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Can the concept of the protean career help us to understand millennial pre-service teacher retention challenges? A study of two pre-service teachers' career pathways in England.

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The career pathways of two pre-service teachers on the point of entering the school workforce were investigated to inform debates on teacher retention. Narrative data were analysed to explore the orientations of two Millennials completing a university-led initial teacher education programme. The protean career concept sheds light on a mind-set regarding career pathways that is substantially different to that espoused by earlier generations of teachers, for whom a working life carried out within the profession could have been a realistic proposition. However, this study demonstrated that the concept cannot be applied universally to a cohort. When considering the two case study participants' narratives, it was necessary to employ elements of a capabilities analysis approach to explore their distinct outcomes after they had initially pursued their goal of 'making a difference' and realised that they were unlikely to achieve this through teaching.

Keywords: protean career; pre-service teachers; capabilities analysis; Millennials.

Introduction

The term Millennials is widely coined to speak about the orientations perceived in present day young people. Other labels, such as Generation Y (Y'ers), the Net Generation (Helsper and Eyon 2009) and Generation Me (Twenge 2006, 2010), have been applied to indicate how they differ from previous generations. Used in this way, the concept of generation serves to signal more than a group of people being considered in terms of their kinship dependencies and is more complex than simply specifying an identifiable cohort of people born in a time bound period (Tolbize 2008; Purhonen 2016). These generational labels, in effect, attempt to summarise shared experiences amongst people who have developed a common worldview, one generated in their formative time (Corsten 1999). A distinguishing feature of the millennial generation is their seamless integration of technologies that previous generations have had to learn to accommodate. Their technological fluency is one dimension that supports the view that

Millennials have developed a distinct approach to life and their understandings regarding work (Edmunds and Turner 2005; Donnison 2007).

One of the features of contemporary employment that younger generations have grown up with is the demise of the job for life. In its place, young people starting out on their work pathway are inundated with ‘ambiguous and contradictory career signals’ (Hall 1996, page 8) that emerge from today’s social and economic landscape. The messages regarding the nature of work derive from advanced economies that have, for several decades, been ‘highly turbulent and complex’ (page 8). One impact of this at the personal level has been the rise in precarious employment and insecure living, even for those following professions that were once relatively secure, long-term and rewarding career choices (Overell, Mills, Roberts, Lekhiet and Blaug 2010). There is acknowledgement that ‘corporate loyalty doesn’t necessarily bring rewards or even long term security in today’s economic environment’ (PwC 2011, page 8). Consequently, in place of long term relations, aspirations about holding down a job tend to be short term and paid work often follows novel arrangements: zero hour and/or temporary contracting, as well as digital nomad lifestyles (Berg, Furrer, Harmon, Rani and Silberman 2018; Deloitte 2019; Findlay and Thompson 2017).

Some Millennials aspiring to a career in today’s economic environment are those signing up to join the teaching profession. However, the retention of novice teachers, many of whom are members of the millennial cohort, has emerged as a continuing challenge in a number of countries. International research spanning the last two decades has investigated the state of teacher supply. In some countries, there are reports of global shortages e.g. Denmark, Turkey, Germany and Slovenia (EU 2013). Whilst in others, there is generally a robust supply but shortages are found in specific geographic regions or in subject specialisms. This is the case in Australia (Weldon

2015), the USA (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond and Carver-Thomas 2016) and England (See and Gorard 2019). The widely cited reasons for enduring specific shortages in countries, such as England, include the negative public image and unattractiveness of the profession, uncompetitive salaries and poor working conditions in comparison to other career options as well as inadequate recruitment mechanisms and selection criteria (European Union 2013).

