McGrogan, N. (2024) ***Teachers as researchers: understanding the lived experience of engagement in research through collaborative close-to-practice inquiry*****. PhD thesis, Bath Spa University.**

Teachers as Researchers: Understanding the Lived Experience of Engagement in Research Through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry

Niamh McGrogan

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Bath Spa University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education

Bath Spa University

May 2024

Ethics, data and copyright statements

This study was approved by the Bath Spa University Ethics Panel on 16/04/2018. Should you have any concerns regarding ethical matters relating to this study, please contact the Research Support Office at Bath Spa University (researchsupportoffice@bathspa.ac.uk).

All participants provided written informed consent prior to enrolment in the study and for any associated datasets to be utilised as presented within this thesis.

The datasets that support the findings of this study are available from the author, Niamh McGrogan, upon reasonable request.

Abstract

In the context of the long-standing discourse of the teacher as researcher and the recent deprofessionalising of teachers to consumers of specific research of 'What Works', this thesis explores what it could mean to be both teacher and researcher. It seeks insight into the experiences of teachers in England and Wales as they engaged in separate small scale research projects and is the focused examination of their research experience as it was lived through engagement in small scale research activity.

In seeking to understand this lived experience this thesis is phenomenological. It is also hermeneutical in exploring teachers' interpretations of their experience. It assumes a Longitudinal Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (LIPA) approach and, throughout their engagement in the research process, participants engaged in semi-structured interviews where they shared their experience as they lived it. Analysis of these interviews moves from the descriptive to the increasingly interpretative to shed light on research questions which focus on the experience of engaging in small scale research, participants' views on collaborative inquiry and potential influences on sustained engagement in research.

Findings indicate that the process of engagement in research could be an empowering-challenging-enticing form of professional development but that this is a fragile, affective experience that requires careful support. Further, the reality, or lived experience of research, can be different to a perception of it as an 'extensive' and 'overwhelming' activity. This thesis therefore argues for a reframing of teacher research as inquiry, specifically Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI), to support teacher engagement in research as a form of professional development: collaborative to provide support, partnership and reassurance, close-to- practice to facilitate the relevance to practice and referred to as 'inquiry' to facilitate a perception of the activity being accessible to teachers. Engaging both with research and in CCtPI can support the teachers as professionals, moving beyond the role of technicians to be both consumers and producers of research.

Acknowledgements

To Jim and Laura, my Directors of Study before continuing on your own journeys to pastures new. Your advice guided me every step of the way and made my own journey all the better for it. You were endlessly supportive and constantly motivating. Thank you.

To Caroline, you have been an incredibly valued, steady presence from the beginning to the end of this expedition as my second supervisor. An incredible support and a constant beacon, I have felt both championed in your reassurances and challenged through thoughtful provocations every step of the way. I could not have asked for more. Thank you.

To Agnieszka, as my current Director of Studies you have been an incredibly patient critical friend, going above and beyond in supporting me to reach my journey's end. I have been fortunate to learn so much from your wealth of knowledge, wisdom and guidance. This thesis has been made immeasurably stronger as I have engaged with your thoughtful challenges and considered advice. Thank you.

To Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon, my travelling companions, research participants, co-researchers. Thank you for your curiosity and desire to critically engage with your practice which led you to participate. It was a privilege to co-research with you on your projects while spending time exploring and understanding those experiences. I hope in my interpretations I have honoured your accounts of your experiences of engaging in research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry.

To my family, friends, colleagues and PRP choir. Thank you for continuing to bring light and joy to my world especially in the recent months of *crazy chaos*. It's going to be a lovely day.

For Jack Oisín

my boy

my greatest journey, my grandest adventure

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Image:

Harbury, E. (1966). The Island of Research. *American Scientist*, 54(4), 470.

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1.1 Choices, writing and structure

Two decades ago this year, I decided I wanted to see some of the wider world and, unwilling to wait for someone to share the adventure, I set off on my own. I spent time in Canada, the USA, New Zealand and Australia and I learned more about myself in those years than I had in my life to date. What I remember most from that time, among all the incredible experiences I had in each country, was the remarkable change I went through as a person… and that when I arrived home, no one noticed the difference. For my part, I felt I had undergone seismic changes; with no one to rely on but myself, my ideas and perceptions of the world and my part in it had been forever altered, my thinking had been continually challenged and I was continually reframing my perspectives of myself and the world I was part of.

Undertaking this doctoral study has reminded me of that time in many ways. As I have travelled through every stage of this research process my thinking and understanding has been challenged. What I have chosen to research is 'a recurrence rather than something completely new' (Bryan and Burstow, 2017: 692). Rather, it has been debated since the 1930s when Kearney, Hepburn and Hawley contextualised the idea of the heroic teacher being the sage of classroom knowledge, 'the great unknown' (Kearney, 1933: 72). The debate continued through the paths of the Action Research movement and the work of Stenhouse and Elliott in the 1980s and 1990s, to the current landscape in which there prevailing political view that teachers can and should be research engaged (DfE, 2016) but as consumers rather than producers (La Velle and Flores, 2018). Identifying as both teacher and doctoral researcher, I have had to navigate the field of educational research, critically examining the possibilities as I have scouted the territory and mapped the terrain, to choose paths and survey arguments. I have sought contributions that I could make and, from this, have sought the teachers' perspectives which have been 'typically absent' (Dana and Yendol-Hoppey, 2019: 6) from the resulting literature from research into practice (Leat *et al.*, 2014). I have had some of the most wonderful travelling companions in Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon as research participants and co-researchers, as they joined me at various points from

May 2019 to September 2021 engaging in a total of 15 ‘‘conversation[s] with a purpose’’ (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 54) (see Appendix 1). I have been fortunate to learn so much from the deeply valued travel guidance in my supervisors Jim and Laura and, more recently, Agnieszka and from Caroline who has guided me consistently as my second supervisor throughout this expedition. And, while for my family, friends or colleagues I doubt that the transformation is any more noticeable now than it was then, it has been as transformative a journey as those global travels were twenty years ago.

While the journey is a well-used metaphor, perhaps some may even say overused, that does not detract from the fact that it is so very apt for my PhD. A professional journey of growth as I have learned to navigate the complexities of the research process. A personal journey of resilience through six years of three supervisors, two job changes, a house move and a global pandemic (all with a teenager in tow). A journey of discovery and the privilege of insight into the lived world of others. What follows therefore is an account that draws from the metaphor of the expedition, or series of significant, meaningful journeys. I will explore the work of the trailblazers who have come before me, stop and explore the significant landmarks, map out the detours and diversions and define and examine the crucial crossroads and pitfalls. The final product, this thesis, presents this expedition as a far neater experience than it actually has been but, in my experience, our recounting of such journeys often tends to be.

I am also writing for you, the reader. I engage with blogs, forums and discussion boards with fellow doctoral researchers and a comment someone made stays with me. It was something along the lines of *I take great comfort in knowing only three people will read my thesis*. I suppose there is some comfort in that, if your readers are solely the examination panel. However, as with everything I have done with this study I cannot forget six more, rather important, people - my travel companions, research participants, co-researchers - who I quietly hope will also read this thesis. Cath said to me in her final interview: *I always think that when you’re reading something it’s quite like, you know, it’s like the ideal… and you’ve got to be really careful not to make yourself feel bad* (Cath, 3.6). Cath was speaking about engaging *with* research and how it can be presented as a *fait accompli* with none of the

messiness and process of getting there in evidence. A nice, neat final product which shoves all the mess out of the way… and leaves the reader feeling *bad*. It reminded me of the literature around the concept of the academic 'ivory tower' (Buckley, 2012: 333), the publishing of 'incomprehensible academic articles that will be read only by a select few' (Care and Kim, 2018: np) and the findings of Lambirth *et al.* (2021) about 'lack of applicability of research findings… written for an academic audience and using a specific style, format and jargon (gap: research language-practitioner language)' (p.825). This then brought me to one of the shared elements of the experiences of my research participants which I explore in *Chapter 6.1.3* - what the purpose of research is and who it is for. And so, I reached a moment of tension. I needed to write for examination (this is a doctoral thesis after all) which encompassed the relevant requirements, but I had a thesis that I hoped would be interesting and accessible to teachers. Yet perhaps not all of what was necessary for examination would be relevant - or possibly even interesting - for other readers.

And so I made a decision to write this thesis differently. I have attempted to produce a thesis which is robust and meets the examination requirements while being accessible to all potential readers and not leave anyone feeling *bad* by the end. This thesis is not, therefore, conventionally structured, beginning with the introduction followed by the literature review, methodology, results and ending with the discussion (Peoples, 2021). It is not that each of these will not form a significant element of the final work, as they are the landmarks integral to the research that is the focus of this thesis, but that this linear approach is not reflective of the study I have conducted for this PhD. Rather, each step has been cyclical, iterative and non-linear either in response to my own learning and development as a researcher and/or in response to the experiences and expressions of the participants. I did attempt to structure it within this convention, but it felt inauthentic, pushing the mess out of sight, rather than an account reflective of the journeys undertaken. Instead, I have woven elements of the accounts of Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon through the chapters where they have been relevant to those moments in the process as well as then examining them in much more depth in specific chapters. Their shared ''meaning-full'' (Smith et al, 2022: 63) words have stayed with me throughout the various iterations of reading, writing and analysis. To

separate them out would have, to continue with the travelling metaphor, felt as though I were packing each part into a different case to be transported separately instead of packing everything into one case in a way that best fits the space available. I have examined the literature in different places where it has been relevant as well as in more depth in *Chapter 3*. While my analysis of the data took place apart from the literature as appropriate for a phenomenological study, the vast amount of work I have read was ever present in all other aspects of my study. I therefore write about it in this way, weaving it through and using it to enrich each aspect of my study and drawing from my findings to question and contribute to this body of work. So this thesis does not follow 'the normative pattern of a conventional thesis… easily divisible and logical' (Weatherall, 2019: 101) 'that pretends to objectivity, rationality and the elision of the author from the text' (Gilmore *et al.*, 2019: 5). It is structured by significant moments at each stage of the journey. It draws on the experiences of Tash, Cath Max, Paul, Liam and Jon as they engaged in research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI), my own experience of this doctoral study and the literature in the field of educational research to explore and understand the lived experience of engagement in research through CCtPI. It tells the story of the journey for anyone to read and, hopefully, enjoy.

Nonetheless, there is a structure. One that travels 'along a road that is as straightforward as [I] can make it (Evans *et al.*, 2014: 14). I have drawn from the journey metaphor to provide a sense of linearity to the writing that does not sacrifice the authenticity of the messiness and non-linear reality of my study. The headings of each chapter propel the writing in a forward direction while leaving space for the writing to be as iterative as the research process has been. A summary of each chapter is set out in *Chapter 1.5*.

Lastly, this thesis not only explores my study and the findings that result from the data to shed light on my research questions, but it also reflects my 'process of making meaning and advancing understandings' (Kamler and Thomson, 2006: 2). It captures the 'formative learning process through which a doctoral student learns what it means to be a researcher in their respective field' (Weatherall, 2019: 101). Therefore the first-person voice is purposefully used throughout to provide an authentic voice and situate me, as the

researcher, as an active agent throughout the research process. This has been my expedition as well as the journeys of those who were, for a time, my travel companions; 'authors, just like participants, have voices which will come out in the constructing of the account' (Smith *et al.*, 2009). These voices were shared and understood as the project progressed as we each examined our experiences, emotions and identities, journeying together to shed light on my research questions and apart for 'personal reflection and an evaluation of the research process' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 118). This thesis is my way of knowing these voices, theirs and mine, sharing my understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Mitchell, 2017) of engaging in research through CCtPI. The 'double hermeneutic' (Smith and Osborne, 2003: 53) is evident throughout as I interpret participants' interpretations of those lived experiences. It is my account of the series of journeys leading to my understanding of the lived experiences of Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon to understand their engagement in research through CCtPI and I have sought to stay true to both their accounts and my own.

1.2 Research and inquiry

My study makes a distinction between *research* and *inquiry* drawing from the concept of research as a 'complex, deliberative and iterative process… in which many different kinds of understanding feature' (Cohen *et al.* 2018: 29) and inquiry as a successful form of professional learning (Hedges, 2010) based on teachers' systematic, intentional study of their own professional practice (Rutten, 2020). This from the very outset seemed an important distinction. I have been increasingly aware of the importance of language choices throughout my study; from initial conversations around what my area of focus would be through to this final writing, I am conscious of the need to choose words with care to ensure the intended meaning is conveyed and to avoid ambiguity or misinterpretation. This led to an early consideration of the language used when communicating with the teaching profession; were teachers' understanding of the term *research* the same as those who were producing the literature and influencing policy? What about *inquiry*? Or *evidence*? This continues to be relevant as I read new educational policy changes or practice directives I encounter in my professional capacity which refers to 'the latest evidence and research on

what works in teaching' (DfE, 2021: 21). This seemed therefore both current and important. As such, I wanted to explore it further as part of my study, bringing it into the interviews with participants to determine if there was a perceived distinction between *research* and *inquiry* or if they were as interchangeable in the minds of teachers as they seemed to be elsewhere; that there is a distinction between *research* and *inquiry* has been identified, though the distinction itself varies and the terms are often used interchangeably (Baumfield *et al.*, 2013) with a sense 'that there might be some sort of continuum of 'research' through to professional enquiry' (Bryan and Burstow, 2017: 699). The dissemination of research outcomes is one aspect of this distinction such as the teacher conducting research to be disseminated and informing the field of educational research, to the teacher conducting inquiry for professional learning which would only be disseminated if deemed to have a potential influence on theory (Stenhouse, 1985b). A further distinction is that inquiry can be considered the middle stage of a process that begins with reflection and leads to sustained action research, the former focusing on practice but not centring it in relevant literature and the latter being more focused on significant wider change (Baumfield *et al.*, 2013). Alongside the multiple definitions of research, there is also a range of terms attributed to classroom based research. Each draw from differing historical traditions and epistemologies yet a common element of each is that 'the practitioner is the researcher, the professional context is the research site, and practice itself is the focus of study' (Cochran-Smith and Donnell, 2006: 503) and that it is systematic and 'interwoven with, systematic examination of the practitioners' own intentions, reactions, visions, and interpretations' (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009: 41). The terms range from Action Research (Lewin, 1946), living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989), teacher research (Cochran-Smith, and Lytle, 2009), practitioner enquiry (Baumfield *et al.*, 2013), Enquiry Based Practice (BERA, 2014) to practitioner inquiry and close-to-practice research (BERA, 2017). I propose an alternative.

Drawing from Stenhouse's view of research as inquiry that enhances professional understanding of practice, Leat *et al.*'s (2014) assertion that inquiry drives professional learning, the view that engaging in inquiry denotes a commitment to professional learning (Cordingley, 2013) and 'a way of knowing about teaching, learning and schooling that is

neither topic- nor project-dependent' (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009: 44), I take the stance of inquiry as an approach to teacher professional development. Further, drawing from the definition of close-to-practice research as 'educational research that is based on problems in practice, may involve researchers working in partnership with practitioners, addresses issues defined by the latter as relevant or useful, and will support the application of critical thinking' (Cooke, 2005 in BERA 2017: np), I termed the collaborative research activity which I undertook alongside my research participants and co-researchers as Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI). In doing so I not only bring together the elements of this activity as has been done by the aforementioned terms relating to classroom based teacher research, but explicitly include its collaborative feature in both name and practice. I therefore determined my definition of Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry to be: a systematic approach to engagement in small scale research as collaborative professional learning, designed by practitioners to examine and support critical engagement with their practice. I considered evidence for practice to be complemented by evidence from practice, therefore not just considering evidence-based practice, but also 'practice-based evidence' (Bryk, 2015: 469).

With this in mind, I defined some of the questions I would include in my initial interviews to determine if the distinctions I was making were not assumptive on my part but reflective of the understandings of my research participants Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon. One such example was when exploring *research* and *inquiry*, asking:

When you hear the term research, what does that mean to you?

So then if I talked about the term inquiry, do you see that as a different thing or the same thing or is there an overlap?

I did not want to simply ask if the participants considered there to be a difference between the two; I was conscious that this could become a leading question, implying that there was a difference and asking them to articulate that difference. Instead, I opted to create a space where 'the same, different or something in between' were all options, encouraging them to freely give their understanding of both terms without feeling there was an expectation of

one answer or another (see Appendix 1 for further indicative examples of interview questions and prompts). For Liam, Tash and Jon there was some overlap between the two, though considered both as involving different types of activity:

> Inquiry would be more going in there with a specific question, so it would be a little bit of an overlap but I would say it would be more specific
>
> Liam 1.24

> I think there's overlap, I think inquiry is more you are finding the research so you are, like, you're the primary person going out and finding the data and what's going on, but obviously then it overlaps with research because you collect all the findings and you then create your own research
>
> Tash 1.21

> Well there is overlap, I'd say an inquiry was more asking questions into a particular, I don't know, it feels more specific more like, you're questioning something that's already happened rather than looking into something new
>
> Jon (1.12)

whereas Paul and Max saw a clear distinction between the two:

> I think that research would support an inquiry wouldn't it, so yeah, so if I look at an aspect of inquiry then the research would depend, the research would assist you to reach a conclusion for your inquiry, yeah so for me they'd be very different
>
> Paul 1.14-16

> I would match the inquiry more with my sort of class based research, that element of having a question I want to find the answer to, to how do I do that, that's where I see the inquiry as opposed to formalised standardised, you know, qualitative and quantitative measures and all that kind of stuff in the form of research
>
> Max 1.52-55

Cath, however, felt there was no clear distinction - though was hesitant in taking a firm position, an unsurety that was reflected throughout her interviews:

> I think it would be like, to me I think it would be, that would just be the same… although I can imagine it could mean quite different things but maybe it's a different approach, style, you know, to what, to how you go about it
>
> Cath 1.69-71

These perspectives reflect my own thinking when designing my study: that the terms research and inquiry had, for almost all of the participants, a distinct implication for practice and for the most part were not interchangeable. They also spoke to the perceived size of the research, with inquiry often referred to as being more specific. This is explored further in *Chapter 5* where I take an idiographic approach to examining and interpreting their lived experiences of engaging in research through CCtPI on a case-by-case basis and subsequently in *Chapter 6* when beginning to examine the instances of cross case patterns of meaning through the Group Experiential Themes (GETs), but at the start of my study and throughout, my term Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry felt increasingly like an important language distinction to make.

1.3 Words and meanings

In *Chapter 1.2*, I stated that *I have been increasingly aware of the importance of language choices throughout my study*. I explored how the terms research and inquiry are often used interchangeably and why a distinction may be important. In *Chapter 3.1.1* I explore the distinction I make between engaging *with* and engaging *in* research. In examining who and what research is for, I explore the distinctions that have been made between different forms of research and their purpose. I anticipate that this is the tip of the proverbial iceberg and that the language and terminology distinctions in the vast continent of educational research are likely to be plentiful. However for this thesis I have needed to set boundaries in my approach to remain within the scope (Simon and Goes, 2018). As such, I have only focused on those distinctions that have a direct relevance to the aspects of teacher research I am seeking insight into. I clarify each of these at appropriate points in this thesis, however here, for clarity, I outline in brief my understanding of key terms I have used with a more comprehensive glossary of terms and acronyms available in Appendix 4:

1.3.1 Research

An approach to knowledge generation through systematic, sustained examination which encompasses:

> Engagement *with* research: accessing, comprehending and taking into consideration extant published literature; and
>
> Engagement *in* research: generating knowledge through systematic, sustained examination.

1.3.2 Inquiry

An approach to teacher professional development that enhances professional understanding of practice, drives professional learning and denotes a commitment to professional learning.

1.3.3 Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI)

A systematic approach to engagement in small scale research as collaborative professional learning, designed by practitioners to examine and support critical engagement with their practice.

In addition, there are two levels of research activity that have taken place – my research that is the focus of this thesis and the collaborative research that I undertook with my research participants as co-researchers. For clarity in making the distinction between the research that has been undertaken, throughout this thesis I will use the following terms:

1.3.4 My study

My study is the term I use for the research that is the focus of this thesis and which sheds light on my research questions. I have undertaken research as part of this, my research degree, however in this thesis I refer to research questions, research design, educational research, teacher research, the research process, my research participants, participants' views of research… it is a word used often. Therefore, when I refer to my own research or

the research that is the focus of this thesis, I use *my study*. I have chosen this term as it also reflects the 'formative learning process' (Weatherall, 2019: 101) that I have engaged in as part of this PhD, referred to in *Chapter 1.1*.

1.3.5 The Collaborative Close-to-Practice (CCtPI) projects

When writing of the collaborative research I undertook with participants, or my travelling companions, Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon, I refer to *CCtPI projects*. This phrase is chosen solely to demarcate them from the research that is the focus of this thesis. I assign ownership of the CCtPI to the participant, for example *Cath's CCtPI project* or *his CCtPI project*. This purpose of this is threefold: to separate it from my study, to recognise the teacher's ownership of the CCtPI and acknowledge the equal partnership in the collaboration.

A note on the CCtPI projects

Each of the CCtPI projects was completed as a research project in its own right. There were six in total as detailed in *Table* 4 (*Chapter 6.2.*3) and Appendix 1, *Table A1*. They were each collaboratively designed by both the teacher and me and, reflective of approaches to teacher research, systematic (see *Chapter 3.1.2*). Following university processes, full ethical approval was sought for each and they did not proceed until approval had been received. The details of each CCtPI project are not included in this thesis as they are not the focus and, while Tash's CCtPI project was completed and published in a peer reviewed journal, identifying details are not included so as to protect her anonymity.

1.4 Contributing to the field of educational research

My study is situated in the field of educational research. The inclusion of the *al* in educational recognises a distinction between *education* research and *educational* research and the question of when education research becomes educational (Ball, 2007). Whitty (2006) asserted that education research characterises the entire field in which research on education is situated, and within this sits educational research which informs and improves

policy and practice. Whitehead and Huxtable (2022) take an alternative view that education research is undertaken within the 'conceptual frameworks and methods of validation of the forms and fields of education knowledge' (p.4) whereas educational research seeks to understand the influences in learning through generating 'valid, evidence based explanations' (p.4). This thesis aligns with the latter and the connections between educational research and an understanding of influences on learning – the learning of the researcher, the learning of others and the social context of practice.

Teachers as researchers is the focus of my study. As introduced in *Chapter 1.1* and explored further in *Chapter 3.1* it is not a new idea nor a new topic for debate. However, despite the richness of the work in the field and the breadth of those who influence the debate, I recognised that there was space for another voice. A voice not often heard (Leat *et al.*, 2014) or possibly even sought among the politicians, medics and academics who argued back and forth over what the teaching profession should and should not do. That of the teachers themselves. I considered their voices as equally important - if not more so, as any resulting outcome of the debate was their responsibility to enact. However I did not want to explore this with teachers as an abstract concept. As I discovered when discussing it with my research participants, the perception and the reality of engaging in research do not always align. I was seeking to hear their voices as they engaged in research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI). As they experienced it as part of their working life. Hence *Understanding the Lived Experience of Engagement in Research*. And not just any research, but *Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry* and I have already, in *Chapter 1.2*, explored the thinking and influences that brought me to this original term which is my first contribution to the field of educational research.

My title was the broad map of my study. I then established my primary research question which is:

> What are teachers' perspectives of research when engaged in small scale Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry?

In order to define the scope of my study (Simon and Goes, 2018) I identified three sub-questions. Those I began with are not quite the ones I have ended with. My tussle with my research questions I explore in *Chapter 2.1* and, throughout *Chapter 3,* I explore how I reached the final questions into which my study seeks to gain insight. These research questions are:

> RQ1: What are teachers' perspectives of engaging in small scale research in their classrooms?
>
> RQ2: What are teachers' views of collaborative inquiry?
>
> RQ3: What influences teachers' sustained engagement in research?

Each focus on the lived experiences of those who participated in my study. As such, my study seeks to gain insight into teachers' engagement in research from their perspective, in their words as they lived the experience. This is my second contribution to the field of educational research.

When I look back at the past six years of my PhD, it has evolved in ways I had not anticipated when I first started out. For an experienced researcher reading this, such a statement will come as no surprise. Certainly now, as I come to the end of my PhD, with the benefit of hindsight and the knowledge and understanding of research I have gained along the way, this 'formative learning process' (Weatherall, 2019: 101) seems natural if not still a little unexpected. Much of this change has been the result of changes in philosophical thinking on my part and this in turn has been heavily influenced by my the accounts of my travelling companions, or research participants, illustrated in how what I intended to contribute to the field of educational research in essence remained the same while the *how* developed and grew over time. My explorations in *Chapter 2.1.2* detail the paradigmatic shift from an emancipatory approach (Bhaskar, 2016) and fixing problems relating to teachers engaging in research to understanding ways in which their experiences could shed light on engaging in research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry yet understanding of teachers' engaging in research is the essence of what I have been seeking insight into. My

contributions to the field of educational research, specifically through the formation of my research questions and the approach to which I have sought to gain insight into them, have been influenced by such changes in my thinking as well as the tussles and tensions of my experiences, developing from critical engagement with the literature and the shared accounts of Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon.

1.5 A travel guide to this thesis

As I stated in *Chapter 1.1*, *I have drawn from the journey metaphor to provide a sense of linearity to the writing… The headings of each chapter propel the writing in a forward direction while leaving space for the writing to be as iterative as the research process has been*. *Setting out* is the process of reflective analysis, beginning a personal journey of understanding the intent of this thesis; ensuring an authenticity in the sharing of the experiences of my research participants to shed light on my research questions as well as my own journey as a researcher. In this I am packing my metaphorical bags, ready for the critical engagement, reflection and analysis that lies ahead. I move on, *Scouting the terrain*, exploring key moments of significance in the terrain of my journey through my study, critically reflecting on experiences as a doctoral researcher as I engage with information and knowledge, adapting and developing my thinking and research practice as a result. Moving forward, in *Mapping the territory* in order to travel along the paths I have chosen, I am positioning my study in the landscape of educational research and mapping out where my paths will travel across this landscape. I draw from the extant literature and the shared experiences of my research participants to understand this landscape and how I intend to carve new paths as a result of my findings. As I am *Journeying*, for a time I am joined by my travelling companions, both research participants and co-researchers. I journey alone to analyse their accounts in within- and cross-case analyses, and with Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon as co-researchers, analysing the significant moments in each of these journeys. In *Chapter 7*, *Reaching my destination*, I identify in what ways light has been shed on my research questions and what I have learned from this expedition… and the future journeys may lie ahead as a result.

