and well-being. In this section, the findings are presented and discussed, integrating analytical insights to create a narrative that contextualises self-determination based on participants' experiences at the initial stage of a master's programme.

The themes presented in Part One of this chapter, from the personal statements, are as follows:



*Figure 10: The themes identified from the Personal Statements.*

The themes presented in Part Two of this chapter, from the Semi-structured interviews, are as follows:



*Figure 11: The themes identified from the semi-structured interviews.*

This approach to the findings and discussion chapter has created a well-supported argument for the significance of this research within the broader context of schoolteacher motivation and engagement in Master of Education programme in Wales, as discussed later in chapter six.

## 5.1 Part One: Application and Inspiration

Each personal statement was analysed to identify codes, which subsequently revealed themes reflecting the participants' journey in their pursuit of enrolling in a Master of Education programme. The first theme of 'I am capable of doing well at master's level' aligned with the participants' motivation to apply. Here participants disclosed their perceptions, confidence and belief in their ability to study, and their thoughts on their achievements, skills and personal commitment to their success. Following this, the theme of 'My Continuous Learning' recognises the qualifications that participants have gained and their desire to undertake further learning for their development in their teaching practice. Participants reflected on how their previous learning experiences have laid the foundation for their engagement in the master's programme, highlighting their commitment to their development and improvement in their workplace. Finally, in part one of this chapter, the theme 'The Importance of Support' shares how participants were supported in their decision to apply. This theme explores the diverse yet collectively shared experiences of participants in the support they receive, highlighting differences in the sources and forms of support from family, colleagues and school leaders. Despite these variations, the support was a common thread that emerged as participants collectively recognise the influence that external support has on their decision-making processes and motivations to apply for the master's programme.

In both Part One and Part Two of this chapter, extracts from seven participants' personal statements and ten semi-structured interviews are presented to provide context. These extracts are formatted in italics for easy identification. The extracts are balanced with interpretations and connected to key points discussed in the literature review in chapter two.

#### 5.1.1 I am capable of doing well at master's level: exploring factors that contribute to participant's motivation to study

Participants reflected on their 'readiness', the need for 'change' and their 'capability' for engaging in master's level study. To illustrate this, participants provided insights into their self-perceived academic preparedness, highlighting personal and professional experiences that contribute to their confidence in undertaking master's study. This theme considers factors shaping participants' beliefs in their readiness to succeed at master's level, offering a nuanced exploration of the overlap between individual self-efficacy, prior learning experiences, and their determination to engage in a master's programme.

One notable consideration emerging from the findings is the significance of self-perceived academic competence, also identified by Deci and Ryan's (1985) SDT. Participants highlighted the role of personal and professional experiences in shaping their confidence and commitment to undertaking master's level study. For one participant, fear of failure emerged as both a motivator and a challenge. Jane described how this fear shaped her self-determination, positioning it as a driver of her academic and professional goals, stating that *'one of [her] greatest fears is the risk of failure'* and notes that this *'has a positive impact on [her] self-determination. It makes [her] a strong and motivated individual who strives for success.'*

This perspective aligns with Richardson et al. (2014) assertion that such fear can have a paradoxically positive impact on self-determination by providing individuals with a heightened sense of control when managed constructively. Jane's perspective emphasises how fear, when reframed as a challenge rather than a threat, can be leveraged to drive her motivation for growth, aligning with Locke and Latham's (2019) exploration of the relationship between challenges, personal learning and motivation. By viewing failure as an integral component of the learning process, Jane demonstrates how a positive attitude towards adversity can act as a catalyst for personal and academic development. However, while fear of failure appears to have spurred Jane's readiness to learn, it raises questions about how this motivation can be sustained and the extent to which coping strategies are employed to manage the associated emotional and academic pressures that master's study may bring. Baldinger (2022) identifies

the relationship between motivation and study preparation and suggests that managing these challenges effectively requires targeted coping mechanisms, a particular need for those enrolling in master's study. This insight, as recognised in the literature review, informed further enquiry during interviews, allowing participants to expand on the strategies they employed to maintain motivation in the face of personal and professional pressures (see 5.2.3). At the time of applying, the potential for managing studies alongside work may not have been considered by Jane.

Possessing well-defined career goals at this initial phase of the programme indicates the motivation for academic and professional development (Brandon and Derrington, 2019). Participants conveyed a sense of readiness and a recognition of the current moment as opportune. Jones et al. (2019) suggest that actively seeking learning opportunities demonstrates autonomy, which is important for developing intrinsic motivation and self-directed learning. Stella's statement exemplifies this connection between having a clear purpose and recognising the right moment to pursue master's study:

*I have chosen this year to apply for this course, due to the exciting changes that are currently underway in Wales relating to additional needs. I am keen to gain a greater depth of understanding of the changes that will be implemented and view this as an opportunity to continue my own professional learning... At this stage in my career, I am looking to progress further, and I have a keen interest in furthering my skills (Stella).*

Locke and Latham (2019) addressed the significant role of goal setting in personal development, noting its influence on intrinsic motivation than on external rewards such as career progression. Stella's perspective supports this assertion, as her primary focus was on deepening her expertise to enhance her effectiveness in her role. This focus on purpose-driven learning indicates a shift in values, where her engagement is grounded in the intrinsic relevance of professional learning rather than external validation. Anderson (2020) also noted that a clear sense of purpose is central to motivation, demonstrating a commitment to both career goals and continuous learning. Stella's experience illustrates this alignment, demonstrating that genuine professional learning is driven by intrinsic goals rather than merely aspiration to progress.

Participants displayed a proactive approach in broadening their knowledge and skills, also linking their motivations to significant policy changes occurring in Wales. Having an awareness of the broader context indicates their willingness to adapt (Sachs, 2016) and stay informed (Fraser et al., 2007) of the evolving vision of the education system. However, this focus on the broader systemic changes may obscure individuals' experiences or challenges that may have

influenced their decision to enrol in the programme. Granziera et al. (2021) provide a contrasting perspective, suggesting that the perceived improvement in knowledge acquisition can itself provide fulfilment. This sense of personal growth may have been an equally significant factor motivating participants to apply for the programme, demonstrating that motivations can arise from a complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Having an awareness of the broader context is also found in Rosie's statement, where she too had a willingness to adapt to the changes in the education vision of Wales:

*Over the course of my career, the sphere of education has undergone significant change and challenges; with changing policies, courses and technologies all impacting on education, I feel it would be an invaluable time to undertake an MA to enable me to stay abreast of the changes and support not only students but my department and school (Rosie).*

Rosie recognises the potential impact that a master's programme would have in developing her knowledge and understanding of the changes in the Welsh education landscape. In essence, she states that the master's programme is necessary to ensure that she is well equipped to navigate these complexities and respond effectively to the evolving demands of her role. By undertaking this level of study, Rosie aims to enhance her teaching strategies, develop professionally and contribute meaningfully to her school and students' success. This finding relates to Netolicky's (2020) focus on transformational professional learning, which prioritises the importance of continuous growth and adaptability as essential components of effective teaching. Rosie acknowledged her strengths in practice and believes that the master's programme is an opportunity to build on these foundations. She anticipates that the programme will not only contribute to collective success in managing change, but also positively impact her students, school and community. This positive stance reflects a broader commitment to professional learning that goes beyond individual success, supporting Weston and Clay's (2018) observations on the importance of collective success and its influence on motivation. However, Rosie's statement does not elaborate on how she plans to integrate the knowledge gained into her teaching practice or balance the demands of further study alongside her professional obligations. Such details would have offered greater insight into her strategies for managing these dual roles and ensuring that her engagement with the programme translates into meaningful change within her professional practice. This consideration points to the importance of exploring not only how participants approach their studies but also how they anticipate their learning in practice. This will be explored further in part two of this chapter.

Continuous improvement and commitment are elements of professional learning that are also emphasised by Hall and Wall (2019), who advocate the need for sustained effort and willingness to engage in professional development. This concept is congruent with the participant's dedication and motivation to ongoing learning. The aspiration to become a more effective teacher and to be able to offer better opportunities for their students emerges as a key motivator for participants' enrolment on a master's programme. The clarity of their goals and determination to benefit others is equally considered by Leanne:

*I am a highly motivated, enthusiastic teacher who is keen to develop the minds of future generations ensuring their progression into the workplace and as active citizens within society... I believe that the MA Education programme would enable me to combine my undergraduate experience, my teaching experience and newly gained knowledge to the benefit of both the students and school within the Welsh education system (Leanne).*

Leanne's motivation appears to be embedded in her passion for teaching, her professional ambition and student development which resonates with having a robust professional identity. This aligns with Sachs' (2016) assertion that teachers' roles extend beyond delivering knowledge to influencing students' intellectual and social development, thereby contributing to the wider society. Leanne's awareness of the local context within Wales, coupled with her commitment to engage with the master's programme, reflects a readiness to influence and enhance her practice for others. This focus is also identified in the motivations of other participants, highlighting their readiness to take ownership of their professional learning. This readiness is indicative of autonomy, as described by Ryan and Deci (2000), where individuals perceive themselves as having control over their actions in pursuit of their goals.

Similar to Leanne, capability and readiness to engage are highlighted by Jamie who is keen to demonstrate his skills, and he feels that having developed a '*critical eye*' through CPD, he is therefore well equipped to return to study, emphasising this as a motivational factor:

*Since my PGCE I have attempted to be a reflective practitioner...writing notes on what needed to be improved in my practice...I have been on a lot of CPD courses and I am developing a more critical eye to evaluate the effectiveness of new advice and think how to apply it to practice...I am capable of doing well at Master's level...I am highly motivated to succeed in this course. I have been planning further study for a long time and see it both as an opportunity to further my professional capability, and an opportunity to make up for my poor performance at undergraduate level (Jamie).*

Jamie demonstrates a commitment to professional growth and learning, as evidenced by his critical reflection on his previous academic experiences and his intention to utilise the master's programme as a transformative opportunity to redefine his educational journey. His self-



awareness, especially in relation to his undergraduate performance, recognises a personal drive to overcome past challenges to enhance his professional competence (Hall and Wall, 2019). The ability to critically evaluate new advice and integrate it into practice, as Jamie reflects his readiness to apply higher-order thinking, a skill essential for postgraduate study (QAA, 2020a). His confidence in his capability further suggests a sense of preparedness for the academic rigour of a master's programme. Jamie's acknowledgement of the dedication required for postgraduate study reflects the view of Hattie et al. (2020), who convey the importance of commitment and motivation for achieving success. This persistence and determination described by Jamie are also evident in the experiences of other participants in this research, which suggests that prior learning plays a role in shaping their sense of competence and belief in their ability to meet the demands of master's-level study. This reinforces the idea that past academic experiences contribute to a learner's belief and preparedness, influencing their engagement in master's study. For example, Georgia takes into account the impact of previous learning stating that she now feels '*confident*' in meeting '*the high expectations and demands of the MA course*'.

In Georgia's statement, a subtle change in motivation can be found as she raised the 'familiarity' with the university and teaching team. Familiarity with the academic environment as a motivator to study is a factor not identified during the literature search and highlights a potential contribution to knowledge in the field. The concept of familiarity as a motivator to study in HE is an important one when considering its interpretation from the student perspective. This familiarity suggests that HEIs have a pivotal role in supporting students' feelings of competence and control, which can directly impact their motivation to engage in postgraduate study. For returning students, the recognition of familiar faces, spaces and routines, and also the university resources and academic processes could reinforce a sense of continuity and connection. This not only supports their transition but also strengthens a sense of belonging by reaffirming their student identity (Kahu and Nelson, 2018). The familiarity Georgia detailed may offer her a sense of security and support, which can be viewed as a motivator to re-engage with studies potentially providing her with greater confidence.

In view of her readiness, Georgia also recognises the necessary skills and shares her confidence in her ability to succeed. This confidence, shaped by her previous positive experience at the university, aligns with the achievement-related motivation framework proposed by Elliott and Dweck (1988). Their framework affirmed that motivational factors could shape individual choices and subsequent performance outcomes. Participants highlighted the importance of confidence as a predictor of success (Hattie et al., 2020). For example, Georgia

expressed how her confidence in meeting the requirements of a master's degree encouraged a focus on her personal development.

Similarly, Georgia indicated that her primary goal is to become a more effective practitioner through her engagement with the programme. This is reflected in the findings of Arthur et al. (2006), which signified the important role HEIs play in enhancing student confidence and belief in their potential for success. Her goal is both specific and tangible, reflecting her commitment to her purpose of engagement and her long-term aspirations, a notion also evidenced by Sian:

*The decision to pursue the MA Education course at xxx University is a thoughtful and purposeful choice, influenced by my commitment to expanding my knowledge and understanding...Confident in my intellectual abilities and equipped with relevant skills, I am enthusiastic and highly motivated to embark on this academic journey...further helping the progression of my career in education (Sian).*

Sian acknowledges the intrinsic rewards and intellectual challenges that fuel her motivation, emphasising that applying for a master's qualification is a deliberate and thoughtful decision driven by a clear sense of purpose. In this context, Sian recognises the importance of research as a core component of both academic and professional learning. This reflects her commitment to broadening her knowledge and embracing continuous learning, a mind-set that is essential for both personal and professional development (Daumiller et al., 2021). Sian's approach demonstrates a deliberate and purposeful commitment to academic and professional development, emphasising the importance of integrating educational research into professional practice. Winch et al. (2015) acknowledge the potential of educational research to enhance teachers' knowledge and teaching practices, whilst also highlighting the challenges of embedding this relationship within academic programmes. This is a crucial point, as it signifies the need to gain a deeper insight into how teachers engage with learning to advance their careers and enhance their expertise. Through this lens, Sian's motivation extends beyond academic achievement to represent a strategic investment in her future professional trajectory. This underscores the interconnectedness of motivation, learning and development, as well as the participants' sense of autonomy and agency in shaping their learning to influence practice (Anderman, 2020). For some, their engagement with the programme appears to be a strategic move aimed at career progressions, implying that their motivation may be partly driven by a desire for external rewards and recognition, seeking tangible benefits and validation through a master's qualification. This perspective is consistent with the conceptualisation of motivation proposed by Brandon and Derrington (2019) and the emphasis on commitment to professional learning and career goals identified by Anderson (2020). Participants demonstrate a positive approach in expanding their expertise, situating

their motivation within a broader awareness of change in the education system. This suggests their adaptability and a forward-looking orientation, driven by a desire to engage meaningfully with ongoing developments. By actively seeking to contribute to these changes, participants exhibit motivations that are not only personal but also reflective of a wider sense of responsibility and ambition. These findings reinforce the notion that professional learning is closely connected to participants' readiness to align their goals with evolving educational priorities and contexts.

In summary, participants' recognition of their strength in practice and the potential impact of the master's programme on their professional learning echoes Weston and Clay's (2018) concept of collective success. This commitment to continuous improvement and ongoing learning, as advocated by Shulman and Shulman (2004), Hall and Wall (2019), and Brandon and Derrington (2019). The motivations for enrolling in a master's programme are complex, encompassing both intrinsic personal development and extrinsic factors like career advancement, as outlined in Ryan and Deci's (2000) SDT. These findings suggest that participants are influenced by a combination of personal aspirations and external objectives, which can collectively shape their engagement with the programme.

An area that has not previously been considered is the role of familiarity with the academic environment as a motivator. This perspective suggests that a sense of comfort and familiarity within the HEI may play a role in shaping motivation and commitment to enrol in master's studies. Improving practice through their engagement with master's level study as a motivator, resonates with Arthur et al.'s (2006) emphasis on the crucial role HEIs play in shaping the learning experience, and with Kahu and Nelson's (2018) notion that engagement and belonging and interconnected collective efforts. Furthermore, participants' well-being, which is closely linked to their sense of belonging, emerges as a fundamental factor in their overall success and motivation to engage in the master's programme.

The findings of 5.1.1 indicate that participants' motivations are closely linked to their competencies, future goals and aspirations. These key concepts signify participants' willingness for professional development and growth and demonstrate their determination to achieve personal and professional goals, which reflects their underlying motivations for learning. This is linked to the second theme of 'my continuous learning'.

#### 5.1.2 My continuous learning: exploring participants' commitment to their continued professional learning

Participants demonstrated their commitment to professional growth and the determination required to navigate the evolving role of schoolteachers. They have also cultivated a mind-set of continuous learning that extends beyond the classroom. Stella's decision to pursue a master's degree exemplifies her recognition of the importance of ongoing learning and transferable skills, a perspective also acknowledged by Baldinger (2022). Stella states:

*I am aware of how my skills and experiences from study can be effectively transferred into practice...I hope to gain a greater understanding of additional learning needs and current documentation to fulfil my role (Stella).*

Stella's dedication to continuously improve her teaching practice also aligns with Harper-Hill et al.'s (2022) identification of dedication as a motivational factor. This commitment signifies her readiness to adapt to evolving practice-based needs. Drawing from her leadership experience and exposure to challenging educational environments, Stella affirms that ongoing learning will refine her pedagogical approach. She recognises that the complexity of her role requires continuous development, and her commitment to staying informed about best practices is essential. Stella's considerations can be identified in the perspectives of Fraser et al. (2007) and Timperley (2011), who stress the importance of becoming an evidence-informed practitioner. Through her experience, Stella not only acknowledges the value of ongoing learning but also actively integrates it into her practice. Rosie also acknowledges the constantly evolving educational agenda, and the need for '*staying abreast of changes*' is perceived as a motivator to enrol in a master's programme. This awareness of the evolving educational landscape signifies Rosie's motivation in adapting to changes and challenges brought about by shifting policies, course structures and emerging technologies. She recognises that undertaking a master's degree would provide her with the skills to adapt to these changes, signifying her motivation to enhance her teaching practice. The necessity of maintaining awareness and adapting to change, coupled with the drive of pursuing a master's programme in order to achieve this goal, is supported by Furlong (2014) and McCallum (2021), who affirm that teachers must engage in research and enquiry in order to facilitate continuous professional growth. This commitment can contribute to job satisfaction and confirms participants' dedication to staying informed so that they have a positive impact on student outcomes (Hall and Wall, 2019).

While acknowledging the potential challenges of professional learning, as noted by Dagenais et al. (2012) and Hall and Wall (2019), Rosie's belief in the value of further study influences her motivation to overcome these challenges, showing a dedication to learning and a willingness to adapt to change to enhance her effectiveness. This is consistent with the view

of other participants who perceive the master's programme as a means of enhancing their teaching experience while also developing an understanding of the synergies between theory and its practical application (Burstow, 2018).

For example, Leanne recognises the correlation between theory and practice stating that she has incorporated her '*subject knowledge, creativity, life, and teaching experiences within a classroom setting*'. What distinguishes Leanne's perspective is the concept of continuous learning, which is not limited to the transmission of knowledge, but also includes the cultivation of skills that are crucial throughout life. By sharing the importance of collaborative and interactive learning environments and affirming that she ensures '*that students can relate to everyday activities and world events and share their experiences*', Leanne demonstrates her intrinsic interest in creating a supportive, relevant and engaging learning culture. This indicates that she is motivated by meaningful connection, aligning with the views of Weston and Clay (2018) and Harper-Hill et al. (2022). Additionally, Leanne's motivation appears to stem from her commitment to lifelong learning and enhancing her pedagogical skills to benefit her students and colleagues.

Similarly, Jamie emphasises the importance of self-reflection in the development of professional expertise. This underpins the important role of collaborative and interactive learning, as exemplified by Leanne. These insights into the master's learning opportunity serve as a valuable source of motivation for engaging in their professional learning. This finding is reflected in the work of Rodman (2019) and Mockler (2020), who suggest that promoting constructive changes in pedagogical approaches and engaging in self-reflection are crucial elements of professional development for teachers. Similarly, participants identified the value of continuous improvement and meaningful development in their practices. For example, Jamie exemplifies these processes by using reflective practice to evaluate and adapt his teaching, demonstrating the tangible impact of self-reflection and constructive change:

*I have attempted to be a reflective practitioner. I began by spending time at the end of the day writing notes on what went well and what needed to be improved in my practice...I am developing a more critical eye to evaluate the effectiveness of new advice and to think about how they apply to my own practice (Jamie).*

Jamie's recognition of the need for self-improvement demonstrates his commitment to continuous professional learning. His proactive pursuit of opportunities his commitment to enhance his skills and keep up to date in his workplace reflects what Mooney Simmie (2023) identifies as the characteristics of engaged professional learning. However, Jamie's motivation goes beyond the acquisition of skills; it is driven by his desire to challenge his thinking and

critically evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of new learning. This is consistent with Nolan and Guo's (2022) argument that professional learning should encourage educators to move beyond surface-level engagement and adopt a more reflective stance toward changes in educational practice. For Jamie, the master's programme represents more than a qualification, it is a platform to critically engage with new knowledge, refine his thinking skills and broaden his perspective. This deeper intellectual engagement appears to be a key motivator for his decision to seek further study.

Georgia's commitment to academic exploration suggests a recognition of the value of broadening her understanding beyond practical teaching experience. She reflects on her academic journey, noting that her time at university sparked a '*thirst for knowledge that hasn't been quenched by my career in teaching so far.*' This statement reveals that, although she has gained practical experiences in teaching, she feels that it does not fully satisfy her intellectual curiosity or provide the depth of understanding she seeks. She goes on to explain her time at university '*inspired by [her] deeper sense of understanding about [her] practice*', indicating that the academic environment allowed her to engage in a more profound analysis of her teaching methods and theories. This readiness reveals a desire for deeper academic engagement and illustrates a strong sense of ownership of her learning. It is evident here that Georgia's prior experiences have had a long-lasting influence on her approach to teaching, as she now feels more prepared for the role. However, her motivation lies in her connection with self-improvement, a concept that may not be fully met in the daily routine of teaching. This insight suggests an awareness of the particular benefits that master's level study can bring to her as a result of her professional learning.