The conventional route to teaching at secondary school level in England has been through studying at a higher education institution for postgraduate certification and qualified teacher status, usually following a similar discipline as that achieved at the undergraduate level. However, since the establishment of the UK coalition government of 2010, various administrations have introduced a range of financial incentives and school-led routes aimed at boosting the supply of new teachers (Whiting et al. 2018). Shortfalls in teacher supply are still critically affecting certain geographical regions and teaching subject domains (NAO 2016: 2017). Work-related factors, such as excessive workloads and few opportunities for part-time or flexible employment, remain as key reasons why teachers are quitting the profession in England (DfE 2018; Worth, Lynch, Hillary, Rennie and Andrade 2018). Further, it has been pointed out that pre-service teachers' preparation programmes often leave them poorly equipped to handle the reality of the workplace (Voss and Kunter 2019; Fantilli and McDougall 2009). One dimension of this reality is that much of their employment in schools is driven by bureaucratic requirements and performance criteria, which demotivates new entrants, pushing them into leaving teaching within the first few years (Hobson 2009, Perryman and Calvert 2019, Spencer, Harrop, Thomas and Cain 2018).

Government attempts to improve the retention of teachers in the English context have addressed generic workload issues and the nature of the work that novices are

expected to undertake (DfE 2018). Moreover, the proponents of these initiatives appear to take the view that novices will treat teaching as a long-term career providing that workloads are reduced to levels that are less demanding than often is the case in contemporary schools. The concept of a protean career, a term used in this context to emphasise flexibility and responsiveness, is suggested as it challenges the notion of novice teachers along with other Millennials having a single, life-long career. This extends the debates on retaining a quality workforce in schools as this concept aligns with what can be considered typical millennial engagement with employment. That is, a protean career is defined as one ‘driven by the person’ and ‘reinvented by the person from time to time, as the person and the environment change’ (Hall 1996, page 8). Because each individual takes responsibility for his/her work life, personal development is most likely to be driven through opportunities for interesting work tasks arising. Equally, promotion through the institutional hierarchy is unlikely to satisfy Millennials to any great extent as a key feature of the protean pathway is that individuals are not willing to rely on their employing organisation, but rather, find satisfaction in values other than financial payment or job status and demand a rewarding life outside work (Özçelik, 2015). In brief, this career ‘reflects freedom, self-direction, and making choices based on one’s personal values’ (Briscoe and Hall 2006, page 6).

The positive attributes of Millennials include a commitment to high personal achievement, with a strong drive for taking on novel experiences and connecting with others (Behrstock and Clifford 2009), which are characteristics that are apparently highly desirable in the teaching workforce. However, these features are contested and tendencies towards self-regard have been identified. These extend to some scholars describing Millennials as having little time for people outside their immediate circle, poor levels of social engagement and scant regard for community issues (Krahn and

Galambos 2014; Twenge 2010). Young people's focus on their immediate circumstances can be explained by their having to adopt a short-term view regarding everyday work life. This concern with immediate circumstances can be understood against the backdrop of precarious employment, where many forms of labour security have been eroded (Standing 2016). One response of the millennial cohort may be to adopt a protean mind-set, where an individual is constantly open to reinventing and starting afresh as social and economic contexts rapidly move on. It is noted, however, that short-term forms of work can be regarded as positive, owing to their associated high levels of flexibility and autonomy and but also negative, due to the likelihood of experiencing a precarious existence (Bajwa, Knorr, Di Ruggiero, Gastaldo, and Zendel 2018).

Two young male pre-service teachers, who may be said to exemplify Millennials, are the focus of this study. Their narratives are considered in light of the above-mentioned dimensions of the protean career concept. The central research question is: Can the protean career model help us to understand retention regarding millennial pre-service teachers?

Two sub-questions are derived for this study:

What motivates the two case study Millennials towards becoming a teacher?

What motivates these two Millennials to reinvent / not reinvent their career pathway?