Chapter 1: Setting out is my introduction. It is this chapter, which explores my choices of writing and structure. It is my autobiographical statement. I set out the curiosities that led to my study and the insights I have been seeking. I explore the language of *research* and *inquiry*, not only the interchangeable use that exists in the literature (Baumfield *et al.*, 2013) but also the distinction between the two made by the participants in my study. It is a recognition of the importance of language that I also examine further in *Chapter 3*. For clarity, in this chapter I also define my understanding of key terms used throughout the thesis. I introduce my research questions and my contribution to the field of educational research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI) and the voice of the teacher, that I then explore in more depth in subsequent chapters as the journey continues.

Chapter 2: Scouting the Terrain explores the thinking behind my study focus and why I came to bring together this research. I examine the first iteration of my research questions, how I came to this phenomenological study and the challenge of all of my participants withdrawing from my study. I explore how this subsequently impacted on my research questions, as I travelled from a Critical Realist perspective, aligning with Bhaskar's 'emancipatory change' (2016: 5) to a phenomenological approach that aimed to 'get back to the things themselves' (Husserl, 2014[1913]: 35). I explore how this meant a shift in my thinking as a researcher, moving from *heroically leading the charge into a great intellectual war with some evidence-based battle cry* to understanding the experiences of others in a way that did not overlay my own agenda on their accounts of these experiences. I identify how this changed my view of the aims of my study, from seeking 'human flourishing [and] emancipatory change' (Bhaskar, 2016: 5) by providing a platform for the teacher voice to be heard in the teacher researcher debate to understanding the specific experience of specific individuals, each with a 'personally unique perspective on their relationship to, or involvement in' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 24) research through CCtPI. I examine how this in turn influenced how I was interpreting my research questions and laid the foundations for the reworking of these to the final research questions shared in *Chapter 1*. I also examine the steps I took to ensure my study was ethically sound, the approval gained from the university and my first foray into data collection.

In *Chapter 3: Mapping the Territory* I further explore the extant literature, building on *Chapters 1* and *2*. Structured by the foci of each of my research questions, this chapter critically engages with the relevant research around the teacher as researcher, exploring chronologically the development of the concept to reality and drawing from the early debates on the teachers as researcher in the 1930s, through to the Action Research movement in the 1950s, the works of Stenhouse in the 1980s to the emergence of evidence based practice in the 1990s and the current landscape. From a close examination of this literature, I identify the often absent teacher voice and this as a contribution I could make to the field of educational research. I continue to explore the language choices as I did in *Chapter 1*, but with a focus on engaging *with* research and *in* research, drawing from the literature and from the words of participants to understand that this distinction is important in identifying teachers as consumers and/or producers of research. I examine the influences on sustaining engagement in research, including the role of collaboration, as identified in the extant literature and how understanding these from the teacher perspective can support the development of teachers as both consumers and producers of research.

Chapter 4: Choosing the Path builds on *Chapter 2* to examine my choice of methods in more depth. I explain my process of data collection which comprised an initial survey and a series of semi-structured interviews which took place as I engaged in Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry with my research participants and examine the considerations that arose as part of a 'dynamic process' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 47) of ethical practice. I also examine how Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) developed from a methodology to a research approach, building on my critical engagement with the research paradigm in *Chapter 2*. I critically engage with the longitudinal elements of my study and the challenges inherent within longitudinal IPA (LIPA), particularly in relation to attrition, as well as the strengths of the approach in developing relationships and rapport to facilitate a spiral approach to the interview process, contextualising these within my study. I introduce my research participants, setting out their professional context and motivations for participating in my study before critically reflecting on understanding where each data collection part fit into the wider whole throughout data analysis; each interview was part of

that participant's whole experience and each experience was part of my whole data set. This critical reflection examines IPA's commitment to the idiographic while seeking patterns of meaning across participants to inform my research questions, and the ways in which I navigated this tension.

Chapter 5: Journeying Part I follows on from *Chapter 4* to detail the process of data analysis with a focus on the idiographic. Moving from listening and noticing as detailed in *Chapter 2*, this chapter examines in detail the first step of exploratory noting from which experiential statements, which related directly to the experiences of the participants, were derived. Analysis within each case led to clusters of these experiential statements, with clustering based on patterns of meaning (Smith *et al.*, 2022). These clusters became the Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) for each participant; they are personal as they relate directly to that person, experiential as they relate directly to that person's experience and themes as they indicate analytic commonalities across the data for that participant. Selecting Tash, Cath, and Max as illustrative examples and using detailed extracts of their accounts, I explore each of their unique experiences of engaging in research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI) to amplify and illuminate their ''meaning-full'' (Smith et al, 2022: 63) accounts. Structured by their Personal Experiential Themes (PETs), I detail the extracts from the transcripts which I noted were 'of interest' (Smith *et al.*, 2022:79) because they indicated an understanding that was of importance to that participant, a language choice that indicated meaning and those extracts that prompted questioning of the data (Smith *et al.*, 2022). I explore the analytical process as I moved from the descriptive to the increasingly interpretative resulting in the patterns of meaning which defined the PETs for Tash, Cath and Max.

In *Chapter 6: Journeying Part II* continues the process of data analysis with a focus on cross-case analysis of the PETs for participants. In greater detail, I explore the interpretative process that took place, sharing how I have interpreted participants' making sense of the lived experience of engaging in research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI). This contributed to the development of Group Experiential Statements (GETs) by drawing from connections between the shared elements of their experiences (Smith *et al.*,

2022). The individual experiential statements which were clustered to produce PETs, which in turn created the GETs, are detailed in Appendix 3.

Chapter 7: Reaching a destination I focus on my research questions, focusing on some of the significant moments and thinking that I explored in previous chapters through engagement with the literature and my own experiences. Drawing from their accounts and the literature, I seek to understand, specifically in the context of my research questions, Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon's lived experiences of engaging in research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry.

Chapter 2: Scouting the terrain

So much of this journey has involved consideration of and revisiting ideas, concepts and decisions, tweaking and refining in response to developments in my thinking, my own experiences and those shared by my travelling companions, research participants and co-researchers, Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon. I explore my philosophical and paradigmatic and thinking that developed over time in *Chapter 2.1* as this supported not only my development as a researcher but for the CCtPI I would later undertake alongside my research participants and co-researchers. I was gaining a deeper and richer understanding of the complexities of paradigmatic perspectives and the ways in which these influence the research being undertaken, from the aims and intent, through to the language chosen for the research questions to the methodological choices made and recognising that establishing these philosophical and paradigmatic underpinnings would be an essential part of the CCtPI process. I examine my original intent for my study and how a shift in my focus from what I was seeking on behalf of teachers to understanding what teachers had to say led to the development of my thinking from Critical Realism to Phenomenology. I explore this initial thinking about my emancipatory research aims and how these informed the first iteration of my research questions. I consider the Critical Realist (CR) paradigm I started with and the tensions that arose when considering the CR epistemological position, moving away from the view that 'different people will come to know different things in different ways' (Stutchbury, 2022:113), trying to align the Critical Realist paradigm with my changing epistemological view toward the social construction of knowledge. I detail the first steps in the research process, exploring the ethical practice I considered and my first foray into using a survey and semi-structured interviewing for data collection, while I wrestled with the philosophical tensions that were emerging. From these experiences I detail how these prompted further consideration of my research practice and the aims of my study.

I then examine further this continuing development in my thinking and my philosophical position in *Chapter 2.2* as a result of further tensions as I reflectively altered my research practice following the withdrawal of all participants from my study. Developing the

wonderings of *Chapter 2.*1, an examination of how I perceived my study and what I was trying to achieve through it resulted in a paradigmatic shift from CR to Phenomenology. This changed not only my perception of my study from an emancipatory endeavour to shedding light on the realities of teachers engaging in research as part of their professional practice but also impacted on the intent of my research questions; I moved from seeking to fix a problem to seeking to shed light on a phenomenon. I explore my questioning of my role as a researcher and what I considered my place in my study to be, recognising the limits to which I could be removed from my study. Building on these, I explore how my study became grounded in phenomenology and hermeneutics, influencing how I approached all aspects of it.

During the data collection process, the world encountered the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent changes were made to my study as a result. This chapter details these changes and the steps taken to ensure ethical practice was maintained.

Chapter 2.3 explores further my thinking around my role in the data collection process and the hermeneutic theories of (Gadamer, 1990 [1960]) and (Heidegger, 1962[1927]) as well as the 'double hermeneutic' (Smith and Osborne, 2003: 53) which considers the role of the researcher in the interpretative process – the researcher interpreting the participants' interpretations of their experiences. I examine preconceptions and 'bracketing' (Husserl, 1927: 8), the impact on my choice of research methods and the implications of presupposing the world (Heidegger, 1962[1927]). I examine when assumptions I was making were usable and when they bid farewell to become unusable in seeking to understand teachers' lived experiences of engaging in research through CCtPI.

2.1 Wondering

> Where you ask me to think makes me go round in circles and I kind of come away and I think about it a bit more and I look at it a bit more and I almost feel like I take a step back from what's going on. I observe for a bit and I think… I love it.
>
> Tash (6.42)

Frequently, when I return to the accounts of Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon's experiences, I discover echoes of the experiences I have had throughout my PhD. This quote from Tash is no different. I too found a spiral nature to my thinking from the beginning to this rapidly approaching ending as I have immersed myself in and stepped back and various points. And I have loved it too.

As I referred to in *Chapter 1.*1, when I first began to explore the teacher researcher concept, I was seeking out the literature and trying to find what I was able to offer the already well travelled research paths. The literature in this area was far from new: almost a century ago in 1933 Hepburn and Kearney debated amidst analogies of the teacher standing 'heroically… amidst the carnage of the battle as intelligence encounters the great unknown' (Kearney, 1933: 72). While the hyperbole has subsided somewhat nonetheless the debate of teacher and researcher continued through the establishment of the Action Research movement, the work of Stenhouse and Elliott in the 1980s and 1990s, through to the then more recent government commissioned reports such as those from Goldacre (2013), the government-designated What Works Centre for Education and the BERA-RSA Inquiry into Research and Teacher Education (2014). Within this there was the message that teachers can and should use research (DfE, 2016) but as consumers rather than producers (La Velle and Flores, 2018). According to Goldacre, drawing from the evidence to practice approach in medicine - and seemingly ignoring the caveat that this 'can't be copied wholesale' (Puttick, 2012: 1) - there was 'a huge prize waiting to be claimed by teachers' (2013: 7) through the introduction of randomised control trials into schools to determine 'what works best' (p.7) in education. While not necessarily advocating a single research design, there was a subsequent re-emergence of the recognition that research could serve to '[empower] teachers, school and college leaders, and all who work with them, to better understand how they might enhance their practice and increase their impact in the classroom and beyond' (BERA, 2014). However little of the resulting literature from research into practice is written from the perspective of teachers themselves (Leat *et al.*, 2014) and, as Dana and Yendol-Hoppey noted, 'teachers' voices have typically been absent from larger discussions about educational change and reform' (2019: 6). Noting this, I began to wonder. Not just about the content of the debate

but about who the debaters were. Only recently having left the classroom myself, alongside the previously aforementioned papers, I was reading publications by Hammersley (1993), Hargreaves (1999), Biesta (2007, 2010) and Goldacre (2013) finding not only were these some of the strongest voices in the debate but that most had never been teachers and any that were had not been in the classroom for over thirty years: Hammersley is a sociologist, Hargreaves spent three years in the classroom (Williamson, 2021), Biesta is an education academic (Biesta, 2023) and Goldacre a medic (Goldacre, 2013). Some of these were the voices, as with Goldacre, that were potentially informing government policy and, some over a decade later, whose arguments are still at the fore in the field of teacher research. Yet where were the voices of the teachers who were teaching now? Surely these were some of the most important? Why were they not being sought when this would directly impact their professional practice? Surely these voices would complement those currently in the debate to give a rounded, multi-perspectival approach to informing practice? I had, in recent years, moved from classroom teaching into the university and was all too aware of the demands of the modern profession and the impact some of these proposals would have on the teachers and children in schools. I was not alone, noting that some voices (Biesta, 2007; 2010; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999b) challenged the views being pushed forward by education and non-education researchers and professionals. I wondered why the debate was being argued without the voices of the teachers themselves. I wondered about the success of any endeavour that was done *to* rather than *with* teachers and the risk of 'a compliance culture, driven by government, rather than a positive process led by professionals' (Sharples, 2013). As a result, I wanted to capture the perspectives of teachers and bring these to the debate. The early aims of my study therefore had an emancipatory element, empowering teachers to contribute to this debate.

2.1.1 Wondering about the -ologies

When I first embarked on this expedition, I did not view it with the journey metaphor in mind. Rather it was more of a matching exercise - find the particular ontological and epistemological maps that matched the route I intended my study to follow and the task was complete. However, I have been quick to learn that these '-ologies' are 'not just a set of

ideas; [but]…. a working expedition with many tasks to be accomplished… for explorers who will be actively involved in making discoveries, not just passive viewers of a travelogue.' (Lawhead, 2022: 11). Engaging with my ontological and epistemological positions was one such journey which, after much grappling with concepts and subtle distinctions in thinking, I had considered to be mapped out only to find myself returning to it repeatedly, discovering significant diversions that demanded an examination of how I had changed as a researcher. These have no doubt added a richness not only to my thinking around my study but also to my engagement with the voices and perspectives of the participants and their experiences as I have moved away from engaging with these concepts as required steps in the research process, to giving them purposeful consideration in the context of my research questions.

Alongside the understanding that my study could be approached from a range of different theoretical perspectives which could influence the project in different ways, I do not now explore all possible frameworks that would align it; as with all aspects of my study I had to make choices and this thesis is no different. I examine those that I started out aligning my journey with and those I ended up situating my study within, exploring the why and how of the change. Each position is rich and complex, and I spent considerable time examining these and the concepts and ideas inherent within them. What follows unpacks these with the purpose of documenting my journey through them and how they shaped my study.

I initially situated my study within a Critical Realist (CR) paradigm and central to CR is the ontological position that much of the world exists without our knowledge or awareness. Drawing from the philosophies of Roy Bhaskar (1944-2014), CR is 'concerned with the nature of causation, agency, structure, and relations' (Archer *et al.*, 2016). Adopting the position that the world is "structured, differentiated and changing" (Bhaskar, 2011: 2) CR seeks to understand what influences human action and interaction. Therefore, in considering how I would conduct my study I was initially drawn to a Critical Research paradigm as my aims at this point were seeking 'human flourishing [and] emancipatory change' (Bhaskar, 2016: 5). Added to this was the awareness that teachers do not work alone. They work within the structure of the school and of the wider education system. Further, as the prevalence of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) is growing, alongside the 2022 government White Paper

proposing that all schools must become part of, or have plans to join, a MAT by 2030 (Secretary of State for Education, 2022), many teachers also operate, or will operate, within these wider structures. Bhaskar also refers to the "plurality of structures' (Bhaskar, 2011: 2) when examining the realist approach which is reflected in these structures of the UK education and school system. For Bhaskar, these structures support us in making sense of experiences and exist apart from the experience itself (1978). It cannot be ignored that, in the UK, there is a significant political influence on education; it is a public service, funded by public money with a curriculum that is prescribed by the government Department for Education. This I felt was an important consideration; to ignore the political influence in education was to ignore a political agenda whose aims were potentially misaligned with that of the profession and served an entirely different purpose. Therefore, it seemed prudent not to 'neglect the political and ideological contexts' of critical research (Cohen *et al.*, 2018: 51).

As Bhaskar (1975) posits, events are not experienced or perceived does not deny the existence of these events, however, in seeking to understand such events, it is these perceptions that need to be understood. There is more involved in perception than a causal link as promoted in the scientific empirical philosophy and that experience is needed to 'define the world' (Bhaskar, 1975: 115). I was beginning to make further connections between the purpose of my study and the CR paradigm; I felt the professional world was being defined for teachers whereas I wanted to understand how teachers defined this world, particularly one which included engaging in research. And I felt empowered in doing so.

Key to Bhaskar's writing on realism is a search for understanding of "the relationship between social structures and human agency" (Bhaskar, 2011: 3) which spoke directly to my search for an understanding of the collaborative activity in the context of the plural structures of the teacher in the school and the school within the education system. In considering the perspectives of researchers on the role of research in teaching, I was seeking the voice of the practitioner as they experienced the phenomenon that was the focus of the research, that is Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI). In seeking this voice, I felt there was alignment with this commitment to human agency and 'the project of universal human flourishing… an agent of emancipatory change' (Bhaskar, 2016: 5). My study was

seeking to address the issue asserted by Leat, Lofthouse and Reid (2014) that in collaborative research projects the teacher is not necessarily the focus of the subsequent writing and 'where teachers write it is unusual for them to write reflectively about their engagement with research; they focus on their selected topic' (p.1). This seemed indicative of the aforementioned lack of teacher voice in the ongoing teacher-researcher debate; perhaps the most important voice, seemingly diminished by politicians, researchers and policy makers. Therefore in exploring the perspectives of teachers my study could thus add this voice to the debate, by sharing the experiences as they are lived in that moment without controlling influence. In addition, the research activity I intended to engage in with each participant was Participatory Action Research (PAR) which shares this emancipatory intent and the support of a greater influence on decision making processes (Boog, 2016).

While CR assumes an epistemological stance, that of relativism in that knowledge is relative to the context or situation at hand, the aims of my study were to explore the construction of knowledge through collaboration with others. It seemed that while the ontological perspective that recognised the structures the teachers work within and the emancipatory aims that I was seeking through giving teachers space to share their perspectives and thus contribute to the teacher-researcher debate, there was a tension emerging in the context of my study. Epistemologically I was seeking knowledge and understanding through collaboration and the co-construction of knowledge. I wanted to bring teachers together, engage in a social construct through which teachers could engage in research collaboratively and from this I could develop a knowledge and understanding of this process. As such, it seemed that, epistemologically, a social constructionist position was better aligned. This created a tension as CR is a paradigmatic position with ontological and epistemological coherence. Yet CR can be viewed as having an ontological position that has 'a relative degree of autonomy from epistemology and interpretation' (Archer, 2016: np) and so I continued with a social constructionist epistemological perspective, maintaining an awareness of this tension, intending to develop a deeper understanding of my study and my position with a view to resolving the tension in due course.

With a Constructionist perspective, 'the focus of enquiry should be on interaction, processes and social practices' (Andrews, 2012); 'what we take to be knowledge is not so much a reflection of the world as it is as a… situated account of the world' (Gergen, 2015: 4). In establishing the tenets of Constructionism and distinguishing it from Constructivism, Papert and Harel (1991) recognise the overlap between 'the N word [and] the V word' (np) in terms of the concept that knowledge is structured rather than transmitted or discovered, however continue on to posit that this knowledge is built when 'consciously engaged' (np) in constructing it. As an epistemology, Constructionism focuses inquiry on knowledge acquisition through 'interaction, processes and social practices' (Andrews, 2012), 'demanding that everything be understood by being constructed' (Papert and Harel, 1991). At this point I considered my study as being focused on the knowledge and understanding of research acquired through participants engaging in research activity, or 'learning by making' (Papert and Harel, 1991), which is a key epistemological underpinning of Constructionism. My study took the position that social interaction is significant in understanding the participants' interpretations of their reality as they interact with research through CCtPI. It was this engagement that could give insight into the perspectives of the teachers. This is not to say that I assumed a position that knowledge cannot be gained from examining observable behaviours, however it was the unobservable behaviours - the construction of knowledge by understanding participants' perspectives as they engage in research activity - that my study sought to understand, and I assumed a position that knowledge of these unobservable behaviours is acquired by seeking and exploring rich descriptions of these experiences. The collaboration, I felt, gave further insight into the unobservable behaviours as the participants would be engaging in the experience and interacting with others as part of this activity; the social aspects of the research process itself giving way to a potentially richer understanding of the participants' meaning making of their experiences and therefore facilitating the knowledge development in this context.

The constructionist epistemological stance was also evident in the phrasing of the research questions themselves; exploring if a collaborative approach to classroom research mitigates barriers to research from the perspective of those involved. There was an underlying

premise that collaboration may have a role to play - the question itself indicates that I considered this to be a possibility. This spoke to the lens through which my initial research questions were constructed. While my study was seeking to understand the perspectives of the participants and avoid influence participant responses by allowing for the outcome to be that collaboration does not play a role in mitigating barriers, nonetheless there is a position that it might. Rather than ask *what approach might be viewed as an effective strategy?* I asked, *is a collaborative approach viewed as an effective strategy?* Thus, from the outset, the constructionist epistemological position was in evidence.

Defined as an approach (Smith *et al.*, 2009, 2022; Alase, 2017) *and* as a methodology (Smith and Osborne, 2015; Noon, 2018) with the terms are seemingly used interchangeably in some literature, initially I had adopted Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as my methodology. I considered IPA as being a good 'fit with the philosophy of knowledge' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 40) that informed my research questions. I saw knowledge as being socially constructed through engaging in activity and that, by using an IPA methodology, I could develop an understanding of teachers' experiences. Informed by the phenomenological in that it 'is concerned with exploring experience' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 2), the hermeneutic in its 'an interpretative endeavour' (p.3) and idiographic in its commitment 'to the detailed examination of the particular case' (p.3) IPA was an approach that captured the essence of what I was aiming to achieve with my analysis. At that moment, IPA was a methodology that aligned with my ontological and epistemological positions. However, there was a change on the horizon. A shift in my thinking which would impact not only how I thought about my study, but would lead to shift in my research paradigm, the consideration of IPA as much more than a methodology, my role within my study and what I was seeking to understand from this expedition.

2.1.2 Travelling onward… to a new path

I chose to seek out the perspectives of teachers as they engaged in research. By engaging in research alongside teachers I could interview them to understand their perceptions of the experience, giving them a space to share their perspectives and accounts. The outcomes and

analysis of these interviews would be the focus of my study. Looking back, I again can see parallels with Tash's desire for her research to *have an impact somewhere wider than just the children (6.12)*. I too wanted my study to impact beyond my PhD; I wanted to create a platform for the voices of teachers to be heard.

Through the ontological and epistemological lenses of Critical Realism and Constructionism respectively, as I return now to my original proposal and progression papers, I sought to explore the role of Higher Education Institution (HEI) researchers in supporting Research Capacity Building (RCB) in schools through collaborative inquiry and explore if this approach mitigates some of the barriers to establish capacity for engaging in future inquiry. On reflection, the intent at this point was causal in nature; another aim of my study at that point was to determine the issues and barriers for teachers and seek a way to overcome these. There were assumptions evident in that there was a role for HEI researchers to support teachers, that this role could support RCB and that, through collaborative engagement, there was the possibility of opening up the world of research to teachers. These assumptions were reflected in my original research questions:

- Is small scale participatory action research (PAR) in classrooms viewed by teachers as an effective strategy in mitigating barriers for engaging with close-to-practice inquiry?
- Does collaborative exploration of the outcomes of such research, through analysis of the data and engagement with relevant literature, engage teachers in inquiry to inform their own and others' practice?
- Do teachers consider value is added to inquiry through dissemination of the outcomes of PAR within and beyond their school setting?

To me, looking back, inherent within the language used to construct these was the sense that there was a solution to be offered in the context of an existing problem and that my study could possibly offer such a solution.

I began to examine how I could approach my study and ensure ethically sound practice throughout.

I was conscious, working in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and drawing from connections with schools and colleagues to invite participants to engage in my study, there was potential for schools and/or teachers to feel obliged to participate. Therefore it was ethically essential that there was full and complete transparency about what participating would entail and that the choice was always on the part of potential participants. The headteachers of schools would be contacted initially via email with a detailed information sheet about the research project provided for consideration by the governors, headteacher and teaching staff. The information sheet detailed the focus and purpose of the study, how the data would be collected and anonymised, how this data would be used and protected, details of potential outcomes that may arise from the research, how participants could access the research outcomes and how the outcomes would be disseminated. It also detailed the option to withdraw consent at any point without consequence, and how to make contact should any staff member need further explanation or clarification on any aspect of the study. An offer to visit the school was included, with a view to providing additional information to the teaching staff alongside a question/answer opportunity. Teachers choosing to participate would be given a consent form to complete. Further information would be shared and again the onus would be on the teachers to choose if they wanted to be sent the full consent form; teachers would be invited to initiate contact rather than being approached with the information. I determined this would give teachers the space and time to consider participation, with all information available to them, without feeling under any pressure to do so. Data collection would initially begin with the completion of a survey to determine teachers' responses to research, and responses from the survey inform the structure of subsequent semi-structured interviews to explore these further (Appendix 1 illustrates the use of the survey to create prompts for the initial interview). The participants and I would then work collaboratively to identify an area to research within the school and then plan and conduct CCtPI, with full ethical approval sought for each CCtPI project. This data collection process and the ethical considerations, including steps to mitigate any feelings of obligation to participate or positions of power, methods of ensuring full transparency through detailed information letters and consent forms detailing full consent to every aspect of my study were submitted to the university ethics approval committee and approval granted.

At this point I was feeling confidently prepared for my expedition. I had scoped out the relevant terrain, mapped out the territory and was ready to set out. What I left behind, I only realised soon after, was my wondering.