Similar to Leanne and Georgia, Sian believes that her undergraduate degree has been instrumental in developing her skills. Sian states that:

*Engaging in group projects and regular presentations, I developed the art of audience engagement and instilled a passion for clear communication and effective organisational skills. These skills I believe, will be vital when managing my studies and independent research while concurrently working as a teacher (Sian).*

Although her approach is not merely concerned with the acquisition of knowledge, it also encompasses the broader educational experience and the development of skills that extend beyond the boundaries of her practice. This indicates that she is driven to gain a well-rounded perspective with the aim of enhancing her effectiveness in her practice.

Sian's motivation is further informed by her awareness of the challenges that lie ahead, a concept highlighted by Collie et al. (2017) who discuss the difficulties of balancing multiple responsibilities, including the commitment to professional learning and its impact on work-life balance. While Sian shares these challenges, she remains optimistic, believing that the skills she has acquired so far will serve as a strong foundation for managing them. Her consideration of her abilities to manage academic commitments alongside her teaching is not only a reflection of her past experiences but also a motivating factor for her continued learning. In relation to work-life balance and study management, Sian does not recognise the importance of support networks during the application process; however, this concept will be explored further in part two of this chapter (see 5.1.3 and 5.2).

In summary, this theme has highlighted the participants' recognition of skills that have developed over time, which they identify as essential for their professional learning and development moving forward in their studies. The motivating factors of positive prior experiences, dedication, currency, commitment, self-improvement, value and effectiveness are evident in the data which demonstrates what Mezza (2022) identified as teacher professionalism. These recognitions serve to emphasise the diverse nature of continuous learning and to highlight the potential influence of a supportive environment in adapting to the challenges of teaching practice. The theme of support emerges as an important consideration, particularly when exploring a holistic view of professional learning (Virtue et al., 2019).

### 5.1.3 The importance of support: personal and professional support networks available to participants when applying for a master's degree

This section focuses on the support identified by participants during the application process. According to Cohen and Wills' (1985) theory of Social Support, social relationships are crucial for engaging in further learning opportunities. This concept is fundamental for achieving personal and professional goals (Cohen and Wills, 1985). COR theory (Hobfoll, 1998) (see 2.5.1) emphasised the importance of the individual's management of social resources to achieve goals and promote well-being, which may be useful in this context, as Jane recognises the role of family in motivating her to engage in master's study. She also feels a sense of responsibility to contribute to her family's success and hopes that her studies will also contribute to her own personal fulfilment, Jane expressed:

*I want to better myself for my family who support me greatly. My motivation is to give them a better life and for them to be proud of me... I have recently taken a career break to look after my children (Jane).*

This statement reflects a wider perspective of the master's programme, extending beyond individual career goals to include the well-being and success of her family. It highlights a gap in the literature regarding the influence of family on schoolteacher motivation to engage in further study, beyond practice and learning, and what I interpret as a recognition of the person behind the teacher. While previous studies (Fiorill et al., 2019a; Thielking and Prochazka, 2022) acknowledge the positive role of family in supporting well-being and coping with stress, there is limited literature that considers the drive behind schoolteachers' motivation to study. Jane's motivation here is illustrated by her desire to balance personal aspirations with familial responsibilities, reflecting a deeper, intrinsic drive to improve both her professional life and the well-being of her family. Jane's decision to take a career break to care for her children further illustrates the importance of her family and how individuals are able to navigate personal familial challenges for their professional learning. By taking the time to reassess her priorities and dedicate herself to her family, she demonstrates the value of personal growth in shaping her motivation to return to professional learning. The importance of family is also identified by Rosie, who shares her priorities when considering further study:

*After having my own family, I took a step back in my career to enable me to raise my children and ensure I could be both a good teacher and a good parent (Rosie).*

Although participants identify the influence their family has had in their motivation to enrol in a master's programme, Jamie draws on the support from his professional network, where he is *'heartened that my head teacher agrees and is encouraging me to do this'*. Jamie's confidence, supported by the headteacher's endorsement, motivates him to take on the challenge of balancing work and study. This is found to be an essential factor for maintaining a positive mindset and can contribute to resilience and motivation when facing any challenges (Anderman, 2020), particularly relevant during master's level study.

Validation from the headteacher is also identified by Stella who stated that *'the headteacher has praised my drive.'* The term *'drive'* implies Stella's determination, reinforcing her focus on achieving her aspirations (Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2021). The positive feedback from the headteacher suggests that these qualities are valued in the context of her decision to enrol on a master's programme. In line with Mullins' (2014) concept of empowerment, where positive feedback develops a sense of value and motivation. Moreover, scholars like Timperley (2008) and Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) emphasise that such feedback promotes a sense of worth but also facilitates development, a view echoed by Jong et al. (2019), who assert that feeling valued and supported can significantly enhance professional practice.



Therefore, it is evident that validation from leadership plays a vital role in reinforcing the motivation for professional growth.

The notion of feeling valued and supported is reflected in Sian's perspective, as she signifies the importance of both family and colleague support in her ambition to succeed in her future studies:

*I attribute much of my success in education to the support of my family and colleagues. Their encouragement has been instrumental in shaping my educational philosophy and aspirations (Sian).*

Sian acknowledges the support system, demonstrating an understanding of how interpersonal relationships can impact on schoolteacher growth. This aligns with Kachchhap and Horo's (2021) proposal that a support network significantly affects the sense of belonging. This idea is consistent with the notion that a positive school environment and supportive relationships contribute to a teacher's satisfaction and, subsequently, their student achievement.

In summary, to conclude part one, this section has highlighted the importance of support during the application process for a master's programme. Findings show the influence of family support on the decision to apply for a master's qualification, with participants acknowledging the importance of social support in their learning journey. By recognising the broader perspective beyond individual goals, they recognise the connection between personal and professional motivations. The lack of research on teachers with family responsibilities complicates this discussion, as it encompasses not only their professional roles but also their personal experiences outside of work. Furthermore, the findings of Turner et al. (2022) support the notion that the family environment enhances wellbeing, a sentiment echoed by the participants in this research. Similarly, Fiorill et al. (2019a) emphasised the role of family as a key source of support that influences teacher well-being and decision-making. Although specific information about family dynamics was not collected during my research, it became evident that family emerged as a strong concept in the participants' narratives. This highlights a gap in the literature regarding the influence of family support on teacher motivation, particularly in relation to the decision to engage in a master's programme. This gap offers new insight into the personal factors that drive schoolteachers' decisions, bridging the divide between their personal commitments and professional aspirations.

The participants' emphasis on achieving work-life balance, being open to stepping out of their comfort zone, and taking into account family priorities is in line with the autonomy and competence aspects of SDT (Deci and Ryan, 2000). This connection highlights the

interconnectedness of personal and professional aspects, revealing that a simple sense of connectedness does not fully capture the complexity of these relationships. In contrast, the concept of interconnectedness recognises the broader and more intricate network of relationships involved, advocating for a more holistic approach to teachers' professional development and learning.

The concept of empowerment, as identified by Mullins (2014) and SDT's relatedness (Deci and Ryan 2020) are inextricably linked. Supportive relationships facilitate empowerment, while empowered individuals contribute to stronger connections with others (Kachchhap and Horo, 2021). In both personal and professional contexts, empowerment and relatedness has a mutually reinforcing effect on participants and their collective well-being. It highlights the significance of acknowledging and reinforcing positive attributes, which concurs with Timperley's (2008) and Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2020) perspectives on enhancing professional practice. External validation, as considered by Anderman (2020), is recognised as a factor contributing to positive self-assessment, resilience, and motivation in preparation of the challenges of master's level study. Participants acknowledge these challenges, however, their determination to engage in the master's programme is clear, driven by a commitment to their professional learning. This insight enhances understanding of the participants' experiences and aligns with the broader concepts of empowerment and motivation in developing practice through professional learning opportunities.

Part One of this chapter, presented the findings from the personal statements of seven of the ten participants. This provided a foundation for understanding the motivations for applying to the master's programme. Part Two turns the focus to the semi-structured interviews, where the findings from all ten participants' experiences are presented and discussed. This section provides an in-depth view of the insights influencing participants' motivation to engage with a master's programme. Following part two, there is an overview of the key findings, followed by how the findings addressed the RQs, and finally a conclusion to summarise the key points.

## 5.2 Part Two: A continuum of learning

The findings presented in Part Two, derived from the semi-structured interview data and organised into overarching themes similar to those in Part One of this chapter, with the addition of a theme focusing on approaches to support participant well-being. These themes, along with their sub-sections, offer valuable insights into the participant's motivations and experiences. The RQs guiding this exploration are: RQ3: What motivating factors influence schoolteacher's decisions to continue with their master's level studies? RQ4: What personal



interacting factors. This suggests that individual experiences significantly shape each participant's motivation to engage in professional learning. It highlights that there is no single motivational factor that universally drives participants' decision to engage in a master's programme. By exploring these factors in more depth, the findings offer valuable insight into how their personal and professional experiences influence their decisions to engage in a Master of Education programme.

### 5.2.1 Motivation and Me: exploring personal and professional motivation factors throughout the time studying on a master's programme

Teacher achievement and fulfilment significantly influence their decision-making and behaviour (Anderman 2020; Anderson, 2020). In their professional and personal reflections on motivation, participants discussed how their motivations provide a sense of achievement, fulfilment, and a way to support their development. These reflections resonate with Zimmerman and Schunk's (2011) assertion on the role of self-regulation in behaviour, as well as its relationship to identity formation, suggesting that teachers actively seek opportunities for professional development as a way to strengthen their identity. This commitment to ongoing learning is further supported by Timperley (2011) and Zhao (2022), who recognised the importance of proactive, self-regulated behaviours in order to enhance teacher effectiveness. Participants identified that setting goals, self-monitoring, reflecting, and adapting contribute to their motivation to influence practice. For example, Delia and Stella's comments illustrate how motivation and self-regulation guide their development. Delia expressed her motivation to advance professionally as a leader to have a greater impact on others: *'my drive I suppose is to go a bit further up so I can implement more of my ideas and make sure that I look and nurture more people'*. Similarly, Stella connects her learning to her teaching practice, noting: *'it does give me that confidence and then because I'm learning the children get to hear about it and it sort of motivates them, seeing that I'm doing what I'm trying to get them to do...practicing what I'm preaching, I guess'*. These reflections draw on the motivation, professional learning, and the drive to positively influence both colleagues and students, signifying the importance of a self-regulated, goal-orientated approach to professional learning.

Drawing from Deci and Ryan's (2020) concept of relatedness, various intrinsic and extrinsic factors influenced participants' motivation to develop their practice. Delia perceives motivation as a way of providing her with a sense of accomplishment stating *'it gives me motivation to think oh, what can I learn today? How can I use that?'*. The movement between the internal and external motivation was echoed by other participants. For example, Leanne emphasised

both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, noting, *'I think you feel more energised... you feel important in what you're doing. What you are doing has value to both yourself and to the department or to the school'*. Similarly, Rosie acknowledges the influence of intrinsic motivation, stating that she is *'more motivated when it's something new, and maybe something that I can relate to, an experience that I've been struggling with in my own practice'*. The varying motivations of the participants, ranging from intrinsic factors to extrinsic influences demonstrate the fluidity of motivation. This shift contributes to participants' engagement with their master's studies, suggesting that their motivations are shaped by personal aspirations and external expectations. As explored further in the next section, these diverse motivations offer valuable insight into the holistic development of participants and the broader implications for their professional satisfaction.

#### 5.2.1.1 The Professional and the Personal Self: The intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that influence participants professionally and personally

Professionally, all participants recognise how they are motivated to engage in the master's programme as they can see how it is developing and rewarding them in their practice. This transformational influence is identified as a motivator to engage with their studies, as disclosed by Stella and Jane:

*I've always been going into school and applying what I'm doing so when I do that, that really motivates me, I find it really rewarding because you see what effect it has, and then it just seeing things come together as well (Stella).*

*It's impacted me greatly, hugely. It's allowed me to reflect on my practice and improve areas which I probably wouldn't have thought about before. It's guided me through my career in ways that I didn't think that it would, it's taken me to places and helped me to meet people that have impacted my professional, my professional life really, and how I conduct myself as a practitioner and how I use this to develop the children and develop teaching and learning within my classroom and within the school that I teach in (Jane).*

For many participants, motivation is described as an internal drive to achieve personal and external goals, encompassing aspirations that extend beyond oneself (Anderson, 2020). For example, Sian expressed a desire to develop not only for personal gain but also for the benefit of others, driven by an ingrained sense of purpose and responsibility:

*I want to do my best by everybody. So being motivated then is that real deep drive within me and sometimes that could be about the goals that I aim for and the lifelong dreams I have (Sian).*

Similarly, Sally finds motivation in the need to develop personally, stating that *'wanting motivation is wanting to better myself, I suppose'*. However, Sally goes on to explain how motivation can be influenced by external factors too, explaining that *'maybe there's a little bit of me that wants to prove to others that even though I am...I'm very quick on humour, even though I'm the joke, I'm not a joke. So that motivates me to prove to other people as well, that actually 'she talks sense'*. Sally's motivation reflects a desire for self-improvement and a determination to prove herself to others, indicating that motivation can be influenced by external perceptions and the need for validation. Participants also reflect on the influence of their master's learning and acknowledge that they are developing confidence as a direct result of it which is discussed later in section 5.2.1.3. The transition from seeking validation to focusing on the development of confidence reflects the emotional aspect of engaging in professional learning. Participants revealed that their motivations transitioned from external validation to a more internal sense of self-assurance in their abilities. This shift is consistent with Deci and Ryan's (2000) framework, which emphasises the importance of intrinsic motivation in sustaining meaningful learning. The internal challenges faced by participants while navigating the professional learning environment can therefore be more deeply understood. Emotional states can fluctuate rapidly, making them more difficult to fully comprehend in real-time (Kahu and Nelson, 2018). Participants responses further illustrate the difficulty in recognising and articulating their emotional awareness during their studies. These insights suggest that emotional fluctuations play an important role in the motivations of participants, emphasising the need to consider emotional factors within the context of master's study.

#### 5.2.1.2 Motivation in the Face of Challenge: exploring the motivations of participants when they are met by challenges

During the interviews, participants identified key challenges they faced. This highlighted the various obstacles participants encounter personally and professionally when engaged in academic studies. It suggests that navigating master's level study can be daunting and demanding for teachers as students. However, some participants viewed this challenge as a chance for personal growth and an opportunity to overcome their insecurities. This has influenced their initial self-assurance regarding academic writing and their sense of venturing beyond their comfort zone during their studies, as evidenced in the comments by Jane and Rosie below:

*So, before I started the Masters, I hadn't been a student for at least 10 years. So, for me, it has helped me grow academically. I just remember how it felt at the beginning*

*of this. I haven't written an assignment for over 10 years I had to reteach myself how to write an academic piece of writing. Yeah, it was tough (Jane).*

*One of the things that makes me feel demotivated is when I think I can't do something, and I have a barrier that I need to push through. And at that point, I just have to keep going. Keep reading, usually means I have a need to find out more because the reason that I'm feeling like that is only because I haven't found it out yet (Rosie).*

These perspectives illustrate that motivation persists in the face of perseverance and adaptation. Although some participants identify perseverance in achieving their academic goals, other participants have indicated that other challenging factors influence their motivation, for example, combining their studies with other commitments. This highlights the emotional impact that engaging in a master's programme can have, including feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and pressure from balancing obligations as identified by Georgia and Sian:

*But sometimes it comes to the detriment of the other side of my brain where it's like if you don't do it, then you're rubbish. You don't get this mark you'd be rubbish and hanging on marks and things (Georgia).*

*I feel like it is a bit of a journey and there are ups and there are downs, but I know that my practice and how busy I am in practice especially at certain times of the year the run up to school holidays is hard and if I'm trying to do my studies alongside that, I do struggle with that you know (Sian).*

Balancing time commitments was a notable concern for participants, and all referred to the challenges this imposed on their time to study, with Sian stating that '*one of the biggest barriers is managing and balancing time*' similar considerations relayed by Jamie who discloses that '*work-life balance isn't there*'. The concept of time is central to the participants' experiences, as it demonstrates the tension between personal and professional responsibilities. For participants, the struggle to balance these demands not only limits their ability to focus on their studies but can also affect their overall well-being. As Evers et al. (2016) assert, balancing work, study and personal life is a common challenge which often leads to increased stress and decreased motivation. Similarly, Durksen et al. (2017), stress that time constraints can impede academic engagement, which can make it difficult for teachers to fully invest in learning experiences. However, while scholars recognise these pressures, it does not fully address how institutional policies might alleviate them. For participants, the challenge of managing time becomes a significant barrier that may hinder their progress, underlining the need for more flexible structures to support their learning.

The challenges presented by the participants show that motivation is not a linear process. Overcoming various obstacles, including academic challenges, time management, adapting to new tasks, and emotional strain, requires a commitment to study and the determination to succeed. Research by Timperley (2008), Klassen and Tze (2014) and Deci and Ryan (2020) identified that individuals may face challenges during their professional learning. However, these challenges can contribute to achieving personal and professional goals as identified later in the theme 'For the love of learning' in section 5.2.2.

#### 5.2.1.3 Developing my Confidence: exploring the influence on participants' self-belief

Despite the challenges, participants reflected on how the master's programme has positively influenced their confidence in their practice, reflecting Locke and Latham's (2019) emphasis on continuous learning. All participants reported that the master's programme had enhanced their confidence by equipping them with new knowledge and skills, leading to greater self-assurance in their practice and sustained motivation to continue learning. For example, Leanne acknowledged that her motivation to learn had increased her confidence in staying true to herself, recognising that *'it's made [her] more confident to kind of be [her]*. She explained how *'sometimes at work, [she] kind of puts on [her] teacher mask'* disclosing that she puts on *'a new persona'* at work. However, on reflection she states that *'it's okay to be me, I can still be me and progress'*. Leanne expressed feeling liberated from the need to adopt a *'teacher mask'* emphasising that her learning journey allowed her to grow while maintaining her authentic self. This suggests that the master's programme not only supported her professional learning but also contributed to personal empowerment. The idea of shedding a *'mask'* highlights the tension between professional expectations and individuality, a challenge many teachers face when navigating their roles (Trent, 2019). By aligning her authentic self with her professional identity, Leanne's experience demonstrates the importance of creating learning environments that encourage individuality and reduce the pressure to conform to rigid personas, resulting in greater confidence and well-being. The teacher persona is also identified by Stella who recognised that:

*I feel a lot more confident talking to parents... Sometimes I feel a bit young when I met like some of the teachers that are there. But it does give me that confidence and then because I'm learning the children get to hear about it and it sort of motivates them (Stella).*

She recognised the confidence gained required knowledge and self-assurance. Initially she perceived a disparity between her experience and that of her colleagues, which could have undermined her confidence. However, the master's programme appears to mitigate this,



providing her with the tools to bridge this gap. Stella also identified the reciprocal influence of her learning journey on her students, recognising that this not only reinforces her confidence but also aligns with the concept of modelling. This idea benefits not only the teacher but also the wider educational community.

The participants stated that the master's programme not only increased their confidence but also helped them overcome obstacles, resulting in a sense of satisfaction. These findings support Bollinger et al.'s (2021) research, which highlights the connection between learning and self-confidence and its significance for holistic development. Similarly, Sian acknowledges that a sense of accomplishment is a significant motivator. She further reflects on the broader influence the master's programme has had on her, stating that:

*I'm enjoying the new information and linking it to what I do. I'm getting the reading I'm doing, I'm enjoying the writing, I'm enjoying speaking with my friends in the class, I'm enjoying speaking to the lecturers, I really enjoy all of it and that's kept me motivated, that makes me want to do it, that makes me want to succeed (Sian).*

During master's level study, participants discuss how motivation affects them both personally and professionally, revealing its transformative impact on their confidence and ability to navigate challenges. These reflections identify how engagement in their studies helps with their development and adaptability, linking to Locke and Latham's (2019) and Urdan and Kaplan's (2020) findings that participation in such learning experiences can lead to an overall sense of empowerment. This empowerment can help to motivate teachers beyond professional practice, enriching their sense of achievement and reinforcing their determination and dedication to continuous learning (Steyn, 2017).

However, to gain a deeper insight into what drives participants' motivations, it was important to explore how they find inspiration and fulfilment in the learning process itself. Many participants expressed a genuine love of learning, viewing it not just as a means to an end but as a deeply rewarding and stimulating endeavour. This intrinsic appreciation for acquiring knowledge and mastering new skills emerged as a theme, providing further insights into the relationship between personal passion for learning and professional outcomes they seek.

### 5.2.2 For the love of learning: an exploration of participants' perspectives of their learning

The experiences described by participants encapsulate the transformative journey that the master's programme offers for their professional learning. Participants reflect on how their learning on the programme had influenced them as a learner and as a teacher. To synthesise

the data, the information is presented in sub-sections to capture the participants' ongoing learning, the links they make to their practice and the strategies they employ during their studies. This provided an insight into how the participants perceived their learning.