Study methodology and analysis

To investigate individuals starting out on their teaching careers, two young men of the millennial cohort were purposefully recruited, because, at the age of 24, they were entering the workplace for the first time. Both had graduated in physics, a strand of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines that faces severe

teaching recruitment shortages in England, as elsewhere, internationally. Hence, they belonged to a category of applicants that has received considerable attention, both in the academic literatures and in terms of recruitment policy interventions (Get into Teaching 2017). Graduates from other academic backgrounds, following other teaching disciplines and who do not share these features could have followed considerably different trajectories through the course of their entry into teaching. Similarly, applicants without these backgrounds could be differently placed regarding protean career trajectories. Nonetheless, the two participants were selected as case studies, being members of a category of pre-service teachers that has a nationally recognised high level of drop-out and were thus deemed to be likely to demonstrate the complex career pathways that are of interest in this study. Specific reasons have been reported to explain the high levels of novice science teachers quitting English secondary schools (NAO 2017, page 18). First, they are often required to teach across many sciences (physics, chemistry, biology and information technology) at different levels (for pupils aged between 11 and 18 years) even though their undergraduate qualification is usually only in one, or even a specialisation within one, of these. This can result in novices having a sense of being overwhelmed and over-burdened. Furthermore, scientists can readily obtain good, if not better salaries outside teaching and once employed in schools, their pay rises appear to lag behind those of their colleagues (Allen and Sims 2017).

The two participants were selected as case studies from a cohort of pre-service teachers enrolled on an initial teacher education (ITE) programme in secondary teaching at a university faculty of education in the south west of England: the postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) with qualified teacher status (QTS). One was training to teach mathematics and the other, mathematics with physics. Recommendation for QTS

would be confirmed after their satisfactory completion of the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2012) criteria and a subsequent year of employment as a newly qualified teacher (NQT). All pre-service teachers on the programme were allocated school placements to meet the mandatory 120 days of practicum and undertook concurrent courses in professional studies delivered by the university faculty and the placement schools' staff leaders. The academic qualification required them to submit three assignments to the faculty, which were assessed at master's level.

In-depth interviews of approximately two hours in length were held four times with each of the two selected participants to gather rich narrative research data. The interviewing spanned an 18 month period covering the last six months of their ITE programme and their first year of work. They were asked to reflect on experiences as school pupils and university students, their family contexts as well as their experiences on the QTS/PGCE programme and subsequent employment. The participants were studying at the university faculty at which the researcher was employed and this facilitated their recruitment to the study through an advertisement placed on the faculty's online teaching platform (Blackboard). The researcher had no prior contact with the participants and likewise, no connections with the staff directly responsible for delivering their ITE programmes, thus ensuring no conflict of interest. The study was subject to ethical approval by the researcher's university and complied with the guidance set out in the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA 2011). In keeping with these requirements, to protect the respondents and research sites, pseudonyms are adopted throughout this paper.

The analysis of the collected accounts involved thematic analysis of the motivations, opportunities and constraints the two Millennials faced. By applying a capabilities approach (CA), first, their enrolment on the ITE programme and, secondly,

the choices made at the end of this, could be analysed effectively. CA assists in outlining the ways in which individuals' lives are expanded through their exercising agency and allows for an analysis in the current study that moves beyond simply considering their resources to looking at the opportunities that the two pre-service teachers have for orienting themselves towards what they value.

Capabilities are defined as the various collections of functionings (i.e. the beings and doings valued by an individual) and, from which, one combination is purposefully selected (Sen 1999). The academic year spent completing the ITE is an important learning opportunity that potentially furnishes individuals with choices. Unterhaller (2003) distinguished the benefits of engaging with education. At a pragmatic level, the acquisition of skills through education and training equips individuals to carry out a particular job. These two Millennials demonstrated the required criteria for the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2012) and were employable as NQTs. Over and above this, there is an 'intrinsic good of education' (Unterhaller 2003, page 9) that relates to enhancing an individual's freedoms and his/her power to exercise agency. Further, as Leßmann (2009, page 450) has proposed: 'the achievement of a functioning typically presupposes on the one hand the availability of certain commodities and on the other, the ability of the individual to use these commodities accordingly'. To expound on this, even though a definitive list of what comprises capabilities has yet to be identified by scholars, when explaining the converting of resources into valued beings and doings, Robeyns (2005, page 197) has pointed out that the individual's particular 'personal, environmental and societal advantages' need to be taken into account. These advantages are explored with respect to both these Millennials converting their resources to follow a career pathway that is valued by them. The subsequent analysis of the interview findings revealed considerable differences with respect to the two case study pre-service