The first person to initiate contact was a head teacher and my first round of data collection took place with teachers in his school. The head teacher was fully informed in the process and I was then invited into the school to speak with a group of teachers. I explained the reasons for and aims of my study, what it would involve in terms of their research activity and the data collection process. I left the information and consent forms with the head teacher to share with those who chose to participate and we set a date for data collection. It was all going to plan.

However, what I had not recognised at this point was that I had effectively passed the ethical responsibility for informing participants and gaining consent to a busy head teacher. As a consequence, I discovered on arriving for the first round of data collection that the teachers involved were not all the same as those in the previous meeting; in fact, peripherally aware of the flurry of activity as I was ushered to a room to set up, I wondered if they were being recruited by the head teacher in the moment. The teachers I spoke to had not completed the forms in advance and so there was a risk they were not fully versed on what to expect. In my eagerness to begin and reach my lofty emancipatory goals, I had begun to lose sight of what had motivated me from the start - the challenges of bringing research practice into the demanding day-to-day realities of teaching. While the data collection did continue at this point - with the consent of the teachers - once it was complete they collectively expressed a desire to withdraw entirely, including the withdrawal of consent to use the data collection up to that point. Looking back this is not surprising. I had obtained consent but was it *informed* consent? The reasons for withdrawal - cited as the data collection methods, which had been explained in the initial meeting and were detailed in the information letter accompanying the consent form - would imply not. 'Ethical research practice is a dynamic process which needs to be monitored throughout data collection' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 47) but I had not been careful or attentive enough to this monitoring.

I began to wonder again. I wondered at the reason given for the teachers choosing not to continue. I wondered at the implications for my research practice. I wondered if there were additional reasons for the withdrawal. As Liam noted when discussing the research activity in his school: *[teachers] have an idea, they try it and if it works then they share it with the rest of the school and you can try it if you like… it's not forced on us* (1.32-1.34). I wondered, if by only engaging with a head teacher and not the individual teachers in these initial steps, I had inadvertently forced participation. I wondered what I could learn from this. Most of all, I wondered if I had inadvertently lost sight of the *people* my study was about.

This signalled a significant shift in my thinking. As a result of this first experience of data collection, I had come to realise that in seeking to provide a space for the voices of teachers and determining if collaboration was a way forward to support teachers in engaging in research; I was focusing on the outcomes rather than the purpose. Focusing on me and my study rather than the teachers and their experience of engaging in research through CCtPI. The purpose of my study was to seek out the perspectives of the teachers, but it seemed this had become less of a focus and, without it, I had lost the heart of what I was doing and why. I subsequently found that each time I read my research questions, the less satisfied I was with them; they seemed to have an underlying causal aim. More and more I was reading these as:

- Does PAR fix the problem of teachers engaging in research?
- Does collaboration fix the problem of teachers engaging in research?
- Does sharing the outcomes add value to research for teachers?

The first two I felt continued in the vein of doing *to* teachers rather than *with* them; a parallel to the context of the teacher as researcher discourse I took issue with from the beginning. My dissatisfaction with the path I had begun to travel was growing. I began to wonder what had changed in my thinking… and what I was going to do about it.

2.2 Listening and noticing

What I slowly began to realise was that my thinking, and therefore my study, was undergoing a paradigm shift. What had been galvanising and motivational at the beginning of this process still felt important but it was no longer the central aim.

I continued in my endeavours to engage teachers for my study and found that engaging headteachers was challenging. However, I was contacted by Max, a senior leader in a primary school in Wales. He was in a position to consent for the school to be involved and, as participant, simultaneously consent to his own involvement. Therefore, he was fully informed of all aspects of participating and I was confident that he was giving fully informed consent. Cath had heard about my study and expressed an interest in participating. With fully informed consent from her headteacher and then from Cath herself, she also became an active participant.

Soon after, during my search for further participants, the world was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The resulting lockdowns and implications for schools impacted on my study. My already challenging search for participants was now entirely unproductive as headteachers rightly focused on the 'cognitively and emotionally taxing' (Kim and Asbury, 2020: 1063) changes in response to the pandemic. In April 2020, the university issued an amendment to ethical practices that changes in response to the pandemic that did not *alter the level of risk to the participant* could be made. My design was adapted accordingly and, rather than approach headteachers in the first instance, a call for participants was sent out via social media seeking to contact teachers first. This was achieved by sharing the questionnaire that had already been approved by the Research and Ethics Committee and asking for teachers to complete it anonymously. It was made clear that those teachers that completed it could contact me should they wish to participate in the wider project but they were under no obligation to do so. Inviting teachers to make contact I felt gave them the space and time to consider participation, with all information available to them, without feeling under any pressure to do so. They could choose not to make contact and there could be no follow up on this as their responses were anonymous. The teachers that did then

continue were given the information letter as well as the opportunity to ask questions and gave their consent to participate. The headteacher information letter was also shared and consent sought from them as gatekeeper before the teacher participated.

Therefore, the change was a reordering of consent; where originally the gatekeeper was contacted first and then the teachers, the challenges of the pandemic resulted in the teachers being contacted, recruited and gaining consent followed by headteacher consent. It also led to participants being individual teachers in schools rather than groups of teachers in a school. This did not alter the level of risk as all parties consented to the teacher's participation as was intended in the original ethics plan. Further, the questionnaire used to make initial contact with teachers had already been given ethical approval and, as it only served to invite contact, that data collected was not used to inform my study. This questionnaire was then completed without anonymity by those teachers who consented to participate and those outcomes used to inform the first interview. This process of participant recruitment and data collection is illustrated in Figure 1.

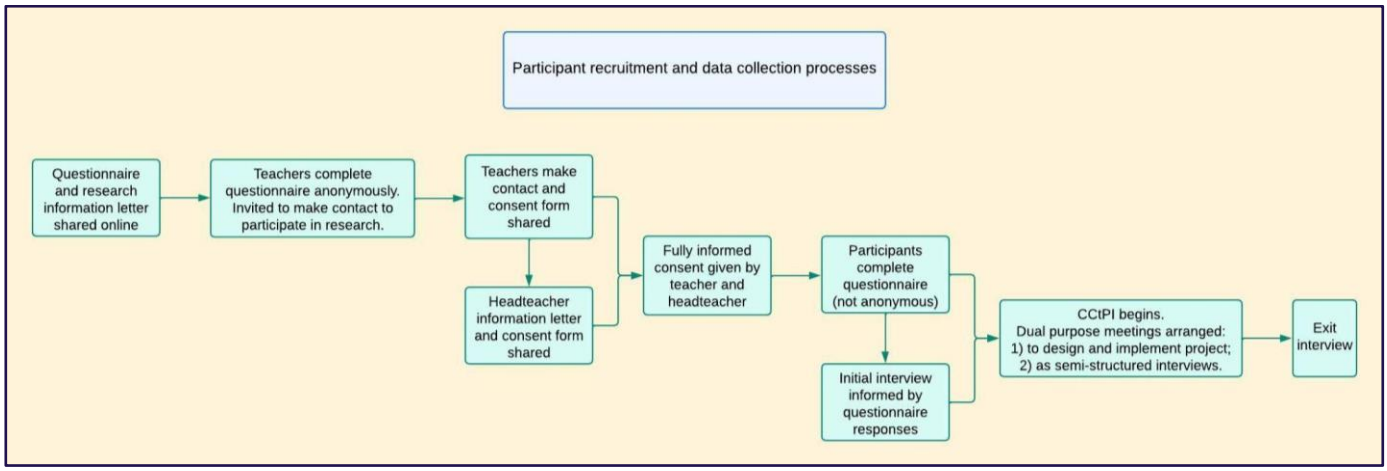

Figure 1: Participant recruitment and data collection processes

As a result of this process, for a while, Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon became my travelling companions. Together we ventured on shorter journeys through the educational landscape.

Tash had not been involved in research since her time at university. A classroom teacher, she was completing her second year of teaching when she consented to participate and she

was keen to do so, considering it to be a mutually beneficial opportunity: *I could choose an element from [my support plan], I think it could really help me as well as helping you with research* (initial email). This seemed to be an important consideration for Tash as she was on a school support plan, a process of 'formal monitoring, evaluation, guidance and support' (DfE, 2019) and had a specific aspect of her practice she was required to develop. Tash also referred positively to her experience of engaging in research and learning from this; it seemed to be a comfortable space for her and she was enthusiastic about what she viewed as returning to this space: *like being back at uni* (1.14). For Tash, her CCtPI focus was aligned with the target of her support plan and so, as this focus was on an aspect of her practice, in our initial research meeting we discussed the different ways practice could be researched. Her support plan target focused on developing her questioning skills and we discussed the different approaches that could be taken to research this. Identifying the particular aspect of this area that Tash was struggling with helped to refine the focus and from this we discussed Participatory Action Research (PAR). We agreed this aligned with the aims and purposes of the project, recognising that being both co-researcher and participant would support the collection of data to answer the research question we had identified. The exact question will not be shared in this thesis as the CCtPI project has since been published and sharing of the research question may risk Tash being identifiable as a participant in my study. Tash's project was the only one to reach completion and publication in an education journal. As with all projects, consent was sought from Tash's headteacher who, while willing to support Tash's participation, did not discuss release time with Tash but was conscious of Tash's workload and the support plan already in place: *she said to keep it in line with something that we're already doing so it's not an additional aspect to then look at, which I kind of really said was a good idea beforehand anyway* (1.52). The nature of Tash's CCtPI project taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic and that it was a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project where Tash was both researcher and participant, afforded her project a degree of flexibility which facilitated her project and, as her project progressed, she did not feel she needed release time.

Cath had been teaching for ten years and had not engaged in research since her previous university studies. She chose to participate in my study because *I haven't ever really done that much research myself ... and definitely since I was at university which was longer than I care to remember now...I think I'd just like to know more about it, I know what I'm doing… I've been teaching for 10 years that's it you know, I want to like keep moving forward with it… so I think that's, I thought that perhaps that might give me the opportunity to take part in this* (1.94-98). Cath's project was in parallel to Tash's in that it adopted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach. Cath's interests lay in exploring time management and becoming more efficient in her practice with a view to understanding ways to reduce teacher workload. Through discussions, she shared that she felt that involving other teachers as participants would increase their workload and she felt this was in contrast to the focus of her project. Therefore, as with Tash, she felt that by being both co-researcher and participant she could make changes in her own practice, explore any impact of these changes and develop an understanding of the impact on her practice with a view to sharing the outcomes with her colleagues. She also felt this would help keep the timeline tight and not risk the project becoming longer than intended. We discussed taking a PAR approach to answer the research question *'Vaden's permissions: can they impact teacher workload management?'.*

Conscious of the recent changes to the Welsh Teachers' Standards requiring teachers' 'structured engagement in an action research community' and school leaders' responsibility for such research being 'carried out in partnership with others' (Welsh Government, 2019), for Max taking part in my study was a recognition that *we don't fully understand exactly what research and inquiry will become for us, I'm interested in finding out what works elsewhere, if you know how other schools are approaching it, if there's a really successful model that's already there that we could learn from that's what I'm interested in… and for staff motivation too I want to be able to sort of keep the staff motivated to take on all these really exciting challenges… but challenges nonetheless… and feel really positive about it… so I'm just really interested in models of inquiry and how that's being approached in different places really… to really develop our practice as a school* (1.190-196). Max had been involved

in research projects previously in his career, endorsed by the local authority, however he described these as *slightly removed… and theoretical* (1.10) and viewed his CCtPI project as a way to engage in *practice-based research* (1.10). Max was keen to draw on the opportunity to make changes in the classroom and explore the impact of these, hoping to impact on an issue he had identified with the class he was teaching. This reflected Max's view of the importance of research that directly related to the children's learning as being *more impactful for me because it's immediate it's there it's those kids it's that moment* (1.18). He had begun to make changes across the school focusing on engaging the children in constructing together what a successful outcome would look like in their learning and while he felt that he was seeing a positive impact on the children's outcomes and progress in his own classroom, he also felt this was anecdotal. He viewed his CCtPI project as an opportunity for a systematic examination of what was happening in the classroom: *we could just all have these lovely ideas and let's do this, we've got to see whether it's actually having an impact* (1.292). Our discussions followed on from this to explore what specifically Max was hoping to focus his research on and together we crafted the research question *Co-constructing success criteria: does it have an effect on children's own responsibility for learning?* From this we explored the different ways data could be collected to answer this question and chose to observe the children's learning behaviours in the classroom towards the end of the academic year when they were still in year 3 as a baseline and then again in the subsequent academic year when Max would be their teacher. Max also wanted to observe them during year 4 when the regular partner teacher was teaching as he was aware that he wanted to determine the impact of the change in practice on learning rather than the impact of his relationship with the children on their levels of independence when engaging in their learning activities while supporting their learning.

Paul, a classroom teacher of ten years, had experienced a shift in thinking regarding research. He commented that *I think I've got enough knowledge now to know what I don't know* (1.36) and this was the underlying motivation to participate in my study, alongside the fact that *I've had so much more time to do… to I suppose just focus on being a teacher and actually using academic books rather than textbooks, then that's kind of led me to create I*

suppose like a couple of hypotheses or ideas (1.36). In contrast, while his time at university encompassed research, at the time he did not see the value of this or the connections between practice and research: *for me it was just… like listen I want to train to be a teacher and you know if I want to do research thereafter like I'll do research thereafter* (1.26-28). He had not undertaken research prior to participating in my study, associating research with academic qualifications and commenting on observing colleagues undertaking their Master's degrees and his wife's PhD. My study was *the first time that I heard someone actually coming up with an idea that teachers could do research on the side* (1.44) rather than part of an academic pathway. Paul had a view of the whole school in mind when exploring what interested him in terms of developing his CCtPI project. As safeguarding lead for the school, he wanted to understand his colleagues' perception of their safeguarding responsibilities. He shared that he was aware that all staff took their safeguarding responsibilities seriously and acted appropriately when issues arose, however he wanted to understand if they felt that whole school safeguarding training prepared them for implementing their training in their day-to-day practice with specific year groups and boarding pupils and if they identified areas where further training would be beneficial. We explored this from an interpretivist perspective and what this meant for the project and from these discussions agreed that interviewing colleagues and then bringing them together for a focus group discussion would provide data to answer the research question *'What are teachers' perspectives of whole school safeguarding training as preparation for safeguarding pupils in years 7 & 8?'.*

Liam, along with the teaching staff in his school, had been using newly purchased software to support pupil progress through undertaking gap analysis of learning and next steps to address these gaps. He was interested in focusing his CCtPI project on determining if the use of the software was in fact having an impact on pupil outcomes. We discussed the different approaches that could be taken for his project such as either looking solely at the data pre- and post- the use of the software to determine if there was impact or by speaking with the children and/or teachers to understand their perspective of how their learning was supported and if there had been any change following the introduction of the software. We

explored how each would have different aims and be viewing the project through a different lens. From these discussions Liam decided he wanted to focus on teachers' perspectives of the software and we decided to use a survey to gather data in response to the question '*What are teachers' perspectives of using PiXL as a tool to support formative assessment?*'. Liam had been teaching for two years and so was at the early stage of his career. He had not been involved in any research activity beyond his teacher training at university: *I think over time I've tended to go away from that and not thought about it* (1.46). However, those with subject responsibility in Liam's school engage with research to inform whole school practice and *then we have, we talk to the children about their experiences of these of topics and how they feel they're doing... and then also the subject leaders talk to them as well* (1.62) so Liam felt his school culture supported involvement in research activity. It was this, combined with new software being used in the school the impact of which he wanted to understand further, than led him to participate in my study.

Jon had been teaching for three years and had experienced a new change in the school context with the appointment of a new head teacher who was *very on it with the kind of up-to-date research things that are being published* (1.30). He considered it to be *really beneficial to teachers to engage in research... and I like to kind of take any opportunity to learn something new and if it can improve my practice then great because it's going to help the kids and that's what I'm in it for* (1.26). He felt the school culture aligned with his thinking in this area and therefore this was a good time for him to participate in my study and he felt confident in doing so. Jon had developed an interest in dual coding, building on a whole school approach to building reading into every lesson. He had discussed dual coding with his partner teacher as a way to develop this further, integrating the reading even more into each lesson so it was not a stand along activity. He had wanted to use dual coding to achieve this and felt his CCtPI project could be a systematic examination of any impact on the children's learning. We then explored Jon's understanding of what the impact of this would look like and how we could explore this as part of the project. From this we agreed the research question *Do children view a dual coding reading strategy supportive in developing confidence*

and understanding in maths? and that a focus group of children exploring their perspectives would provide the data in response.

For all projects, in line with the ethical approval for my study, consent was sought from headteachers as well as participants. In the information letter the possibility of release time was highlighted and as part of the consent form, headteachers agreed to this. However, as almost all projects were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and all but one of the participants withdrew, there was no need for headteachers to enact this agreement of release time. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that Tash, Paul and Jon each made reference to their projects as taking place outside of their teaching role: *I thought I could do research in my half terms* (Paul, 2.42), *obviously after school is when it would be done, on the weekends* (Tash, 3.52)*, it was separate from the school* (Jon, 2.6). This suggests that while the headteachers were supportive of participation in my study, they were not necessarily following through on the consent for release time they had agreed to when signing the consent forms. However, this was an unprecedented time and a 'potentially highly stressful situation' (Kim and Asbury, 2020: 1063) for schools and it could be that the support from headteachers for participants to engage in their CCtPI projects may have been different beyond the context of the pandemic.

Each project was intended to be designed so that participants were co-researchers, however when the discussion around their CCtPI project began with each participant, I was conscious that they were speaking less and often not speaking at all, looking to me for answers: *I wouldn't know where to go to be perfectly honest* (Paul, 1.26). Therefore, I focused the initial conversation around the CCtPI project on their interests and prompting for ideas around areas they wanted to research and their understanding of how they might choose to approach this. In doing so I was therefore giving them the choice of research focus to support engagement in the project (Godfrey, 2014) and facilitating a space where there was recognition of each person's expertise and a bringing together of this to form a collaborative equal partnership of 'co-creation' (Nelson and Campbell, 2017: 121). From these contributions I then suggested what methodological approaches might align with their thinking and together we explored which methods would be practical in terms of their

workload and school setting and a timeline for the project (see *Table 4: the six CCtPI projects* for the agreed timelines). When they looked to me for specific answers, for example how long the project would last, I would return to the idea that this was a shared space and that we would determine these ideas together as co-researchers. With each participant, this led to a discussion of the different activities we would undertake as part of the CCtPI project both together and separately, and the practical considerations of undertaking their CCtPI in their setting of which they were the expert rather than me. These discussions facilitated the co-researcher space; by exploring their ideas initially and every decision or question being an exploration, they brought their knowledge and understanding of their research interests and professional context from which I could then bring knowledge and understanding of the research process, methodologies and methods for discussion.

Each interview became ‘‘a conversation with a purpose’’ (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 54) as we journeyed together; they would take place after discussions about the project we were working on and often end with an informal chat about what was happening in school, or headline making happenings in education at the time, each time establishing and consolidating rapport. And I would listen. I would sometimes notice at this point but mostly I would just listen.

And I noticed that, to begin with, I was not particularly good at just listening.

I interjected. A lot. I still listen back to the early interviews and wish, as I did when I began transcribing, that I would *Just Be Quiet!* I did not interrupt but, in pauses, I contributed and I interjected. Frequently.

I mean, I think that research would support an inquiry wouldn't it that em

right

so yeah, so if I look at an aspect of inquiry, then the research would depend the research would assist you to reach a conclusion for your inquiry. Yeah, so for me, they'd be very different. But maybe that's because then I I'd be a history subject specialist.

Uh huh

So then for me inquiry is very I would almost be thinking along the lines of a sort of lesson based or scheme of work based inquiry or an inquiry with a sort of broader eh a broader theme of you know, how are free school meals pupils what why is there an issue with free school meals pupils not achieving in history compared with one of the other Humanities.

Yeah.

Right. Uh huh. Yeah. This is only a very brief extract of Paul's initial interview, yet I interjected three times. Noticing this, I wandered back to wondering. I wondered why I was interjecting and recognised that I was trying to show I was engaged in what he was telling me. Prove that I was, in fact, listening. I also noticed that all of my interjections were affirming. *Right*. *Yeah*. And so I wondered if I had influenced Paul's responses in any way. Was he encouraged to continue his train of thought because that was his perspective or because I was intimating to him that this was the 'right' perspective? Smith *et al.* (2022) note the value of silence in the interview: 'in an interview these silences have to be waited out a little longer… your silence signals that you are waiting for more detail' (p.64). I could sense the paradigm shifting further. I determined to speak less and, if an interjection was deemed necessary at all, keep to a non-committal *mmm*. When I was listening back to interviews, I wanted to hear less of me. I wanted to go back and tell myself to *Just Be Quiet* because my voice was an interruption to the voice I wanted to hear - Paul's.

I was seeking the voices of teachers but the purpose was no longer emancipatory or 'human flourishing'. I was not going to be Kearney's teacher-researcher, heroically leading the charge into a great intellectual war with some evidence-based battle cry. I had retreated somewhat from this headstrong, headlong foray and wanted instead to step back. To listen.

To notice. And listen and notice. It became somewhat of a mantra at this point. Listen and notice: to examine how these teachers made sense of the experience of engaging in research. Listen and notice: to understand their experience and then share it. Listen and notice: so as to not risk continuing along a path that overlaid my own agenda on their accounts. My focus shifted away from trying to solve issues I perceived on behalf of teachers. I now wanted to focus on understanding what teachers shared about their lived experience of engaging in research through CCtPI was, how they perceived collaboration and the value of the sharing outcomes.

Understanding this lived experience of something, focusing on the individual's account of it and analysing this to understand not just what they say but also interpreting what they share without explicitly saying it, is a phenomenological endeavour. I wanted to 'get back to the things themselves' (Husserl, 2014[1913]: 35). Epistemologically, therefore, my study was in fact focused on knowledge from personal experience, subjectivity and the 'importance of personal perspective and interpretation' (Lester, 1999: 1). In seeking to develop an understanding of the experiences of participants the intent of my study had evolved into a 'systematic examination of the types and forms of intentional experience' (Husserl, 1927: 2) seeking to 'shed light' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 32) rather than to determine cause or facilitate emancipation. My aims were now to understand the specific experience of specific individuals, each with a 'personally unique perspective on their relationship to, or involvement in, [the] phenomena of interest' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 24).

I continued with the interviews and the CCtPI process and sought to hear more of the participants' voices and less of my own. As I progressed, I found that I continued to struggle to align critical engagement to the accounts of experience while fully attending to the voices of the participants and their lived experiences. I no longer wanted to critically engage, mould the data or relate what was being said to what I had read elsewhere. This noticing, meaning and understanding became of the utmost importance and to do anything more than this, I felt, would be to devalue the accounts presented to me by my research participants; it was not my role to mould their account but to listen, notice and understand what they were telling me of their experiences or their 'being in the world' (Heidegger, 1962[1927]: 41) as it

was made meaningful through their engagement in relationships and activities within it. They were sharing their accounts and ‘‘meaning-full’’ (Smith et al, 2022: 63) experiences of research as they located in that context. They were not sharing their understanding of research, but their experience of research in the context of their CCtPI project; their experience in relation to the phenomenon and, as such, their ‘being in the world’ (Heidegger, 1962[1927]: 41) of research. Appendix A2.1 illustrates this in the context of Cath’s exit interview when she examines her experience in her professional context, alluding to the tensions of what she perceived the experience would be and what her experience actually was.

I also noticed that these conversations were extending beyond the scheduled interviews and that comments made in email communications were, at times, ‘‘meaning-full’’ (Smith et al, 2022: 63). When explaining reasons for rescheduling or when arranging a subsequent meeting, I noticed that there were ‘gems’ or ‘a single extract to have a significance completely disproportionate to its size’ (Smith, 2011: 6) in some of the emails. However, I had not intended to capture these communications as part of my data, and so engaging once more with the ethical process returning as was appropriate to the pre-COVID procedures, gained approval for data collection to be amended to include email communication. Informed consent was then sought and, for those who consented, email communications were included in data collection and analysis.

As each interview took place, I transcribed it to create a verbatim record (see Appendix 2 for illustrative examples); in doing so I was immersing myself in the data, repeatedly listening to what was being said and beginning to notice what was meaningfully shared. I made notes occasionally, but more often than not I simply listened and created a record of what was said. I intended to examine the data further once the transcription was complete, deepening the analysis to an interpretative level, but at this point just wanted to listen. However, a deeper noticing of meaning leading to some initial interpretation began to take place more frequently regardless, reminding me that ‘analysis and interpretation often occur simultaneously… the process of data analysis is recursive, non-linear, messy and reflexive,

moving backwards and forwards between data, analysis and interpretation' (Cohen *et al.*, 2018: 644).

In understanding my study and developing the philosophical underpinnings which I, first subconsciously and later purposefully employed, the phenomenology in which it was situated became not just 'aligned' or a 'neat fit' with my thinking. It resonated with my perspective within and beyond my study to the point that it was the lens that, for me, gave every aspect clarity and sense. My undergraduate degree is in psychology and I now found, intentionally, I was again within these realms. My methodology and approach to data analysis were both grounded in psychology; IPA was developed by Professor of Psychology Jonathan Smith. This return to my educational roots had been unexpected, though in hindsight unsurprising: I have always been intrigued by the idea that more than one person can have, on the surface, an identical experience yet each may have different recounts, interpretations and/or responses to it; it seems I subscribed to a phenomenologist perspective long before I was aware of either the term or the philosophy underpinning it. IPA, being idiographic, has a focus on the individual and the experiences of particular cases are the priority with a purpose of shedding light by 'producing fine-grained accounts of patterns of meaning for participants' (Smith *et al.*, 2022). This spoke to my fascination with the experience of the individual and offered an approach that would facilitate understanding what the experience of engaging in research was for Tash, Cath, Max, Jon, Liam and Paul.