#### 5.2.2.1 Ongoing learning and links to practice

The reflections of Georgia and Stella provide valuable insight into the transformative nature of master's level study, particularly in the deepening of both subject matter and study skills. Georgia's notion of becoming an effective learner draws attention to the dual nature of academic progression, while the conceptual demands of master's level learning challenge students, the refinement of study techniques contributes to their ability to engage with these challenges successfully. This aligns with Strom and Viesca's (2021) assertion that advanced learning contributes to cognitive and metacognitive development. Georgia's metaphorical use of 'mastering it' encapsulates the evolution of her academic identity, emphasising the depth of engagement that distinguishes master's level study from prior educational experiences, as she reflects:

*I've loved it. I know full well it's changing me again. As a student, I can see, reflecting on where I was as a student undergrad, to where I was, and even on my PGCE actually to where I am now, I feel like yes, Masters is the word, I feel like I'm mastering it more like it's not, it's hard slog yeah, because it's more like the concepts making it more challenging but the skills that I have and the study skills themselves are better. You know, and more effective. I'm definitely a more effective learner than I was (Georgia).*

Georgia conveys a clear sense of progress in both her academic and personal development. However, the term of '*mastering it*' also emphasises the complexities of navigating HE. While she suggests she is more equipped and effective as a learner, she acknowledges the ongoing challenges of mastering new and complex concepts, highlighting the path to academic mastery is not linear, but a process of continuous adaptation. Similarly, Stella highlighted how postgraduate learning bridges gaps left by her undergraduate experiences, stating that she is '*noticing a huge improvement*'. This suggests a more practical application of knowledge. Stella's recognition of an improvement in her ability to integrate theory into practice aligns with her broader motivation to refine professional confidence and teaching impact. The reflections of both Georgia and Stella reveal that, although the master's programme requires considerable intellectual and emotional exertion, it simultaneously equips them with the requisite tools and confidence to enhance their teaching practice and further their professional learning. This emphasises how mastery, both as a process and an outcome, plays a key role in their academic and professional journeys.

Other participants revealed how their motivation stems from a desire to remain connected to learning and avoid complacency in their teaching career with Delia stating that *'it's just kind of motivation for me to improve myself and keep learning and not stagnate because I'd kind of got stuck, so it was just give me a bit of a boost'*. Her realisation that master's study has impacted her teaching approach suggests the importance of ongoing learning in revitalising pedagogical approaches. This is reinforced by Delia and Carys' recognition of the critical role reflection plays in practice transformation:

*I think it has made a difference in my teaching and what I look for, because if you don't know today, you're not going to change it... And I wouldn't have thought that otherwise, I'll have just got on with my teaching. So it does make a difference (Delia).*

*I would never have actually reflected like that on my practice if I hadn't done my masters (Carys).*

The intrinsic rewards of applying learning to practice are further articulated by Stella and Leanne, who draw on a direct connection between their academic endeavours and their professional environments. Stella notes that the visible impact of her studies on her students acts as a continuous motivator, as she feels that *'it has such an impact on the children that just keep like seeing how it is impacting the children will motivate you to get through the course'*.

Similarly, Leanne emphasises the empowerment gained from applying learning, describing feelings of *'being energised'* and *'taking ownership'*. She identifies the importance of her studies and recognises that what she is doing *'has value to both [herself] and to the department or to the school'*.

The accounts highlight the importance of self-assessment and critical evaluation, which are fundamental components of professional learning at postgraduate level (QAA, 2020a). Participants identified the impact of professional learning on their practice, recognising the master's programme as a catalyst for intellectual development. This is consistent with Rodman's (2019) and Mooney Simmie's (2023) notion of professional learning as a tool for self-reflection and discovery, where engaging in master's study allows schoolteachers to gain deeper insights into their teaching practice and themselves. The participants discussed how the master's programme has revitalised their teaching practice and brought personal fulfilment. Through the participants' shared experiences, there is evidence of the transformative power of continuous learning in their roles as highlighted in the comment from Sally who stated that *'I'm not scared to fail because, if you don't fail, you can't learn'*.

This finding highlights the role of determination as a foundational element in the learning process. Sally's comment reflects a willingness to embrace challenges and setback as opportunities for growth, emphasising the transformative nature of failure when reframed as a learning experience. This aligns with Strom and Viesca's (2021) findings on the impact of transformational power can impact practice and enhance competence. Furthermore, Sally's perspective connects to Deci and Ryan's (2020) emphasis on the importance of autonomy and relatedness in motivation. By recognising failure as a necessary part of learning, Sally identifies an intrinsic motivation that supports both her autonomy as a learner and her commitment to develop continuously.

Participants also reported the strategies they utilised to support their learning, which have played an important role in building competence and sustaining motivation. The interplay of transformational power, effective learning strategies and intrinsic motivation becomes evident as a critical component of their professional and academic growth.

#### 5.2.2.2 Strategies for Learning: the approaches adopted to support learning

The learning strategies that both Sian and Sally used indicate a commitment to self-regulation and intentionality in their academic work. Both participants use structured approaches to break down tasks and stay on track, which is consistent with key theories of motivation and self-regulation, such as Zimmerman and Schunk's (2011) concept of self-regulated learning. Their reflections suggest an active role in shaping their learning experience, enabling them to meet the challenges of balancing study with other life responsibilities.

Sian, for example, recommends the use of '*mini-challenges*' and '*mini-targets*', which act as manageable goals that provide structure and direction to her studies, explaining that she has '*a plan of action, even if that's bullet points*'. She shares strategies such as writing '*some key things down, [and] even mind map*'. Emphasising that '*more than anything [she] always [has] a timeframe*'. However, she also shares the challenges noting that:

*when I come in after work, I'm more than often tired and I have to feed the family and make sure everybody's happy (Sian).*

This approach reflects Sian's reliance on planning and organisational tools to manage her studies in the context of her personal responsibilities. Her use of timeframes and strategic planning reinforces the importance of autonomy and self-direction in learning, as she takes proactive steps to make her studies manageable despite competing demands. The acknowledgement of personal fatigue and family responsibilities highlights the ways in which

her autonomy is critical to successfully balancing these responsibilities (Deci and Ryan, 2020). Similarly, Sally describes her preference for a structured process throughout her learning journey, affirming:

*I like to have a process...So little mini pitstops along the way, so I can get the assignment done, reflect on it, and look to what could do better next time. And then continue on the journey again... That's why I like the programme, because I could be in control of me, and I can do it (Sally).*

Sally's approach also focuses on structure, but with a greater emphasis on reflective practice. The idea of 'mini pit stops' along her learning journey provides a visual representation of her progress where she can pause to reflect, evaluate her work and set goals for improvement. This strategy is consistent with the concept of metacognitive awareness, where learners monitor and reflect on their learning processes in order to make adjustments as necessary (Hattie et al., 2020). Sally's reflection after each '*pit stop*' shares the importance of maintaining motivation through regular self-assessment and fine-tuning her approach to learning. The idea of '*little mini-breaks*' also suggests that learning is a balanced process, not just about continuous effort, but also about pacing oneself for sustainability.

Both Sian and Sally's strategies demonstrate the importance of autonomy, self-direction and reflection in motivating and sustaining their engagement with their studies. These strategies provide a sense of accomplishment and direction, helping them to maintain motivation throughout the demanding process of master's level study. The emphasis on managing both personal and academic life speaks to participants' growing sense of ownership of their learning. By conceptualising learning as a series of achievable steps with built-in opportunities for reflection and rest, they tailor the learning experience to their individual needs, an important factor in enhancing long-term academic motivation (Mooney Simmie, 2023).

These strategies have highlighted the significance of effective planning, self-awareness and self-regulation in effective learning practices. Incorporating strategies that promote well-being and balance, such as setting tangible short-term tasks, demonstrates a holistic approach to learning, a finding that is discussed further in chapter six. Participants reported that they learned best through active engagement, self-motivation and a commitment to personal development. Through the use of effective strategies, participants concluded that they were able to enhance their learning experience, improve their productivity and achieve their academic and professional goals. Prioritising mental health and self-care alongside their learning highlights a genuine commitment to nurturing their studies in sustainable and fulfilling ways.

### 5.2.3 The support I need: participants identification of the support networks during their studies

All participants communicated the significance of support in sustaining their motivation and success in their studies and practice. They described a network of interconnected factors, such as peer interaction and family support, which contributed to their sense of purpose and determination (Weston and Clay, 2018). While two participants mentioned some correspondence with their headteacher, all participants highlighted a general lack of support from their workplace. Notably, this lack of support from practice did not seem to affect their motivation to engage with the programme, a concept that will be explored further in the summary section (5.3) of this chapter. The literature presented in chapter two illustrates the influence of having supportive networks, emphasising the need for collaboration and encouragement embedded in an organisational culture that promotes teacher learning and development (Timperley et al., 2008; Jones, 2016; Netolicky, 2020) alongside the emotional support needed for engaging in learning opportunities. However, once participants started their master's, the support and encouragement from their workplace seemed to diminish. Nevertheless, participants emphasised that support from their peers and families was key to their motivation to engage in their learning, as demonstrated in the following subsections.

#### 5.2.3.1 Peer Support: the recognition of the influence of peer support during participants studies

Most participants highlighted the power of peer support during their studies, finding motivation through collaborative discussions and shared goals. They draw motivation from their interactions with those who know what they are experiencing. Jane reflected on how her collaboration with peers motivated her:

*What I find most motivating is being able to communicate with other people on the course, getting together and discussing things. Talking about what we're studying at the time where we're doing, I normally feel most motivated after I've either communicated, have had a group meeting or communicated with my peers (Jane).*

Jane's motivation is largely driven by social interactions, particularly with peers and tutors, which fulfil her needs for relatedness and competence. These interactions provide intrinsic satisfaction and support, similar to Sian's recognition of how the friendships within her peer group can be motivating, where she states that '*I really feel motivated by friendships that have been created, we help each other out, working towards similar if not the same goals*', highlighting a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

The role of peer support in the master's programme underlines the diverse nature of peer interactions and their impact on motivation, learning and overall well-being (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Belay et al., 2022). For example, Stella shares how peers support her by *'sharing ideas because it's been really hard. And that sort of gives you a push as well when you're talking about it together'*. Participants also reflected on how their peers can serve as valuable sources of knowledge and inspiration, how they help to provide examples, insights, and perspectives that enrich their learning experiences, with Jamie affirming:

*the really useful things are the unplanned little conversations or even the planned conversations, but the little the peer-to-peer interactions ...which are a lot more natural and a lot more informal when you're in a classroom with a person (Jamie).*

This informal aspect is also considered by Rosie, who shares the benefit of an informal group chat highlighting the importance of peer support networks in managing stress and emotions beyond the master's learning environment, reflecting on the *'WhatsApp group for students for [their] year group and that [it has] been really good support, just air out how [they are] feeling'*, as a motivator to engage.

The participants' reflections highlight the significant role that peers play in their learning in the master's programme, a notion echoed in the work of Hattie et al. (2020), who assert that peers are considered valuable sources of knowledge and inspiration that enrich learning experiences. This suggests that peers offer emotional support and encouragement, helping individuals navigate difficulties and stay motivated. This sense of community and collaboration among peers is an integral part of the learning experience (Netolicky, 2016; Netolicky, 2020), enhancing academic outcomes and promoting emotional well-being, creating a sense of belonging and solidarity among individuals on the master's programme. While Jong et al. (2019) recognise the importance of peer collaboration in a community of learning, participants in my research distinguish peer support from their teaching practices. The lack of support from their workplace remains an area for further investigation, as discussed in chapter six. Participants emphasise the value of being *'in it together'* as peers, a concept not traditionally explored in the literature on teacher professional learning. However, participants have identified that studying together creates a sense of community and belonging, which is motivating and contributes to a shared sense of success (Laverick, 2018). Additionally, collaborative learning provides individuals with the opportunity to engage with a diverse range of perspectives and approaches to learning, which can enhance the enjoyment and manageability of the learning process (Steyn, 2017).

### 5.2.3.2 Support in Practice: consideration of the support for participants in their teaching practice

The workplace environment plays a significant role in shaping teachers' perceptions of their professional learning and can influence their ability to stay focused and committed as practitioners (Netolicky, 2020). Three participants acknowledged friendships among their colleagues. However, the level of support here varies greatly. For instance, Sally shares her experience of encouraging younger colleagues to pursue postgraduate studies. Despite facing scepticism from some colleagues about her academic journey, Sally takes pride in motivating others to seize professional learning opportunities. She reflects, *'I've got my buddies in work. They think I'm mental for doing this'*. Despite their doubts, Sally encourages her younger colleagues to apply for the master's programme, saying, *'I pushed them to apply. I said because by the time you get to my age, you won't get any funding for it so do it'* Sally discloses how she feels a sense of pride when they take her advice, adding, *'I'm chuffed for them, you know'*.

This experience indicates that negative attitudes from colleagues, as expressed in Sally's comment, can affect motivation. Other participants expressed a similar view recognising that such scepticism could make it more difficult to focus on their own professional learning. For example, Leanne reflects on the significant influence that the attitudes of those around her in her practice can have on her motivation, stating that:

*If the people around you are really enthusiastic, you're more like yes, let's do this, but when they're not, like, 'Okay, right I'm going to try and do this' and then 'I wouldn't bother'. So, it's also people around you, isn't it? If you can motivate yourself but then it's hard if everyone around us is being really negative (Leanne).*

This highlights the critical role of social dynamics in shaping motivation. It also highlights the challenge of sustaining motivation in the absence of practice-based support. Stella also discusses the influence of her work environment on her motivation, particularly the impact of her colleagues' reactions to her academic pursuits. She reveals how negative or dismissive comments can diminish her enthusiasm to engage in conversations at work about her studies:

*I do find I'll talk about something and then someone else found like oh doing your masters are you or they'll make a joke of it. And sometimes...I don't wanna say anything now because they'll make jokes about it (Stella).*

Therefore, contributing to a sense of feeling devalued. Stella shares the challenges of professional identity within the context of her practice where she encountered scepticism and



even mockery from colleagues regarding her engagement in master's study. This reaction may stem from a variety of factors, including cultural norms, perceptions of hierarchy, or insecurities about one's professional learning. Stella's reluctance to talk openly about her studies in her practice suggests a need for greater recognition and advocacy for her professional learning in the workplace. Similar to a range of authors who explore professional learning and effective leadership (Timperley, 2011; Stoll et al., 2012; Hall and Wall, 2019), Fransson and Norman (2021) emphasised the importance of a culture that values and supports teachers' engagement in continuous learning, and state that the creation of such a culture can help to reduce barriers and promote a more inclusive and supportive professional environment. Stella's experience connects with this notion, as she expressed her frustration when colleagues fail to understand the significance of her master's studies. This frustration is also identified by Sian who reflects:

*I come across some negative colleagues, they don't understand why I'm doing the masters they don't really understand why it's needed in practice and that really frustrates me because I know the impact it has had on me and my learning and developing me, and you think that people want to develop in their practice but this is not always the case (Sian).*

It could be argued that the absence of support, such as advocating and reinforcing participant learning, the feelings of frustration with colleagues and school leaders may have a detrimental effect on the participants' motivation. However, the recognition of how participants' learning affects their practice, their support from peers and family appeared to be sufficient to motivate participants to continue with the master's programme.

The lack of support from their workplace suggests that participants perceive their engagement in the master's programme as undervalued in relation to their role. This reflects an unsupportive environment that could hinder the development of a culture of continuous learning, limiting opportunities for participants to enhance their knowledge and skills in their professional practice. The extant literature surrounding teacher professional learning highlighted the relevance of building an effective learning culture, such as Fullan's (2015) assertion that cultivating a learning environment in schools, where leaders embed an effective culture that supports continuous professional learning, is crucial. This view is echoed by Guskey (2021), who highlighted the need for teachers to feel empowered to develop their practice that then impacts on pupil outcomes. In consideration of the disparity raised here, cultivating a culture of continuous learning is an area discussed further in chapter six.

The role of leadership in creating a supporting learning environment is important, as effective leadership can significantly influence both teachers' professional learning and motivation (Guskey, 2021). Findings demonstrate that there can be tensions between the support leaders offer and the practical challenges that schoolteachers face. This is evident in the conflicting messages reported by some participants, as recognised in Jamie's reflection:

*I know that I've got really supportive SLT I've got a really supportive head of department...she's really supportive, which is supportive, in one way is making her job more difficult...I'm already doing a master's which I know she feels can detract me from the main job at times. So 'you've got a lot on', kind of conversations. 'You've got a lot on at the moment. Come on, make sure this is your number one priority' (Jamie).*

Jamie's experience demonstrates the contradictory nature of support from his head of department. This illustrates how, regardless of the outward support, leaders' concerns about workload can unintentionally demotivate schoolteachers, particularly when professional learning efforts are seen as competing with their primary responsibilities. Similarly, Rosie described a more detached approach to leadership support, where professional learning is offered but feels isolated from her daily work, acknowledging that:

*As far as professionally they're together but they're separate. My boss has said if you need any time, which is really nice to have...but I feel like it's more separate and I'd rather not ask her...And just you know, only if I was really desperate, I'd ask (Rosie).*

This sense of separation speaks to a gap in the holistic and collaborative approach to professional learning advocated by Netolicky (2020). Netolicky (2020) who emphasised the importance of a collaborative environment in which professional learning is deeply embedded in the culture of the school and integrated into teachers' daily practices. This approach would ensure that teachers are not only supported by the senior leadership team but also by a network of colleagues who can actively advocate and reinforce professional learning.

The use of language such as '*demotivated*' and '*desperate*' suggests a transactional relationship between school leaders and participants, where individuals may not feel comfortable or confident asking for support. Some participants have expressed that they perceive their professional learning during the master's programme and the support they receive in their practice as two distinct entities. Although they acknowledge that their learning impacts their knowledge and growth in the classroom, they do not believe that the master's programme is appreciated or valued in their practice. Therefore, they are hesitant to seek additional support from colleagues or school leaders. This reluctance to blur the boundaries between personal and professional learning may be indicative of a need for participants to retain control over their own professional learning. By maintaining a distinction between their

personal and professional learning, participants can circumvent potential judgments or misunderstandings from colleagues or school leaders. The maintenance of this divide enables participants to protect their personal growth from external pressures, thereby reinforcing a sense of autonomy while simultaneously navigating both internal goals and the expectations of their professional roles. This notion is emphasised by Georgia:

*I'm doing it for me. I'm not doing it, I know it doesn't, it holds no value. My master's doesn't really hold value in the setting I am in (Georgia).*

A dichotomy between individual professional learning and development and institutional support or recognition is implied. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived lack of support from their workplace and the sense that their contributions are undervalued while engaging with the master's programme. This contrasts with the findings from scholars who advocate that effective leadership, and a supportive learning culture are vital for nurturing teachers' professional growth and enhancing their sense of value and engagement in continuous learning (Vangieken et al., 2015; Kennedy and Stevenson, 2023). Although a small number of participants have friendship groups with specific colleagues in their workplace, all participants highlighted a lack of support from the setting as a whole, in particular from school leadership. This tension can be understood from two perspectives. Firstly, it suggests that the workplaces of participants may not place sufficient value on the master's programme. Secondly, it emphasises the necessity for an organisational culture that is conducive to continuous professional learning, a concept that is further explored in chapter six.

#### 5.2.3.3 Support from family

The findings highlight that family support is a crucial motivational factor. All participants discussed their relationships with family members, either parents, partners or children, during their time on the master's programme. Family members act as a source of support and motivation for the participants and this support appears to be instrumental in facilitating their success, a notion I had not identified in the literature. Although not directly connected to a teachers professional learning, Fiorilli et al. (2019a) highlight the importance of support networks in minimising stress and burnout for teachers. This is reflected in the data, as participants recounted how their family members provided emotional comfort, encouragement and recognition of the sacrifices and contributions made, which directly influenced their progress in their learning. Carys reflects on the motivational support from her own children, noting how they both challenge and support her:

*...the youngest he'll come in when I'm doing an assignment and instead of saying what's for tea, he'll just look at what I'm doing and rub my back...And what's nice about the older one...friends of his will visit and say how is your Masters doing? (Carys).*

Carys' reflection illustrates how the support she receives reinforces her sense of competence and motivation. This support from her family not only sustains her emotional well-being but also strengthens her commitment to her studies. Rosie also acknowledged the support she received from her partner and children, which allowed her more time to focus on her academic work: *'I found my family to be the most supportive. My partner and the children you know, they're very supportive which has created more time'*. Both Carys and Rosie illustrate how family support sustains emotional well-being and strengthens their commitment to their studies.

Participants explained how their families are the drivers for their engagement in the programme and emphasise the significance of the family as a top priority in their lives. Highlighted by Sian who explicitly states that *'I want it for my family'*. Nevertheless, there are challenges here too. Despite the support participants receive from their families, some acknowledge the feelings of guilt associated with balancing their studies with family responsibilities, evidenced by Stella:

*It's like guilt on family, like with my son and things like that you feel sometimes you're locked away doing well if I'm doing work as well, from my actual work, and it's, I sometimes feel a bit of guilt that makes it a bit of a barrier (Stella).*

Stella expresses guilt about being away from her son while working and engaging in studies, indicating a struggle to manage competing priorities. This emotional conflict emphasises the complex dynamic between family support, motivation and the challenges the participants experience while engaged in the master's programme. The findings indicate that a supportive home environment is a crucial factor in maintaining emotional well-being and academic aspirations, which directly impacts the participants' ability to successfully navigate the programme's demands and remain committed to their professional learning goals. Future research should explore how family support can enhance motivation for learning without contributing to emotional strain, considering strategies to manage these challenges more effectively. Dagenais et al. (2012) identified the importance of time management and balance and encourages the need for clear structures and support in the school environment, which may help to maintain both personal and professional well-being, as discussed next.

#### 5.2.4 Taking care of me: an exploration of participants' approaches to support their well-being.

Research shows that it is important of balancing work and personal responsibilities during study to ensure well-being (Kachchhap and Horo, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021), emphasising the need to minimise stress and promote overall mental and physical health (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2018; Ferguson et al., 2022). Jane's perspective recognises this dual nature of professional development, viewing it not only for career relevance but also as a personal journey of self-improvement:

*As a professional, you know that you must continue to be involved in professional development keep on track of everything that goes on professionally, but personally, this is also a journey for me in a personal perspective to improve myself enhance my well-being (Jane).*

Jane's reflection highlights the intrinsic motivation that drives her engagement with professional learning. She recognises how the drive for mastery and self-fulfilment contributes to her personal sense of accomplishment and well-being: *'When you achieve certain goals that helps you, that makes you feel good...that gives you happy times as well'*. This aligns with Zhang et al. (2021), who found that achieving set goals creates a sense of satisfaction, even amidst the challenges of professional and personal demands. However, Jane's consideration of moments when well-being felt compromised points to the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of professional learning, as evidenced in the findings so far. While it offers opportunities for growth, it can also induce stress, requiring effective strategies to maintain balance. This sense of achievement from achieving milestones strengthens Jane's confidence and reinforces her view of professional learning as a pathway to both personal and professional growth.