teachers' conversion of resources by their drawing on their individual advantages to engage with career pathways. The focus in the next section is the extent to which the capabilities of each facilitated their achievement of functionings i.e. the beings and doings valued by these two pre-service teachers, specifically those they associated with joining the teaching profession.

Presentation of findings: reinventing a teaching career

The two participants' admittance onto the ITE programme and their orientation towards teaching as their chosen initial formal employment are presented first. It was evident that pre-entry assessment recorded that one of the two, Adam, was a highly competent mathematician, who also offered considerable ability in science subjects, primarily physics. He was judged competent across all the skills assessed at the selection interview. Previously, Adam had achieved a first class BSc honours at a highly regarded 'plate glass' university, one which was first opened in the 1960s and specialised in technical and engineering disciplines. To achieve this standard in his studies marked him out as a gifted scientist. Becoming a teacher crystallised as something that interested him as his initial career choice after having attended information days on campus hosted by the Institute of Physics (IOP 2017). Adam related how teaching had recently become part of his family milieu, due to his mother's employment as a primary school teacher. By contrast, his father had spent his whole career working in one global retail company, undertaking various senior executive roles within its London-based headquarters (Interview transcript: Adam Wave 1).

For Adam, one aim in undertaking teaching was to get away from what he considered a traditional scientific environment: one that was not technical, but rather, people centred, which is what he had apparently found in teaching.

I think when I was even going into the degree, I was reasonably certain that yes, physics interests me, but I don't think I want to become a research physicist and then even a lot of the physics graduate stuff that wasn't research physics was still very much the thing that I don't want. I don't know, maybe some sort of engineering, but that is still kind of the sort of formal thing.... a very scientific kind of context. (Interview transcript: Adam Wave 1)

Clearly, his ability in the sciences had been a driver encouraging him to pursue teaching mathematics and the sciences, where he thought he could make a difference and fulfil this personal goal through working with people and helping others less able than himself:

Thinking back almost to sort of being in secondary school, myself, I always liked the feeling of the person sitting next to you doesn't quite get something and then you like explain it to them in a different way and then they get it and just I've always enjoyed that feeling. Almost, that was kind of it. I almost wanted to be teaching them and thought, I could go do that and get something out of that. (Interview transcript: Adam Wave 2)

Matt's background highlights some similarities and some differences compared to that of Adam. He studied mathematics and gained a first class honours for his undergraduate programme at a new (post-1992) university. His first choice after graduating was to start a master's level programme, but he was not successful in finding a university that would accept him, because, apparently, his undergraduate qualification was not deemed sufficiently academically demanding. While an undergraduate, he had been an ambassador with local schools, helping children and sixth formers with their mathematics lessons (Interview transcript: Matt Wave 1). Teaching as a career option

emerged when he was in discussion with the coordinators for this community project as he had no friends or family who worked in education. Matt was not dissimilar to Adam in his account of why he was interested in following the ITE programme. His motivation rested on a notion of imparting knowledge to pupils and delivering his much loved subject, mathematics. Again, for him, making a difference was a key inspiration and something he valued.

I didn't really know what I wanted to do, but in the third year there was a unit where we were allowed to go into schools and act as a teaching assistant, observe lessons, see how teaching maths worked from the other side and I really enjoyed it. I liked being able to sit down and, when any student had a question, I enjoyed being able to go over and feel like I had been able to use my knowledge that I had managed to work hard to get and then make a difference for somebody else in learning. (Interview transcript: Matt Wave 2)

Matt was looking to meet his dream of embarking on what he termed a professional career: a status that he regarded highly. On this point, he appeared to be motivated by recollections of seeing his father's working life roll out through a series of casual jobs and limited success as a small-scale entrepreneur.