While there is a stepped guide to conducting IPA, in my early attempts at following this I felt a sympathy with Cath who, at the time as I noted in my journal was *being evasive throughout the process… she is still willing to be involved but actually allocating time to be involved has been a challenge* (research journal, Jan 2021). I was doing the same; I had noticed that I was becoming less engaged and spending less time with the data. This avoidance brought me back to my wondering; what was happening here? Much like Cath, I wanted to engage but was simultaneously avoiding it. I began to examine this and recognised that in trying to approach the data in a structured way as set out in Smith *et al.* (2009), it felt that I was somehow re-routing back to placing something onto the experiences, reworking the data into a form that I wanted it to take. I felt that I needed to once more step back, leave the

step-by-step guide behind and attend to the experiences as they were presented to me. Listening and noticing. Listening and noticing.

> Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) state that the analysis of data within the IPA approach 'is collaborative, personal, intuitive, difficult, creative, intense and conceptually demanding' (p.80). I'd read this before - and highlighted it as important - but reading it this time, it really resonated with me. This sums up neatly exactly what my experience of data analysis has been so far and continues to be. It's also reassuring that they go on to state that 'there is no clear right or wrong way of conducting this sort of analysis' (p.80) and, even more so, that innovation is encouraged. I'm more confident that, as long as at the heart of my analysis is a focus on the 'participants' attempts to make sense of their experiences' (p.79), move from description to interpretation, seeking to understand the participants' perspectives and the 'meaning making in particular contexts' then I am undertaking IPA when I engage with the data, remembering that 'the end result is always an account of how the analyst thinks the participant is thinking - this is the double hermeneutic' (p.80)
>
> Research journal, Oct 2021

Encouraged by a less structured yet, what seemed to me, a freer attention to the data, I was also conscious that 'meaning will be strongly influenced by the moment at which the interpretation is made' (Smith *et al.*, 2022). So I ensured that I immersed myself in the interviews, both listening to them and reading the transcripts, finding that I would notice different gems that demanded my attention or stood out (Smith, 2011) in different moments, on different days, in different weeks:

> I started out wanting to listen and understand so it felt that by placing a structure on the data I was forcing something on it rather than letting the data 'speak'. Ironically, perhaps, the structured analysis was designed to let the data show codes, things etc but the mechanical nature for me seemed to deny the message being conveyed and that a more holistic approach would be more true to the data, the participants and my research paradigm. So instead I'm just listening. Again and again and again. And by just listening, on different days at different times and so on, it feels like important aspects are becoming clear. It's like the ''meaning-full'' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 63) is floating to the surface to be seen. Rather than hunting through and picking out what I think is key or what's repeated I'm actively listening over and over which brings its own clarity. I suppose doing it this way puts less of me in the analysis - rather than actively seeking codes/themes, I'm actively listening to allow things to stand out.
>
> Research journal, Oct 2021

2.3 ‘The conspicuousness of the unusable’

I love this phrase. Coined by Heidegger (1962[1927]: 104) it sums up so much of my PhD experience, particularly as I write this account. As I examine the complex multi-journey expedition I have been on and the moments that lie on a spectrum of significance, I consider how much of this has been a part of my experience yet is *unusable*, or unused, for this thesis. Like faded, out of focus or poorly composed photographs that offer little to the casual observer yet so much to the traveller compelled to capture that precious moment. I write with the most significant moments in mind, with the experiences of Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon at the heart of my telling, with the knowledge gained from the literature and from the analysis of the data. For me, now and beyond this doctorate, these and all of my experiences are both conspicuous and usable. It has been a reflexive journey through which I have learned and grown both professionally and personally, and while select moments of journeys have been chosen to be written about here, I don’t think there has been a moment that lies in an unusable discard pile.

When I first began to consider a path through this research and consider my research design, I approached it with the assumption that while my research questions drew from my ‘personal understandings and formulations’ (Cohen *et al.*, 2018) I could collect my data and analyse it while remaining separate from it, analysing it as something external to me. To achieve this I would, to draw again from Husserl, be practising an ‘epoche’ (Husserl, 1927: 3), taking an ‘ordinary objective “position”’ and ‘retreat from the objects posited’ (p3) to focus on the ‘essence’ (p5) of the phenomenon thus giving the truest account of it. I was soon to discover that this was not to be the case in my study.

Initially when trying to connect with teachers who would join me for a time on my journey, I assumed that they would not only be aware of the expectations that educators would engage in research but were to some extent willing to do so if the barriers to this were mitigated. This was based on anecdotal conversations with colleagues in primary schools. However it became evident once I began to recruit participants that this was not in fact the case. In taking a collaborative approach to the research that I would conduct with the

participants I had intended to mitigate the workload barrier (Strokova, 2016) and my assumption was that teachers would be willing to participate as a result. I had designed the data collection so that, as we engaged in the research process, I would interview each teacher to build an account of their lived experience. Each interview would build on the previous, exploring responses and being participant led rather than research led and 'focused on the subjective experiences' (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). Merton and Kendall (1946) noted that 'foreknowledge of the situation obviously reduces the task confronting the investigator, since the interview need not be devoted to discovering the objective nature of the situation' (p541). With this in mind, I was conscious that I did not have this knowledge prior to the initial interview. To address this, I adapted a survey designed and validated by Nelson and Sharples on behalf of NFER and the Education Endowment Foundation respectively. This survey was used by Nelson *et al.* (2017) to measure teachers' research engagement. I was seeking to use the outcomes from the survey to begin to contextualise the focus of the initial interview on gaining an understanding of participants' perspectives of research and how they had engaged *with* and *in* it to date. The survey was initially shared as part of the data collection process and then, as part of the adaptations made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic detailed in *Chapter 2.2*, sent via colleagues and social media, with detailed information about the purpose of the survey, information on the wider research project and an invitation to contact me should any wish to participate in the wider project. However, of the 30 teachers who responded to the survey few chose to participate, still viewing research as an addition to their workload that they did not want to commit to and the collaborative element did little to change this. From this I was increasingly aware of assumptions I was making about the role of collaboration in research activity and the potential for this to mitigate barriers to engagement and the consequences for my study. I began to recognise that I could not completely remove myself from the research process and by trying to I was inadvertently impacting on it in ways I had not prepared for – I had assumed that there was a willingness by teachers to engage in research if only they had someone to collaborate with. These were significant, seemingly erroneous, assumptions and led to me questioning not only these but what other assumptions I was inadvertently making as I progressed. It brought to light the importance of engaging in an ongoing, spiralling

reflexive process that would facilitate me being increasingly aware of my prior knowledge, assumptions and pre-conceived ideas, connecting to research participants through mutual relations of being 'travelling companions' journeying together, relations termed by Heidegger as 'ready-to-hand' (1962[1927]: 103). I needed to stop assuming and charging ahead and to check the impulse to use participants' data for my own goals through means-ends relations where the participants are 'present-at-hand' as 'objects' to be studied by a disconnected researcher (Heidegger, 1962[1927: 41). It was essential to take careful considered action based on what I could discern from others, the extant literature and always examining my thinking to ensure it was exploratory rather than assumptive.

Inherent within both the IPA approach is the double hermeneutic: I am making sense of the participants making sense of their lived experience. This duality of the role of the researcher is important as I, like my travel companions, was making sense of the world, engaging with their accounts of their experience but through the lens of my own experience. Here the phenomenology and the interpretation is interwoven; 'without the phenomenology, there would be nothing to interpret; without the hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 31). Armed with this awareness I could then be conscious of my prior knowledge and assumptions as I engaged in the interpretative data analysis process, recognise when they were coming to the fore during this process and, in actively seeking to ensure they did not become part of the process, aim to ensure that they became unusable: 'in our dealings with what is ready-to-hand, this readiness-to-hand is itself understood… It does not vanish simply, but takes its farewell, as it were, in the conspicuousness of the unusable' (Heidegger, 1962[1927]: 104). I considered this to be a form of Husserl's 'bracketing' (1927: 8) but rather than removing these entirely from the process, my approach aligned with Heidegger; as with writing when we place text in parentheses it is still present, it still exists in the writing but it is separated from the writing itself. It is a seen element of the text but is not so interwoven that it is necessary to the text or its meaning - the text can still make sense without the writing in parentheses. With this analogy in mind, I recognised that I would always be present in my study as I was the one conducting it but an ongoing reflexive process was essential to ensure that the focus remained on the

experiences of my research participants. This bracketing has taken many forms but key to it have been the professional conversations I have had with research colleagues as well as my supervisory travel guides - Jim, Laura, Caroline and Agnieszka - all of whom have given me the much needed space to examine my role, my thinking and my assumptions while offering welcome challenge to these at appropriate moments.

The ways in which I had ‘‘presupposed’ the world’ (Heidegger, 1962[1927]: 101) was evident at various points as my awareness of these pre-suppositions increased through my deepening reflexive practice. They were not always unusable; as I noted in my research journal when preparing to interview Cath:

> I now feel I should be prepping further for my interview with Cath which is coming up. This was originally intended to be a research meeting to design her CCtPI project however I think this research is at risk of a blend of understanding the challenges/barriers for her in engaging and designing the project. It seems important to explore and examine the barriers, but time is of the essence in terms of getting moving with the project… I had previously left this to her with the view that she was busy and so should set the pace of the project, however she is so busy that the pace is essentially non-existent as a result. I feel a challenge will be offering prompts that will help explore her perspective while ensuring these aren’t misconstrued as challenges or criticisms. Asking why she hasn’t engaged could come off as critical and result in a defensive response. I feel it will be important to clearly establish from the outset what the purpose of the prompts are and what I’m hoping to achieve… phrasing of these feels like an important prep in advance.
>
> Research journal (Jan 2021)

In this moment I was not only aware of my previous pre-suppositions and the impact of these in terms of the progress of Cath’s CCtPI project, but I was increasingly aware of the potentially sensitive upcoming interview. I was conscious that I could not assume that Cath would not consider my questions and prompts about her engagement as a criticism despite the rapport we had already built. It was therefore essential that I plan my questions and prompts with care and ethical consideration so as not to negatively impact Cath or the rapport we had built. This reflexivity was essential in recognising that I could not continue into this interview without careful preparation and due regard for Cath. Such presuppositions were a valuable tool at this point, supporting an awareness of possibility in

the interview and guiding my planning as a result. The difference was that this was careful and considered examination of what might happen rather than making assumptions about what would happen; I was preparing for eventualities rather than working with pre-conceived expectations.

As my data collection neared an end and I continued to engage with Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon's accounts of their experiences, I was also considering my own experience and noting how often there were parallels. Tash completed her CCtPI project, seeing it through to publication in a peer reviewed journal. Tash's project involved her being both co-researcher and participant, exploring her questioning practice that she had been trying for some time to refine and develop. For most of my travel companions there was an affective element to the CCtPI process; they may have been involved in the CCtPI in their professional capacity, but they were personally emotionally invested in the experience. In Tash's final interview we were exploring her experience retrospectively of the whole process and she spoke of the moment when she experienced a shift in perspective which had carried forward into her subsequent professional practice:

> Now I feel like I've automatically taken a step out and I'm looking at this class as not my class, I'm looking at this, you know, it's not my teaching, it's not my class, it's just this is data and this is how we're going to do it, but it took a really really long time with the questioning for me to be able to do that, it took quite a while and I think there's probably a point when you read the journal where you go, I can see, now it's changed into a perspective that's looking more at the children and the teacher, rather than looking at me... I think reading through, there's almost a point where it, it flips and it suddenly looks at data rather than really personal experience'
>
> Tash (5.87-5.91)

This suggests that Tash's *point where it flips* was a form of bracketing, as she set aside her own involvement with her class and her practice and took a *step out* to consider the data in its own right rather than as something she was invested in professionally and personally:

> When I take a step back and I read it's almost like reading somebody else's journey and I can see really clearly where they started, where they've ended up, and the kind of process they've gone through and I think that's really helped… to take a step back and always look on it from the outside perspective.
>
> Tash (5.83)

2.4 Looking ahead

Even now as I write I am struck at how the ideas and thinking of my travelling companions and of mine were revisited. From going round in circles to stepping back, there is much that is echoed throughout the research experiences. My paradigmatic shift from Critical Realism, through the epistemological tension as I explored Social Constructionism to an entirely Phenomenological approach grounded in philosophical underpinnings and my ontological and epistemological positions are reflected in the difficulties Tash and Cath seemed to experience when trying to align their perception of what engaging in research would be with the contrasting reality of what their lived experience (explored further in *Chapter 6.1.1*). My own role in data collection and where I was positioned in terms of listening and noticing what was being shared is echoed in Tash's experiences of her research project and her noticing of her role as a questioner in the classroom (see *Chapter 5.4.1*). Our experiences on engaging in research echoed.

And so, looking ahead, *Chapter 3* is my search for these echoes in the literature that I have engaged with. The echoes of my research questions that my data sheds light on and where these sit in the field of educational research that an understanding of teachers' lived experience of research can contribute to.

Chapter 3: Mapping the territory

In this chapter I map the territory of my study by exploring the background and thinking which led to the formation of my research questions as set out in *Chapter 1.4*. I examine the literature in the field of educational research and the post-Stenhousian debates about educational research; who should be engaging in research, in what ways and for what purpose. Considering the context of the teacher researcher which has shifted beyond the work of Stenhouse and into approaches based on models which privilege specific types of research, I have structured the chapter by the concepts that my research questions focus on: the experience of engaging in research from the perspectives of the teachers who participated, their understanding of the role of collaboration in the process and the influences on their sustained engagement in research. The links between these concepts and my research questions are illustrated in *Figure 2* below.

The chapter builds on the connections between the research explored in this thesis and the literature which I have already made elsewhere as appropriate to my explorations of each stage of the journey I travelled. In *Chapter 1.2* I explored the terms *research* and *inquiry* and drew from relevant literature to examine the potential distinction between the two terms and how this informed my study, particularly the formation of the term Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI); in *Chapter 2.*1 I began to explore how the current What Works context of teachers engaging with specific research findings influenced my thinking and focused my study on seeking the voices and perspectives of teachers as they engaged *in* research. In *Chapter 2.1.1* I engages with the philosophical literature to explore the paradigm shift from Critical Realism to Phenomenology and the underpinning theories that informed my thinking. As I noted in *Chapter 1.1* with regard to my research participants, *I have woven elements of the accounts of Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon through the chapters where they have been relevant* and this chapter is no different. While my engagement with the literature began prior to meeting my travelling companions, it continued throughout and, as I write this thesis, every aspect of my study is interwoven. This is reflected in my writing in this chapter; I explore the literature but also points where the voices of my research

participants resonate as I am always seeking to understand teachers' experience of engaging in research through CCtPI.

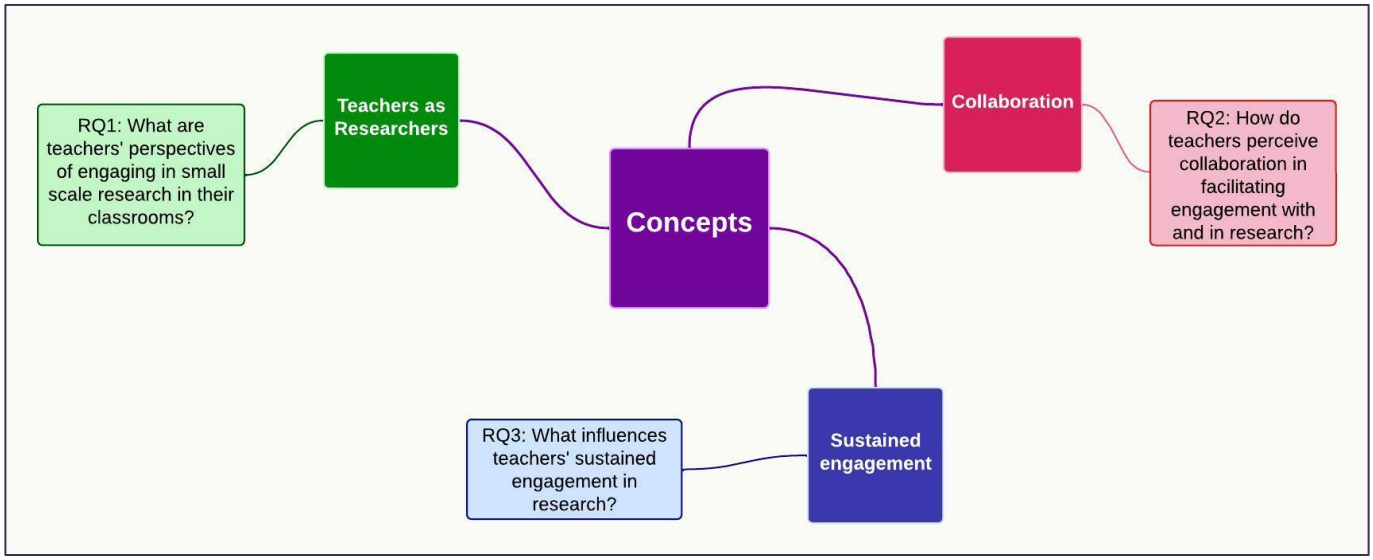

Figure 2: The links between concepts and research questions

Setting out on my PhD expedition, I was less than five years from the classroom and keenly aware of the realities of teaching and the professional role that demanded far more than merely delivering lessons. Yet, simultaneously, through my Master's degree completed while working full time as a teacher, I had experience of conducting small scale research that directly supported my practice, developed my knowledge and understanding of my practice and led me to presenting my final assignment at an education conference. My studies were government funded at a time when teachers were encouraged to engage *in* research through the provision of scholarships with the view that 'teachers, alongside university academics, are seen as the guardians of the intellectual life of the nation' (DfE, 2013: np). The landscape has since changed; in recent years the establishment of the What Works movement and the Education Endowment Foundation indicates a government that funds research undertaken by those outside of the classroom, positioning teachers as consumers of such research (DfE, 2016). This recent context and my own contrasting experiences influenced the focus of my PhD research. I sought to understand if teachers viewed research, as I had, as a form of professional development that informed their practice; an activity to engage *in* not just information to engage *with*. The works of Stenhouse and the idea of

research as an ‘everyday activity’ (Stenhouse, 1981: 103) led me to not only a deeper retrospective reflection of my own experiences as a foundation for my questioning of the potential for teachers to be ‘both producers and consumers’ of research (La Velle and Flores, 2018: 533), the purpose of educational research, and what it means for teachers to engage in the process with a focus on the perspective of teachers themselves. This led, in turn, to deeper critical engagement with the existing literature in the area of the teacher researcher and tracing the development of this to the current context. This, as detailed in the proceeding chapters, subsequently influenced the direction of my focus and the formation of my research questions.

3.1 Teachers as researchers

Building on previous writings regarding curriculum planning development (Stenhouse, 1975), Stenhouse turned his focus to research and classroom practice (Stenhouse, 1981). This examination of research in the context of the classroom was not new; Dewey in 1929 wrote of the risks of teachers being solely consumers of research: ‘teachers are the ones in direct contact with pupils… I suspect that if these teachers are mainly channels of reception and transmission, the conclusions of science will be badly deflected and distorted before they get into the minds of pupils’ (p.47). Kearney, Hepburn and Hawley were each debating the concept of *Teacher or Researcher* in 1933, respectively arguing for the teacher as a follower of research, as a bringer of light to the field and as being equal to the researcher, marching side-by-side through an educational battlefield. In this recognising that the teacher is in a position to contextualise research to the classroom, Stenhouse built upon these ideas debated in the early twentieth century. However, Stenhouse was not alone in exploring this concept; by the time he turned his attentions to the teacher researcher concept, teacher research had already been developing in the form of action research. Defined as "comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action" (Lewin, 1948: 202-203), action research focused on social change through research. In the context of education Corey (1953), identified action research as a process to develop teacher effectiveness over time in comparable situations

rather than generalising across contexts. By the 1960s and '70s action research was being carried out as a collaborative endeavour to enhance rigour and address critique of scientific validity (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1990). It was at this time that the teacher researcher movement began to emerge in the UK in response to the narrow focus of curriculum development and the gap between curriculum development and classroom practice, with a focus on the teacher as a professional, 'a skilled practitioner, continually reflecting on her or his practice in terms of ideals and knowledge of local situations, and modifying practice in light of these reflections; rather than a technician' (Hammersley, 1993: 426). Stenhouse was an important figure as these developments took place in the UK (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1990) and his writings still resonate today when considering who is best placed to engage in classroom based research. Stenhouse's view of research was as 'an everyday activity' (Stenhouse, 1981: 103) that extended beyond the academic 'ivory tower' (Buckley, 2012: 333) and into the remit of the classroom teacher. Rather than generate theoretical, generalised knowledge that does not take into account 'the acts and thoughts of individuals human beings [and] essentially unpredictable elements' (Stenhouse, 1981: 106) and 'fails to discriminate the effects of specific actions on specific cases' (p107), Stenhouse proposed that social science research, specifically that in education, produced results that supported a greater understanding of practice rather than a set of rules to govern practice. This echoed the argument put forward by Hepburn (1933) that 'only those who have lived in the world of men with open eyes and with sympathetic understanding can supply the deficiency. In these fields more than the researcher it is the teacher who has lived among men' (p.94). Leaping briefly ahead to 1990, Cochran-Smith and Lytle noted that 'what is missing from the knowledge base for teaching, therefore, are the voices of the teachers themselves' (p2) and further still to 2023, when the view that teachers need 'to be able to exercise a scholarly approach to educational knowledge and research inquiry' (Hordern and Brooks, 2023: 10) is still being argued; it seems that while there have been many proponents of the different approaches to teacher research, as explored in *Chapter 1.2*, there still prevails 'a form of teacher deprofessionalisation accompanied by technical prescription' (Hordern and Brooks, 2023: 15). The concerns Dewey voiced are as relevant today it seems as they were almost one hundred years ago.

Further echoing Hepburn's (1933) argument and building on the role of the teacher as researcher, in the 1990's Hargreaves spoke of teacher engagement *with* and *in* research, drawing parallels with the field of medicine to illustrate the value of both to informing practice (Hargreaves, 1996). As medical practitioners contribute to the body of medical knowledge, Hargreaves argued, so too should teachers contribute to a body of educational research that provides evidence of 'what works' in teaching. The following year, Hammersley (1997) response to Hargreaves' lecture added the caveat that teacher research is 'designed to serve a different purpose… Such inquiries are no substitute for academic research, just as the latter is no substitute for them' (p.35). He warned that 'in moving as soon as possible to an evidence-based teaching profession… what could be lost is the substantial researcher and teacher expertise that we currently have' (p.35). Hargreaves wrote of a 'research-based profession' (1996); within a year this had become an 'evidence based teaching profession' (Hammersley, 1997: 35). The language of 'evidence of what works' (DfEE, 1998: 14) was appearing in government documentation and alongside this was the intent that 'experienced and excellent teachers should have opportunities to undertake development or research work to extend and enhance their performance' (DfEE, 1998: 52). There were still echoes of Stenhouse's inquiry in the context of professional practice and 'constructing an evidence base for informing professional judgements' (Elliott, 2001: 571) yet an increasingly prescriptive approach to teaching practice 'in the detailed processes of how to teach, based on evidence of 'what works'' (Furlong, 2005: 125). By 2013, Goldacre in his commissioned report from the then government, had identified randomised control trials as the as 'the best way' (p10) to generate evidence of 'what works best' (p.7).

3.1.1 The current context

In its White Paper Educational Excellence Everywhere (2016), the Department for Education in England assumed the view that research in education should more 'directly driven by the priorities of teachers and schools' (DfE, 2016: 39) and that research questions should be drawn from a 'bank' (p.39) established by teachers. It placed schools and teachers firmly in the role as consumers of research and the purpose of such research to directly inform classroom practice. The perspective of the government was that teaching should be

evidence informed (Coldwell *et al.*, 2017) but the role of producing this research evidence deemed external to the role of the teacher, instead being the remit of the government approved and, in part government funded, Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) as the 'designated What Works Centre for education' (DfE, 2016: 39). As such, a significant number of RCTs are now conducted by the EEF (What Works UK, 2018) on behalf of teachers, citing these as the gold standard that 'provide the best way of producing useful results for schools' (EEF, 2016), disseminating the results for teachers to adapt their practice accordingly. This despite concerns that there is 'too much trust in RCTs over other methods of investigation' (Deaton and Cartwright, 2018: 2). The EEF, as part of the UK What Works Network (What Works UK, 2018), rather than supporting teachers as consumers of a breadth of research in education or as producers of research, facilitates teachers in continuing as consumers of specific research findings. Research, therefore, is for teachers to inform their practice but not to be undertaken by teachers, despite reports noting that teachers' engagement in research can support the goal of the government's proposed 'self-improving school system' (Stoll, 2015). As such there is a sense that research is for policy makers and politicians, to streamline the research that informs practice and narrow the methodologies of such research to that of RCTs and what is measurable by quantitative studies. What on the surface is presented as a drive toward conscious questioning and challenging of knowledge and practice seems more of a prescriptive instruction for classroom practice (Biesta, 2007; Sheldon, 2016). 'Research offers possibilities' (Sheldon, 2016: 3) but when outcomes merely echo what has been noted previously, such as 'setting or streaming pupils on the basis of ability for specific subjects is detrimental to the learning of low attaining pupils' (Gold, 2018), previously determined by Jo Boaler in 1997, 'it may be that policy makers are expecting too much from research-informed practice' (Anwer, 2023: 327). Taking 'findings as truth [when] the reality is much more complex' (Wiliam, 2015: np) could 'limit severely the opportunities for educational practitioners to make such judgments in a way that is sensitive to and relevant for their own contextualized settings' (Biesta, 2007: 5). In addition, without the purposeful application and exploration of educational possibilities in practice, the contribution of such research to the wider field could be largely theoretical. Teacher research could contextualise the evidence produced by the What Works network to their

own classrooms, examining not just What Works but what might work for the children they teach in the context of their school. It could encourage a deeper inclusion of the purpose of education – the learning and development of the child – rather than risk losing the child in the quantitative reduction of children to data.