##### 5.2.4.1 Self-belief: developing confidence and personal growth

Some participants identified self-belief as a significant aspect of their experience in the master's programme, with the findings suggesting it influences their confidence, self-perception and personal development, for example, Delia recognises her growth:

*I didn't realise I'd learned a lot about myself as I was going which I found good actually, I thought it'd be more this is a theme, like do the essay, but I found it more practical stuff that I could use. I know that sounds silly because the whole point of learning is you do use it, but I do find it sometimes you don't do, you do stuff to go through the motions (Delia).*

Delia's reflection highlights a notable shift in her perspective from viewing learning as a procedural, academic exercise, to embracing it as a tool for self-discovery and practical application. This realisation signifies the transformative power of learning experiences (Netolicky, 2020), where participants gain not only academic knowledge but also personal insight. Delia's journey promotes deeper self-awareness and a stronger sense of competence, which subsequently cultivates a sense of empowerment and self-confidence. This concurs with the work of Steyn (2017) and Anderman (2020), who both emphasised that meaningful professional learning goes beyond the acquisition of technical skills, facilitating personal growth and strengthening self-belief. However, Delia's initial expectation of learning as a formulaic process highlights a challenge in professional practice and the potential disconnect between academic frameworks and their practical, reflective value.

To highlight this point, Rosie explained how the learning from the programme had positively influenced her self-esteem and professional identity, explaining that the experience had helped her overcome feelings of inadequacy and comparison with others:

*It's given me self-belief that you know, because I've always had this feeling of like, not being quite good enough or not being quite as good as somebody else, you know, and I think the master's course has given me more self-belief as a professional (Rosie).*

Rosie and Delia's perspectives recognise the transformational potential of professional learning in re-shaping self-perception and reinforcing confidence, potentially leading to participants to navigate both personal and professional challenges. The validation of Rosie's skills and expertise has developed her confidence as a professional, affirming her values and contributions. This newfound self-belief not only enhances her personal well-being but also positively influences who she is as a professional. There is a sense of purpose and direction (Ranson, 2019), and similar to Rosie, the participants Delia, Leanne and Sally all expressed how their engagement on the programme served as a source of strength and coping during challenging times:

*I did struggle with my mental health. And then this kind of helps give you the drive, kind of learning new stuff and focusing on me really...which I quite like and where the stuff comes from. And it helps you and the kids as well. You know different types of strategies you can use with the kids. Absolutely. I learned quite a bit myself really... it's given me other stuff that I can help with my life (Delia).*

*I'm quite a shy person I'm quite quiet, but it's kind of making me think I can do this actually. And I do actually have the knowledge to do it (Leanne).*

*I've never been good enough. But I am good enough. Yeah (Sally).*

The integration of personal and professional learning demonstrates the holistic nature of learning, indicating its potential to enhance individual fulfilment. Participants suggest that the master's programme has had a transformative influence, positively impacting their confidence, self-perception and well-being. The promotion of a sense of empowerment, self-validation, and personal growth can be seen to provide individuals with the motivation to engage in positive learning experiences that extend beyond academic achievement. These experiences can encompass the holistic development of individuals towards a sense of self-fulfilment (Cordingley et al., 2020). This growth is closely linked to the formation of professional identity, as it shapes how individuals view themselves in the context of their careers (Jones, 2022).

#### 5.2.4.2 My Professionalism: navigating professional identity

Interpreting participants' experiences of the master's programme in terms of their well-being reveals a multi-layered relationship between personal growth, professional learning and social dynamics. The insights provided by participants demonstrate how they perceive and navigate their professionalism in the context of the programme and their learning, as discussed in chapter one. All participants share the importance of continuous improvement as a teacher, indicating a desire for self-improvement and well-being enhancement. This focus highlights the interconnectedness of personal and professional development, suggesting that achieving one aspect can influence the other. The identification of learning as a need for growth is espoused in the comment from Rosie who recognised how learning is empowering:

*I think when you get some sort of level of education, nobody can ever take it away from you. Nobody can ever take that away...education has pulled me out of a lot of you know, it's changed the trajectory of my life (Rosie).*

Rosie's recognition of learning as both empowering and transformative affirms its role in reshaping her identity, reflecting on education as a source of agency and stability which are important for both personal empowerment and professional learning. This insight aligns with the notion that professionalism and professional identity are not static but continually shaped through transformative experiences (Netolicky, 2020; Kennedy and Stevenson, 2023).

As identified in the other themes in this chapter, the participants identify a common thread of seeking fulfilment, purpose, and development in their learning journeys. They exhibit self-awareness regarding their aspirations and the importance of self-improvement. However, nuances emerge as they share their individual experiences and priorities, explored further in the following sub-heading.

#### 5.2.4.3 It's About My Feelings: participants' emotions during their studies

The affective aspects of learning experience were prevalent within the data. Participants reported experiencing positive emotions when engaged in their learning, particularly when they made a connection between their learning and its practical application. This enthusiasm and passion for learning appeared to motivate them to invest time and effort into their studies, resulting in a more fulfilling learning experience. However, some participants have reported experiencing negative emotions such as stress, anxiety and frustration. These challenges recognise the complex emotional landscape of professional learning, where external pressures and internal expectations can impact teachers' performance. Nevertheless, the emergence of positive feelings of confidence, as identified in section 5.2.1.3, suggest that this has led to a sense of self-efficacy, where there is a belief in their ability to succeed and overcome challenges. Kumari and Kumar (2023) found that motivation plays an important role in enhancing teachers' job performances by building resilience and a sense of purpose. This aligns with the participants' experiences, where overcoming difficulties not only contributes to a sense of accomplishment but also enhances their overall well-being. The relationship between motivation and self-efficacy appears crucial, as it drives participants engagement with a Master of Education programme even though there are emotional barriers.

The feelings expressed by participants reflect a complex relationship between loneliness, fear of failure, pressure to perform, the desire for enjoyment and achievement, and the impact of feedback on motivation and well-being. These factors demonstrate the challenges participants had in navigating their professional learning within a demanding personal and professional context. Delia and Rosie share the isolating nature of teaching, with Delia describing moments of professional solitude despite being surrounded by people, noting that teaching can often feel like *'a lonely job'* where feedback on day-to-day practice is absent. She explained that *'the master's gives me feedback and I understand more about me. You don't' really get time to think 'how's my teaching.'* At the same time Delia contrasts moments of survival in her role with feelings of satisfaction and connection to her students, stating that *'some days you are literally just surviving. I have five lessons with these kids, I have got to get through it today and then other days, I love this'*. This reflects the nature of her teaching experience, where the emotional demands can both challenge and motivate her. Similarly, Rosie shares how her feelings of isolation can sometimes demotivate her, particularly when she feels that she is the only one facing particular challenges:



*Tiredness, even loneliness sometimes if you feel like you're the only one that these things are happening to, that can be a bit demotivating (Rosie).*

These accounts suggest that professional isolation can impede motivation and well-being, reflecting broader concerns raised by Gavin et al. (2020) who argue that a lack of support structures within professional context may impact confidence and engagement, which could significantly influence a teachers' identity and development in their practice and engagement in professional learning opportunities.

Georgia offers a nuanced perspective on the relationship between stress and success. While she once believed that high levels of stress were necessary to achieve strong outcomes, she now recognises that similar results can be achieved without compromising emotional health. She reflects:

*To be good at something I must be really stressed. Because when I've been stressed...I've come to realise, it's not the case at all... you don't have to get totally stressed out and really wound up and really crazy about it to actually get the similar results (Georgia).*

Her experience aligns with the argument that sustainable success involves finding balance rather than relying on stress as a motivator. This perspective resonates with the findings by Kumari and Kumar (2023) who affirm that motivation linked to well-being can enhance personal satisfaction and professional performance. Georgia's experience signals a re-evaluation of traditional success paradigms, emphasising the potential for professional growth through enjoyment and self-care.

Leanne's experience provides insight into the impact of criticism on self-confidence and motivation. She explains how negative feedback can be demotivating and make her question her abilities, saying that:

*I think sometimes it can be people's criticism, that can demotivate you and also make you think do I want to try doing that again, if you've already been criticised (Leanne).*

This reflection identifies the vulnerability that participants may feel during their learning journey, where the learning process itself is at risk of being undermined by external judgements. As noted by Gavin et al. (2020), criticism, particularly when poorly framed or unsupported by constructive solutions, can exacerbate insecurities and hinder development.

Participants' experiences highlight the crucial role of peer and family support in mitigating the emotional complexities associated with professional learning. While challenges such as loneliness, stress, and criticism can affect motivation, the presence of supportive peers and family enables participants to navigate these difficulties and maintain their focus on personal and professional growth. These findings relate to Kumari and Kumar's (2023) argument that motivation and effective support systems are crucial in promoting teacher performance and well-being. The findings suggest that the participants' successes are closely linked to the strength of their personal support networks.

### 5.3 Findings overview

From the presentation of the findings and discussion, there are many factors that influence the motivations of schoolteachers engaged on a Master of Education programme in Wales. I will now share the key factors identified before detailing how my findings aimed to address the sub-research questions (RQs) before concluding this chapter.

My research identified additional factors influencing schoolteachers' motivation in a Master of Education programme that extended beyond those previously addressed in the literature:

- The role of the family: All participants highlighted the influence of family in their decision to enrol and the practical and emotional support provided throughout their studies. Family support came from partners, children, and parents, shaping participants' capacity to manage both personal and professional responsibilities. The family emerged as a consistent and pivotal factor in sustaining motivation, highlighting its importance in the context of professional learning.
- The absence of teaching workplace support: Participants consistently reported limited or no support from their professional practice while enrolled in the programme. Although workplace support was mentioned in personal statements as a factor before enrolment, this disconnect raises questions about the role of professional settings in encouraging continued learning.

In addition to these recurring factors, participants highlighted the challenges of managing their time when engaged in their master's degree, as well as the perceived lack of value the master's held in relation to their workplace:

- Finding the time to study: Participants emphasised the difficulty of finding time to devote to their studies in the midst of their professional and personal commitments. These challenges are expressed in terms such as '*balance*' and '*guilt*', indicating the internal and external conflicts between academic responsibilities and other life demands. This not only reflects the time constraints faced by participants but also highlights the emotional toll of trying to manage these competing priorities.
- The value of professional learning: The value of the master's emerged as a contentious issue. Some participants expressed how the master's does not hold any value in their professional contexts. They expressed instances where colleagues dismissed their efforts, suggesting they were '*mad for doing it*' or that they feel that they were being mocked. The sense of being devalued can have a significant impact on how supported they feel, and this can discourage meaningful collaboration in their practice. This can also negatively affect their personal well-being. These challenges highlight the need for a culture that genuinely values and supports professional learning to encourage personal fulfilment and collective progress.

Alongside this, two individual participants introduced distinct findings that further enrich the insight into schoolteachers' perspectives:

- Familiarity with the university: One participant noted that their familiarity with the university was a significant motivator, sharing this in both their personal statement and in the interview. This sense of belonging and comfort, although a singular account, suggests the potential role of familiarity in enhancing confidence and engagement.
- A fear of failure: Another participant mentioned fear of failure as a motivator to continue with their studies. While unique, this insight provides an important lens for understanding how individuals manage challenges during their professional learning journeys. The use of fear as a motivating factor gives rise to significant questions regarding the impact of such an emotion on the overall learning experience. This insight illustrates the diverse motivations influencing teachers' engagement with professional learning.

These findings suggest that these are areas for further exploration, especially regarding the role of family support and the emotional dimensions of motivation in sustaining engagement with professional learning. The next section will discuss how the findings address the RQs.

## 5.4 Addressing the RQs

The MRQ of this research was to explore the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in a Master of Education programme, with subsidiary questions designed to facilitate a detailed exploration of the factors influencing teacher motivation for learning. Chapter two provided an in-depth analysis and evaluation of scholarly debate, focusing on key aspects of motivation, professional learning, communities of learning and teacher well-being, as represented in the conceptual framework. In view of the current focus on teacher professional learning in Wales, there has been no attention on the factors that motivate schoolteachers to engage in a master's programme. This area of motivation is of particular significance, as participants found that it not only enhanced pedagogical practice but also reinforced a dedication to learning that extends beyond the classroom, subsequently influencing their teaching practice.

The RQs will now be revisited in order to determine the extent to which they have been addressed:

*RQ1: What research has been conducted on the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in master's programmes?*

RQ1 examined the existing literature on the relationship between motivation and professional learning, with a specific focus on schoolteachers and their development (chapter two). The findings from the literature revealed a significant relationship between motivation and professional learning. The review also identified key concepts related to teacher motivation, including the growing emphasis on the development of learning communities and the significance of teacher well-being.

The analysis and evaluation of the key concepts revealed that motivation was a central concept, as illustrated in Figure 3 in chapter two (section 2.1) where motivation was identified as the connecting element between professional learning, communities of learning, and well-being. In the event of a lack of motivation to engage with a learning opportunity, a critical gap would inevitably emerge within this triangular relationship. In the absence of the drive to succeed, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, teachers may find themselves moving along the continuum of self-determination towards amotivation. This can hinder their ability to set goals and engage meaningfully in activities, potentially creating barriers to meeting their individual needs (Ryan and Connell, 1989; Ryan and Deci, 2000). As previously discussed in chapter two (section 2.3.2), a lack of motivation and sense of purpose may significantly impede

schoolteachers' engagement with professional learning, negatively influencing their personal and professional growth.

There is a wealth of literature exploring the key concepts. Nevertheless, despite a comprehensive review of the literature, no studies could be identified that specifically addressed the MRQ of my research. However, from the analysis and evaluation of the literature, key points emerged that raised questions for my research, which were used to inform the questions for the interview schedule. These gaps in the literature provided an opportunity to explore ideas beyond those currently represented in the field, offering a fresh perspective on the interconnected role of motivation, professional learning, communities of learning and well-being when schoolteachers are engaged in a master's programme.

*RQ2: What are the motivations that influence schoolteachers' decisions to engage in a Master of Education programme?*

The findings presented in chapter five part one, revealed a range of motivational factors influencing schoolteachers to engage in a Master of Education programme. The participants reflected on their past learning experiences, which had shaped their professionalism and prepared them for further study. In considering their engagement with the master's programme, participants acknowledged the influence of family on this decision, citing aspirations to improve their children's lives, with a participant sharing how they were motivated to apply for the master's programme to '*give them a better life and for them to be proud of me*'. This acknowledgement of personal factors provided a lens through which to view the teacher not only as an educator but also as an individual with personal responsibilities and as a student undertaking master's study.

A key motivational factor was the recognition of support networks, a concept that has been frequently identified by several authors (Stoll and Louis, 2007; Wood, 2007; Watson, 2014; Boeskens et al., 2020; OECD, 2020b; Thomas, 2022; Mooney Simmie, 2023). These scholars emphasise the importance of practice-based support for teachers engaged in professional learning. In part one, participants identified the availability of these support mechanisms as a significant motivator for enrolling in the programme. However, the semi-structured interviews subsequently revealed that such support was lacking in their workplace, indicating a disconnect between expectations and experience.

Furthermore, participants emphasised the importance of empowerment (Mooney Simmie, 2023) and motivation in developing their practice (Erixon and Hansson, 2022), with many

recognising changes in the educational landscape. The participants expressed a desire to expand their knowledge and skills in order to meet the evolving demands of the field and viewed the Master of Education programme as a means of achieving this.

A response to RQ2 has been considered in the findings presented in part one of chapter five (see 5.1). RQ3, RQ4 and RQ5 are now discussed in relation to the findings presented in part two of chapter five.

*RQ3: What motivating factors influence schoolteacher's decisions to continue with their master's level studies?*

Participants identified a broad range of motivational factors reinforcing their decision to engage in a Master of Education programme. Similar to concepts discussed in the literature and noted in RQ2, these included empowerment (Mullins, 2014; Steyn, 2017), fulfilment (Cordingley et al., 2020; Jones, 2022), and recognition of the connections between their studies and professional practice (Erixon and Hansson, 2022; Boylan et al., 2023), which positively influenced their confidence and determination to succeed. The findings suggest that participants' commitment to learning, alongside the strategies they developed to support their studies, served as key motivators throughout their academic journey. Additionally, participants peers and families were identified as crucial support networks, providing encouragement and underpinning their reasons for continuing their learning. Participants further acknowledged the transformational impact of their studies on both their personal and professional development, highlighting the avoidance of complacency, the cultivation of confidence, and the attainment of a sense of achievement in their roles as key motivators.

To address RQ3, the findings suggest that participants exhibited autonomy as learners, demonstrating both a willingness to engage and a strong sense of connection with their peers. Furthermore, the influence of their personal support networks played a crucial role in enhancing their motivation to sustain their engagement with the master's programme.

*RQ4: What personal and professional support motivates schoolteachers when they are engaged in a Master of Education programme?*

Participants indicated that the support provided by their peers had a considerable impact on their experiences throughout the programme, although they all agreed that their family networks constituted the most substantial source of support. This emphasis on family introduces a new dimension to the findings, addressing a gap in the existing literature

regarding how personal support networks assist schoolteachers in their professional learning, including their motivations for applying and their engagement in a master's programme.

While the support of professional learning is a key theme in the literature, my research revealed that professional work-based support was limited. The participants believed that their learning was distinct from their teaching practice; however, they acknowledged that their engagement in the master's programme had a significant impact on their professional learning and application in their teaching practice. In particular, the participants identified the knowledge and skills gained through the programme as a source of motivation for further learning and recognised the transformational changes in their understanding (Netolicky, 2020), which directly influenced their teaching practice.

In response to RQ4, the findings reveal the personal and professional support systems that motivated schoolteachers during their engagement in the master's programme. The insights provided by participants indicate that support from personal support networks was of vital importance, and how peer relationships within the professional learning opportunities shaped their experiences.

*RQ5: What are the strengths and limitations of the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in a master's programme?*

Participants identified numerous strengths in their motivations as previously discussed, these include empowerment, fulfilment, transformation, achievement and the development of self-confidence. They acknowledged the significant support provided by their families and peers on the programme. However, participants identified limitations to their motivation, including challenges in balancing work, life and study, and feelings of guilt about devoting time to their studies while managing family responsibilities. Some participants also expressed that their learning was not valued by colleagues or school leaders, and all participants highlighted a lack of support from their work environment, which hindered the sharing of knowledge and skills with leadership teams and colleagues. This underlined the disconnect between the literature's emphasis on professional learning and the realities of practice during the participants' studies. These insights reveal how external pressures and workplace cultures can act as barriers to sustained motivation, highlighting gaps in institutional support that are not fully addressed in the existing literature. By exploring this duality of strengths and limitations, the findings provide a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing teachers' motivations.

The findings illuminate the complexity of teachers' motivation in master's programmes, enriching existing knowledge and addressing RQ5 by highlighting the relationship between personal aspirations, professional contexts and systemic challenges.

These findings also emphasise the importance of considering both individual and institutional factors in motivating teachers, while recognising the areas where further support is needed to enable teachers to fully realise the benefits of their learning experiences.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Teacher professionalism, as defined by Kelchtermans (2017: 8), combines 'expertise and commitment'. This concept emphasises the way teachers perceive their roles, integrating self-image, task perception, job motivation and future aspirations. Findings from the participants' personal statements and semi-structured interviews reveal a range of motivational factors, including feelings of empowerment, fulfilment, a commitment to professional development, recognition of their professional identity, and support networks such as family and peers. The support systems identified, particularly the personal support from family and peers, are closely linked to the concept of belonging (Kachchhap and Horo, 2021). These positive interpersonal relationships play a significant role in influencing schoolteachers' learning. My findings demonstrate that these relationships serve as key motivators for schoolteachers' engagement in master's study. This highlights the interconnection between personal and professional relationships in shaping teachers' journeys towards a Master of Education programme.

### 5.5.1 My additional insights from the interviews

Data from the semi-structured interviews revealed additional insights into participants' motivations. Themes such as a love of learning, the support required to sustain engagement, and the importance of continuous learning identified key drivers for participants' motivation to engage in a master's programme. Participants described various motivational strengths, including their commitment to personal and professional growth, feelings of fulfilment and empowerment, a sense of belonging within a learning community, and the support they received from family. While these factors helped to sustain motivation, participants also noted challenges. Limited support from professional settings during their studies emerged as a recurring concern. This disconnects between individual motivation and institutional support emphasises the importance of addressing systemic barriers to teacher engagement in professional learning.



Some participants also reflected on the programme's applicability, noting its relevance not only in building knowledge but in cultivating skills essential for long-term professional growth. This perspective aligns with the findings of Weston and Clay (2018) and Harper-Hill et al. (2022), which emphasise the value of professional learning in enhancing both personal and professional development growth. Participants also identified self-reflection as a key driver for transformative change, echoing insights from Mockler (2020), Netolicky (2020), and Rodman (2019). Through this reflective process, participants assessed the impact of their learning and sought new opportunities to improve teaching practices, broaden perspectives and enhance confidence. These factors signify the motivations of schoolteachers' engagement in a master's programme.