Maybe one of the other things that made me think about being a teacher was my dad. He wanted to become a doctor, but due to various circumstances that didn't pan out. If my dad wanted to try and aim for working in the professions, I thought I'd like to try to do what he didn't manage and go into one of the professions. (Interview transcript: Matt Wave 3)

Transition to employment emerges as a key point in the career pathways for the two pre-service teachers. Matt applied for a vacancy advertised by a large secondary school within a short distance of his family home and at the conclusion of the ITE programme, was looking forward to attending his employer's induction as an NQT at

the start of the following school year. Adam, who came from circumstances in which education was highly respected, where one family member was already employed as a teacher and who had passed his ITE programme with few challenges, did not proceed with becoming an NQT; refusing to apply for a first teaching job.

In keeping with Millennials' orientations towards employment, the reported work conditions experienced by both Matt and Adam were very likely to encourage them to reject teaching as a career. Matt described how he had only survived the programme through receiving substantial support from his university tutor and school-based mentors. His practical experiences in schools had been unfulfilling, comprising unrelenting pressure related to routine tasks, e.g. managing pupil behaviour, preparing lessons and marking assignments using specified criteria. When questioned, he did not see any prospect of these burdens becoming any less demanding when he became an NQT. Perhaps the attraction of a job that he regarded as having professional status, i.e. being a 'real teacher', was one motivation that maintained his career planning. Matt was the novice who opted to go forward into teaching even though he himself recognised that he had had a very difficult time, particularly regarding completing the practicum element of the ITE programme.

It appeared that Adam was not drawn to ITE based on gaining a professional qualification. For him, aspects of teaching, such as social status and a reasonable salary apparently, offered no attraction and, on completion of the ITE programme these factors did not counter his view that the job on offer was unattractive. It could be posited that, over and above the lack of workplace flexibility and poor work life balance, one key issue was the tipping point against teaching as a career, namely, that for him, the everyday operations of the schools failed to align with his own valued goal: to make a difference by helping individuals to learn. Adam reported that he had decided that his

ITE programme, whilst not having been a wasted year, had shown him that teaching was not for him. As he explained:

I don't think anyone kind of goes in to a PGCE expecting it to be kind of easy, Certainly, I think for me the thing wasn't necessarily the amount of work; the most frustrating is the feeling that you were almost never quite finished. Knowing what I am like as a person, of all the stuff that I've had to learn this year, it's been forcing myself to sort of be stern and not just kind of teaching, like giving people a glare and then giving them one more chance. (Interview transcript: Adam Wave 4)

Throughout his time on the ITE programme, he exercised his curiosity and intellectual powers regarding what he saw happening in relation to his valued end of contributing through making a difference through teaching. He had been quick to analyse the inconsistencies he had experienced regarding codifying his practice according to the Teachers' Standards (DfE 2012). He was fully cognisant of the restricting impact of this, where for example, in some instances, the expectation was that teachers' lessons always followed a pre-set format:

The Standards aren't based on 'are they doing these precise things?' Like, 'have they included a starter?' So, you can't kind of judge things based on that, because it should be perfectly possible to create an outstanding lesson that doesn't necessarily have a starter. (Interview transcript: Adam Wave 2)

Having been dissatisfied with the work, as a pre-service teacher, Adam had no qualms about shifting to a different pathway, no longer having any aspirations to become a teacher. This outcome could be expected in the case of an individual typifying millennial orientations towards work and one following a protean career trajectory. He used the opportunity for personal development offered by the ITE programme but came to realise he could not make a difference by teaching in schools and subsequently, pursued a new work direction. The failure to capture his practice in what he considered

a suitable manner and the emphasis put on completing the paper trail of evidence of his ITE programme were described by Adam as frustrating (Interview transcript: Adam Wave 4). Initially, he had valued the idea of helping others learn about science so as to make a difference, but eventually figured out that this was not possible in the various classroom settings and school environments in which he found himself. The barriers to achieving his valued sense of helping others in the school context stemmed from the large class groups he had to manage which required skills that were beyond his reach as a novice. In addition, he found himself constantly working to prescribed performance criteria that did not align with his views on how he could be helping pupils learn. These related to his assessment for the ITE programme as well as the demands made by the teachers managing the science departments in which he was placed and the controls exercised by the schools' senior leadership teams (Interview transcript: Adam Wave 4).