The result of justifying action in schools in response to such research or evidence is the risk that 'a dominant rationalized myth centres on the use of 'evidence' to justify practice' (Helgetun and Menter, 2022: 88) where such evidence is 'politically constructed' (p89). This is a move toward the instructional and 'evidence based' practice (Nelson *et al.*, 2017: 128) with classroom practice seen as a 'measurable and replicable activity' (Klehr, 2012: 124). With this is the risk that this 'oversimplifies the relation between evidence and action' (Andrews and Morris, 2005: 14) rather than enabling 'judgemental predictions of how events will go and to revise those predictions in the face of surprise' (Biesta, 2007: 106). From these perspectives, Goldacre's *prize* is reserved more for the politician and the policy maker, than the teacher; the decision on What Works and the evidence deemed necessary to be disseminated are not within the remit of teachers.

However, it is not just the policy contributors and policy makers who take the view that teachers should not engage in research. For some this is the purview of academics and 'asking teachers to be researchers? They are not' (Stewart, 2015: np). The teacher as researcher is viewed as a 'delusion' (Wiliam, 2015: np) and the literature 'identifies the benefits of teacher engagement in research but minimises the difficulties of sustaining that engagement' (Salter and Tett, 2022: 289). The challenge of sustaining engagement was one that arose in my study and is explored further in *Chapter 7.3.* However, I would expand on Salter and Tett's assertion with what is further minimised are the requirements needed to overcome those difficulties to support teachers in undertaking research projects. This is no mean feat and not one that was achieved with all of my participants; however Tash completed her project and it was subsequently published in an education journal aimed at a teacher audience. The implications of this are also explored in *Chapter 7* and would suggest that, while these difficulties are very real and challenging for teachers, they are not insurmountable.

Alongside the persistent technicist view of the teacher being advocated by the Department for Education (What Works UK, 2018), nonetheless proponents of the teacher engaging *in* research to inform practice have continued to identify the benefits of teachers 'engaging in enquiry-oriented practice' (Salter and Tett, 2022: 287). Taking the view of 'teachers as experts developing their expertise by researching their praxis to improve it and generating educational knowledge that contributes to the knowledge-base of education' (2015: np), Whitehead's perspective is reflective of Stenhouse's. From this perspective, the purpose of research is also to inform practice but that teachers benefit from being engaged *in* research; the process of researching practice is as beneficial as the outcomes of the research itself and contributes to the field. As such, teachers benefit from being merely consumers of knowledge but 'producers of knowledge exploring and researching' (Salter and Tett, 2022: 288) with 'practices validated and supported through research' (LaVelle and Flores, 2018: 533). This is echoed in (Salter and Tett, 2022: 287), who note that 'UK reports… emphasise the importance of teachers engaging in enquiry-oriented practice so they can use research to 'investigate what is working well and what isn't fully effective in their own practice' (BERA, 2014: 18)'. The reference to 'UK reports' is to the BERA-RSA inquiry into the role of research in teacher education. The focus of research engagement, according to the inquiry, is to empower teachers to develop a deeper understanding of their practice and how they might adapt it in order to support stronger outcomes for those they teach. Through research teachers can 'focus and direct their own professional growth and development in specific areas that they want to target, as opposed to having professional development topics thrust upon them' (Mertler, 2021: 4). As such, research, or evidence, is not proof of what has come before to be used as a prescriptive rule for what happens in future, but an examination of what has happened as a knowledge base to determine possible actions that may then be taken (Biesta, 2007). From this the teachers are not 'technicians who must passively accept and act upon directives from academic researchers [but] professionals who must adapt research-derived guidance to meet the particular circumstances they face' (McAleavy, 2015: 30). 'In practitioner research, teachers and teacher educators count' (Lunenberg, 2007: 18).

Regardless of agenda or ideology, one aspect of what most contributors to these debates have in common is one identified in *Chapter 2.1*; that few have been teachers and none have been teachers in recent years. Teaching is a profession in which for the past ten years 'a substantial proportion of teachers report having 'a low level of autonomy over their professional development goals' (NFER, 2020: 12). There is also the issue surrounding research that considers teachers as participants rather than co-researchers, seen 'only' as practitioners (Leask and Jumani, 2015) resulting in a lack of collaboration where 'knowledge is not co-created between them' (Anwer, 2023: 328) and teachers remain sceptical about the relevance of the research to their practice (Leat *et al.*, 2015). As I explored in *Chapter 2.1*, this seemed to me to be significant. Eminent sociologists, doctors, educationalists and politicians were weighing on an issue that directly affected the professional lives of an entire profession, but it seemed those who would be most impacted by the outcome were not always heard: the results of research produced with teachers is most often focused on the research that was undertaken rather than the experiences of the teachers in engaging in the research (Leat *et al.*, 2014; Oates and Bignell, 2022). Educational research is often conducted by those external to the classroom and 'the collective voice, experiences, and knowledge of the professionals "on the ground"—immersed in that particular setting each and every day— typically not considered' (Mertler, 2021: 3); in research collaborations, 'the experience of the school teacher in the partnership often goes unheard' (Oates and Bignell, 2022: 106). This was the gap I wanted to explore: the teacher voice. Teachers' perspectives of engaging in research while they were meeting the demands of day-to-day teaching, in today's schools, in the current context. I wanted to understand if they considered themselves 'as "dispensers of knowledge," as opposed to "generators of knowledge"' (Mertler, 2021: 3). I sought to understand their perspectives of engaging in research, not as an abstract idea, or a possibility, but as they lived the experience of it; if Stenhouse's ideal of teaching 'in a spirit of inquiry' (Stenhouse, 1979: 20) was viable from the viewpoint of teachers in classroom in the early 2020s. I wanted to know what the reality of this was 'on the ground' (Mertler, 2021: 3) for the teacher. I identified this as a contribution that could be made to the field of educational research and, after the critical reflections detailed throughout *Chapter 2*, defined my first research question as:

RQ1: What are teachers' perspectives of engaging in small scale research in their classrooms?

This research question indicates my position in the post-Stenhousian teacher research debate as explored in this chapter: I held, and continue to hold, the view that engaging in research can be of benefit to teachers. As I progressed through my study, my position did not change; the experiences I had while travelling with Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Max, the experiences that they shared, offered insight into the 'messy complexity' (Oates and Bignell, 2022: 106) of teacher research but not the sense that it was a 'delusion' (Wiliam, 2015: np) or best left to academics (Stewart, 2015: np). Nonetheless, I choose the modal verb *can* deliberately; my findings as explored in *Chapter 7* lead me to a wariness of anything more assertive and an avoidance of indicating that this is universal for all teachers in the profession. I align with the message, though perhaps more directive that my own more tentative approach, from the BERA-RSA inquiry that 'every teacher should have the confidence, ability and capability to engage in research and enquiry activities *when the opportunity or need arises*' (BERA, 2014: 12, my emphases). I take the view that overcoming the barriers to teachers' engagement is essential for teachers to engage *in* research, that a single methodological approach (What Works UK, 2018) is not the best way to conduct all teacher research and that there are different forms of research which serve different purposes and are intended for different audiences. However, this was my view, my stance. Through my study I was seeking to understand the perspectives of teachers in terms of why they chose to engage in my study and, therefore, their own research project, what and who they considered research to be for and what their experience of engaging in research was.

Teachers researching their own practice is not misaligned with the stated aims of the government in its intent 'for teachers to find and use evidence to improve their teaching practice' (DfE, 2016: 39). The differences lie in the methodological approaches in large scale RCTs which preclude teachers, and the relevance and applicability of such evidence to a specific classroom. When exploring barriers to research Strokova (2016) noted that 'innovation is pushed out due to mismatch of educational policy and the actual educational practice… (p11). A further difference is the approach to producing this evidence, whether

teachers are considered to be consumers or producers of research - engaging *with* or engaging *in* it.

3.1.2 Engaging *with* and engaging *in* research

Consistent throughout my study, evident in the literature and also often unprompted from discussions with participants is this distinction between engaging *with* research and engaging *in* research. For the purposes of this thesis, my understandings align with that of Lambirth (2021) and Cordingley (2013): engaging *with* research as 'accessing, making sense of and responding to publicly available research' and engaging *in* research 'doing one's own research as teacher-researcher by getting involved in some forms of enquiry about pedagogical issues and practice' (Lambirth, 2021: 815). This distinction is further influenced by my examination of the *tangle* that Tash referred to when exploring her understanding of research and what research means to her. She struggled to define this and articulate what she meant when she spoke about research:

> I feel like you asked me this before. And we ended up in a whole tangle of thought then too [laughs]
>
> Tash (6.26)

For Tash, the term 'research' incorporated both engaging *with* research and *in* research but while the term encompassed both, she identified a distinction between the activities. The former she considered being *secondary research like the literature review type stuff* (5.103) and the latter *taking on research looking at what's implemented and what needs to be implemented* (1.16). This duality was echoed by Cath and Max who identified that research encompasses both aspects of engagement activity.

This was further reflected in the perspectives of Jon and Liam; however, their definitions went beyond Tash's definition of research, identifying a range of professional learning opportunities based on the input of others as also being research:

> going to different CPD events ... even kind of like discussing with colleagues and talking to people in the school... staff meetings... if we're actually looking at the concept and how to improve our teaching in our class, that's research as well…
>
> Jon, initial interview

This echoes Stenhouse's position that research is grounded in 'curiosity and a desire to understand' (Stenhouse, 1981). However, Stenhouse defined research as 'systemic and sustained inquiry, planned and self-critical... [and] subjected to public criticism (Stenhouse, 1981: 113) which is not as all-encompassing as the definition presented by Jon, for example. Yet, Stenhouse promoted research with the purpose of 'deepening professional understanding of [teachers'] own practice' (Rudduck, 1988: 37) and all the activities in Jon's list, it could be argued, serve this purpose. However, two broad distinctions of the teacher researcher have emerged (Fordham, 2016). The first of these encompasses the teacher as a reflective practitioner who engages in continual professional development through 'a process of explicit reflection' (Fordham, 2016: 136) through engagement with research. The other 'a method of obtaining critical insight into a problem experienced in the real world and of solving that problem, in order to learn from the experience for future action' (Lunenberg *et al.*, 2007: 15). Through this, teachers work individually or collaboratively, employing the tools of research to develop their understanding of the context in which they work and develop their practice as a result (Fordham, 2016). This too, therefore, supports the government goal for 'teachers… use evidence to improve their teaching practice' (DfE, 2016: 39). However, it goes beyond them merely 'finding' such evidence, as they become producers of it thus extending the concept of knowing through research 'where research is seen as a body of knowledge to be accessed and to be acquired' (Leat *et al.*, 2015: 272). There is, therefore, an epistemological element to the perspectives on teacher research in terms of how knowledge is deemed to be generated, by whom and for what purpose: 'researchers aim to possess generic and explicit knowledge based on logical evidence while practitioners endeavour to hold contextual and tacit knowledge and pursue evidence that researchers would characterise as anecdotal' (Anwer, 2023: 329). The epistemological position taken therefore determines the stance taken in the debate. If 'the best way of producing useful results for schools' (EEF, 2016: np) is viewed as a large scale, impact

evaluation process focused on causality, and verifiable through the finding of 'useful, comparable results' (EEF, 2016: np), such as Randomised Control Trials (RCTs), then the value of teacher research in a single classroom or school in order to inform practice will not be considered of value. However, if knowledge for practice is considered to be gained through the individual examining their own practice and through 'systematic enquiry that is made public' (Whitehead, 2018: 89) then teacher research can be an appropriate course of action to achieve this. This is the bringing together of two 'trajectories of meaning' (Elliott, 2004: 267): teachers drawing on evidence 'as a basis for researching their own situated practices' and ''user' involvement in the design of 'practically relevant' research… [that] appears to fall short of giving teachers a significant voice on questions of research methodology' (Elliott, 2004: 267). Elliott was writing in 2004, almost twenty years ago and yet these two trajectories are still in evidence today; the establishment of Teaching Schools which encourage engagement in research (DfE, 2018b) alongside the EEF which places the teacher in the role of 'time-poor' (EEF, 2016: np) consumers of research from large scale RCTs. As part of my *wonderings* explored in *Chapter 2.1*, and especially as I reached the conclusions I explore in *Chapter 7*, I note the tension between the two and the implied 'either-or' issue. Yet for me, and for the teachers who participated, it does not seem that one precludes the other:

> why it works for those other schools ... and whether it would fit in fit with what you're doing, you know, with your school
>
> (Cath 1.121)

> looking at what works elsewhere so you can then critically evaluate it and take the bits that you think ah that'll work for us and that'll fit our context… it's going to look different in here and here and here and here and here… it's not everyone's going to do it like little clones… cause that doesn't work
>
> (Max, 1.214-230)

Teacher research, and indeed CCtPI, can encompass both. As part of the systematic approach to teacher research, and any research, an 'essential part of the research process' (Wilson, 2009: 38) is engagement with the literature that currently exists and informs the field. A research project does not sit in isolation from the body of work that precedes it and therefore knowledge for practice benefits from both extant research and the research being

undertaken. While the large scale RCTs that are 'the bedrock of our approach' (EEF, 2016: np) continue to offer evidence of What Works, there can be a role for teachers to then explore if the proffered approach, intervention or practice works in their context or can contribute to an understanding of 'how do I improve what I am doing?' (Whitehead, 2018: 5). In turn, the field of educational research benefits from 'the contribution that teachers' knowledge about teaching and learning provides' (Olin, 2023: 260).

A challenge inherent within teacher research, and all research including the much lauded medical research (ESHRE, 2018), is ensuring that the research conducted is of the required rigour and standard. Teacher research can be dismissed as 'too small, being run by one person in isolation, in only one classroom, and lack the expert support necessary to ensure a robust design' (Goldacre, 2013: 17) and 'considered to be typically of poor quality and unlikely to generate findings that can be relied upon' (McAleavy, 2015: 9). Indeed, the practice of teachers engaging in research activity is 'both messier and richer than any typology allows' (Oates and Bignell, 2022: 106). While it is of value to consider the opportunities for and value of teachers engaging *in* research, it is equally important to ensure that not 'anything and everything is taken to be practitioner research' (Lunenberg *et al.*, 2007: 14). Of the definitions of teacher research, there is a determination that it is more than a *curiosity* or *anything and everything* but is 'systematic and sustained' (Stenhouse, 1981: 113), 'systematic [and] intentional' (Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2019: 6) and a 'systematic process' (Mertler, (2021: 3) 'made public' (Whitehead, 2018: 5). This common thread of the process of inquiry or study as being *systematic* seems to be a recognition that teacher research must be structured and methodical, formalised and planned to ensure rigour and robustness. One way of ensuring this is achieved, can be through collaboration with academic researchers.

3.2 Research as a collaborative endeavour

There is some consistency across the literature that 'there should be close collaboration between researchers and practitioners' (Anwer, 2023: 333), 'that teacher researchers and the wider research community work in partnership, rather than in separate and sometimes

competing universes' (BERA, 2014a: 5). Partnerships between teachers and higher education institution (HEI) researchers are viewed as beneficial (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999a; Gade, 2015), where teachers lead the research with the HEI researcher providing support in the role of a critical friend (Husbye, 2019). This collaborative element of research can provide the opportunity for teachers to 'reconstruct and improve their skills as professionals' (Gutierez and Kim, 2017: 9) in professional learning communities that are 'continually facilitating collaboration and partnership in each phase of the research' (Whitehead and Huxtable, 2022: 3). Nelson and Campbell note 'opportunities for collaboration, co-creation, sharing and application of professional knowledge and external evidence can be beneficial' (2017: 121) echoing Leat *et al.*'s (2014) assertion that 'it is likely that teachers engaging in research as part of a collective have an advantage to those engaging as individuals within the school setting' (p5). This advantage extends to support for the research process (Husbye, 2019) and for the dissemination and exchange of knowledge (Fordham, 2016; Nelson and Campbell, 2017). Therefore, the value of collaboration in teacher research is well established and recognised (Parsons, 2021). However, as it is essential to determine the purpose of teacher research (Biesta, 2010, 2015; Hordern, 2020) so too is it with such collaborations. With the potential to be multi-faceted, it is likely to be simplistic to simply state that teacher research should be collaborative without defining the purpose of the collaboration from the perspective of all those involved.

Collaboration between HEI researchers and teachers can serve to support the development of practice and teacher learning or the development of researchers' practice and knowledge (Olin *et al.*, 2023). In an equal partnership, a collaboration can be an opportunity for 'co-creation, sharing and application of professional knowledge and external evidence' (Nelson and Campbell, 2017: 121). This view of collaboration as a process for learning raises the aforementioned epistemological question over the 'knowledge [that] emerges from the conjoined understandings' (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999a: 275) how this knowledge will be acquired. It unsurprising therefore that 'a recurring problem when it comes to teachers participating in creating knowledge about their own practice is their position in such work' (Olin *et al.*, 2023: 249). The quality and nature of the relationship in the collaboration needs

to be certain (Leat *et al.*, 2014) and understanding the views of those involved, establishing who is learning from and with whom, may further a deeper understanding of what engaging in a collaboration means for the teacher.

Teachers can struggle to find time to consider the value of research to their practice and school context (Parsons, 2021); 'the challenge often lies in the teachers' workload, which makes it challenging to add on such extra activities' (Aspfors *et al.*, 2015: 408). The collaborative approach can support the 'addition to overcrowded workloads' (Leat *et al.*, 2014: 4), particularly in partnerships between teachers and HEI researchers as 'lack of knowledge of where to find research papers or teacher friendly summaries' is a significant barrier (NTRP, 2011: 5). This was the case with Max, who noted that sourcing relevant literature for his CCtPI project would be 'a possible hindrance' (2.112). HEI researchers can also provide support in the role of the critical friend (Husbye, 2019), the dissemination of findings and reducing teacher scepticism of the applicability of research to practice (Leat *et al.*, 2014). By 'bringing research expertise from universities into schools' (Fordham, 2016: 137) collaboration can support the applicability of research to practice by ensuring that the focus of research directly relates to issues teachers face (Olin *et al.*, 2023). In this way, there is potential for the tension of Elliott's (2004) two trajectories to begin to ease, through complementary engagement with research as part of collaborative engagement in research. Yet this assertion is largely theoretical; understanding it from the perspective of teachers as they live the experience may provide a richer understanding of what they consider the purpose of collaboration to be. This further contributed the teacher voice to the debate but from an additional perspective and led, following the tussles as explored in *Chapter 2.*2, to the formation of my second research question:

RQ2: What are teachers' views of collaborative inquiry?

Through mutual valuing and respecting of expertise in partnerships (Gewirtz *et al.*, 2009) the creation of research partnerships can also support a motivate teachers' sustained engagement in professional learning (Cordingley, 2015).

3.3 Sustaining engagement in research

However, there is no guarantee that a collaborative approach can overcome the challenges of teachers sustaining engagement *in* research (Salter and Tett, 2022). Further, sustaining engagement is not the only challenge; the barriers teachers face when engaging in research are well documented, ranging from few opportunities to engage, limited time and even less capacity (Reis-Jorge, 2007) alongside 'household and personal problems… and, most importantly, unwillingness and inability' (Strokova, 2016: 11). There are also reported barriers to engagement *with* research. These include having access to research (La Velle and Flores, 2018), 'perceived lack of time, the difficulty in finding relevant research, reports written in ways that practitioners find hard to understand, lack of skill to interpret research, and the difficulty in knowing how to apply much of the research in daily practice' (Levin, 2013: 18). In addition, there is the question of identity and how much teachers assumed the practice of research into their identity as a teacher. When I first began to explore the concepts and areas within the literature that would inform and direct my research questions and the design of my study, I explored and then chose not to include that of teacher identity. While I felt this was relevant and an important consideration, I felt at that time that it was tangential to my focus of causality and empowerment as explored in *Chapter 2.1.2*. So, after much consideration, I set aside this element of my inquiry. However, as I continued on to discuss in *Chapter 2.2*, my approach shifted to become phenomenological and focused on the experiences of the teachers and their interpretations of that experience that they shared with me through the semi-structured interviews that took place as we engaged in their Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI) projects. I noticed throughout my analysis of these interviews, detailed in *Chapter 5* and *Chapter 6*, that the sense of identity was present throughout the experience – both teacher identity and researcher identity. As such, my engagement with the literature around teacher research identity brackets my data analysis; from my explorations prior to setting this aside, to my engagement with it after recognising the patterns in meaning that led to the Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) and Group Experiential Theme (GET) C *'Just something that would be good to do'*: a teacher's role or identity does not encompass engagement in research, as detailed in *Chapter 6.1.3*. However,

indicative of the complexities of identity, what was evident as a pattern of meaning was not only the teacher researcher identity but also the connections between identity as a woman teacher and engagement in research (see *Chapter 6.2.1*).

The identity of the teacher is one developed from teacher training, dynamically developed over time, interpreted and re-interpreted in response to practical experiences and how teachers perceive themselves (Beijaard and Meijer, 2017). Graus *et al.* (2022) define teacher identity as 'a balance between how you teach, what you know about learning and teaching, who you are as a person and how you are seen as a teacher by others and by yourself' (p3). Taylor (2017) noted that it is not fully understood how teachers can be supported to develop a researcher identity however there is a connection between such development and engagement in the activity itself. This influenced my choice of methods; on reflection I could have interviewed teachers, like Max, who had already engaged in research and interviewed them about that lived experience. However, at the outset when planning my research design within a Critical Realist paradigm with elements of causality and emancipation in my thinking, this identity formation was assumed. As such, the engagement *in* research as I interviewed participants about that lived experience was in part about understanding if engagement in the CCtPI process impacted on the formation of a researcher identity or the incorporation of research activity into the teacher identity. This is explored in *Chapters 5.4.1* and *5.4.2*, exploring Tash's recognition of how *everyone's a researcher. It's all just missed (6.78)*, identifying elements of her professional practice which mirrored the CCtPI process or Cath's separation of her work as a teacher and that of a researcher: *your everyday sort of thing that you do… you think that's not really, like, good enough for a research project, you know?* (3.22). There is a sense of separation or divide between the teacher and the researcher in their 'competing universes' (BERA, 2014a: 5). Yet the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) HEI researcher has inhabited both *universes* and potentially aligns with both professional identities as a result. There is potential, therefore, for the researcher in a *teacher - ITE researcher* collaboration for the HEI researcher to considered as less removed from the world of the teacher. Therefore exploring teacher identity only provides a partial understanding of the collaboration – understanding the identity of the researcher and the

connections to the teacher identity may provide further insight into the collaborative partnership and the potential to encompass research activity into the teacher identity.

The motivation for teachers to engage in research has been outlined as threefold by Noffke (1997): to understand and improve their own practice, to inform and support other teachers and to contribute to the professional field. When sharing their motivations for participating, Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon's reasons were not inconsistent with Noffke's findings. However, these motivations also created tensions which are explored further in *Chapter 7* and which indicate the importance of understanding teachers' perspectives of the research process as they experience it. Knowing what motivates teachers to participate in research seems only to be part of the picture - understanding the complexities of these motivations and how they influence teachers' engagement throughout the process may offer a richer understanding of what it means for teachers to engage in research activity. As my study progressed and my research participants shared with me their experiences of engaging in their projects as they took place, the motivations to engage and the barriers to sustaining that engagement were evident - and not dissimilar to those noted in the literature. These proved insurmountable for all involved, except for Tash. This, as I state in *Chapter 6.2.3.* seemed significant and *not just another data point*. It seemed important to try and understand what made Tash's experience different in that it supported a sustained engagement to the completion of the project and publication in a peer reviewed education journal. I explore this further in *Chapter 7* but it prompted a change to the third research question. It involved a retrospective reworking of this question in response to engagement with the participant accounts and my inductive analysis of these (Smith *et al.*, 2022). While my original third question - as detailed in *Chapter 2.1.2* and focused on the dissemination of research outcomes - had no less importance, it was the overcoming of the barriers Tash faced and understanding this that I felt contributed further to understanding sustained engagement in research and therefore the field of educational research. It built on my previous research questions and went a step further to explore what was is seemingly dismissed by the What Works movement; if some of the barriers for teachers engaging *in* research could be overcome to support a profession of consumers and producers of

research. If, through inquiries into practice, teachers could acquire knowledge and combine this with '"practical wisdom"' (Wiliam, 2015: np) 'for intelligent problem solving' (Biesta, 2007: 20). As such my final research question was defined as:

RQ3: What influences teachers' sustained engagement in research?

3.4 Looking ahead

This chapter has explored the thinking and literature that informed my study and the questions I chose to focus on in the field of educational research. It is apparent there is a dominant discourse in the current political landscape that educational research should be outsourced using the gold standard methodology of RCTs thus framing teachers as consumers of research and technicians of practice. This raises the questions of who is building knowledge in, of and for practice and for what purpose. There is potentially a role for teachers to critically examine the findings of large scale RCTs in the small scale context of their own classrooms and the cohorts of children they teach. There are grounds for a defence of teachers' engagement *in* research, to be recognised as professionals who critically engage with practice, but this is likely to be a complex process and understanding its complexities from the perspectives of teachers may offer a better understanding of how best to support such engagement.