#### 5.5.1.1 The role of social and institutional dynamics

In a culture of learning, motivation and well-being are shaped by how effectively individuals' personal and professional needs are met (Goh, 2021). The findings of this research reveal that participants' motivation and well-being were strongly influenced by social interactions, such as the relationships with peers and the support of their families. These support networks established a positive learning culture beyond formal teaching environments, enabling collaboration and collective achievement. This aligns with Baldinger's (2022) concept of adaptability and resilience in transformational professional learning, which highlights the importance of strong relationships in enabling growth. However, participants primarily framed this support through personal experiences rather than professional, exposing a gap in how their schools or workplaces contribute to creating an effective learning environment.

A combination of positive learning environments and robust support systems enables individuals to adapt to challenges, develop resilience and continually improve (Baldinger, 2022). While a combination of supportive relationships and constructive environments can enable teachers to grow, participants frequently noted a disconnect between the ideals of a learning culture and their professional environments. They observed that their studies were undervalued or unrecognised, expressing sentiments such as, *'My master's doesn't really hold value in the setting I am in,'* and *'they don't really understand why it's needed in practice.'* Others had experiences of being mocked, stating, *'they'll make a joke of it.'* This lack of support within their professional contexts is a significant barrier and emphasises the need for schools to integrate professional learning into a broader, holistic strategy. Addressing this issue could offer teachers essential professional and personal support throughout their studies. Further research is needed to explore the benefits to schools of teachers' engagement in further study.

#### 5.5.1.2 Balancing intrinsic and extrinsic motivators

The findings indicate that the interaction between schoolteachers and their professional environments can significantly affect their motivation and well-being. Participants recognised the considerable influence of their learning on their professional identity, confidence and teaching practices. Personal factors, such as autonomy and competence, combined with supportive social structures, were shown to shape these experiences.

Similar to findings from Deci and Ryan (2008), this research highlights that motivation is indeed a multifaceted concept, shaped by both internal and external factors. Intrinsic motivation such as self-reflection and determination are essential for achieving goals; however, external support, including collaboration with peers and encouragement from family, is equally important for overcoming challenges and maintaining engagement. This perspective emphasises the relationship between individual agency and social dynamics in professional learning. Motivation and well-being are sustained through a balance of internal drive and external support, currently provided by families and peers but not from participants school settings.

By analysing the findings through the lens of SDT, it is evident that social processes significantly influence participants' motivation. By establishing a comprehensive culture of learning that integrates professional learning with social and institutional support will allow teachers to draw upon four key sources of motivation: their families, peers, HEIs and their teaching practice. These insights naturally led to a critical reflection on how my research contributed to the existing body of knowledge as discussed next in chapter six.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

This final chapter presents the conclusions of my research, including its limitations and recommendations. Firstly, this chapter presents a summary of the MRQ and RQs that guided this research and draws together the key findings in relation to extant literature and my claims to knowledge. Secondly, it considers the limitations of the research before sharing recommendations for practice and policymakers, and future orientations of my research. Finally, I share my final thoughts of the findings and suggest potential practical applications. I will also present reflections on my personal and professional growth of the research process and the influence the research has had on me.

### 6.1 The significance of the findings: my contribution to knowledge

My research has identified that the participating schoolteachers perceived their motivations in diverse ways. However, collectively, they described motivation as an inherent drive to succeed in both their personal and professional learning within the context of their Master of Education studies. The IPA-informed approach, with its focus on exploring participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attach to those experiences, was crucial in uncovering these nuanced perspectives. Notably, as they reflected on their dual roles and the support they received from their workplace, they raised considerations about motivation that are not widely addressed in existing literature.

My research revealed that one participant's fear of failure served as an intrinsic motivator and another participant found that the familiarity with the HEI positively influenced their motivation to apply and their confidence when engaged in the programme. For most participants, peer interaction within the programme emerged as a significant motivational factor. While some literature refers to peer support (Belay et al., 2022) it does not address the unique relationships that schoolteachers form with their peers during a master's programme. This context allows teachers to relate their learning directly to their classroom practice and to share insights with peers, leading to a deeper, more practice-oriented exchange of ideas.

A significant finding that emerged was the strong motivational influence of family. All participants recognised the pivotal role their families played in shaping their motivation to apply and engage in a master's programme. Some referenced this influence in their personal statements when applying for a master's. However, the analysis of the interview data indicated that all participants expressed the support they received from family members, where they recognised its influence of this on their motivation to continue their learning on a master's

programme. The literature I reviewed did not identify family as a motivating factor for teacher learning and specifically during their time engaged in a master's programme, therefore, revealing a gap in the existing research and a concept that contributes to the knowledge base.

In contrast to the support provided by family, participants acknowledged the limited or absent support they received from their workplace. The extensive literature on teachers' professional learning stresses the importance of work-based support mechanisms that enable teachers to improve their teaching practice and emphasises the transformative nature of such activities (Netolicky, 2020; Boylan et al., 2023; Mooney Simmie, 2023). My findings illustrate how participants come to understand the purpose of their professional learning during their master's studies, the knowledge they gain, and how this knowledge strengthens their connection with their professional identity. This process reveals a gap in the extant literature on the topic. Despite the lack of support within their professional practice, the findings of my research suggest that teachers are still motivated to engage in their professional learning. This raises the question of how to provide adequate resources and support from their professional practice, and whether the drive and commitment to succeed is sustainable throughout their studies. Without embedding a strong learning culture in schools there is a risk that the progress made in education in Wales will be undermined, despite the Welsh Government's commitment to its improvement.

My research has prompted me to consider the limited support that participants felt they had from their practice, leading to further questions about this, specifically in relation to the current narrative in Wales in relation to the delivery of a national master's programme, as discussed in chapter one. It may be the case that participants did not feel supported because the master's is viewed as outside of the professional learning and development opportunities shared with them by in-school initiatives or local consortia, as discussed in chapter one. It is pertinent to explore why the participants perceive their learning on the programme as being an external aspect of their practice, despite acknowledging the impact that the advancement of their knowledge and skills is having on their teaching practice. It is also worth considering what factors contribute to the perception that the learning on the programme is not valued by participants' workplaces and what factors contribute to the lack of support from schools for individualised learning for their teachers. What my research has found is that ten participants from ten different schools in Wales identified a lack of support from their workplace when they were engaged in a master's programme. This collective insight signified a critical issue that warrants further investigation. The nature of this concern suggests a potential systemic problem for schools in Wales and indicates a pressing need for additional research to explore the underlying reasons for this deficit. In particular, when considering the ongoing

development and delivery of the National MA Education (Wales) programme, funded by the Welsh Government. Engaging with a broader range of stakeholders, including school leaders, HEIs and government representatives will be essential in understanding the factors that contribute to this lack of support. Addressing this issue will be vital, not only for the well-being of teachers but also for the overall effectiveness of teacher professional learning and the impact on student outcomes.

A further question that arises from this issue is whether the reliance on family support is a consequence of a lack of support within the participants' teaching context. This is not to diminish the importance of family support, but to highlight the need for further consideration of a balanced approach to teacher support. This would require further research to determine whether this is indeed the case.

## 6.2 Limitations of my research

As previously stated in chapter three, this research did not set out to be generalisable. Rather, it was rooted in an idiographic exploration of participants' experiences, specifically their motivations and their engagement with a master's programme. This idiographic focus aligns with the principles of IPA as noted in chapter three, which prioritises a nuanced insight into individual perspectives over broad applicability of findings (Nizza et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022).

As discussed in chapter three, conducting qualitative research is inherently complex and non-linear, with numerous challenges and occasional moments of uncertainty. Embracing reflexivity throughout the process proved invaluable in recognising my role as an active participant in shaping the research. For instance, during the interview process, I encountered differing perspectives on what motivates participant engagement with the master's programme, some emphasised personal growth (intrinsic motivation), while others highlighted career advancement (extrinsic motivation). By maintaining a reflexive stance, I could critically reflect on my biases and experiences, allowing me to navigate these complexities effectively (Engward and Goldspink, 2020). This approach helped manage the influence of my analysis and interpretation of the data, to enhance the trustworthiness and reliability of the data (Smith and Osborn, 2022).

The decision to undertake this small-scale research was made with an awareness of the potential limitations of exploring the experiences of individual schoolteachers. This awareness informed not only the methodological decisions and research design (Nizza et al., 2021)

discussed in chapter three section 3.4.7, but also the manner in which the findings were presented in chapter five. The idiographic nature of individual experiences, the small sample size and the reliance on voluntary participation indicated that the research was subject to certain limitations. However, rather than undermining the validity of the research, these factors reinforced the IPA framework that guided it.

## 6.3 Recommendations and actions for practices

In view of my findings, both in the literature and primary research, I have considered aspects of my practice that require consideration. As outlined in chapter one, my role as Programme Leader for Master of Education programmes has provided me with valuable insight into the motivations and experiences of participants. This has enabled me to identify ways to support future students in their studies. These are as follows:

### 6.3.1 For my practice

**Student fear of failure:** The reference to a fear of failure has prompted me to reflect on the pressures that students encounter during their first year of a master's programme.

**Action:** This has led to the development of a ten-week bridging model to support students in navigating these challenges. This would facilitate students' introduction to the expectations associated with level seven writing and thinking. The objective is to develop critical thinking, awareness of academic conventions and a sense of confidence in academic practice. It has also led to the introduction of a Navigating the Student System workshop delivered in students' first year of study. This is to ensure students can navigate the virtual learning platform, which includes the online library resource and student support services that are available to them throughout their time on the master's programme.

**Setting a realistic and achievable timeframe for study:** In practice it is important to consider the delivery and assessment dates to help with time management skills.

**Action:** Through open discussions with students, a timetable can be developed that notes time for family and reflection to provide a balance between home, work and study. At the beginning of the academic year, I aim to work with students to discuss assessment dates and share timetables that include planned study breaks. This approach will be particularly beneficial during the dissertation year when effective time management is essential.

Another important concept to consider is the scheduling of assessments and the implementation of individualised timetables. While there may be constraints around the timing of university assessment boards, setting aside time to actively plan both study and downtime would help students to achieve a better balance between home, work and academic responsibilities.

**Develop peer collaboration groups:** Continue to develop activities that encourage group work.

**Actions:** Whether in-person, blended or fully online, the programme team can create additional time in the delivery schedule to encourage peer collaboration. This can take place in breakout rooms, discussion boards, and when using real-time collaboration tools. As a result of the sense of belonging identified in the findings, I have introduced five optional on campus writing retreats held on Saturdays over the year. Although the sessions are focused on individual writing and reading, they also allow for informal discussion to take place, collaboration and sharing of information throughout the day, therefore building a sense of community.

**Consideration of personal support networks:** The concept of personal support networks is one that presents a number of complexities. While there are meaningful ways to involve families in the learning process, this must be approached with care. I recognise that not all students may feel comfortable involving families, and some may have personal reasons for keeping their academic life separate. However, there are ways in which personal support networks could be included in the learning process, dependent on circumstances.

**Action:** A way to potentially include families in the learning process is to extend an invitation to students and their families to attend a welcome evening, as well as any presentation evenings that take place during the programme. An example of this could be a student conference event. Knowing that families are present may provide emotional and motivational support, boosting student self-esteem and confidence. Students may feel more motivated knowing their hard work and commitment to their studies will be seen by their loved ones. Sharing achievements with the family could instil a sense of pride and accomplishment, which I have personally witnessed at graduation ceremonies.

It is important that such involvement remains optional and inclusive, ensuring that students who may not have access to such support networks are not made to feel excluded. By handling

this sensitively and acknowledging diverse contexts of learners, HEIs can promote belonging while respecting individual boundaries. This inclusive approach may also strengthen the student and HEI relationship and inspire future generations.

**HEI and school collaboration:** It is recommended that HEIs are encouraged to collaborate with schools to identify an effective strategy for supporting teachers engaged in postgraduate studies.

**Action:** A potential collaboration initiative is to establish Professional Learning Communities (PLC) (Stoll and Louis, 2007). Although not a new concept, a PLC can be developed locally and lead to a national approach. In these PLCs, participants can engage in regular meetings, workshops and discussions focused on aligning academic research with classroom practice, identifying shared professional learning goals, and developing tailored support for teachers' ongoing professional learning. This collaborative structure would allow teachers to access the resources and expertise of HEIs, while enabling HEIs to remain attuned to the practical needs of schools. At the time of writing, there are national and local discussions on the active role HEIs can take to support teacher professional learning, therefore my findings will play a role in shaping these initial discussions.

Another potential avenue for collaboration is to explore the introduction of a dissemination strategy, whereby teachers would have the opportunity to share their work and research findings with their colleagues. At present, the National Master's programme encompasses an in-person annual national student conference event, and this could be replicated at the local level with schools and families invited to view and discuss student research, either online or in-person.

**Student familiarity with the HEI:** Internal recruitment drives already take place in my practice. However, this concept can be further developed.

**Action:** One approach is to invite alumni of our Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) programmes to attend specific master's events. In addition, the programme team can encourage engagement by sharing an annual newsletter with local schools, highlighting key events and extending invitations to the student conference. This outreach will help promote ongoing links with alumni and strengthen partnerships with the local education community.



### 6.3.2 For schools

I recommend that schools develop supportive networks for teachers involved in individual professional learning opportunities and actively encourage collaborative sharing of knowledge and practice. This approach aims to establish a sense of value among teachers, emphasising the importance of their learning and its practical application. In the context of recent developments in education in Wales, including the introduction of a new curriculum and revised professional standards, supporting teacher enquiry and professional learning is critical to successfully navigating these changes. To achieve this, change agents such as school leaders, local education authorities and professional learning coordinators have a key role to play in establishing a culture of learning. Resources to support this work could be found through partnerships with universities and government-funded teacher development initiatives. By securing these resources and engaging school leaders, schools would better equip teachers to adapt to evolving expectations, ensure that new educational initiatives lead to meaningful improvements in student outcomes, and have the potential to support the retention of teachers in the profession.

## 6.4 Future orientations of the research

My research has identified gaps in the existing knowledge base, raising additional questions and directions for future research. Therefore, the following future orientations should be considered:

1. Leadership perspective: In consideration of the findings of my research, it would be beneficial to gain insight into the views of school leaders regarding their thoughts and experiences of professional learning, particularly a Master of Education programme, and its relevance and value to their practice (Mooney Simmie, 2023). The research could consider how schools are creating cultures of learning and consider the strengths and limitations for leaders in schools.
2. Exploring additional teacher perspectives: Future research focusing on teachers who are not enrolled in a master's programme would be valuable in identifying similarities and differences in motivation for professional learning experiences, as well as understanding the reasons for their decision not to study at level seven.
3. Teacher learning and impact on student outcomes: Future research examining the long-term impact of teachers who have completed a Master of Education programme

would be valuable to schools, HEIs and governments. Investigating the relationship between teachers' professional learning and student outcomes could provide evidence of the impact of master's level learning, highlighting its importance and potential benefits for educational practice and policy decisions.

4. Support for sustained learning: Research of the mechanisms to support teachers' success in the programme could consider mentoring, peer support networks and strategies to sustain student motivation, such as regular feedback and goal-setting workshops.

## 6.5 Recommendations for policymakers

In Wales, the government are currently driving initiatives to support teachers' development and professional learning (Welsh Government, 2023). There are a range of projects I am currently involved in, so I have first-hand experience of the work they are doing, and I commend the drive to develop teachers in their practice. Nevertheless, there are still nuances that need to be considered and explored further. These are:

1. Clarity is needed on what constitutes professional learning for teachers: As noted in chapter one, there have been many professional learning initiatives since devolution in Wales (Jones and Evans, 2023; Hutt et al., 2024). However, without a clear distinction between professional development and professional learning, transmissive approaches may take precedence over transformative ones, limiting critical engagement (Kennedy and Stevenson, 2023). Establishing this clarity may enable school leaders to more effectively advocate for and support professional learning opportunities for individual teachers, such as master's study.
2. Development of a professional learning framework to build a national community of learning: As I write this, there are current movements in the tier system in Wales identified in chapter one section 1.6. As noted, the three-tier system includes the following:
  - Tier 1: Welsh Government
  - Tier 2: The 22 local authorities have been grouped into regional consortia. It is the responsibility of the consortia to deliver professional learning and development to schools in collaboration with other organisations, including HEIs
  - Tier 3: Schools

From April 2025, within tier two, the local consortia will be disbanded, therefore, leading to a gap in the system for the management of professional learning opportunities in schools in Wales. In consideration of this, to ensure that teacher motivation for learning is not impacted, I propose a new professional learning framework that guides and supports professional learning for teachers. The drive to change the education system and the focus on building professional capital will need to continue to see a long-term systemic change in Wales. Building a learning culture can be driven from the macro perspective which may influence the thinking about school learning cultures that advocates learning for all (Goh, 2021). Aspects of this are happening in schools in Wales, such as the schools as learning organisations initiative. However, more work can be done here to embed a learning culture in and across schools in Wales which will need to be driven from a policy perspective to ensure school leaders are leading the way forward for teachers.

3. Work-life balance: Greater consideration of work-life balance for teachers should be noted and developed further. Building on the notion of collaboration (Kachchhap and Horo, 2021), a commitment to professional learning (Timperley, 2011; Netolicky, 2020), and the drive to improve student outcomes (Thomas, 2022; Welsh Government, 2022), it is essential to consider the time teachers invest in their own professional learning and development. Analogous to the instruction in flight safety briefings, where individuals are instructed to secure their own oxygen mask before helping others, allowing teachers to prioritise their professional learning will enable them to support their students. By facilitating a commitment to professional learning, teachers can enhance their own pedagogical expertise, which has the potential to exert a positive influence on both their students and the broader education community (Nolan and Guo, 2022; Boylan et al., 2023).

## 6.6 The influence of my research on me and my role

Engaging in discussions with participants about their motivations gave me a valuable insight into their experiences (Smith et al., 2022) as they reflected on their engagement in a master's programme. I was aware that, beyond my own experience, I had very little knowledge and understanding of the influence their motivation for learning had on them, their drive and determination to succeed, and the steps they take to remain motivated. From the very first interview I realised that my preconceptions were being challenged, in particular my assumption that all teachers are motivated and supported to learn. This pattern continued in

each subsequent interview as I became increasingly aware of both the strengths and limitations of participants' motivations. However, what was clear to me was each participant's strong sense of determination. The conversations did not merely concern the master's programme; they also explored the participants' personal identities, their enthusiasm and their commitment to learning. It may therefore be argued that learning is an inherent quality of the participants beyond the confines of a master's programme. It was a genuine privilege to gain these insights, and I am immensely grateful to the participants for sharing their thoughts in such an open and honest manner. This experience has had a significant impact on my practice, influencing it in three key areas:

1. Student engagement: While I have always made an effort to get to know my students, this experience has led me to intentionally integrate regular check-ins throughout each module, whether in person, via online platform or through email. These informal conversations, alongside formal ones, have proven vital in building stronger relationships and enhancing a sense of belonging (Zhang et al., 2021). By providing timely support and demonstrating empathy (Carter, 2021), I have strengthened my connection with students, which has positively influenced their engagement and overall experience in the programme.
2. My teaching methodology: The knowledge gained from the literature and from the findings of this research have influenced my insights into teacher motivation for learning, teacher well-being and the influence of collaboration. This has helped to shape the way I approach my teaching. I take the time to ensure there are a range of collaborative activities to encourage discussion and team building (Netolicky, 2016; Jones et al., 2018). I have also incorporated time to discuss individual student learning and the influence on their workplace which has also helped students make the connection in support of their assignments and share best practice with peers.

Similar to the time I spend with students, building in time for students to work in a structured way with their peers will continue to create a sense of belonging and support their motivation in their studies.

3. Confidence in leadership and collaboration: A significant impact of my research has been the enhancement of my confidence as a leader. Through reflecting throughout the process and subsequently engaging with my colleagues, I have come to recognise the importance of cultivating strong relationships within the team. I now make a conscious effort to prioritise dedicated planning time, allowing for the sharing of

knowledge and skills gained from professional learning opportunities and our practice. This change in my approach has enabled me to model collaborative behaviours, encouraging open communication and mutual support. My guiding principle for motivating my team is simple: Collaboration is key. By developing a collaborative environment, I have noticed an increase in collective problem-solving, shared ownership of tasks, and a stronger sense of cohesion within the team, which has in turn contributed to the overall success of our projects, including the programme leadership across seven universities in Wales.

Since expanding my understanding of professional learning, teacher motivation, well-being and the influence of communities of learning, I have been able to develop content for specific modules in the national master's programme. This knowledge has enabled me to actively participate in collaborative research projects focused specifically on professional learning for teachers.

## 6.7 My final thoughts

When exploring the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in a Master of Education programme, it has been important to consider the role of programme leaders in sustaining student engagement in their learning. As a programme leader of master's programmes, I am positioned to provide essential supporting mechanisms, implement effective pedagogical practices and deliver professional learning content tailored to meet the needs of teachers (and all students). These strategies are designed to help maintain their motivations throughout their studies. However, while I can provide support for learning, additional support from their professional practice, such as collaborative opportunities and a supportive school culture, will help teachers to fully integrate and sustain the benefits of their development (Timperley, 2011; Jones, 2016).

As I continue to work with my current students, I have heard similar concerns from teachers regarding a perceived lack of value and support for their studies from their workplace. This highlights the importance of ensuring that when learning extends beyond the immediate working environment, support from senior leadership and colleagues is essential (Harris and Jones, 2017; Guskey, 2021). Such a support structure would provide the work-based support teachers need, complementing the support from their personal networks, HEI and peer relationships. Literature highlights the impact of professional learning communities (Harris and Jones, 2019a), a community where teachers feel valued, encouraged and a community where learning is transformational (Netolicky, 2020; Boylan et al., 2023). Research signifies the role

of support to motivation (Richardson et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2018; Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2020; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2021) and professional learning (Jones, 2016; Boeskens et al., 2020; OECD, 2020b; Mooney Simmie, 2023), which then influences teacher well-being (Day and Gu, 2013; Collie, 2020; Kachchhap and Horo, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Therefore, in line with Arthur et al.'s (2006) finding on the support networks for teachers, I believe that holistic support from school practice, peers, family and HEIs would enhance schoolteachers' experiences in their professional learning within Wales and beyond.