Consideration is provided next regarding how the two participants responded to their move towards employment, at which point they could reinvent their pathways. The affordances offered by the protean career model for explaining these two cases are critiqued and this model is combined with the CA perspective to strengthen the theoretical interpretation of the findings.

If advocates of the protean career model were to be introduced to these two narratives, they would no doubt be quite sceptical of either of these two pre-service teachers deciding to pursue a career in teaching, given neither of them could see their aspirations of making a difference being fulfilled. However, this outcome was not the reality in both cases. As described above, at the outset, Matt had demonstrated a similar motivation to Adam for entering teaching, that of wanting to help others learn and hence, make a difference. Matt pressed on to obtain his first job in teaching even though he was on a programme that heralded his future employment as comprising routine

tasks, stressors that as a trainee he had already found very challenging on a daily basis and offering few, if any, opportunities to make that difference (Interview transcript: Matt Wave 1). He showed no inclination that he intended to change his pathway, thus being unwilling to pursue a protean career pathway. That is, he did not, at this point, seek to reinvent his career even though the teaching environment he had anticipated finding in school had not materialised. In contrast, Adam's mind-set was such that it encouraged him to re-orientate himself, once he realised that a career in schools was no longer a valued proposition. Adam engaged with reinventing his pathway, demonstrating his openness to a protean mind-set that entailed him assuming responsibility for shaping career changes for himself.

The above data demonstrate that the protean model is not universally applicable to individuals, specifically these two case study pre-service teachers. Hence, it is necessary to analyse why Adam's lot is consistent with the protean career whereas Matt's is not. This can be achieved by drawing on CA, which supplements the model with a fine-grained approach to unpacking the two cases. With regards to elaborating on their career trajectories by deploying CA, there are significant factors underpinning Adam's strength in converting his resources into his functionings. That is, the social context in which he remained located supported him when he reinvented his planned career and turned away from teaching as a means to achieve his valued beings and doings. His personal advantages and his ability to use these to convert resources into functionings, set him apart from his counterpart, Matt.

With regards to directing himself to finding work immediately after the ITE year, Adam reported how he had been one of the few trainees on the ITE programme who had not taken several years out to gain life experience. In effect, he had not given himself the opportunity to be, as he put it, 'more worldly wise'. His immediate valued

goal was, as he explained to make up for what, to date, he had missed out on, perhaps demonstrating that his ambition did not revolve around his work-life, but rather a wide range of interests (Interview transcript: Adam Wave 4). Adam's family remained very understanding, allowing him to return to the family home, despite him having been living away for the previous four years. The solid grounding that his family continued to offer formed a rich store of emotional security (Reay 2004) and he described how his family would always shelter and nurture him by deploying their social and cultural reserves (Robeyns 2005) to support him.

As described above, in contrast to Adam, Matt maintained his goal of becoming a professional, which is what he considered a career in teaching could offer. This was, perhaps, a valued goal directly reflecting his family members' opinions or was one he had figured out for himself, having witnessed his father's precarious employment status. Similarly to Adam, as a young person he had returned to his family home on completing his studies, but unlike Adam, this setting did not offer many environmental advantages. He described living in a remote rural town that had few industries and none that were likely to recruit graduates on a regular basis (Interview transcript: Matt Wave 4). In contrast, Adam's family home, by happenstance, was in the Home Counties, north of London. This potentially opened up to him a wide range of opportunities with an assortment of employers located across the region and capital city.