> that element of us finding out about inquiry and being able to share that with others and bring that in, that's… what piqued my interest
>
> Max 1.202

Chapter 4: Choosing the path

In this section I explore the path I chose in order to interpret the lived experiences of the companions who travelled with me for a time and whose accounts of experience shed light on my research questions. Understanding experience lived over time is a starting point to explore the methodological approach I chose: Longitudinal Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (LIPA) (Farr and Nizza, 2019: 199). I draw from the literature, most significantly the work of Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, 2022) as founders of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), but also the work of researchers who have employed and contributed to the development of IPA and LIPA. I contextualise this literature in the context of my own experiences as recorded in my research journal and the lived experiences of my travelling companions. Through semi-structured interviews which took place as we collaborated in research projects, they shared with me their interpretations of their lived experience of engaging in research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI). In *Chapter 4.2* I introduce them, their perspectives of research and their motivations for participating. These introductions build on the perspectives of research and inquiry I explored in *Chapter 1.3* when seeking to understand the difference, if any, between the participants' understandings of the terms *research* and *inquiry*. *Chapter 4.3* examines the tensions that arose as I began to engage with the analysis of my data, leading into *Chapter 5*.

I also introduce Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon; my research participants, co-researchers and travelling companions for a time on this journey.

4.1 Living experience over time

The concepts of time and temporality were present throughout my PhD, beyond the obvious duration of a part time, six-year research degree. I was engaging in research with teachers through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI) projects, and each project took time. A lot of time. Much more than I anticipated in fact. Yet I had decided that to understand teachers' perspectives of engaging in research, there should be engagement *in* research;

that is, an experience to draw from. An experience with meaning and significance. A lived experience. A phenomenon.

Researching within a phenomenological paradigm as explored in *Chapter 2.2* aligned with my intent to adopt an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) IPA approach. This was initially in respect to my data however as I began to develop my understanding of IPA further, I found it was so much more than an approach to data analysis:

> 'IPA is part of a family of phenomenological psychology approaches, all of which differ to some degree in their theoretical emphases and methodological commitments but are in broad agreement about the relevance of an experiential perspective for the discipline. IPA avows a phenomenological commitment to examine a topic, as far as is possible, in its own terms. For IPA this inevitably involves an interpretative process on the part of both researcher and participant'
>
> (Eatough and Smith, 2017: 193)

It was an approach to the entirety of my study in that I was seeking to understand the experiences of others. As explored in *Chapter* 2, I was adopting the Husserlian 'systematic examination of the types and forms of intentional experience' (Husserl, 1927: 2). I was assuming Heidegger's *Dasein* (1962[1927]) or being in the world and the meaning making of such experiences through interpretation. I was recognising the limit to which I could bracket (Husserl, 1927: 8) myself from my study; maintaining an awareness of my own bias (Gadamer, 1990 [1960]: 269) was essential yet such 'fore-conceptions' (Heidegger, 1962[1927]: 192) are not always evident until the interpretative process has begun. Explored in *Chapter 2.*2, each of these perspectives informed the entirety of my study including my research questions, my decision to engage in CCtPI with participants and engage in semi-structured interviews throughout the process as a data collection method to capture their interpretations of their lived experiences. As such I was drawing on a range of 'theoretical emphases' (Eatough and Smith, 2017: 193) and methodological choices by choosing to assume an IPA approach beyond the data analysis process that I detail in *Chapters 5* and *6*.

IPA was established in its earliest form by Smith (1996) and defined as being 'concerned with exploring experience in its own terms' (Smith *et al.*, 2009: 1). It is thus phenomenological

and seeks to examine how people make sense of experiences. It concerns the experiences of participants as they directly experience phenomena (Alase, 2017) and as such the participants are the 'experiential experts' (Smith and Osborn, 2015). It assumes a hermeneutic phenomenological epistemology that seeks an understanding of experience to understand the world with a commitment to the idiographic or 'a detailed focus on the *particular*' (Larkin and Thompson, 2012). As my research questions seek an understanding of teachers' experiences of engaging in CCtPI, through engaging in research with my research participants as co-researchers, I was trying to attain an enhanced understanding of their perspective as they were engaging in the research activity by seeking their interpretations of this phenomena. In this, my questions are phenomenological and informed by my interpretations of participants' interpretations of their experiences, aligning with the philosophical perspectives explored in *Chapter 2.2* and which underpin the IPA approach.

IPA allows for multiple individuals who experience similar events to tell their stories without any 'distortions and/or prosecutions' (Alase, 2017: 11). Throughout my journeys with Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon, my research questions have, in part, directed the paths we have travelled. In my discussions and through the CCtPI, I have been seeking to understand their lived experiences of engaging in research through CCtPI. Some of my interview prompts were deliberately designed to focus on seeking their understanding of a particular perspective such as *research* and *inquiry* or collaboration, with a view to informing my research questions (see Appendix 1). However, as illustrated in a comment from Paul, *I'm just rumbling on* (2.92), and a musing from Tash, *I do you wonder what I give you sometimes because I go round in circles* (6.80), much of the interviews were spaces for each participant to share with me their experiences in a way that felt authentic for them. By approaching the data in this flexible way my study has sought to obtain '"thick description"' (Geertz, 1973: 312) that is, an understanding of the complexity of meaning and significance the participant ascribes to their experience. From the explicit, the inferential and the implied meaning, determined through interpretative analysis of their accounts, is built an enhanced understanding of the experiences of teachers engaging in research through CCtPI.

As noted in *Chapter 2.1.1*, IPA is defined as an approach (Smith *et al.*, 2009, 2022; Alase, 2017) *and* as a methodology (Smith and Osborne, 2015; Noon, 2018) and the terms are seemingly used interchangeably in some literature when referring to IPA. However, in their guide to IPA, Smith *et al.* (2022) define it as an approach to research with commitments that inform practice rather that set methodological constraints. As such IPA is flexible so as to be focused on the specific research project with a wariness of the prescriptive; aligning with the qualitative research approach there is a recognition that 'methods are understood *not* to have 'stand-alone integrity'. They do not, by themselves, produce meaningful outcomes [or] guarantees of quality' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 35). It is the flexibility of IPA and the avoidance of methodolatry (Chamberlain, 2000) which marks it as a research approach (Larkin *et al.*, 2015; Smith *et al.*, 2022). As such the IPA researcher is 'free to develop and apply methods that are appropriate for finding answers to the research questions under consideration, and they should not be constrained in a methodological straitjacket' (Chamberlain, 2000: 289). Without this *straitjacket* of fixed methods, I was able to engage flexibly with participants, giving them space and time to participate in ways that acknowledged the personal and professional demands on their time. Participants began by completing a survey with a two-fold purpose: as prompts for thinking about their engagement in research to date and for their responses to form some of my prompts for the initial semi-structured interviews. When seeking to understand specific aspects of their experiences I could engage in an interview that was semi-structured to begin with yet became increasingly less structured as participants shared aspects of their experience that they felt were significant or particularly meaningful for them (see Appendix 1). The interview schedule was open and at the conclusion of each meeting, next steps were discussed and the subsequent meeting scheduled. These meeting dates/times were subject to change in response to participants; at times last minute change as school schedules conflicted with pre-arranged meeting times:

> I am free but not for very long. It has been a super stressful day! I just have follow up meetings and admin to do for it.
>
> Tash, email

> I can't commit to anything for the next few days but I'm sure I can organise something on a Thursday when I'm back in school

Max, email

I have been asked to cover a lesson! Can we reschedule for next week?

Paul, email

However, this did not mean they did not follow a schedule of sorts. As the CCtPI progressed, meetings to discuss next steps were scheduled at appropriate stages in the research process and the data collection interviews took place immediately following these meetings. This was a deliberate choice to reduce the time the project was demanding of the teachers by combining the two activities but also to ensure that when the interviews took place that the participants were engaged in the research process and could reflect on their experience of it in the interview. This would also facilitate the data capturing the temporal nature of the experience through the timing and frequency of the data collected (Farr and Nizza, 2019). This flexibility felt important as it facilitated a responsiveness to participants and the experiences they wanted to share and to account for the changing contexts in which they were working. It also seemed ethically sound practice considering that participants were engaging voluntarily and would have personal and professional demands beyond the needs of my study. This would be in line with the ethical considerations I explored throughout as I monitored my ethical practice as part of a 'dynamic process' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 47) (see *Chapters 2.1*, *2.*3 and *4.2* for further ethical explorations and considerations).

IPA has a focus on personal experiences and is idiographic, in that it is concerned with the particular experience of the individual. It seeks to understand the experience of the individual through detailed examination of each case before 'producing fine grained account of patterns of meaning' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 31) across participants. 'IPA studies usually benefit from a concentrated focus on a small number of cases' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 46) and this has been the case in my study as six teachers joined me on my journey. However, in adopting a Longitudinal IPA approach, Smith *et al.* term 'bolder designs' (2022: p47), I interviewed participants more than once. As a result, as explored in *Chapter 5.3* and illustrated in *Table 1*, I gathered data from 15 interviews for analysis across the six participants. *Figure 3* illustrates the interview process with Tash showing the occurrence of the interviews with her over time.

Interviewing participants more than once has its advantages, one of these being able to engage in superficial analysis of an interview before engaging in the next (Flowers, 2008). This was a step in the interview process that I found valuable in that it facilitated each interview to be an opportunity to maximise 'depth and opportunity for probing' (Flowers, 2008: 26). It also ensured that every interview was ''a conversation with a purpose'' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 54) and that in the conversation this purpose, which was my research questions, was not lost:

> I don't feel I really gathered her thoughts and ideas on the experience fully. The challenges of asking open questions means that she goes off on tangents and doesn't quite answer what's been asked. I worry that, in prompting her with a view to guiding the discussion back to the research question, means I use leading – or potentially leading – prompts/questions that could affect her answers. Before the next interview therefore I need to prepare more question stems that I can adapt in the moment when this happens.
>
> Research journal, Jan 2021

> I don't think I spent enough time with her exploring the aspects of my research. Our meeting was primarily focused on the collaborative project with a section at the end of my RQ foci. Moving forward it feels important to schedule distinct time for both.
>
> Research journal, Jan 2021

A further advantage was the development of the rapport and relationship with each participant and 'repeated opportunities for disclosure to occur' (Flowers, 2008: 26). However, there were also disadvantages in that the increased complexity of my research design and the temporal element also added the complexity of attrition - as Smith *et al.* noted, 'you are likely to have more participants at 'time 1' than you do at 'time 3' (2022: 127). A challenge of LIPA is participant attrition and the changing number of participants over time (Hermanowicz, 2013). This proved to be the case in my study; following the first experience with participants and them withdrawing en masse as detailed in *Chapter 2.1.2*, six teachers participated. Of these six, five withdrew from their CCtPI, though not from my study, and one completed their CCtPI in full. There were various reasons for this, not least the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as 'the data-collection process is itself socially situated; it is neither a clean, antiseptic activity nor always a straightforward negotiation' (Cohen *et al.*, 2018), and these reasons are explored in *Chapter 6.1* and illustrated in *Table*

4. A consequence for data collection was that the number of interviews for each participant varied - some participants only engaged with the initial interview, some the initial and final interviews and some participants were engaged in the CCtPI for longer and a number of interviews took place. Nonetheless, 'concerned with understanding particular phenomena in particular contexts, IPA studies are conducted on small sample sizes' (Smith *et al.*, 2022), and as such the data collection still gave insight into the lived experience of the participants. The reasons for withdrawing from the research shed light on the perspectives of those teachers as did the data collected from the interviews with Tash who completed her CCtPI project. In the context of my study, and the participants with whom I collaborated the longest, it was not that there were fewer participants over time but that the participants became less engaged in their projects over time and there were fewer opportunities for data collection as a result. Therefore, while the number of these participants remained largely the same, the number of interviews for each differed as illustrated in *Table 1*, due to the varying demands on their time in their personal and professional lives.

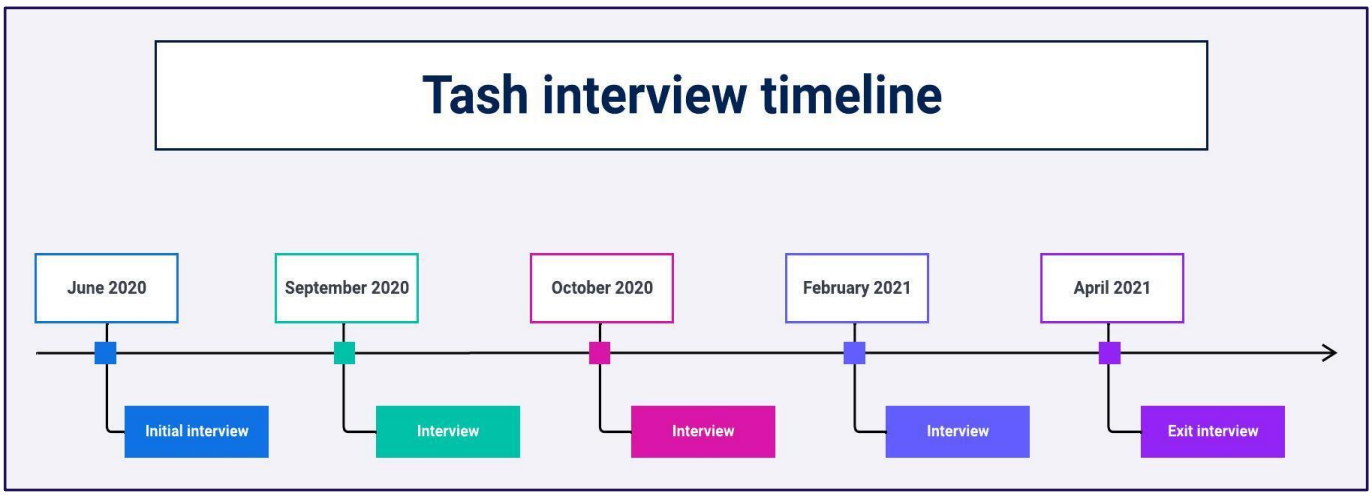

Figure 3: Timeline of Tash's interviews

As an approach IPA is concerned, as the name suggests, with the analysis of data however as noted previously in this chapter, IPA is informed by the phenomenological, the hermeneutic and is idiographic. Therefore, I find within this that there are implications which suggest it is a methodology, albeit one which is neither prescriptive or dictatorial but is suggestive as to how data is 'usually (but not necessarily) in the form of semi-structured one-

to-one interviews' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 3) and which enables experience 'to be expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems' (p.26). As Smith *et al.* (2022) state 'we can think of methods as providing us with a partial map of the territory which we wish to cross… constraints are largely put in place by the commitments of the *approach*, rather than the conventions of methodological practice' (p.35-36). In *Chapter 2.2* I have explored my tussle with engaging in a structured approach to data analysis and the feeling that there was a 'right' way to approach this. There seems to be an assumption that a methodology brings with it a set of instructions, a guide to the 'right' way to collect and analyse data which IPA takes great pains to avoid. What stands out for me in the key IPA text is the statement that 'it is up to you to choose' (p.35). This characteristic of freedom of choice for the researcher, with the caveat that they are staying true to their research focus and the concepts and debates that inform IPA, have led me to the decision that it is my methodology. It reflects the practice of *wondering* and *noticing* that I explore in *Parts 2.1* and *2.2*. It informed the methodological decisions I made, such as my use of interview prompts that facilitated a sharing of meaningful experiences, how these offered insight into the unique lived experiences and shed light on the shared aspects of these experiences. I detail this in *Chapters 5.3* and *5.4* along with my thinking about how my data collection facilitated teachers' rich and detailed accounts of their experience of engaging in research and how they make sense of this. I detail how I moved the analysis from descriptive to interpretative engaging in 'an iterative and inductive cycle' (Smith, 2007). As such, in being phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic IPA defined the *why* and *how* of my methods.

In choosing to 'examine a meaningful experience of an event occurring over a period of time' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 127) I was therefore adopting a *longitudinal* IPA approach (LIPA) and *Table 1* below illustrates the start and end date of each Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI) project. As a result, each of the participants' lived experiences form parts of the whole of my study but so too does each data collection point form parts of the whole of each account of the experience (Farr and Nizza, 2019); there were multiple points where data was collected thus creating 'a series of wholes that, though independent, are also the

constituent parts' (Farr and Nizza, 2019). As an illustrative example, Tash agreed to participate in June 2018. Through the course of her CCtPI project, as illustrated in *Table 1*, we had five interviews and *Figure 3* shows occurrence of these over time.

The purpose of taking this approach was to capture as accurately as possible the experiences in as close proximity to the activity as possible, that is, to interview participants before, during and after they engaged in CCtPI, as 'the recency of an event around which a study is designed can lead to a more vivid account of experience' (Farr and Nizza, 2019). Each interview point was also a research meeting; we would discuss the CCtPI project and also engage in an interview about their experience of engaging in the CCtPI.

The element of change is an intrinsic element of LIPA as 'involvement with phenomena can be dynamic and changing over time' (Farr and Nizza, 2019: 204); capturing this was an important element that I needed to consider when analysing and interpreting the data. Change was also not a given; for Cath, Paul, Jon and Liam their perspective and understanding of research did not seem to change - indeed for Tash and Cath, despite their lived experiences contrasting with their perceptions of what research involved, their perceptions were still resistant to change. Nonetheless this lack of, or resistance to, change was still 'powerful and informative' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 128), and is explored further in *Chapter 6.1.1.*

Thus the challenges of a longitudinal approach were inherent in my chosen LIPA approach. However, temporal aspects of my study also appeared as significant moments throughout my research experience, as illustrated by the following excerpts from my research journal:

> The process of IPA presents challenges. As suggested in the training I went to, the schedule is largely defined by the participants. This has slowed the whole process of research down - there is nothing time efficient about LIPA!
>
> Research journal, Sep 2020

> Data collection is going so slowly!
>
> Research journal, Jan 2021

While I had consciously designed a longitudinal study and had been aware of the demands on teachers' time that would affect their engagement in their Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI), I was struck at repeated intervals at the duration of the process. This also meant that, due to my own time constraints of completing my PhD, I had to choose an end point for my data collection. For Cath, Max and Liam this was before the end of their CCtPI - the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the demands of the teaching profession and this affected their engagement in my study. This was a difficult moment when I wrestled with an ethical conundrum:

> At what point do I draw a line and end these projects? There are ethical considerations here - I have a duty to follow through with my participants surely? However, if I'm the only one driving the project forward I need to consider if my participants are in a position to continue! I feel I also have a duty to recognise when they can't commit to taking part even if they don't see this themselves. I'd arrange time to talk through it with them honestly but getting hold of them at all is the problem!!
>
> Research journal, Apr 2021

After discussions with my then supervisors, Laura and Caroline, and much thought, I chose to explain via email the time limitations I was faced with, ending the CCtPI before it had completed and inviting each to an exit interview.

As each CCtPI project progressed, I was also conscious that the amount of time Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon could devote to their project was dependent on what was happening in their professional and personal lives at that moment. I was noticing that *timing* as well as *time* were an important factor. Personal issues were also significant; for Tash her health would impact on the time she could spend on the project, for Paul his family was growing and so too were demands on his time. For everyone the COVID-19 pandemic was an understandably significant factor and, as teachers, the time they would have planned to spend on their CCtPI was subsumed in being responsive to the demands on the profession, with Max describing those months as *relentless online teaching* (email, Jun 2020). Both Paul and Jon secured new roles in school which demanded more of their time, leaving them with

neither the time or capacity to offer the level of commitment that I would like to (Jon, email Sep 2020).

I have used the metaphor of a journey throughout this writing as this is reflective of my personal connection to my study as detailed in *Chapter 1* but also my longitudinal research experience and the lived experiences of my research participants. The years the CCtPI was taking place were also times of significant change worldwide and journeys of sorts beyond my study for everyone involved. As such, the journey analogy seems increasingly apt, not least capturing this temporal element.

Participant	Participation started	Participation ended	Total number of interviews
Tash	Jun 2020	Apr 2021	5
Cath	Jun 2019	Sep 2021	3
Max	May 2019	Aug 2021	2
Paul	Feb 2020	May 2021	2
Liam	Jul 2020	Aug 2021	1
Jon	Jun 2020	Nov 2020	2

Table 1: Number of interviews and duration of participant

4.2 Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon

As detailed in *Chapter 2.2*, there were challenges in engaging participants and my first arrangement with a school led to a group withdrawal from my study. Subsequent to this, Max contacted me, having been sent information by my colleague. As a senior leader he was both gatekeeper and teacher and therefore fulfilled both roles, giving fully informed consent to participate. Cath also heard about my study and expressed an interest in participating. With informed consent from the headteacher as gatekeeper, she then provided informed consent to participate. Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the order of consent was adjusted. Teachers were contacted in the first instance via the survey which had been

approved in the original ethics process (see *Chapter 2.1*) to indicate the scope and nature of my study. This was completed anonymously. At the end of this survey teachers were invited to contact me should they wish to participate in my study. It was at this point that, with consent from their headteachers and individual consent to participate, Tash, Paul, Liam and Jon joined me on my travels. They joined at different points on this path and journeyed with me for the time that they could. For this I am very grateful. I have written of them already in this chapter and in previous chapters, using their words to shed light on points I have discussed or issues I have raised. The remainder of this chapter, and moving ahead to *Chapters 5* and *6*, is an exploration of my interpretation of their interpretation of their lived experience of engaging in research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry. Therefore, before I continue on to analyse their words and interpret their experiences of engaging in research through CCtPI, this is an appropriate point for a brief review of the contexts in which Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon were undertaking their CCtPI projects as detailed in *Chapter 2.2*.

4.2.1 Tash

A teacher in a primary school in England, Tash clearly saw a connection between engaging in research and the development of her classroom practice:

> I mean this is going to be fun and it, like, draws to that side of me. I really, I enjoy that, yeah, I really enjoy it. I think it will help like my confidence-wise so like personally I think I have confidence in my ability which has a lot to do with the last couple of years... but I think it's great kind of continual professional development as well I think it will really help
>
> (Tash, 1.48)

She had been finding aspects of her practice difficult to develop; that they needed to develop was something that was identified in feedback from her line manager and this was reflected in her professional appraisal. Tash had engaged *with* research to support this development but had found she made little progress. As a result Tash was on a support plan at the time of choosing to participate. She was therefore hoping that engaging in research would

support this development further. The CCtPI began soon after the initial interview and is the only project completed to date.

4.2.2 Cath

Cath also felt that engaging in research would support the development of her own practice. A class teacher in an independent school in England, Cath felt that to engage with research would support both her development and the children's learning which she viewed as the purpose of educational research:

> I am interested in always trying to better my own practice and if by doing this it gives me the opportunity to do that and… then understand something better then I'm all for that… I've been teaching for 10 years that's it, you know, I want to like keep moving forward... yeah so I think that's I thought that perhaps that it might give me the opportunity.
>
> (Cath, 1.96-98)

However, while appearing keen to engage in the CCtPI, actually undertaking it proved to be more of a challenge than her enthusiasm implied. She was aware of this and was able to identify that while she recognised that it would be of value, she was uncertain and lacked confidence to engage and this therefore led to her delaying her participation:

> I think that partly the reason we haven't got going with it is because I'm a bit like I don't really I'm not sure what I'm doing. So I think I don't in a way I suppose a bit scared of it of it. You know? Like I think it's like to you know, don't know what I'm doing so it's like, you know, but at the same time I want to… I think the main thing is the confidence to do it, to just say that that is good enough, you know?
>
> (Cath, 2.8)

4.2.3 Max

Max was keen to be involved in this research from the outset and had some experience of engaging in research previously. As a deputy head in a Welsh school, he regularly engaged with research and encouraged the staff team to do the same. He was also aware of the new changes to the Welsh Teachers' Standards which state that teachers' professional learning includes 'structured engagement in an action research community' and that, for school

leaders, 'research is carried out in partnership with others' (Welsh Government, 2019) and the potential implications this had not just for him, but for the school staff team as a whole:

> I think because we we don't fully understand exactly what research and inquiry will become for us I'm interested in finding out… and for staff motivation too. I want to be able to sort of keep the staff motivated to take on all these really exciting challenges… so I'm just really interested in models of inquiry and how that's being approached in different places really to really develop our practice as a school
>
> (Max, 1.196)

As such, he felt that engaging in this project would support both his practice in the classroom and his practice as a leader. Max was pro-active and his CCtPI project started soon after the initial interview was completed. However, the impact of the pandemic resulted in the CCtPI process being interrupted and postponed.