As the education landscape is driven by the impact of student outcomes, the focus has to be on the teachers who have the first-hand experience of providing a positive learning experience for their students. Without supportive networks to encourage and motivate teachers to engage in learning beyond the classroom, then the drive to build professional capital will be limited. Engaging in professional learning is about the individual as it develops who they are and what they do (Mockler, 2020). It is about their professionalism, their learning, and most importantly it is about their professional identity (Toom, 2020; Suarez and McGrath, 2022).

I believe that having the time and space to engage in professional learning would be key to driving a culture of learning within practice and would also support the advocacy of learning that transforms practice, moving from a 'need to do' that encompasses professional development activities to a 'want to do' that encompasses transformational professional learning (Liu et al., 2019). There are many recent discussions about teacher recruitment and retention across the UK (House of Commons Education Committee, 2024; NFER, 2024), so I would propose that policymakers and school leaders consider the time and space for teachers to engage in professional learning opportunities to help instil a positive and valued culture of learning. Working with teachers to create time during the working week, which is directly used for engagement in professional learning opportunities will be essential for this.

### 6.7.1 Personal reflection

The opportunity to listen to participants share their experiences prompted me to engage in a process of reflexive thinking, whereby I have revisited my own learning journey and the motivations that have driven me throughout my professional learning. This reflection enabled me to explore the personal, professional and contextual factors that have shaped me, and to identify how these have aligned to the motivations the participants shared. It became evident that, similar to the schoolteachers in this research, my professional learning has been influenced by my personal support networks. The challenges I encountered along the way with practice-based support and balancing family commitments, while considerable to me, only

served to strengthen my determination to succeed, therefore demonstrating how motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, has been a primary driver of my own growth. This process of self-reflection has highlighted the transformative impact of professional learning. My learning journey has been one of continuous evolution, shaping both my professional role and personal life. This demonstrates to me the significant impact professional learning has on an individual, highlighting the need to promote and embed a culture of professional learning within the teaching profession to enhance its professional capital.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Interview schedule - Semi Structured Interview Questions and Prompts

### Interview questions and prompts

Welcome. Reminder of confidentiality, anonymity and the right to withdraw. Ask if it is ok to record for transcription purposes only.

Brief introduction of who I am and the aim of my research.

To start: Please can you tell me a little bit about your role in your practice and how long you have been studying on the MA Education programme.

1. What does the term motivation mean to you?  
How can you define motivation? What does this look like in your life?
2. What does motivation mean to you in relation to your studies?  
Can you share an example? What factors contributed to the motivation?
3. What helps you to feel motivated?  
Can you share a specific example? Is there anyone who helps you feel motivated? What does motivation feel like to you?
4. What demotivates you?  
How do you handle these moments of demotivation? What do you do when you face challenges?  
How can you help your motivation?
5. Can you share areas of your study that you find motivating and areas that you find less motivating?  
Can you share an example of a specific time? What excites you and keeps you engaged?
6. What are the personal approaches you use to motivate yourself to engage with your studies?  
What support is important to you? How does this support help or hinder? What strategies do you use to motivate yourself?
7. What are the professional approaches you use to motivate yourself to engage with your studies?  
What support is important to you personally? What support is important to you professionally? Why is this support helpful for your engagement?
8. Are there any barriers that you have experienced that have impacted your motivation to study?  
Personal barriers and professional barriers? How do you overcome these barriers?
9. Can you tell me how studying on the master's programme has impacted your development as a student?  
Can you share specific skills, knowledge, or experiences that you have gained? What has had a significant impact on you? How has your perspective evolved? Have any moments or insights influenced you?
10. Can you tell me how studying on the master's programme has impacted your development as a professional practitioner?  
Do you have any examples? What skills and knowledge have you gained that have directly influenced practice? Has there been anything that you have not studied that you expected to? Have there been any practical development in your role? Has there been any changes as a result of your studies?
11. Is there anything else that you would like to discuss about your studies and your motivation that we have not covered in the previous questions?

To end: I have no further questions. Do you have anything you would like to share or ask before we end the interview? Thank you and next steps.

## Appendix B: Glossary of terms

### **Accreditation**

In the context of higher education, an institution that has undergone a quality assurance process conducted by an external organisation to ascertain whether specific standards have been met is designated as accredited. This designation signifies official recognition. The accreditation process serves to verify that the professional learning opportunities offered by institutions are aligned with the Professional Standards Framework (PSF) (AdvanceHE, 2021).

### **Community of Learning (CoL)**

The term community of learning is also defined as a professional learning community (PLC), which refers to a group of practitioners who collaborate and share their knowledge and expertise to improve student learning outcomes. The overarching focus of communities of learning is continuous improvement and collective responsibility for student learning outcomes (DuFour et al., 2008).

### **Community of Practice (CoP)**

A community of practice (CoP) is a group of individuals who share their knowledge, skills, and experiences related to a specific area of interest or work. Wenger (1998) affirms that CoPs are formed through the mutual engagement of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to improve as they interact regularly. CoPs are defined as groups of people with a shared field of interest who are actively engaged in a process of collective learning that changes them and the way they work (Wenger, 2000).

### **Conservation of Resource (COR) Theory**

The COR theory (Hobfoll, 1998) offers a framework for understanding the influence of assessment on emotions and performance and focuses on the resources of individuals and groups. COR theory assumes that the primary motivation of an individual is to build, protect, and foster their resource pool to protect themselves and the social bonds that support them. The COR theory asserts that stress is a consequence of environmental, social, and cultural factors. These factors exert an influence on the demands placed on individuals regarding the acquisition and protection of their circumstances, which serve to ensure their well-being and protect them from threats to their well-being (Hobfoll 1998; 2010).

### **Estyn**

Estyn is the name of the education and training inspectorate for Wales. The inspectorate was established under the Education Act 1992 and is funded by the Welsh Government, although not directly accountable to the Welsh Parliament. The duties and powers of Estyn are drawn from those of His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) whose position is set out in the Government of Wales Act 2006 (Estyn, 2023).

### **Goal Theory**

Goal theory is a psychological theory that explains the processes by which individuals establish and pursue goals in order to motivate their behaviour. Locke (1968) posits that specific and challenging goals, in conjunction with feedback and goal commitment, result in high performance.

### **Master of Education**

A Master of Education programme is a postgraduate degree 'composed of structured learning opportunities' for individuals seeking to advance their knowledge of educational theory and practice, and to advance their careers in education (QAA, 2020a: 5). Typically, a master's programme can take one to three years to complete, depending on whether it is delivered full-time (one year) or part-time (two to three years).



### **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**

Established in 1961, the OECD is an international organisation that promotes policies to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world (OECD, 2024). Its focus areas involve economic policy, education, environment, health and social policy. The OECD describes itself as a well-known organisation that prides itself on its economic data and policy recommendations that shape global standards and practice (OECD, 2024).

### **Professional Development**

The term professional development (PD) has been a long-standing interpretation of all training that teachers undertake in order to demonstrate their engagement with activities related to their role (Jones, 2016). These activities may include, for example, safeguarding training, health and safety training, or intervention programme development. Teachers in schools in Wales are expected to record their ongoing development and professional learning on the Education Workforce Council (EWC) professional learning passport (PLP) (EWC, 2024).

### **Professional Learning**

Professional learning (PL) is identified by Jones (2016) as a subtle shift in language from professional development, which has taken on connotations of providing internal development training for teachers. Timperley (2011) identified professional learning as a way of transforming practice by challenging and questioning previous assumptions through the acquisition of new skills, knowledge and understanding in order to improve performance.

### **Self-efficacy**

The term self-efficacy is used to describe 'an individual's belief in their ability to perform a given action' (Bandura, 1986: 391). This concept has also been explored by Schunk (2012), who proposed that self-efficacy is an individual's capacity to achieve the desired outcome. With a focus on learning and performance, self-efficacy plays an essential role in explaining and predicting learner outcomes.

### **Self-determination Theory**

The concept of self-determination, as defined by Deci and Ryan (1985), is rooted in psycho-analytic theory. It is a process whereby an individual acts with determination, a state of being willing to do something with true volition. This definition encompasses the notion that self-determination allows an individual to make their own choices and decisions, and to take control of their lives. Deci and Ryan (1985) define self-determination as the extent to which an individual's behaviour is internally motivated and self-regulated, as opposed to being controlled by external factors.

### **Teacher Well-being**

Teacher well-being is defined as the physical, emotional, and psychological health and well-being of teachers (Hascher et al., 2021). It encompasses factors such as stress, burnout, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life and is linked to job performance. According to Boeskens et al. (2020), effective policies and practices to support teacher well-being include providing opportunities for professional development, adopting a positive school culture, and promoting work-life balance.

## Appendix C: Theory and connections from the literature review

Theory	Relevance to my research	Connections to themes	Key Reference
Community of Learning	Enhances teachers' motivation by developing a supportive learning environment.	Promotes professional learning, contributes to well-being, and enhances motivation through shared experiences.	Lave J. (1991) 'Situating learning in communities of practice', in L Resnick, J Levine and S Teasley (eds), <i>Perspectives on Socially Shared Cognition</i> . Hyattsville, MD: American Psychological Association, pp. 63-84.
Community of Practice	Encourages collaboration and shared expertise, motivating teachers to engage in professional learning and development.	Integral for professional learning and motivation, contributing to a culture of learning.	Wenger, E. (1998) <i>Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  Wenger, E. (2000) 'Communities of practice and social learning systems', <i>Organisation</i> , 7 (2), pp. 211-365.
Conservation Resource Theory	Highlights the need for sustainable practices in teacher learning and development, influencing motivation to engage in ongoing learning.	Links professional development with motivation and well-being through sustainable practices.	Hobfoll, S.E. (1998) <i>Stress, Culture, and Community: The Psychology and Physiology of Stress</i> . New York: Plenum Press.  Hobfoll, S.E. (2001) 'The influence of culture, community, and the nested-self in the stress process: Advancing conservation of resources theory', <i>Applied Psychology</i> , 50, pp. 337-421.  Hobfoll, S.E. (2010) 'Conversation of Resource Theory: Its implications for stress, health and resilience', in Folkman, S. (ed.), <i>The Oxford Handbook of Stress, Health and Coping</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 127-147.
Self-Determination Theory	Supports the idea that autonomy, relatedness and competence in learning enhances teacher motivation for further learning.	SDT emphasises autonomy, competence and relatedness as drivers of intrinsic motivation and engagement. In professional learning and communities of learning, SDT suggests that individuals thrive when they feel empowered and supported in making choices, developing mastery and forming meaningful connections. These principles are conducive to motivation, collaboration and wellbeing.	Deci, E. L. and Ryan, R. M. (1985) <i>Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behaviour</i> . New York: Plenum.  Deci, E.L. and Ryan, R. M (2020) 'Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practice and future directions', <i>Educational Psychology</i> , 61, pp. 2-11.  Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. (2000) 'Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being'. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 55, pp. 68-78.

			Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. (2020) 'Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions'. <i>Contemporary Educational Psychology</i> , 61, Article 101860.
Goal Theory	Helps in understanding how setting educational goals can enhance teacher motivation.	Connects <b>motivation</b> to <b>professional growth</b> and <b>well-being</b> by fostering achievement through clear <b>goals</b> .	<p>Locke, E. A. (1968) 'Toward a theory of task motivation and incentives', <i>Organisational Behaviour &amp; Human Performance</i>, 3 (2), pp. 157–189.</p> <p>Locke, E. A., and Latham, G. P. (2013) <i>New developments in goal setting and task performance</i>. Abingdon: Routledge.</p> <p>Locke, E. A., and Latham, G. P. (2019) 'The development of goal setting theory: A half-century retrospective', <i>Motivation Science</i>, 5 (2), pp. 93–105.</p>
Self-Efficacy Theory	Influences teachers' motivation to pursue further education by boosting their confidence in their abilities.	Ties closely to <b>motivation</b> , <b>professional growth</b> , and <b>well-being</b> , as higher self-efficacy can lead to better performance and satisfaction.	<p>Bandura, A. (1977) 'Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change', <i>Psychological Review</i>, 84 (2), pp.191-215.</p> <p>Schunk, D. H., and DiBenedetto, M. K. (2021) 'Self-efficacy and human motivation', in A. J. Elliot (ed.), <i>Advances in motivation science</i>. London: Elsevier Academic Press, pp. 153–179.</p>
Self-Regulation Theory	Empowers teachers to take control of their learning, enhancing motivation to engage in a Master of Education programme.	Links <b>motivation</b> to <b>professional learning</b> through self-management and emotional <b>well-being</b> .	<p>Zimmerman, B.J. (2008) 'Investigating Self-regulation and Motivation: Historical background, methodological development, and future prospects', <i>American Educational Research Journal</i>, 45 (1), pp. 166-183.</p> <p>Zimmerman, B. J. and Schunk, D. H. (Eds.). (2011) <i>Handbook of self-regulation of learning and performance</i>. Abingdon: Routledge.</p>
Grit Theory	Encourages teachers to remain committed to their educational pursuits, promoting motivation and resilience.	Connects to <b>motivation</b> , <b>professional learning</b> , and <b>well-being</b> through the importance of sustained effort.	Duckworth, A. L. (2016) <i>Grit: The power of passion and perseverance</i> . London: Scribner.
Teacher Well-Being	Affects teachers' motivation and engagement in professional learning and development opportunities.	Strong connection with <b>motivation</b> , professional development, and <b>communities of learning</b> by creating a supportive environment.	<p>Turner, K., Thielking, M. and Prochazka, N. (2022) Teacher wellbeing and social support: A phenomenological study, <i>Educational Research</i>, 64 (1), pp. 77-94.</p> <p>McCallum, F. (2021) 'Teacher and Staff Wellbeing: Understanding the Experiences of school staff', in Kern, M. I., and Wehmeyer, M.L. (eds) <i>The Palgrave</i></p>

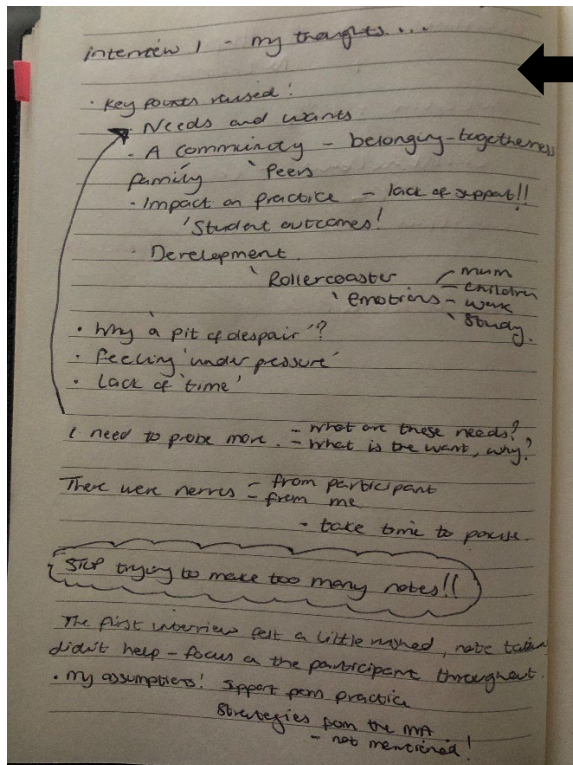
			<i>Handbook of Positive Education</i> . London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 715-740.
Wantivation	Highlights the intrinsic motivations that drive teachers to engage in further learning.	Ties <b>motivation</b> to <b>professional learning</b> and <b>well-being</b> , emphasising desire as a key factor.	Vansteenkiste, M. and Soenens, B. (2023) 'Less Is Sometimes More: Differentiating 'Must-ivation' from 'Want-ivation', in Bong, M., Reeve, J. and Kim, S. (ed.) <i>Motivation Science: Controversies and Insights</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 123-129.
Personal Agency	Enhances teachers' motivation to pursue further education by empowering them to take charge of their learning.	Relates to <b>motivation</b> and professional growth a sense of control and <b>well-being</b> in the learning process.	Toom, A. (2020) 'Shaping teacher identities and agency for the professional: contextual factors and surrounding communities', <i>Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice</i> , 25 (8), pp. 915-917.
Professional Learning	Critical for maintaining motivation to enhance teaching skills through advanced education.	Reinforcing the role of <b>motivation</b> in <b>professional learning</b> and the importance of <b>well-being</b> in <b>learning communities</b> .	Timperley, H. (2008) <i>Teacher professional learning and development: educational practices</i> series 18. Brussels: International Academy of Education, International Bureau of Education & UNESCO.  Guskey, T. R. (2021) 'Professional Learning with Staying Power. <i>ASCD</i> , 78(5), pp. 54-59.
Teacher Identity	Influences motivation to pursue further learning, as strong identity can drive professional engagement.	Connects with <b>motivation</b> and <b>well-being</b> , impacting <b>professional learning</b> and the <b>culture of learning</b> in schools.	Beijaard, D., Koopman, M. and Schellings, G. (2022) 'Reframing teacher professional identity and learning'. In I. Mentor (Ed.), <i>The Palgrave handbook of teacher education research</i> . London: Springer, pp. 1-23.  Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., and Verloop, N. (2004) 'Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity', <i>Teaching and Teacher Education</i> , 20 (2), 107-128.  Beijaard, D., Verloop, N. and Vermunt, J.D. (2000) 'Teachers' perceptions of professional identity: an exploratory study from a personal knowledge perspective', <i>Teaching and Teacher Education</i> , 16, pp. 749-764.
Teacher Professionalism	Enhances motivation to engage in education programmes that uphold professional standards.	Relates to <b>motivation</b> and <b>professional learning</b> , fostering a supportive <b>culture of learning</b> .	Sachs, J. (2016) 'Teacher professionalism: why are we still talking about it?', <i>Teachers and teaching, theory, and practice</i> , 22 (4), pp. 413-425.
Transformational Professional Learning	Encourages teachers to pursue further education for substantial improvement in their teaching.	Links to <b>motivation</b> and <b>well-being</b> , as <b>transformative learning</b> experiences can revitalise teachers' professional identities.	Boylan, M., Adams, G., Perry, E. and Booth, J. (2023) 'Re-imagining transformative professional learning for critical teacher professionalism, a conceptual review', <i>Professional Development in Education</i> , 49 (4), pp. 651-669.  Netolicky, D. M. (2020) <i>Transformational professional learning: Making a difference in schools</i> . Abingdon: Routledge.

Transformational Change	Motivates teachers to embrace educational change, enhancing their skills through further study.	Connects to <b>motivation</b> and <b>professional learning</b> , reinforcing the importance of <b>community support</b> in facilitating change.	Fullan, M. (2015) <i>The New Meaning of Educational Change</i> . 5th ed. London: Teachers College Press.  Mezirow, J. (2009) <i>An overview on transformative learning</i> . In: K. Illeris, ed. <i>Contemporary theories of learning: learning theorists . . . in their own words</i> . Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 90–105.
Leading Professional Learning in Schools	Essential for motivating teachers to engage in professional learning opportunities.	Ties <b>motivation</b> and <b>professional learning</b> to <b>community</b> , promoting a <b>culture of continuous improvement</b> .	Harris, A. and Jones, M. (2019a) 'Leading professional learning with impact', <i>School Leadership &amp; Management</i> , 39 (1), pp. 1-4.  Jones, K. (2022) <i>Leading Professional Learning</i> . Cardiff: National Academy for Professional Educational Leadership.  Porritt, V, Spence-Thomas, K, and Taylor, C (2017) <i>Leading Professional Learning and Development</i> , in Earley, P and Greaney, T (eds.) <i>School Leadership and Education System Reform</i> . London: Bloomsbury.
Culture of Learning	Cultivates motivation among teachers to engage in collaborative learning opportunities.	Strongly connects <b>professional learning</b> , <b>well-being</b> , and <b>motivation</b> through shared goals and <b>community support</b> .	Goh, A.Y.S. (2021) 'Learning cultures: Understanding learning in a school–university partnership', <i>Oxford Review of Education</i> , 47(3), pp. 285–300.  Hodkinson, P., Biesta, G. and James, D. (2007) 'Understanding learning cultures', <i>Educational Review</i> , 59 (4), pp. 415-427.
Professional Capital	Encourages teachers to pursue advanced learning to enhance their professional capital.	Relates to <b>motivation</b> and <b>professional learning</b> , enhancing the overall <b>well-being</b> of the <b>educational community</b> .	Hargreaves, A. and Fullan, M. (2012) <i>Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school</i> . Teachers College Press.  Hargreaves, A. and Fullan, M. (2013) 'The power of professional capital', <i>Journal of Staff Development</i> , 34 (3), pp. 36–39.
Social Learning Theory	Highlights the value of peer learning, motivating teachers to engage in collaborative educational environments.	Links to <b>motivation</b> and <b>professional learning</b> , reinforcing the importance of <b>social interactions in the learning process</b> .	Bandura, A. (1977) <i>Social Learning Theory</i> . New York: Prentice Hall.  Bandura, A. (1986) <i>Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory</i> . New York: Prentice-Hall.  Bandura, A. (2001) 'Social cognitive theory: an agentic perspective', <i>Annual review of psychology</i> , 52 (1), pp.1-26.
Collaborative Learning	Encourages teachers to work together in their learning journeys, enhancing motivation to pursue further learning.	Strong connections with <b>motivation</b> , <b>well-being</b> , and <b>professional learning</b> through <b>shared learning experiences</b> .	Steyn, G.M. (2017) 'Fostering Teachers' Professional Development Through Collaboration in Professional Learning Communities', in: Amzat, I., Valdez, N. (eds) <i>Teacher Empowerment Toward</i>

			<i>Professional Development and Practices</i> . London: Springer, pp. 241-253.
Job Demands-Resource	A framework for understanding teacher engagement in professional learning and the balance between the demands placed on them and the resources available to them.	<b>Motivation</b> can be influenced by an individual's work environment. Balance between job demands and resources has a direct impact on <b>well-being</b> . Those with adequate resources such as time and encouragement can support teacher engagement with <b>professional learning</b> .	<p>Bakker, A. B. and Demerouti, E. (2017) 'Job demands-resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward', <i>Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</i>, 22 (3), pp. 273–285.</p> <p>Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., and Xanthopoulou, D. (2019) 'Job Demands-Resources theory and the role of individual cognitive and behavioural strategies', in Taris, T., Peeters, M. and DeWitte, D. (Eds.), <i>The fun and frustration of modern working life: Contributions from an occupational health psychology perspective</i>. Antwerp, Belgium: Pelckmans Pro, pp. 94-104.</p> <p>Skaalvik, E. M. and Skaalvik, S. (2018) 'Job demands and job resources as predictors of teacher motivation and well-being', <i>Social Psychology of Education</i>, 21, pp. 1251-1275.</p>
Well-Being	Directly impacts teachers' motivation to engage in professional development programmes.	Connects <b>motivation</b> and <b>professional learning</b> , as <b>well-being</b> is crucial for sustained engagement and effectiveness in education.	<p>Ryan, R. M. and Deci, E. L. (2000) 'Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being'. <i>American Psychologist</i>, 55, pp. 68-78.</p> <p>Zhao, Q. (2022) 'On the Role of Teachers' Professional Identity and Well-Being in Their Professional Development', <i>Front. Psychol.</i> 13, pp. 1-4.</p>
Achievement Goal Theory	Motivates teachers to engage in educational opportunities that align with their personal and professional aspirations.	Intersects with <b>motivation</b> , <b>professional learning</b> , and <b>well-being</b> , as achievement goals can drive engagement and satisfaction in professional development.	<p>Elliot, A. J. (2005) A conceptual history of the achievement goal construct, in A. Elliot &amp; C. Dweck (eds.), <i>Handbook of competence and motivation</i>. New York: Wiley, pp. 52–72.</p> <p>Elliott, E.S. and Dweck, C.S. (1988) 'Goals: An approach to motivation and achievement', <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 54 pp. 5-12.</p> <p>Urdan T. and Kaplan A. (2020). 'The origins, evolution, and future directions of achievement goal theory', <i>Contemporary Educational Psychology</i>, 61.</p>



## Appendix D: Field work diary excerpts



Interview 1 - my thoughts...