Despite being inexperienced in terms of work, Adam had accrued a good science degree from a well-respected university, which remained a high value asset that he could carry forward as part of his bundle of academic capital, which also included the PGCE. This equipped him with peace of mind, as Adam shared his opinion that there was a good chance of him getting work in a competitive jobs market, when he eventually found something that attracted him (Interview transcript: Adam Wave 4). For

Matt, the ITE programme supplemented his degree with a PGCE and gave him additional academic capital, so he was not entirely without qualifications to offer prospective employers.

Matt had resources, but his conversion of these appears limited, in that he settled for a job that no longer offered him many prospects of realising his valued goal of making a difference through teaching. Moreover, he could be considered as substantially lacking in terms of possessing the personal, social and cultural advantages that could be converted for starting anew at this point in his life. A possible reason why a career pathway to teaching might have still been pursued by Matt, even though he had to make a substantial compromise, was the absence of any other options that he could contemplate, particularly given the high regard he felt for joining a profession such as teaching.

Concluding remarks

The data collected for this study relate to two case study individuals, and had more participants been recruited, there is a chance that a wide range of teaching disciplines and work orientations could have supplemented the narratives. Notwithstanding this, the purpose of this paper is specifically to uncover the contrasting career directions of two chosen pre-service teachers, who initially presented with substantially similar qualifications and orientations towards teaching when enrolling on their ITE programme. This focus has allowed for a fresh perspective to be generated regarding the issue of chronic poor retention rates in the English context found amongst young male pre-service teachers of STEM subjects in secondary schools.

The application of the concept of the protean career is a first step towards understanding millennial pre-service teachers' orientations towards this career and the

likelihood of their retention in the profession. That is, it sheds light on a mind-set towards career pathways that is substantially different to that espoused by earlier generations of teachers, for whom a working life carried out within the profession could have been a realistic proposition. However, this study demonstrates that the concept cannot be applied universally to a cohort and when analysing the two case study participants' narratives it was necessary to employ elements of a CA approach to shed light on the distinct outcomes after initially pursuing the goal of 'making a difference'. The pre-service teacher with considerable resources (high quality educational qualifications, competency in the classroom setting, enduring emotional and financial support from his family as well as close access to an opportunity-laden urban location) was apparently following a protean career trajectory. That is, he utilised these capabilities to set himself a short-term employment horizon coupled with uncompromising demands for high levels of stimulating and purposeful engagement in the workplace from the very start. No doubt, this high calibre individual would have been welcomed by school leaders to join their staff but, in fact, it was his counterpart who proceeded to work as an NQT. His counterpart was less endowed with resources, willing to compromise on his valued goal and, potentially, given his reported negative experiences of coping with the ITE practicum, not as likely to demonstrate talent in the school setting. This situation points to the inadequacies of present day recruitment and retention initiatives. Specially, the much vaunted ambition of many government administrations regarding attracting and retaining the best and the brightest individuals to the school workforce has been found to be lacking in the accounts of these two pre-service teachers.

The divergence in the pathways demonstrated in the case study research raises a number of challenges for pre-service teacher education. The reported realities of the

school workplace for the two pre-service teachers appear to have come as a surprise to them. It was neither what they had been anticipating, nor an environment for which they were adequately prepared. The narrative data revealed that this disconnect was acutely felt by them in terms of failing to find the means for realising their valued beings and doings: to make a difference by helping pupils learn about science and mathematics. In this respect, the analysis of the case studies has pointed out some of the weaknesses of the ITE programme in accommodating adequately the values espoused by the two pre-service teachers, who could be said to typify a millennial cohort and who, in addition, potentially might adopt a protean career orientation. A worthwhile avenue for further investigation is how best to accommodate the perspective that the protean mind-set brings to understanding educating future generations of teachers and for the teaching profession, particularly in national contexts, such as England, where teacher recruitment and retention remain challenging.

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