4.2.4 Paul

Paul was also keen to engage and his motivation to do so was to seek a challenge, a perspective that was also echoed in Jon's interview. He felt that his professional practice was well established and he was ready to engage with something new:

> I am really not challenged at the school I am at. I am looking to get... more challenge and reward in my work
>
> (Email, November 2020)

He viewed the idea of engaging as the challenge he was seeking. However, as time progressed, he secured a promotion in another school and this, alongside personal commitments, led to his withdrawal from the CCtPI:

> it's quite an easy life until I got my promotion and now things are a bit mad… with all the will in the world I just couldn't find the time to do it properly really, yeah, so something had to give… I feel that I just need to focus on juggling those things and then get used to those, get good at those
>
> (Paul, 2.42-112)

4.2.5 Liam

Liam was keen to participate as his school had adopted a programme designed to support the identification of gaps in the children's learning and support teachers in addressing these. He was seeking to determine if the teachers in the primary school where he worked had found this to be a useful tool. His view of research was that it could facilitate the analysis and examination of current practice to inform the school wide impact of specific practices:

> I was just interested to see whether this is actually taking good effect or not
>
> (Liam, 1.32)

4.2.6 Jon

Jon was also seeking a professional challenge. As with Paul, he felt he had established himself in his role, reaching the *peak* of his practice and was seeking something to help him develop further:

> ...looking for that extra challenge because that was what I was looking for last year when I said yes, I was looking for something to develop myself
>
> (Jon, 2.14)

Jon secured a promotion as schools reopened following the COVID-19 pandemic. He assumed more responsibilities and as he worked to manage these alongside the additional challenges in school post-pandemic, he decided he had too much to balance and subsequently withdrew from the project:

> I guess it feels like I'm going in a cycle I started and I kind of... I felt like I had a mountain to climb but I like that. I like the challenge and I developed as a teacher and then I kind of I reached my peak… and I was ready for the next challenge and then I found it, but then I forgot I also took on four or five other challenges and I can only climb one mountain at a time.
>
> (Jon, 2.14)

4.3 Explication and analysis

The analysis of the data was an aspect of my study where I encountered various tensions as explored in *Chapter 2.2* and previously in this chapter. Peoples (2021) highlighted another aspect of the analysis - or explication - process that raised a tension for me:

> 'The term *data analysis* is not completely in line with phenomenological inquiry because *analysis* means to "break into parts" whereas phenomenological inquiry seeks to understand a phenomenon as a *whole*… in hermeneutic phenomenology and the use of the hermeneutic circle, the parts inform the whole and the whole informs the parts. If something is broken into parts alone, the phenomenon is lost as a whole'
>
> (p57)

Was I examining the parts of each lived experience or the lived experience itself or both? I associated the term analysis with a detachment which belied my immersion in, and what I was seeking to understand from, the accounts of experience gained from the interviews. Hycner (1985) speaks of explication rather than analysis stating that this is an 'investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole' (p.300) thus addressing the issue raised by Peoples (2021) that analysis focuses on the parts and risks losing the whole. From the phenomenological perspective, and specifically IPA, the concept of explication as a process that explores the parts while situating these parts within the whole felt more aligned with the process I went through when engaging with the data. I was seeking to understand the individual experience however each interview was a part of this experience. As Peoples (2021) suggests, analysis could look at each interview as a data point and lose sight of the whole of the experience in which it sits. Explication maintains the focus on the entirety of the experience while still exploring the individual accounts of that experience as share in each interview. Therefore, when I refer to my analysis of the data, I am using the term in line with the concept of explication. I am keeping in mind that any part of an interview and any one whole interview from Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam or Jon forms part of their whole experience and does not sit apart from that wider context. This speaks to the messy and non-linear features of my study and the commitment to recognising throughout, including in my writing, that every aspect is intrinsically interconnected - the

parts cannot be separated, or presented as separate, from the whole. This is also reflected in the IPA approach; the parts of the interview are explored in the context of the whole, with the commitment to the idiographic, the experience of each participant a focus in and of itself. However, there is exploration of Group Experiential Themes (GETs), patterns in meaning across participants' experiences, the *whole*, and an awareness of *Dasein*, or being in the world: 'because Dasein's experience is understood to be an *in-relation-to* phenomenon… a given person *can* offer us a personally unique perspective on their relationship to, or involvement in, various phenomena of interest' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 24).

In *Chapter 2.2* I began to explore my initial approach to the 'recursive, non-linear, messy and reflexive' (Cohen *et al.*, 2018: 644) data analysis occurring simultaneously alongside the data collection process. As this *listening* and *noticing* process continued as I listened to the interviews both for the purposes of attending to the participants' accounts and for the purposes of transcription. I transcribed the interviews first as a verbatim record, which required an immersion in the data as every utterance by both interviewer and participant were transcribed and served to not only to produce a written record of the interviews (see Appendix 2) but, as I have also explored in *Chapter 2*, informed how I could refine future interviews. I then took the layering approach to analysis that is typical of IPA (Eatough and Smith, 2017), moving from the descriptive to the analytical and interpretative, starting with exploratory noting before moving on to experiential statements, Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) and Group Experiential Themes (GETs).

4.4 Looking ahead

And so, my travels continued as I began to understand the journeys my travelling companions and I had sojourned together from their perspective. The analysis of their accounts of their experiences was phenomenological in that I was seeking to examine with care their lived experience and understand the meanings they ascribed to those experiences. It was also interpretative on two levels as it focused their interpretations of their experiences and my interpretations of their interpretations; the double hermeneutic (Smith and Osborne, 2003: 53) I explored in *Chapter 2.2* and *Chapter 2.3*. It was messy, non-linear and

raised tensions for me as I engaged with their accounts and sought to find their attribution of what was ‘‘meaning-full’’ (Smith et al, 2022: 63) for them. It began with the descriptive and moved to the interpretative and I engaged and re-engaged with what had been shared by them. I listened. I noticed. I drew on the experiences, detailed throughout *Chapter 2*, which had shaped my research questions. I considered my understanding and structuring of the world gained from situating my study in the field, explored in *Chapter 3*. And, as I explored in *Chapter 2.3* and *Chapter 4.1*, I bracketed these while still maintaining an awareness of the prior knowledge I was not yet aware of and that would arise as I engaged in the analytical process. And in all of this, I held on to the moments of clarity that I explored in *Chapter 2.2* and *Chapter 2.3*: that at the heart of my study I was seeking to understand, through their own accounts, the lived experiences of Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon as they engaged in research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry.

Chapter 5: Journeying, Part I

As explored in *Chapter 2.2* and *Chapter 4.1*, approaching data analysis was not straightforward nor simple. I had a clear understanding of the approach I was going to take – Longitudinal Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (LIPA) – and an instructional guide to follow in the seminal text by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2022). However, I still struggled to engage with my analysis until, as detailed in *Chapter 2.3*, I bracketed my own prior knowledge and set aside what I had read and understood. And just listened and noticed. This shift in thinking of how to approach the data is detailed in *Chapter 2.2* and it was essential in the analysis process. It facilitated my focusing on what was being shared and then seeking meaning in what was – and was not – being shared. In this way my analysis started with the descriptive and moved to the interpretative as I thought less about what I should be doing and centred solely on what my travelling companions, or research participants, were sharing with me. The process is detailed in this chapter and the next, *Chapter 6*. These are my interpretations of participants' interpretations of their lived experience, or the 'double hermeneutic' (Smith and Osborne, 2003: 53). While the process was messy and non-linear, 'personal, intuitive, difficult, creative, intense and conceptually demanding' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 76) the uniqueness and similarities of the experiences became apparent.

The methods used for data collection were semi-structured interviews which were transcribed in full for analysis as detailed in *Chapter 2.*2 and *Chapter 4.*3 (see also Appendix 2). In this chapter I detail how, drawing from the IPA analysis process in Smith *et al.* (2022), I began with annotating these transcripts, making exploratory notes which were then used to identify experiential statements. These experiential statements were then clustered and given a title that captured the characteristics of the cluster thus creating Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) (Smith et al, 2022).

With a focus on the idiographic, *Chapter 5.4* draws on the experiences of Tash, Cath and Max as illustrative examples of those who not only shared with me their experiences as part of the data collection process, but, as I explore in *Chapter 7.6*, from whom I have learned more about myself as a researcher and educator.

5.1 Exploratory notes

As detailed in *Chapters 2.2* and *4.3*, a*s each interview took place, I transcribed it to create a verbatim record* (see appendix 2) immersing myself in the data. By engaging and re-engaging with both the audio recordings and the written transcripts of the interviews, I began to formalise the analytical process by making exploratory notes on the transcripts. I chose to print out the transcripts and write the exploratory notes on the hardcopies. These exploratory notes were initially in response to anything of interest within the transcript, beginning to 'identify specific ways by which the participant talks about, understands and thinks about an issue' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 79). Gradually, as I repeatedly engaged with the transcripts and audio recordings over time, these notes became more interpretative in response to what was being implied, or not being explicitly stated.

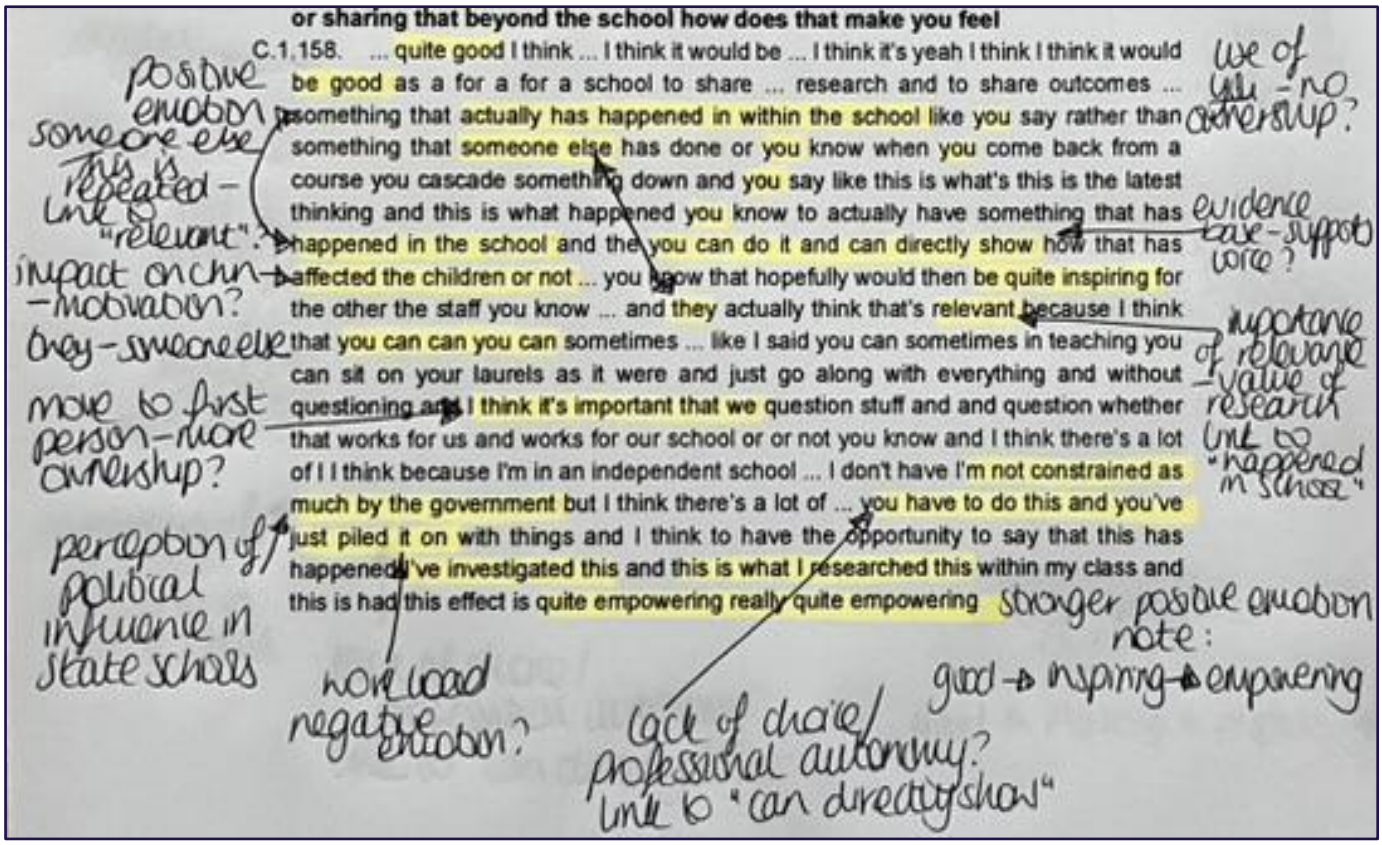

Figure 4: Extract from Cath's first interview illustrating exploratory notes

Figure 4 illustrates the different exploratory notes used, drawing from the features of each as identified in Smith *et al.* (2022: 83-84):

- Descriptive notes 'describing the content of what the participant has said': the use of the second person, *you*, and the subsequent shift to first person, *I*;
- Linguistic notes 'exploring the specific use of language… pointing to what these… may be contributing to our understanding of the participant's experience': repetition of *has happened in school* → seems to indicate this is an important aspect of research for Cath;
- Conceptual notes 'explicitly asking questions of the data [and/or] a shift in your focus, towards the participant's overarching understanding': *it can directly show* linked to *you have to do this* → is research viewed as providing an evidence base to say I/we do not have to do this?

I found I had begun naturally to follow the process of interpreting the data as suggested by Smith *et al.* (2022); on re-reading this process it was easy to map my process to their suggested steps. This felt significant in that it gave reassurance of the robustness of the approach to analysis yet also seemed that in approaching it slowly and with a greater attention to listening and noticing before moving to explanatory noting than I felt I could have given had I followed the steps from the outset, that I was not only aligned with the process but I was aligned in a way that made sense to me and did not feel like I was reworking the participants' accounts. I repeated the explanatory noting process regularly over time - the extract from Cath's interview above illustrates the noting process that took place at a number of points during the analysis process rather than in one step.

This process was instinctive to begin with; I was still transcribing the data, seeking to understand the whole while beginning to examine the linguistic and ''meaning-full'' (Smith et al, 2022: 63) parts. I also needed to consider that, as a longitudinal study, there were multiple interviews for each participant, each itself part of a whole, with all of the interviews for each participant being the whole account of their experience. The process became increasingly analytical as I immersed myself in the data as parts of a whole that was becoming clearer as further interviews took place. With each iteration of exploratory noting, there were fewer descriptive notes use of *you* and *I* - and a move toward the more interpretative *second person - ownership and not viewing self in that process*; *use of first*

person - owning the responsibility to question what works and seeing that as part of role as the process became increasingly analytical. In time, the interpretations deepened, to conceptual notes and interrogations of the data which I recorded and reflected on in my journal, capturing this 'abstract style of thinking' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 84):

> Cath starts by talking about the prospect of engaging in research being 'good' then 'inspiring' then 'empowering'. Alongside this she also says research can 'directly show' something and about being directed to do things and having work 'piled on'. It seems like she could be making a connection between research proving something, giving an evidence base from which to say, "no I don't have to, 'I've investigated this… I researched this' so I can respond to the work I'm being directed to do or choose not to let the work be piled on because I have the evidence to back up what I'm saying". Could there be a connection between her talking about research and then referring to directives and the pile up of work and then back to research? Her view of research developing from 'good' to 'inspiring' to 'empowering' as she is making a connection between sharing the outcomes of research and having more autonomy in her practice?
>
> Research journal, Sep 2019

During this process I was conscious of my own understanding of the purpose of research and connections between politics and the classroom, so was conscious to remain tentative in my conceptual musings. I wanted to capture them but not follow them through too far, rather coming back to them at a later time, at different moments of interpretation, to ensure that these were closer to the accounts of the experiences than my interpretations of the accounts as much as possible. The double hermeneutic meant I was interpreting participants' interpretations of their experience, not my interpretations of their experience. An important distinction. Nevertheless, I was deciding what was significant enough to be assigned an exploratory note therefore while this reflexivity supported a degree of bracketing, I was still inevitably drawing on my own 'experiential and/or professional knowledge… pre-understandings and… newly emerging understanding of the participant's world' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 84).

5.2 Experiential statements

I then moved to working directly with the exploratory notes in order to begin to identify experiential statements within each participant's account. As the exploratory notes drew directly from the verbatim transcripts of the interviews, moving to working primarily with these facilitated a reduction of the detail contained within the transcript and exploratory notes while 'articulating the most important features of exploratory notes' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 86). These experiential statements, as the term indicates, relate to the experience of the participant and are my statements as an 'initial preliminary marker of [my] analytic work' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 87). While the commitment of IPA to the idiographic meant a focus on each participant, I was also aware that subsequent steps of the analysis process would give consideration to aspects of each experience that may have been shared across some or all the participants. In revisiting the data regularly as part of this iterative approach to analysis, I also began to note where there seemed to be connections between the exploratory notes and experiential statements in the transcripts of other participants with a view to analysing these further when determining GETs (illustrated in *Figure 5*).

Bringing together the experiential statements I then began to search for connections between them in order to establish PETs for each participant. I noted the experiential statements onto a second printed copy of the transcripts and cut out each section and associated experiential statement before grouping them together, 'breaking up the initial ordering of the statement to facilitate a search for a different more conceptual ordering' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 91). This process was repeated for each participant which I completed on a different day for each, in order to remain as close as possible to each individual account, avoid the reproduction of ideas and allow each to be its own 'universe of inquiry' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 99).

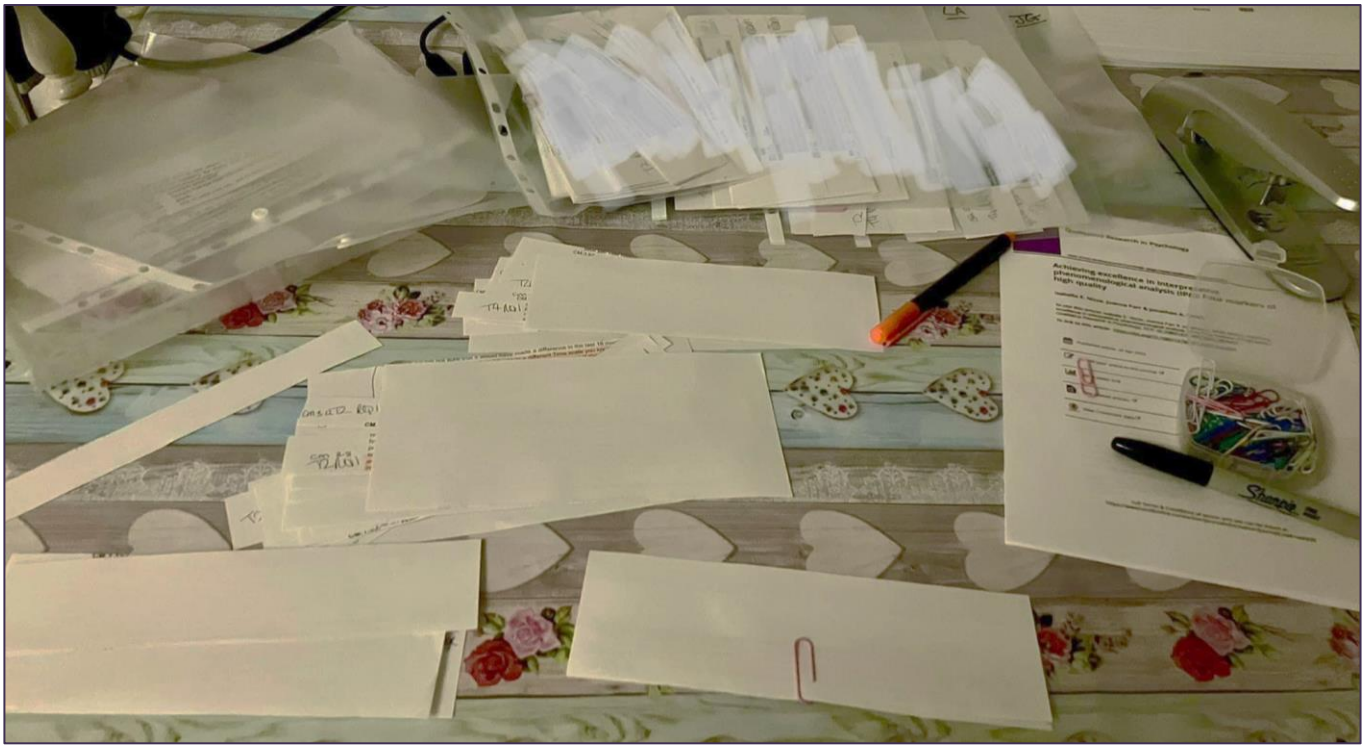

Figure 5: Finding patterns of meaning in exploratory notes and experiential statements

5.3 Personal Experiential Themes (PETs)

I analysed a total of 15 interviews across 6 participants (see Appendix 2, Table A1.1), making exploratory notes, experiential statements from these notes before establishing PETs by drawing connections across the experiential statements for each participant. As noted in *Chapter 1.2*, most of the participants noted a distinction between *research* and *inquiry*, yet when they spoke of the activity they were engaging in, they used the term *research*. In naming the PETs I have aimed to keep as close as possible to the language they have used. However, have chosen *inquiry* when the activity being referred to relates to the Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI) or strongly echoes the definitions of *research* and *inquiry* that they identified in their interviews. In this way, at times I may not be reflecting precisely the words they have used instead staying true to the meanings they are implying based on the more detailed distinctions they had made previously. Due to participants' use of *research* as an umbrella term, it appears more frequently in the PETs and

GETs than *inquiry*. However, the distinctions made between the two by participants are detailed in both this chapter and in *Chapter 6.1.1*.

Participant	Personal Experiential Statements (PETs)
Tash	Research is learning and empowerment The purpose of research is to develop practice and a professional voice Inquiry can be part of the teacher role and collaboration is a bridge Being a teacher does not always facilitate engagement in research Research incites strong positive emotions for Tash
Cath	Research is significant and conducted by others The purpose of research is to question and develop classroom practice Research sits apart from the Cath's world as a teacher There are bridges and barriers; collaboration can be both Research incites conflicting emotions for Cath
Max	Research informs the field; inquiry informs classroom practice The purpose of research is to impact on practice Engagement in inquiry aligns with Max's world as a teacher There are barriers and bridges, and collaboration is important Research is a positive experience for Max and could be for others
Paul	Research is not a priority when there are other demands Research supports yet sits apart from practice Research is disruptive Engagement in inquiry is alone insufficient to overcome professional ennui The prospect of engaging in research is different to the reality
Liam	Research supports practice and children's outcomes Research is learning and collaboration is part of this
Jon	Research facilitates the development of practice The demands of the teaching role do not support engagement in research Engagement in research brings status but not career development When pressured, doing is sufficient

Table 2: PETs for each participant

5.4 Travelling companions

This section focuses on the idiographic and the unique lived experiences of three of my research participants - Tash, Cath and Max. Using extracts from their accounts, I explore

each of their unique experiences of engaging in research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI) to amplify and illuminate meaning 'from the concerns of the participants themselves' (Smith et al, 2022: 197).

5.4.1 Tash - the '*little researcher'*

> It almost tells us the story I guess from the beginning. From being stuck into literature, finding literature using different methods and kind of seeing the outcome. I'd like to think that it's almost… what's the word… like it goes in that… kind of steps. It has that kind of… that flow to it. The story.
>
> (2.76)

Tash's lived experience of the CCtPI was indeed *a story*; complete with a beginning, middle and end, Tash was the only participant to see her project through to completion and journal publication. Tash was an early career teacher who qualified in 2018 and so was at the beginning of her career. She works in a state school in England and chose to participate in this project in part as a form of professional development to support her with her practice. She was on a supportive action plan in school at the time of agreeing to participate and from the outset identified this as a starting point for her CCtPI: *I could choose an element from this, I think it could really help me as well as helping you with research* (initial email).

PET: Research is learning and empowerment

Tash's view of research was very closely tied in with her experience at university which *I really enjoy (1.52)*. Being an Early Career Teacher (ECT), she was not unfamiliar with engagement with research to inform her practice. She was less confident with her practice but when making links with what was familiar - *oh this is like being back at uni* (1.14) - she felt more confident. This was the crux of Tash's motivation for taking part in this research. Feedback from the senior leadership team in her school had noted that she needed to develop her practice and she was on a support plan. She felt she was trying to meet expectations but falling short:

> I've read so many different articles. I've read lots of research, I've read lots of books, I've tried to take it from the readings and put it into practice but it didn't work. He kept picking up on the same things and then was saying well you haven't acted on it and I'm like I have tried, I've tried…
>
> (1.60)

She was turning back to what was familiar and comfortable - the activities she *really enjoyed* - but they were insufficient to help her achieve her goal. Engaging in this project seemed to be the bridge between what was familiar and what she was struggling with. She viewed it as *empowerment… like that… that you could do this… you could start this and you're going to be listened [to]* (1.40) suggesting that her struggles with her practice were leaving her feeling disempowered. This feeling of being *back at uni* brought her to a place where she felt stronger and more able to connect while using it as a *great kind of continual professional development as well. I think it will really help* (1.48). Tash repeatedly referred to this idea that the project would *really help* particularly in her first interview. She also repeatedly commented that she had *really tried* or was *really trying* to develop her practice. The repetition of both suggested her struggles with meeting expectations to improve her practice were a significant focus in her professional life and hint at a determination to find some way to succeed. By bringing together the *academic side of it* (1.52) and professional development, it appeared that Tash was able to have the best of both - the comfort and familiarity of university and, perhaps, the chance for the success that had eluded her thus far: *I'm really excited. It'll be fun!* (1.2).

Initially Tash's view of research was that it was something that she passively engaged with, in that it was engaging with the work or practice of others rather than something she was involved in producing. When she spoke of research it was an exploration of what others might do:

> as a subject lead you'd actually be taking on research, looking at what's implemented and what needs to be implemented… it may come from a subject leader to initiate or for senior leaders to initiate it. I guess anyone could do it and start that process… normally it's just a lot of readings or it might be like watching other people's practice…
>
> (1.16-1.58)

whereas in later interviews she began to use the first person and consider what she might do in terms of engaging in research:

> I would like a literature review because this is your… research part of it… this is working out, you know, what's out there already… I think it is that perception of what research is and how I think how you manipulate and use it…
>
> (3.66-3.80)

> That was my idea of research. When someone said go and research questioning I just Googled questioning and I read a few research things and I got the old textbooks out from the PGCE and I looked through them and then I was like, well I've done my research now, I'm supposed to be able to put it in… and it wasn't working until we did this project…
>
> (5.93)

The language Tash used could indicate a developing sense of involvement in the research process and that she had an active role to play rather than being the passive receiver of the research conducted by others; she seemed to be moving away from viewing research as something to engage *with* to something that she could engage *in*. This seemed to be connected to her perception of the purpose of research and also how she identified with the concept of being a teacher who actively engaged in research, all of which appear to be influenced by engaging in the project as there was a change in her perception of these as the project progressed. Each of these concepts - the perception of the purpose of research and the identification or dis-identification of the teacher as researcher - emerged as themes throughout the project and are explored further in this section.

The way in which Tash spoke about research indicated that she made a distinction between engaging *in* research and engaging *with* research; however, she referred to both of them as research. On occasion she spoke of *secondary resources… so like the readings and that side*

of research (1.16) and *primary resources* (1.16) or engagement *with* research and engagement *in* research. Her reference to both as *resources* indicated that she viewed them as pre-existing rather than being constructed by her. However, when discussing inquiry there was a greater of sense of involvement in the process:

> I think inquiry is more… you are finding the research so you are... like you're the primary person going out and finding the data and what's going on... but obviously then it overlaps with research because you collect all the findings and you then create your research and then it goes out to other people as research
>
> (1.20)

This indicated that Tash perceived research as something to engage *with* and inquiry as something to engage *in*. This distinction may have been a contributing factor to her completing the project - she was undertaking inquiry rather than research and from the outset inquiry was something she perceived as an activity she expected to fully engage in. Perhaps had this been introduced as close to practice research (BERA, 2017) it could have influenced Tash's engagement and the outcomes been different as a result.