Key points raised:

- Needs and wants
- A community - belonging, togetherness, Family - peers
- Impact on practice - lack of support!!
- Student outcomes
- Development - rollercoaster, emotions, mum, children, work, studies
- Why a 'pit of despair'?
- Feeling under pressure
- Lack of time

I need to probe more - what are these needs? What is the want? Why?

There were nerves - from participant, from me, take time to pause

STOP trying to take too many notes!!

The first interview felt a little rushed, note taking didn't help - focus on the participant throughout,

My assumptions: - Support from practice  
Strategies from the MA - not mentioned

I didn't make notes to focus on the participant - I wanted to! I need to find a happy medium!!

Questions for me:

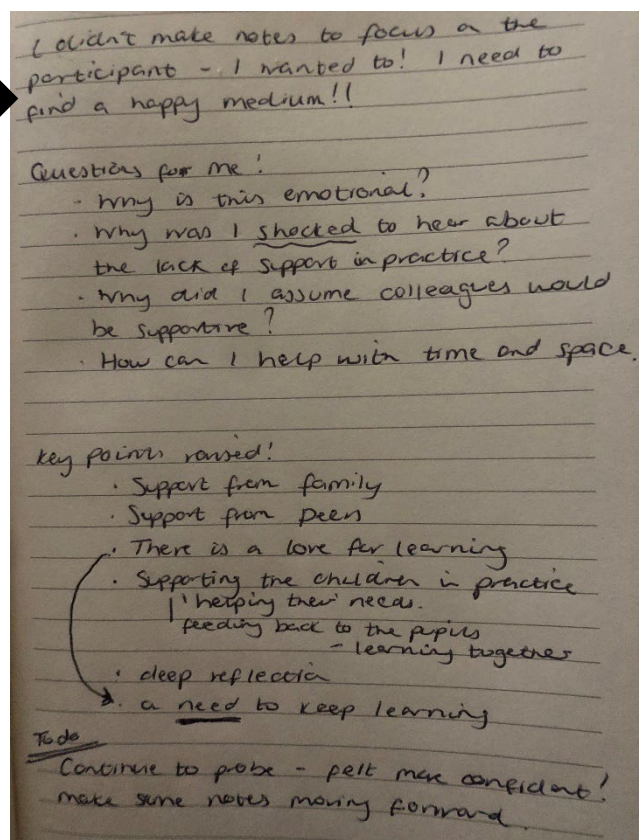
- Why is this emotional?
- Why was I shocked to hear about the lack of support in practice?
- Why did I assume colleagues would be supportive?
- How can I help with time and space?

Key points raised:

- Support from family
- Support from peers
- There is a love of learning
- Supporting the children in practice - helping their needs, feeding back to the pupils - learning together
- Deep reflection needed
- A need to keep learning

To do:

Continue to probe - felt more confident! Make some notes moving forward.



## Appendix E: Ethics form with approval



### St Mary's University

#### Ethics Sub-Committee

#### Application for Ethical Approval (Research)

This form must be completed by any undergraduate or postgraduate student, or member of staff at St Mary's University, who is undertaking research involving contact with, or observation of, human participants.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students should have the form signed by their supervisor and forwarded to the Faculty Ethics Sub-Committee representative. Staff applications should be forwarded directly to the Faculty Ethics Sub-Committee representative. All supporting documents should be merged into one document (in order of the checklist) and named in the following format: **'Full Name – Faculty – Supervisor'**

Please note that for all undergraduate and taught master's research projects the supervisor is considered to be the Principal Investigator for the study.

If the proposal has been submitted for approval to an external, properly constituted ethics committee (e.g. NHS Ethics), then please submit a copy of the application and approval letter to the Secretary of the Ethics Sub-Committee. Please note that you will also be required to complete the St Mary's Application for Ethical Approval.

Before completing this form:

- Please refer to the **University's Ethical Guidelines**. As the researcher/ supervisor, you are responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgment in this review.
- Please refer to the Ethical Application System (Three Tiers) information sheet.
- Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Commonly Made Mistakes sheet.
- If you are conducting research with children or young people, please ensure that you read the **Guidelines for Conducting Research with Children or Young People**, and answer the below questions with reference to the guidelines.

**Please note:**

**In line with University Academic Regulations the signed completed Ethics Form must be included as an appendix to the final research project.**

If you have any queries when completing this document, please consult your supervisor (for students) or Faculty Ethics Sub-Committee representative (for staff).




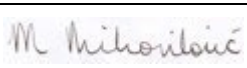
## St Mary's Ethics Application Checklist

The checklist below will help you to ensure that all the supporting documents are submitted with your ethics application form. The supporting documents are necessary for the Ethics Sub-Committee to be able to review and approve your application. Please note, if the appropriate documents are not submitted with the application form then the application will be returned directly to the applicant and may need to be re-submitted at a later date.

Document	Enclosed?*	Version No
1. Application Form	Mandatory	
2. Participant Invitation Letter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
3. Participant Information Sheet(s)	Mandatory	
4. Participant Consent Form(s)	Mandatory	
5. Parental Consent Form	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
6. Participant Recruitment Material - e.g. copies of posters, newspaper adverts, emails	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
7. Letter from host organisation (granting permission to conduct study on the premises)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
8. Research instrument, e.g. validated questionnaire, survey, interview schedule	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
9. DBS certificate available (original to be presented separately from this application)*	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
10. Other Research Ethics Committee application (e.g. NHS REC form)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	
11. Certificates of training (required if storing human tissue)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable	

I can confirm that all relevant documents are included in order of the list and in one document (any DBS check to be sent separately) named in the following format:

**'Full Name - Faculty – Supervisor'**

Signature of Proposer:		Date	16 <sup>th</sup> May 2021
Signature of Supervisor (for student research projects):		Date	2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2021

## Ethics Application Form

<b>1. Name of proposer(s)</b>	Kelly Smith
<b>2. St Mary's email address</b>	<a href="mailto:197260@live.stmarys.ac.uk">197260@live.stmarys.ac.uk</a>
<b>3. Name of supervisor</b>	Dr Mary Mihovilovic Dr Jane Chambers
<b>4. Title of project</b>	What are the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in a Master's in Education programme in Wales?

<b>5. Faculty or Service</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Business, Law & Society <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Institute of Education <input type="checkbox"/> SAHPS <input type="checkbox"/> Theology & Liberal Arts
<b>6. Programme</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> UG <input type="checkbox"/> PG (taught) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PG (research) Name of programme: EdD
<b>7. Type of activity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> UG student <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PG student <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting <input type="checkbox"/> Associate

<b>8. Confidentiality</b>	
Will all information remain confidential in line with the Data Protection Act 2018?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>9. Consent</b>	
Will written informed consent be obtained from all participants/participants' representatives?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable
<b>10. Pre-approved Protocol</b>	
Has the protocol been approved by the Ethics Sub-Committee under a generic application?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable Date of approval:
<b>11. Approval from another Ethics Committee</b>	
<b>a)</b> Will the research require approval by an ethics committee external to St Mary's University?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>b)</b> Are you working with persons under 18 years of age or vulnerable adults?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

12. Identifiable risks	
a) Is there significant potential for physical or psychological discomfort, harm, stress or burden to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
b) Are participants over 65 years of age?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
c) Do participants have limited ability to give voluntary consent? This could include cognitively impaired persons, prisoners, persons with a chronic physical or mental condition, or those who live in or are connected to an institutional environment.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
d) Are any invasive techniques involved? And/or the collection of body fluids or tissue?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
e) Is an extensive degree of exercise or physical exertion involved?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
f) Is there manipulation of cognitive or affective human responses which could cause stress or anxiety?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
g) Are drugs or other substances (including liquid and food additives) to be administered?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
h) Will deception of participants be used in a way which might cause distress, or might reasonably affect their willingness to participate in the research? For example, misleading participants on the purpose of the research, by giving them false information.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
i) Will highly personal, intimate or other private and confidential information be sought? For example sexual preferences.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
j) Will payment be made to participants? This can include costs for expenses or time.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No If yes, provide details:
k) Could the relationship between the researcher/ supervisor and the participant be such that a participant might feel pressurised to take part?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
l) Are you working under the remit of the Human Tissue Act 2004?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

m) Do you have an approved risk assessment form relating to this research?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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<b>13. Proposed start and completion date</b>
<p>Please indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the study is due to commence.</li> <li>• Timetable for data collection.</li> <li>• The expected date of completion.</li> </ul> <p>Please ensure that your start date is at least five weeks after the submission deadline for the Ethics Sub-Committee meeting.</p>
<p>The proposed start of the study: January 2021</p> <p>The timetable for data collection is: Semi-structured interviews July 2022 Focus groups August 2022</p> <p>Expected date of completion: September 2023</p>

<b>14. Sponsors/collaborators</b>
<p>Please give names and details of sponsors or collaborators on the project. This does not include your supervisor(s) or St Mary's University.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsor: An individual or organisation who provides financial resources or some other support for a project.</li> <li>• Collaborator: An individual or organisation who works on the project as a recognised contributor by providing advice, data or another form of support.</li> </ul>
N/A

<b>15. Other Research Ethics Committee Approval</b>
<p>Please indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether additional approval is required or has already been obtained (e.g. an NHS Research Ethics Committee).</li> <li>• Whether approval has previously been given for any element of this research by the University Ethics Sub-Committee.</li> </ul> <p>Please also note which code of practice / professional body you have consulted for your project.</p>
N/A

<b>16. Purpose of the study</b>
<p>In lay language, please provide a brief introduction to the background and rationale for your study. <i>[100 word limit]</i></p> <p>The purpose of the study is to explore the motivations of teachers who engage with professional learning. Within the Welsh education context, the Welsh Government has developed a National Approach to Professional Learning (2018) with a vision and</p>

mission to engage all teachers in Wales in professional learning. The professional learning vision and mission is in place to focus on the professional learning of teachers in Wales across the school, regional and national context. On identification of this vision and mission, the study aims to explore the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in accredited professional learning, with a focus on master's level study, during their employment in the education sector.

## 17. Study design/methodology

In lay language, please provide details of:

- a) The design of the study (qualitative/quantitative questionnaires etc.)
- b) The proposed methods of data collection (what you will do, how you will do this and the nature of tests).
- c) The requirement of the participant i.e. the extent of their commitment and the length of time they will be required to attend testing.
- d) Details of where the research/testing will take place, including country.
- e) Please state whether the materials/procedures you are using are original, or the intellectual property of a third party. If the materials/procedures are original, please describe any pre-testing you have done or will do to ensure that they are effective.

- a) The design of the study: This will be an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis study, the aim of which is to discover the experiences of individuals from their perspective (Gray, 2014; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Due to its exploratory approach the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of issues in real life through an inductive qualitative approach (Yin, 2018; Opie and Brown, 2019).
- b) The proposed methods of data collection: Semi-structured interviews with participants, analysing personal statements of participants, focus groups and a fieldwork diary. Ten Participants will be invited to take part in a semi-structured interview for in-depth discussion. Participants will be invited to share their personal statements from when they applied onto an MA Education programme. Two groups of five participants will be invited to join two focus groups and Participants will only be required to attend one focus group or one semi-structured interview.
- c) The requirement of the participant: Participants will be required to take part in one focus group for approximately one hour and a semi-structured interview lasting approximately one hour.
- d) Details of where the research will take place: The research will take place within [REDACTED] which is a higher education setting in Wales or online if government restrictions are in place due to Covid 19 or if preferred by participants.
- e) The materials: The questions for the focus groups and semi-structured interviews will be original and a pilot study will take place to ensure the

questions are purposeful for the study and to help to identify any weaknesses in the questions.

## 18. Participants

Please mention:

- a) The number of participants you are recruiting and why. For example, because of their specific age or sex.
- b) How they will be recruited and chosen.
- c) The inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- d) For internet studies please clarify how you will verify the age of the participants.
- e) If the research is taking place in a school or organisation then please include their written agreement for the research to be undertaken.
- f) Please state any connection you may have with any organisation you are recruiting from, for example, employment.

- a) The number of participants and why: 20 teachers will be invited to participate in the research, 10 participants to take part in the focus groups and 10 participants to take part in the semi-structured interviews. Each person will be invited to participate in individual semi-structured interviews. The focus groups will take place following semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The focus group aims to invite participants to explore broader concepts of motivation to help stimulate discussion (Thomas, 2017). The focus groups will be two sets of five participants. There will be no criteria for the group or semi-structured selection and will be decided on participant availability. Each person will be invited to participate in individual semi-structured interviews. Participants will not be recruited according to variables such as, age, gender or ethnicity.
- b) Recruitment: The sample selected will be as a result of specified criteria, thus, the sample will be purposive.
- c) Participants will need to meet the following criteria:
  - Teachers in Wales
  - Engaged in an MA education programme. For this study, the focus will be on professional learning through accredited master's level learning.
- d) The study is not an internet study, however, due to Covid 19 restrictions, the focus groups and semi-structured interviews may need to take place synchronously online.
- e) Written agreement from the organisation is attached (please see Appendix A). The Associate Dean of the Faculty of Social and Life Sciences has the authority and will act as the gatekeeper for the study.
- f) I am currently employed as the programme lead for the MA Education programme at [REDACTED].

## 19. Consent

If you have any exclusion criteria, please ensure that your Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet makes participants aware that their data may or may not be used.

- a) Are there any incentives/pressures which may make it difficult for participants to refuse to take part? If so, explain and clarify why this needs to be done.
- b) Will any of the participants be from any of the following groups?
  - Children under 18
  - Participants with learning disabilities
  - Participants suffering from dementia
  - Other vulnerable groups.
 If any of the above apply, state whether the researcher/investigator holds a current DBS certificate (undertaken within the last 3 years). A copy of the DBS must be supplied **separately from** the application.
- c) Provide details on how consent will be obtained. This includes consent from all necessary persons i.e. participants and parents.

- a) There are no incentives or pressures for participation. As participants will be engaged in accredited professional learning on the Master's in Education programme at [REDACTED], I am aware of my position as MA Education programme leader, therefore, information about my role as researcher and not as a programme leader will be provided in the participant information sheet.
- b) The participants will not be recruited from the groups listed. Therefore, no DBS is required. The participants will all be adult teachers employed in the education sector in Wales.
- c) Consent will be obtained from participants through the completion of a consent form. This will also include a Participant Information sheet (please see Appendix B). Through a voluntary process, participants will be required to sign the consent form which will be either a hard copy of the form or an online copy (Appendix C and D), where details of the right to withdraw will be present.

## 20. Risks and benefits of research/activity

- a) Are there any potential risks or adverse effects (e.g. injury, pain, discomfort, distress, changes to lifestyle) associated with this study? If so please provide details, including information on how these will be minimised.
- b) Please explain where the risks / effects may arise from (and why), so that it is clear why the risks / effects will be difficult to completely eliminate or minimise.
- c) Does the study involve any invasive procedures? If so, please confirm that the researchers or collaborators have appropriate training and are competent to deliver these procedures. Please note that invasive procedures also include the use of deceptive procedures in order to obtain information.
- d) Will individual/group interviews/questionnaires include anything that may be sensitive or upsetting? If so, please clarify why this information is necessary (and if applicable, any prior use of the questionnaire/interview).
- e) Please describe how you would deal with any adverse reactions participants might experience. Discuss any adverse reaction that might occur and the actions that will be taken in response by you, your supervisor or some third party (explain why a third party is being used for this purpose).
- f) Are there any benefits to the participant or for the organisation taking part in the research?

- a) Although there are no potential risks associated with the study, participants will be reflecting on their motivations and therefore, unexpected feelings may arise.

Participants can choose not to answer any question posed and will have the right to withdraw at any time.

- b) When reflecting on the experiences, participants could draw on some sensitive reflections, for example, the discussions could remind participants of a particular time that has had a negative impact on them which would be difficult to completely eliminate or minimise. Should this happen, then the focus group and/or interview will be paused, and participants will be signposted to support services. Time will be allocated to debrief the participant at the end of the focus group and interview to allow time for the participants to reflect and ask any questions or raise anything that may concern them.
- c) There will be no invasive procedures.
- d) Focus group questions and the semi-structured interview questions will not include any sensitive or upsetting questions.
- e) All participants will be informed of confidentiality and anonymity before the commencement of the study. The participants will be allowed to withdraw from the study at any time.
- f) The benefits for the participants are to share their lived experiences drawing on their motivations for engaging in accredited professional learning which will support them with the completion of their studies and the development of their practice. The benefit for practice will be to support current mechanisms, pedagogical practices and delivery of content to make sure that motivation for learning can be retained for teachers who engage in professional learning. It will also help to build an effective community of learning to ensure teachers are successful in their studies.

## **21. Confidentiality, privacy and data protection**

- Outline what steps will be taken to ensure participants' confidentiality.
- Describe how data, particularly personal information, will be stored (please state that all electronic data will be stored on St Mary's University servers).
- If there is a possibility of publication, please state that you will keep the data for a period of 10 years.
- Consider how you will identify participants who request their data be withdrawn, such that you can still maintain the confidentiality of theirs and others' data.
- Describe how you will manage data using a data management plan.
- You should show how you plan to store the data securely and select the data that will be made publically available once the project has ended.
- You should also show how you will take account of the relevant legislation including that relating to data protection, freedom of information and intellectual property.
- Identify all persons who will have access to the data (normally yourself and your supervisor).
- Will the data results include information which may identify people or places?
- Explain what information will be identifiable.
- Whether the persons or places (e.g. organisations) are aware of this.
- Consent forms should state what information will be identifiable and any likely outputs which will use the information e.g. dissertations, theses and any future publications/presentations.



To ensure confidentiality, privacy and data protection I will draw on the guidance from BERA (2018), St Mary's University Ethic processes, and GDPR (2020). All raw data collected will remain anonymous to ensure no participant is identified. Audio data will be removed from the audio device as soon as it is possible, encrypted, password protected and stored securely on St Mary's University servers. Transcription will be carried out in a private space and will only be available to the researcher and supervisor. All data collected will be anonymised using a coding system only identifiable to the researcher. Should any participant wish to withdraw from the study then the coding system will be accessed to remove the participant's data. All personal identification information will be removed or changed during transcription. When transcriptions are completed, data gathered will be handled with caution, stored in a secure location on St Mary's University servers when not in use and the transcribed interview recordings will be deleted.

Digital copies of the files will be encrypted, password protected and stored securely on St Mary's University server. All raw data will be treated as confidential and GDPR (2020) compliant. The data will be kept for the duration of the study and will be deleted. Should the raw data be required for a longer period all participants will be informed in writing.

Participants will be provided with detailed participant information sheets and a consent form.

## 22. Feedback to participants


Please give details of how feedback will be given to participants:


- As a minimum, it would normally be expected for feedback to be offered to participants in an acceptable format, e.g. a summary of findings appropriately written.
- Please state whether you intend to provide feedback to any other individual(s) or organisation(s) and what form this would take.

A summary of findings will be shared with participants on completion of the study.

No feedback will be provided to other individuals or organisations.

The proposer recognises their responsibility in carrying out the project in accordance with the University's Ethical Guidelines and will ensure that any person(s) assisting in the research/ teaching are also bound by these. The Ethics Sub-Committee must be notified of, and approve, any deviation from the information provided on this form.

Name of Proposer:	Kelly Smith		
Signature of Proposer:		Date:	7 <sup>th</sup> June 2021

Name of Supervisor (for student research projects):	Dr Mary Mihovilovic Dr Jane Chambers		
Signature of Supervisor:		Date :	2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2021



## Approval Sheet


(This sheet must be signed at all relevant boxes)

Name of proposer(s)	Kelly Smith
Name of supervisor(s)	Dr Mary Mihovilovic Dr Jane Chambers
Programme of study	EdD
Title of project	What motivates teachers to engage in accredited professional learning in Wales?

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.

<b>SECTION 1:</b> 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:			
Signature of Supervisor:		Date:	

<b>SECTION 2:</b> 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:	MATT JAMES		
Signature of Faculty Ethics Representative:		Date:	23/07/2021

Gatekeeper Consent

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021

Kelly Smith  
Education Department

**Re - Research Title: What motivates teachers to engage in accredited professional learning?**

Dear Kelly,

Following your recent request to gather data from participants engaged in accredited professional learning on the Master's in Education programme at [REDACTED], for the purpose of completing your EdD Thesis. I can confirm that I am happy for you to collect data from this cohort of students studying at [REDACTED].

I note from your request that you will gather data from participants. You have confirmed that all data gathering activities will be confidential and participation in this research is voluntary.

Good luck with your research. I will be very interested in reading your thesis once completed.

Yours sincerely

## Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet



### The Research Project

Title of project:

What are the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in a Master's in Education programme in Wales?

#### 1. Purpose and value of study

Engagement in professional learning is a focus of all governments across the UK. Professional learning will ensure that all teachers have high-quality opportunities to enhance their professional knowledge, engage in research and improve their professional practice. An accredited option for professional learning is to engage with master's level study, as this will provide high-quality, in-depth academic study that impacts professional practices and pupil learning.

However, I have identified that there is a lack of research exploring the motivations of schoolteachers who engage in master's level study. The research aims to examine your motivation for engaging in the programme, to explore the approaches taken to engage teachers in master's level learning and identify any improvements needed to support teachers in their learning.

Before you agree to take part in the research it is important to understand what your participation will involve. If further information is needed my contact details are provided at the end of the Research Project information.

#### 2. Invitation to participate

I am inviting you to participate in this research as you are a schoolteacher and a student on a master's in education programme in Wales. The research will collect data on your motivations to engage in, and during your study on the master's programme. Data collection will be through a semi-structured interview lasting for approximately one hour and from analysing the personal statement you submitted as part of your application process.

#### 3. Who is organising the research

My name is Kelly Smith, and I am the programme lead for the Master's in Education programmes at [REDACTED]. I am also a doctoral postgraduate research student at St Mary's University in Twickenham, London. For the past three years, I have also been involved in the delivery and development of the new Master's in Education programmes in Wales and the Welsh government's National Approach to Professional Learning in Wales.

#### 4. What will happen to the results of the study

The results of this study will help to inform ongoing Master's in Education programme delivery and development. They will be used as findings in my research and may be used in the dissemination to policy makers and in publications. The findings will also be shared within my practice, and you will also have the opportunity to read the completed dissertation, or an executive summary of the research findings and recommendations made, on request.

5. Source of funding for the research

My doctoral study is funded by [REDACTED] as part of my continuous professional development as a senior lecturer in education. I am not in receipt of any additional funding from any external bodies or organisations.

6. Contact for further information

If anything is not clear, or if further information is required, please contact me:

Kelly Smith

[197260@live.stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:197260@live.stmarys.ac.uk)

## **Your Participation in the Research Project**

1. Why you have been invited to take part

I have invited you to take part in the study as you are a schoolteacher and a student on a master's in education programme in Wales. The purpose of this study is to explore your motivations for engaging in master's study.

2. Whether you can refuse to take part

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. If you decide to take part in the research, you will be asked to sign a consent form to take part in a semi-structured interview and to agree for me to analyse the information shared in your personal statement during the application process.

3. Whether you can withdraw from the project at any time, and how

If you do agree to take part, you may still withdraw from the research at any time without providing any reason for doing so. If you choose to withdraw from the research any data provided will not be used.

4. What will happen if you agree to take part

If you agree to take part in the study, I will ask you to share the personal statement you submitted as part of the application process for the MA programme. I will also invite you to a semi-structured interview which will last up to one hour. This will take place using Zoom or Teams at an agreed time and date. There will be no costs to you and there will be no expenses paid. I will record the interview and store the data on the GDPR compliant secure server at St Mary's University. Only I as the researcher and my research supervisors will have access to the secured data.

5. Whether there are any risks involved (e.g. side effects) and if so, what will be done to ensure your wellbeing/safety

There are no risks anticipated in the research, however, if any unexpected issues arise you will have the right to not answer any questions. You can also withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.

6. Whether there are any special precautions you must take before, during, or after taking part in the study

There are no special precautions to take before, during, or after taking part in the study.

7. What will happen to any data collected from you

You will be asked to complete a consent form before any data is collected. All consent information will be stored on the GDPR compliant secure server at St Mary's University. All data will be analysed, and findings will be presented in my dissertation for the doctoral postgraduate research study at St Mary's University. No participant will be named.

8. Whether there are any benefits from taking part

When agreeing to take part in the study you will share your lived experience, drawing on your motivations for engaging in a master's in education programme. This experience will help to develop current mechanisms on the master's programme, alongside, the programmes pedagogical practices and delivery of content to make sure that motivational considerations can be maintained/implemented for teachers who engage in master's study. Your anonymised experiences will contribute to the findings and recommendations of this study.

9. How much time you will need to give up taking part in the project

The semi-structured interview should take up to one hour and will be carried out virtually online using Zoom or Teams.

10. How your participation in the project will be kept confidential

To ensure confidentiality, privacy, and data protection, I will draw on the guidance from BERA (2018), St Mary's University Ethics processes, and GDPR. All data collected will remain anonymous to ensure no participant is identified. Audio data will be removed from the audio device as soon as it is possible, encrypted, password-protected, and stored securely on St Mary's University servers.

11. What happens now?

If you agree to take part in the research, please complete the consent form provided and return it to me. Once consent is provided, you will be contacted to take part in a semi-structured interview at an agreed time and date.

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR  
CONSENT FORM

Please see the consent form below.

## Appendix G: Consent Form



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of the project: What motivates teachers to engage in accredited professional learning?

Main investigator and contact details:

Kelly Smith  
Email: 197260@live.stmarys.ac.uk

Members of the research team:

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 agree to anonymous quotes being used in the thesis.
6. 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.....

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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 H: Initial noting of a personal statement

### Initial notes (Georgia)

<p>After studying at xxxx for both my Foundation and top-up degree in Education, I have had a thirst for knowledge that hasn't been quenched by my career in teaching so far. During my time at the university, I became inspired by the deeper sense of understanding about my practise I developed as a teaching assistant and, as a result, was much more prepared for my role as a teacher than many of my peers on my PGCE course. In the day to day role as a year 5 teacher, I find I miss the dissection and research of current practise and theories in the profession and, although I obviously reflect regularly on my own practice, it is not to the same level that is required through academia. Having studied under the tutelage of xxxx for most modules of my degree, I feel confident that I could meet the high expectations and demands of the MA course at xxx. During my level 7 writing modules on my PGCE, I was awarded distinctions in both assignments and was given excellent feedback with regard to my level of writing and ability to critique. For now, I envisage your MA course enabling me to become a better practitioner, however my long-term ambition would be to use the qualification to lecture. From the brief discussion I had with the xxx team at the recent open afternoon, I feel excited at the prospect of the professional development your course would provide me with if my application is successful.</p>	<p><i>Familiarity with the university</i></p> <p><i>Wanting to learn – a need that has not been met in their context.</i></p> <p><i>Identifies a desire for learning and a deeper understanding of teaching practice.</i></p> <p><i>The university experience contributed to being well-prepared for the role of a teacher – expectations.</i></p> <p><i>Missing the learning and research of current practice and theories in the day-to-day role –passion for learning. Reflects on regular practice but notes that academic engagement offers a deeper level of reflection.</i></p> <p><i>A sense of belief in meeting the high expectations and demands of the MA course as they achieved distinctions in both assignments during PGCE.</i></p> <p><i>Feeling confident from receiving excellent feedback on writing and critiquing abilities.</i></p> <p><i>Envisions the MA course enabling personal improvement as a practitioner in the short term. Aspirations of becoming a lecturer - long term goal.</i></p> <p><i>Expresses excitement on the learning the MA course can bring.</i></p>
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## Appendix I: Initial noting from a section of an interview

### Initial notes (Jane)

<p>K - What can you tell me about your perception of motivation and what it means to you in relation to your studies?</p> <p>Jane - Well, motivation is always something that I find to be, erm sometimes I have it, sometimes I don't. And sometimes I lose it and don't know how many get back. But with regards to my studying with everything going on in in your day to day life. Working. Being a mum holding a house together, it's really difficult to muster up motivation. And is like a roller coaster of emotions. Sometimes you've got lots of motivation, sometimes you have zero.</p> <p>K- Absolutely. Could you tell me what, what does the term motivation mean to you?</p> <p>Jane - It means when you're motivated, and you feel that you're, you're ready for action that you can that you want to do what you're doing. You want to get stuck into the task in hand really.</p> <p>K- Thank you. So you just mentioned then about all the all the things that you're balancing your work and your children. What are your experiences with feeling motivated? How does that make you feel?</p> <p>Jane - Well, when I do feel motivated, I feel elated. I feel that I can take everything on and when I don't feel motivated, I feel like you're in a pit of despair and think where am I going next? How can I get this motivation back? What can I do to get back and feel motivated really.</p> <p>K - So it's about going back to that motivation that makes you feel that you could take anything on?</p> <p>Jane – Take anything on yeah.</p> <p>K - Can you then summarise the key aspects of your study that you find motivating and the aspects that you find less motivating?</p> <p>Jane - Okay, so what I find most motivating is being able to communicate with other people on the course, getting together and discussing things. Talking about what we're, we're studying at the time where we're going, I normally feel most motivated after I've either communicated have had a group meeting or communicated with my peers. Or if, after</p>	<p><i>Fluctuating levels of motivation — rollercoaster implies ups and downs</i></p> <p><i>Motivation is influenced by responsibilities and roles – mum, teacher, student – what other roles?</i></p> <p><i>Challenges around finding the time and energy to maintain motivation</i></p> <p><i>Motivation provides the feeling of ability to do, ready for action</i></p> <p><i>Elation and despair – a fine line to balance motivation and keeping motivated.</i></p> <p><i>Despair implies distress, possibly pain or unhappiness</i></p> <p><i>Empowerment?</i></p> <p><i>Communication with peers is a key motivator. The importance of communication is evident. This suggests a sense of belonging can help in maintaining motivation. Someone who understands</i></p>
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I've spoken to a tutor, or had a tutorial or had a meeting in some way, with somebody who knows what I'm doing and can relate to how I'm feeling.	
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## Appendix J: Coding of personal statements and interviews

### Coded excerpt of a personal statement

Jamie – coding of personal statement

Since my PGCE I have attempted to be a **reflective practitioner**. I began by spending time at the **end of the day** writing notes on what went well and what needed to be **improved in my practice**. I have been on a **level one** course, and I am **developing a more critical** approach to the effectiveness of new advice and to think about how they **change** practice. The **opportunity** to be a **reflective practitioner** MA course will help me to evaluate **new knowledge** as it is presented and think more broadly about what is correct and well-formed logic behind it, while also being mindful of my **potential issues or flawed reasoning**. I **hope** to go **beyond face value thinking** and spend time exploring other viewpoints while also being **conscious of the agenda** or **aspiration** writer or speaker. **Being a reflective learner means turning that critical** **learning** taking the time to explore **preconceptions** as we **aspiration** have stood the new learning presented to me. I also think it includes **meta** **contribution to learning** **pupil outcome** **aspiration** **about thinking**. I am **hopeful** that as a teacher **I am able to apply to myself the techniques** **teaching strategies** of, **writing** **papers**, I believe I am **capable** **belief** **master's level**. I am **heartened** that my head teacher agrees and is **encouragement** **do this**. I have spent **over a decade** in a professional setting, and that has **personal goals** **skill** **support** **that I believe will help me to succeed**. I am a **highly motivated** to **study** **motivation** **this course**. I have been **planning further study for a long time** and see it as both an **opportunity** **development** **my professional capability**, and an opportunity to make up for my poor performance at undergraduate level. I have prepared for this by spending time engaging with professional development and **speaking** **knowledge sharing** who have been through the process of studying a work-based higher degree while working full time. I have **reduced my hours to 90% to allow myself time to engage in further study** and **I am committed to spending the time and effort necessary to successfully complete the course**. **time commitment** **commitment**

## Coded excerpt of an interview transcript

K - How does the number of peers influence your motivation?

Stella - well I guess it doesn't really, we have ea **Peers** work well together as a small group, and we really support **Support** which has been great.

K - So what are your experiences? When you're feeling motivated? What sort of experiences do you have?

Stella - I end up like reading a lot a **Strategies** a notebook. So, if I'm feeling I tend to do everything early, because if I'm not feeling motivated to do something that I don't want to push myself where I think I've got a deadline, so I need to do it tonight **Time** usually why I start quite early, so I ended up only doing it when I want to do it. It doesn't become like during nights where I've got to do it, because I have to time it **Time** I think that helps with my motivation as well because it's not forced, I don't have to force myself to do any of the study or anything like that.

K - And that leads lovely into my question then on what, what demotivates you?

Stella - Being pressed for time **Time** panicker, so if I left it to last minute, I couldn't deal with it. And then I end up, because my head gets blocked sometimes, whereas if I **Time** strait and I needed to have done **Feedback** I've left it that'd make me panic more and I just would zone out. And I'm quite bad with negative **Feedback**, it takes me quite a while to read my assignment. I'll read the good things first, and then I sort of come back to the other bits when I'm ready to, I need to write the next one I need to learn from it. I sort of go back then because sometimes I'm a bit 'Oh', and then I end up seeing the negatives before I'd see the positive **Feedback** all together. So, I usually take the positive and then look at the negatives a bit later or not too long later. I like to read things quite simply to get my head around things whereas if it's really like foggy and really, I don't know how to explain it, like hard to read, then that's demotivating as well.

K - Yeah, absolutely. Thank you. can you summarise key parts of your study that you find motivating and any that you find less motivating?

Stella - The application of my **Learning**. When I put it into school, so all of my study, well apart from a PGCE, was all I've done which wasn't alongside work. So, I've always been going into school and apply **Learning** doing so when I do that, that really motivates me **Self-belief** warding because you see what effect it has, and **Practice** seeing things come together as well. So, when I've done the dyslexia this one, there's a girl that I hadn't noticed that has it, so she was in top groups when she's coming to me in year one and I was like there's something not right here, in terms of dyslexia wise. And **feelings** worried about asking parents, it's never been brought up before but then I've just spoken to them on parents evening. And her dad, he's a journalist, he said that he is and it's a standing joke that everyone thinks he's got dyslexia because he can't spell. Then for me, I was like, I knew something wasn't right, I picked that up, the girl was known to be top of the class in the previous year and then obviously the parents are saying the same for the dad as well. So that sort of rewarding because you see the impact **Learning** studies are having on the child **Practice**

K - Is there anything then that's less motivating in regard to your study?

Stella - Probably time **Time**

## Appendix K: Data Coding of interview data

### Motivation

Line 4: Well, motivation is always something that I find to be, are sometimes I have it, sometimes I don't, and sometimes I have it and don't know how much get back. But still regards to my thinking with everything going on in my day to day life, working, being a mom, having a house together, it's really difficult to muster up motivation. And it's like a roller coaster of emotions. Sometimes you're got lots of motivation, sometimes you have none.

Line 8: It means when you're motivated, and you feel that you're, you're ready for action that you can that you want to do what you're doing. You want to get stuck into the task in hand really.

Line 10: When I do feel motivated I feel excited, I feel I can take anything on.

Line 12: What I find most motivating is being able to communicate with other people on the course, getting together and discussing things. Talking about what we're, we're studying at the time where we're going. I normally feel most motivated after I've either communicated with a group meeting or communicated with my peers. Or if, after I've spoken to a tutor, or had a tutorial or had a meeting in some way, with somebody who knows what I'm doing and can talk to me about it.

Line 14: I motivate myself sometimes I just have to sit and think, I need to get this done. This has to be done. Sometimes I have to sit in a little bit of pressure to your motivation. Knowing that it needs to be done and you forget that you want to do it that you just know that it has to be done in order to achieve your goals. And therefore, that's my motivation.

Line 22: Well, professionally, to improve my performance as a as an educator as a practitioner. I need to keep improving professionally. But personally, this is personal myself. Personally, in which, I was hard to admit it's hard to describe it from a personal perspective, again to drive a professional you as a professional, you know that you must continue to be involved in professional development keep on track of everything that goes on professionally, but personally, this is also a journey for me in a personal perspective to improve myself enhance my well-being I suppose, even though sometimes you don't feel like it's, enhancing your well-being you when you achieve certain goals that help you, that makes you feel good and yeah, that that's how you happy then to do it.

Line 32: When I don't feel motivated, I feel like you're in a bit of despair and think where am I going to next? How can I get this motivation back?

### Need

Line 24: I don't really know how I motivate myself sometimes I just have to sit and think right, I need to get this done. This has to be done. Sometimes I have under a little bit of pressure is your motivation. Knowing that it needs to be done and you forget that you want to do it that you just know that it has to be done in order to achieve your goals.

Line 26: Well, professionally, to improve my performance as a as an educator as a practitioner.

Line 28: But personally, also to improve myself

### Flexibility

Line 48: I think that has definitely improved communication and that feeling that you've got contact with somebody at all times when you need it, perhaps not all times. But you know what I mean, that, that somebody's there, you don't have to wait until that one day a week, every single month. You can communicate quite easily if you if you need to. So yeah, I think it's had its, it has done beautifully not seeing each other all the time, but also, as long as you can make sure that you can see each other and you've got that option of, of being at home and that flexibility of accessing material when perhaps you can't be there on that day because you've got other things going on means that you can then look at material in your own time and it eases that pressure a little bit of the timetable.

### Communication

Line 20: what I find most motivating is being able to communicate with other people on the course, getting together and discussing things. Talking about what we're, we're studying at the time where we're going. I normally feel most motivated after I've either communicated with a group meeting or communicated with my peers. Or if, after I've spoken to a tutor, or had a tutorial or had a meeting in some way, with somebody who knows what I'm doing and can relate to how I'm feeling.

Line 20: Talking about what we're, we're studying at the time where we're going. I normally feel most motivated after I've either communicated with a group meeting or communicated with my peers. Or if, after I've spoken to a tutor, or had a tutorial or had a meeting in some way, with somebody who knows what I'm doing and can relate to how I'm feeling.

### Time

Line 32: workload, not actually having the time to do what you want, what I want to do so. So basically, sometimes it's not through lack of motivation, it's through lack of time. For me, yeah, so it's not through lack of motivation, it's through lack of time. So the barriers are that sometimes you want to do something but physically, physically can't find the time to do it.

### Responsibilities

Line 44: So, before I started the Masters, I hadn't been a student for at least 10 years. So for me, it has helped me grow academically. Just remember how it felt at the beginning of this. I haven't written an assignment for over 10 years I had to stretch myself how to write an academic piece of writing. Yeah, it was tough.

Line 54: Of course, yes. In my family life get two very young children who are very demanding, and you've got the usual things that you need to do like get them to school, get them to all their football tournaments to this that and the other and just to generally hold down a home environment. That's, that's a role and fosters my children's, you know, a nurturer that does as well.

### Reflection

Line 56: In particular with student teachers and new qualified teachers it has helped me reflect on how mentoring is an important just nurturing our students, our early career teachers into helping them grow as well and that the experience that they have impacts the learning of the students as well, with in particular with students I know it's allowed me to reflect on how I think about children and the collaborative side of children in the classroom and how they work. How they're working together collaboratively can improve their learning and their reflection on their own learning. Just things like that, really just how I've been able to use the research that I delved into to reflect and improve on the experience that both colleagues and students in my care have.

### Growth

Line 48: So it has developed me academically and improved my academic writing in ways that I didn't think that I would be involved in academic writing again.

Line 52: It's impacted me greatly, hugely. It's allowed me to reflect on my practice and improve areas which I previously couldn't have thought about before. It's guided me through my career in ways that I didn't think that it would, it's taken me to places and helped me to meet people that have impacted my professional, my professional life really, and how I conduct myself as a practitioner and how I use this to develop the children and develop teaching and learning within my classroom and within the school that I teach in.

### Practice

Line 60: I can't think off the top of my head to be honest, my motivations just that it's always a hard thing to contain/release motivation. It's just hard to keep motivated. It's hard to get motivated, but use the resources that you have around you to help you maintain that motivation and perhaps get back into where you need to be.

### Learning

Line 28: as a professional, you know that you must continue to be involved in professional development keep on track of everything that goes on professionally, but personally, this is also a journey for me in a personal perspective to improve myself enhance my well-being I suppose, even though sometimes you don't feel like it's enhancing your well-being you when you achieve certain goals that help you, that makes you feel good and yeah, that that gives you happy times as well.

Line 54: P1 - Yes, so I have gone down the line of looking at mentoring. And so, in particular with student teachers and new qualified teachers it has helped me reflect on how mentoring is an important just nurturing our students, our early career teachers into helping them grow as well and that the experience that they have impacts the learning of the students as well, with in particular with students I know it's allowed me to reflect on how I think about children and the collaborative side of children in the classroom and how they work. How they're working together collaboratively can improve their learning and their reflection on their own learning. Just things like that, really just how I've been able to use the research that I delved into to reflect and improve on the experience that both colleagues and students in my care have.

## Appendix L: Identification of themes

### Sally – Motivation and Me