Over time it became apparent that Tash's perception of engaging in research and the reality of what that lived experience was were different:

> perhaps it's just my perception of like a few years back that seemed like a really big thing to do and it came with a lot of pressure, whereas this doesn't come with the pressure. So perhaps it's that in my mind that changes it slightly… So I think it is that perception of what research is
>
> (3.78)

She was drawing on previous experiences, specifically her university dissertation, to frame her understanding of research and it was this pressured, deadline-driven approach to research activity that she was using as her frame of reference. This seemed to influence her perception of what it meant to engage in research activity which contrasted with this lived experience. Even by the end of the project she was still holding to her preconceptions of research and being research active - explored further when examining the theme of identification or dis-identification of the teacher as researcher - even when these contrasted

with her lived experience of the CCtPI. This indicates that her preconceptions of research were difficult to adapt even in light of contrasting experiences:

> I guess they overlap. They're, they're kind of the same in my mind when you're doing it but they're not the same when you talk about it as a person
>
> (6.57)

PET: The purpose of research is to develop practice and a professional voice

Tash's perception of the purpose of research seemed to be inextricably linked with teacher professional learning and development. Using her terms *primary* and *secondary resources* (1.16), secondary resources - engaging with existing literature - were her initial starting point to develop her practice. However, she reflected that *I really probably needed some real life… not textbooks telling me or the internet telling me how well, like… even articles that say these are the best types of questions. I think I would have needed that… this is where you start and this is where you could finish* (2.82). The consumption of knowledge from educational literature was not enough to support Tash in developing her practice, despite what she felt were her best efforts and therefore its purpose was being undermined. The CCtPI project provided the opportunity for her to engage in research and construct her own *primary resource* of research. Tash commented that engaging in research *is like what we get the children to do. We want them to explore a question. I guess research is like an adult term for exploratory learning* (1.18). Here the language seems important; exploring the idea of research and inquiry in a later interview Tash stated that she liked *the idea of calling it inquiry rather than research. Just because, yeah, perhaps it's more inquiry. It's a bit more exploration… I think it feels more explorative. It feels like you're doing something yourself* (5.99). For Tash it seems that research is engaging with literature whereas inquiry is *real life*, something she can do in order to not just draw on existing literature but *apply it to the classroom… it's gone further* (6.16).

The perception of research as a vehicle to support practice was referred to by Tash through all of her interviews and she frequently made links between research and *continual professional development* (e.g. 1.48, 1.94, 2.68, 2.74, 5.29, 6.33). However, for Tash it went

further than developing her practice and facilitated a deeper understanding of her teacher training and her work as a teacher in a way that she felt had perhaps been previously lacking:

> I think the transition between the PGCE and teaching was harder than I thought… as soon as I was in the second year that's when it all went wrong… but this project has almost bridged what we've learned at uni and the student side of it to the teaching side of it. And I think that's the important part for me and I can see where it all fits in. And I could kind of see myself now, where I fit in as a leader going forwards
>
> (6.48)

However, she also speaks of the CCtPI having *a purpose wider than just me… it's nice that it would be going somewhere, it would have an impact somewhere wider than just the children… [though] they do matter* (6.12):

> I guess the CPD would be the initial impact… well me first of all and then those around me. It would be really nice if it was, like, wider educational aspects as well
>
> (2.74)

It seemed that Tash would not perceive the outcomes to be purposeful if they served only to develop her practice; there was a sense that it needed to be shared further:

> Like what's the outcome for this? What's it actually going to do, what's it going to achieve? I think now I can be a bit more… I'm going to share it with staff. Staff have to read it and then it might improve… or it can get published or like there's an element of actually it's going somewhere, it's got a purpose…
>
> (2.59)

It seemed for Tash that while an important purpose of research was to develop her own practice it was also important that it supported others' learning and informed the educational field through journal publication; [that] *it has that bigger, kind of, shared ideas* (6.12). Therefore while she frequently referred to the professional development aspects that engaging in research would support, this was insufficient for her; she felt it should go beyond her own practice. This linked with her idea of wanting to feel empowered and *listened to* (1.40); it suggested that in developing her practice as part of the project she would not only be able to address the targets in her support plan but also have a voice in and beyond the

school that was knowledgeable and worth giving time and attention to. There is a sense that in not being able to develop her practice as per her support plan that she felt she was not viewed as capable and able to contribute to the school community. This project, therefore, could potentially not only guide her practice and support her in meeting her plan but also prove to those in the leadership team that she had always been trying; it was the tools she was using that were the barrier to her development rather than any lack of effort or skill on her part. The project therefore could give her the opportunity to not only resolve the issues with her own practice but she could also bring to the school community a solution that could be adopted by the school and enhance professional development for all staff.

> I think with… the fact that I had been on a support plan at that point… I kind of want them to be interested in it. And given it can impact the school I want them to show some interest…
>
> (3.94)

PET: Inquiry can be part of the teacher role and collaboration is a bridge

> But from kind of talking about yourself as something, I would say I was an inquirer rather than a researcher…. research is almost like a job. I have a job. My job is teaching. I think that's where my struggle is with it as a person
>
> (6.56-6.62)

Tash saw her CCtPI project through to completion and journal publication. In collaboration with me, she co-designed, implemented and carried through a research project and this presented a conflict for her. By doing the CCtPI she had undertaken what she considered 'researchers' do which was to engage in research activity *to make a change and a difference* (6.60) and yet she struggled to reconcile this with her perception of what 'a researcher' is:

> I feel like researcher sometimes sounds like they should be a lot bigger than I am... but then, on that note, what I've done does make a change and a difference so... I don't know…
>
> (6.60)

Unpicking this further, it seemed like there was a mismatch between what it felt for Tash to actively engage in research and what it meant from her perspective, to be a researcher. Tash

seemed torn between these fixed ideas of 'teacher' and 'researcher' and that they were mutually exclusive; she had to be one or the other. There was also a sense of a lack of confidence influencing this which came through when she spoke of the collaborative element of the CCtPI in the discussion, commenting that *you're at the university, we're just at school* (6.40). The word *just* implied that Tash viewed her contribution to research as somehow less because she was a teacher:

> We kind of go forwards thinking researchers are the ones with the big degrees and they're doing, kind of, all this formal stuff. But I suppose, I suppose we are… I think it's that difference isn't it between jobs… I guess… perhaps it's just being a teacher does include that on a smaller scale. I still think on a smaller scale not a bigger scale
>
> (6.52)

This tension between dis-identifying as a researcher yet recognising that, as a teacher, she could undertake research activity and be researching was ongoing for Tash. While she could recognise her own engagement in research as the work of a researcher, she could not move beyond her prior perception of what a researcher in education does and that this is separate to research work she would undertake:

> At the beginning I thought of it as different because you were, like, a person in education. Not that my colleagues aren't but that's kind of… my brain went like, you're at the university, we're just at school… but now I think it's exactly the same
>
> (6.40)

Again, there is the reference to being *just* a teacher; that a teacher's contribution to research is less than that of an academic. And yet, by the end of the CCtPI project, Tash was beginning to recognise that the research she perceived a researcher would do and the research she undertook were on a par. She was beginning to identify as a researcher and a teacher; though there was still a limit to the extent that she was prepared to ally herself with the researcher identity:

> I feel like researcher sometimes sounds like they should be a lot bigger than I am. I'd be a little researcher
>
> (6.50)

The bringing together of the two identities for Tash was interwoven with the external recognition:

> Really I just wonder if it's recognised. Like I didn't recognise it so other people probably won't recognise it… don't think I could go around saying I'm a researcher
>
> (6.64)

This was reminiscent of her desire for others to recognise that she has been working hard on her support plan: *I've tried and tried and tried and tried* (1.58) and her need for her work to be recognised and validated by others: *I want them to show some interest…* (3.94) and give her a voice: *you could do this you could start this and you're going to be listened to* (1.40). She didn't have the confidence, even after the CCtPI, to state that she was a researcher and yet she was recognising that she had undertaken a research project from design to publication; she was researching and so, in her mind, was a researcher. She began to address this tension by referring to herself as a *little researcher* (6.50) or by recognising research practice in hers and others' practice: *like, everyone's a researcher. It's all just missed* (6.78). So, while the CCtPI had given her confidence in engaging in research and begun to pave the way for her identification as a researcher as well as a teacher, it seemed this was insufficient to challenge the barrier of self-confidence in her research practice to fully align with a teacher-researcher identity. Instead, Tash began to absorb the researcher identity into her already established teacher identity potentially in a way to address this tension:

> Like everyday you're in research, aren't you? Even when you're not really thinking about it as a bigger picture kind of research… so I guess every single day I'm in the classroom, technically I'm in research because there's something that I'm doing, there's something I'm collecting, there's a child that doesn't quite work in the same way that you think, so then you're going backwards and forwards again
>
> (6.30)

In addition, Tash's comment that engaging in research is *like what we get the children to do. We want them to explore a question. I guess research is like an adult term for exploratory learning* (1.18) indicated that Tash was attempting to accommodate the idea of being

research active into her identity as a teacher by making links to her classroom practice and activities she encouraged the children to engage in. There seemed, for Tash, to be an idea that to identify as a researcher meant losing some of her established teacher identity so aligning research activity with her teaching practice served as a way to relieve this tension. She did not have to identify specifically as a researcher if research became part of how she perceived the role of a teacher to be and, more importantly, how she perceived herself as a teacher. Potentially, therefore, she could draw on her established teacher identity, in which she feels secure, to make sense of this new researcher identity without having to claim to be something more or for her teacher identity to become somehow less.

PET: Being a teacher does not always facilitate engagement in research

Tash's experiences of the barriers to engaging in research activity were not unexpected from workload to time:

> If I asked any of my staff to help me with a research project they'd be going I just can't, like… you're just asking too much of me to do all of this and then more
>
> (1.36)

> I don't have very much time to do it, kind of, things crop up… I think it's always going to be time
>
> (3.96)

Tied in with these were other pressures, both from the workplace and in her personal life:

> it's always been a bit paused, I think, and everything else today… it had been the last on the list unfortunately… I've come home and kind of just died
>
> (3.13-3.52)

In terms of time, Tash felt the timing of the research an *equally* important consideration; it wasn't just the time that the research would take, but that key events in the school year leave little time for teachers to engage in research activity:

> Well, we've had Harvest to do things for and… Christmas to do things and obviously term six… you've got SATs and then just the whole end of year chaos… and you don't have very much time to do it
>
> (3.58)

Tash's perception of what research had to be presented a barrier: *I'm pretty sure at the beginning I started off with ideas that were too big* (2.88) as did her perception of her research from the perspective of the senior leadership team:

> I don't know if they would see the value in doing your own research and then sharing it because I'm not sure, I don't know how much we'd be trusted to complete research in the sense that [they'd] want it done, if that makes sense. Like I don't think [they] could read a research article and say, oh yeah a teacher from like any school in [our trust] has managed to do that. I think in [their] mind maybe research is only conducted in those, kind of, article from, like I guess, universities and things… I'm not sure if [they] would see the value of it very much
>
> (1.88)

Getting stuck and needing to explore ideas and examine concepts were also barriers for Tash but she only raised these when discussing the benefits of collaboration; in fact the collaborative nature of the CCtPI seemed to address all of the barriers Tash experienced throughout the project giving her greater confidence, adding a greater value to the experience both from her perspective and in a way that she could present to the senior leadership team particularly as the collaboration was with *an external person to the school* (5.79). The collaboration served as the bridge for Tash to be able to engage with the research process though her perception of what this looked like changed as the project progressed.

Initially when discussing collaboration Tash seemed to view it as merely the opposite of doing everything alone:

> I think collaboration's quite important actually… you have to start somewhere… so that's looking at other peoples' research… and then when you share it you're collaborating with other people so you don't just kind of… keep them to yourself… I would share outcomes and stuff and I would need [others] to help me, like, implement it across the school otherwise it would fall flat. I don't think I could run round and do all of it
>
> (1.22)

However, as the CCtPI began to take shape, by the second interview Tash's exploration of collaboration was more focused on the shared nature of the project:

> I think it would have looked very different if I had done it without you at the start… I think it's that, like, you've been somebody to sound off to or ask questions to help in that way whereas if it was on my own it would definitely, yeah, it would probably would have been put on pause quite a few times… that kind of knowing where to start but having you and knowing, kind of, what you're doing has helped because you know exactly where to start, you know, where you can kind of help unpick it
>
> (2.62-2.65)

For Tash, the concept of collaborating had moved beyond engaging with the work of others and sharing outcomes to working alongside another who would examine and explore ideas, be a driving force when she was under time or workload pressures and guide the process from the start. This seemed to be quite a significant shift in thinking and she attributed the collaborative nature of the project with significant responsibility for its success. By the end of the project, Tash identified the barriers she experienced but these were always in the context of when and how the collaborative nature of the CCtPI helped bridge these. She moved from speaking in general terms to identifying specific barriers and how the collaborative nature of the project was a bridge. When time and workload became barriers, the collaboration ensured the project still continued: *there's somebody else that would rely on you to kind of get a move on and get doing something; that you couldn't just sit and leave it [when] the workload is huge… they're just there and you know they're waiting for you…* (6.35). The collaboration also gave Tash the security of having someone to engage with when she found the process too challenging or was unsure how to proceed with it:

> It is that, kind of, sense that you're not alone
>
> (5.51)

> I do like being able to know who I can go to to say, I'm just stuck… I know I'm not stuck, but I need you to listen so I can talk it through… I think you get a bit more, you're able to ask those deeper questions. You're able to dig a bit deeper, rather than just kind of, doing, like, skimming the surface of it. If there's somebody else there who just simply says oh I wonder why? Or, is this an interesting thing? Perhaps we can kind of explore this a bit more, I think a lot comes out of it
>
> (6.35-6.37)

Tash's recognition of her role in the collaborative process was notable; she began by saying *I'm just stuck* but corrected herself immediately by saying *I know I'm not stuck, but I need you to listen so I can talk it through*. This indicated a growing confidence in her role in the process; her initial approach is one of self-deprecation and is reflective of the lack of confidence she indicated in the first interview when she was on a support plan and had *tried and tried and tried and tried* to develop her practice to no avail. However the immediate amendment indicated that she had come to recognise not only her contribution to the research but that she had knowledge; she just, at times, needed space to explore that knowledge and the collaboration was a way of finding this space. This indicated that she viewed herself as an equal participant in the process by this final interview, with a confidence to recognise her value to the project and that the collaboration was not a sign of weakness but an opportunity to enhance her understanding: *…and I think that's where it's helped for me like personally; I think it's just that bridge* (6.48).

PET: Research incites strong positive emotions for Tash

As with many of the other participants, the lived experience of engaging with the research process was, for Tash, an emotional one; she spoke regularly of how she was feeling at various points throughout the project. In her initial interview these were predominantly positive in nature: *I'm really excited* (1.2) *I really enjoy that side, the academic side of it… I've quite enjoyed what I've learnt* (1.52-1.54) however there was also a sense that she was taking a risk and there was the potential for things to go awry: *if…I've got to the end and I've got, I don't have the outcome I wanted to start with and it feels like almost you failed and you've*

not reached what you need to… (1.46). This sense of failure and not reaching expectations echoes where Tash was in her practice at this point and potentially reflects her worries in terms of her support plan; while she was feeling positive about embarking on the project, there was some fear of judgement or not being good enough. However she also spoke of how research would give her a sense of *empowerment… you're going to be listened to* (1.40). This indicates a tension for her in terms of what the project could offer - either a voice or another path to failure. Nonetheless her enthusiasm for the project was the overriding emotion in this first interview and she tempered her fear of failure with a recognition that *you might have a different outcome… or no outcome at all might support or disprove something* (1.46) which seemed to be the factor that mitigated any risk in this sense. In addition, when seeking support from her headteacher for the project she was advised to *keep it in line with something that we're already [doing]* (1.52) and she viewed the project as a way to meet the targets of her support plan. In this way, therefore, there was potentially less of a fear of failure; she had struggled to meet the expectations in the support plan so to continue to do so would not be overwhelming but just more of the same. So, potentially, both the professional and emotional risks were lessened as a result, whereas to succeed would not only mean success for the project but also lead to the achievement that Tash had been striving for. As such, Tash was invested both professionally and emotionally in the project from the outset:

> I mean this is going to be fun and it, it like draws to that side of me I really I enjoy that, yeah I really enjoy it. I think it will help, like, my confidence-wise so, like, personally… but I think it's great kind of continual professional development as well I think it will really help... those kind of things that I'm always picked up on
>
> (1.48)

Tash spoke of her confidence throughout the project indicating that this was significant for her. However it seemed it was not always confidence in the research process that was her concern but confidence in her practice and as a member of the school community: *our project together has been a really important part of my confidence growing and me realising where I sit in my classroom and where I sit as a teacher* (5.75) however on completion of the project she also stated *now… it's not a scary thing, it's not a big thing* (6.33) implying that at

some point she did view the research as *scary* and *big*. There was also some self-doubt when Tash commenting that she didn't think her research was *good enough* (2.75) to inform the wider educational field however, in keeping it as an inquiry into her practice as a form of professional development, she saw the project as one she would want to repeat: *I'd love to take on another aspect of my appraisal and do another one* (2.46). The classroom based inquiry approach seemed to be the form of research that Tash felt was not only valuable but was what she was confident with in terms of this lived experience and also moving on from it to other projects. Nonetheless, Tash could also see how the project could be relevant to other teachers:

> my struggles of constantly being told this is what you need to improve but never really understanding how, I'd hope and think is probably quite relatable… I think it's that bit that I'd quite like to go out, like, grab people… actually do you know what I'm in the loop, I'm stuck and every observation says questioning and I have no idea where to start with that... because it almost tells us the story I guess… I think that's what I really would have probably needed like every time it came up… I think I'd really probably needed some real life; not textbooks telling me or the internet telling me how… I think I would have needed that this is where you start and this is where you could finish
>
> (2.76-2.82)

yet for Tash there seemed to be a distinction between sharing the project with other teachers and sharing it to inform the wider educational field. Even her use of the term *story* to refer to the project could be viewed as an attempt to view it as less formal and official - less of a piece of 'research' and more an experience to be shared. In this way there was again potentially less risk involved; a story is a personal experience and therefore cannot be right or wrong or not *good enough*, whereas research is subject to peer review and judgement possibly along with an expectation that she may have to defend its robustness and value. Given that Tash's references to her previous experiences of research were her PGCE assignments which were graded, and thus could be viewed as having been judged, it would be unsurprising if Tash associated research as having to be presented for judgement. This could have been a daunting prospect for Tash, particularly as confidence was an issue for her throughout the project. So, even though she wanted the project to *have a purpose wider*

than just me (6.12) there was a sense that telling *the story* was somehow safer than publishing a research project.

When reflecting on the process in the final interview the move away from the emotional investment in the project created a greater sense for Tash that she was engaging in research:

> I'm looking at this, you know, it's not my teaching, it's not my class. It's just… this is data and this is how we're going to do it but it took a really really long time with the questioning for me to be able to do that. It took quite a while. And I think there's probably a point when you read the journal where you go: I can see. Now it's changed into a perspective that's looking more at the children and the teacher, rather than looking at me... there's almost a point where it, it flips and it suddenly looks at data rather than really personal experience sense. It really works when you're in it, quite intensely. And I think having another person almost drags you out of it. because you have to talk about it, it makes it something else
>
> (5.87-5.91)

It seemed that towards the end of the project Tash was less emotionally invested and it became less of a *personal experience* which seemed for her to be an achievement. It was potentially a move away from the emotive, personal investment to a more detached research perspective and the project had less of a *personal element* (2.16), it was less her *story*, and as a result Tash felt it became more aligned with her perception of what research, and researchers, should be. The project then became *a nice, like, stepping stone almost* (6.16) from a personal story of professional development to a research project focused on supporting teacher professional development.

5.4.2 Cath - the '*reflective practitioner*'

> maybe… it's actually something that is doable you know? That it's not out of reach. And I know I thought that, very much that it was something that was very academic… and I wouldn't consider myself that that way
>
> (3.76)

Cath is a middle leader in an English independent school and chose to participate in this project as an opportunity to challenge herself and develop professionally. Throughout the

project she referred to wanting to improve and develop her practice and avoid reaching a professional plateau which was the motivation for her involvement:

> I am interested in always trying to better my own practice and if, by doing this, it gives me the opportunity to do that and ... and then understand something better then I, I'm all for that you know? I'm not, you know, I'm quite or like to think anyway that I'm quite reflective about about my practice and I'm always trying to do the next thing or do you know make it better rather than just be, like, that's fine I know what I'm doing, I've been teaching for 10 years… you know I want to, like, keep moving forward with it so… I thought that perhaps [this] might give me the opportunity
>
> (1.96-100)

Cath, like a number of other participants, reached the stage of the CCtPI where it had been collaboratively designed, ethical approval sought and granted and data collection begun. However, for a number of reasons explored later in this section, Cath withdrew from the project at this point and the CCtPI ended incomplete.

PET: Research is significant and conducted by others

> When you think of research you think of a published paper, you know that's something you have to write and publish it so that other people can read it and gain from it, yeah, so that I think that's sort of where I get like sort of torn between no, no I'm not a researcher or I'm not… I can't do a research project. But I suppose that I kind of consider research to be, and I know that I know really that this isn't true because you know anyone can publish a paper… it would have to involve more people you know that actually your outcomes but then have to be judged by somebody else to… validate them… and that sort of research like just me on my own sort of thing doesn't constitute research as such
>
> (3.84-3.88)

Cath's view of research was that it was the purview of *people who, who are lecturers and people that are maybe at a higher level educationally* (1.144) and it was *something that academics do* (1.148). She did not view herself as part of this group of people and research was therefore not an activity she would be engaged in. Research, for Cath, was something to be engaged with rather than something she would feel she would engage in: *I wouldn't really necessarily experience that it's like more of the summary of that someone else has done the work* (1.38). Her perception was that research was *supposed to be like a big thing*

that will change something… it has to be a too big a question [for me] to research (2.12) and, as such, it was *for those more academic people than myself* (1.152). Nonetheless she recognised that this was something she was not excluded from entirely and that there was scope for her to engage in research *which was quite appealing to… think how I could help that sort of situation really* (2.90). She also seemed prepared to question her perception of research: *I'm not thinking small enough, you know that actually it's supposed to be like a big thing… whereas actually I think it probably doesn't have to be that way at all* (2.12). This indicates that from the outset there was a tension for Cath in terms of what she perceived research to be i.e. something big, possibly too big, and what she understood research could be i.e. small enough to be something she could engage with. This tension persisted up until the point that she withdrew from the project; she referred to research as something beyond her capabilities and yet she remained engaged in the project for some time. This implied that she was continually trying to reconcile her concept of big research with research that was small enough for her to manage.

Cath did not make a distinction between research and inquiry considering them as *interchangeable, yeah I don't think it would mean anything different to me* (1.61). However as she continued she did comment that *potentially that would be the same you know although I can imagine it could mean quite different things but maybe it's a different approach style you know to what to how you go about it… yeah I wouldn't know necessarily the difference* (1.71). This approach of making a clear, sure statement followed by some uncertainty and a self-deprecating comment was common for Cath; she frequently tempered her view of what research was with a comment that questioned her view and/or included a reminder that she was inexperienced with and ill-informed about research. This lack of confidence in not only her capacity to engage in research but also her own perception is explored later in this section.

Research for Cath was *a way to [find] best practice, best approaches* (1.45) and putting theory into practice and *finding some real results, you know, potentially that could say, hey do you know what? This actually works or doesn't* (1.57). She also seemed to view there being a sense of accountability:

> I would expect to have to… prove, so evidence would prove what you have whatever you're saying, you know… through asking the children questions, getting their opinion on things or physical you know work and through observation as well, you know… any of those sort of things to build that evidence
>
> (1.89-1.92)

with evidence, and research, being the vehicle through which practice or an approach were validated.

Along with being *a big thing that will change something* (2.12) Cath also viewed research as being a formal process and that anything informal was not research. She defined informal as:

> analysing results of how what children are doing you know ... when so I guess I guess when we put in something new into school like a new approach or a new practice or a new scheme with the intent of to, to gain better results we… then analyse that… but I would say it's quite informal so we'll just, it's more of a, like, discussion between teachers and you'll look at your results and you'll look at your year groups and you think 'has that impacted on on those those… such things' so… I think it depends how you sort of define research really
>
> (1.109-1.111)

This potentially implies that Cath did not view this practice as research, even if it reflected a research approach. Further exploration of this determined that Cath likely held this view because *I consider because I haven't written a thousand words on it that it hasn't happened, you know, the process hasn't happened so therefore you're not, you know… you're not a researcher because you're not publishing papers* (3.84). This written, published outcome seemed to be the definition of research for Cath - without this, any research related activity was not, for her, research. For Cath to consider such activity research it needed to be written, published and shared to inform the wider education field. It needed to inform and *change something* more than her practice and that of her school colleagues.

PET: The purpose of research is to question and develop classroom practice

This idea that research inform the wider field and have an impact beyond on classroom or one school is a key purpose of research from Cath's perspective. It was also the essential motivation for her participation in the project:

> something that I could put into practice that I can do to make a difference to the children because at the end of the day that's what I want want to do is to make a difference to their education and if I can do something that will help that then enhance that or enhance my teaching or whatever
>
> (1.156)

While Cath felt it was not her place to engage in research, nonetheless she felt it important that *we question stuff and, and question whether that works for us and works for your school or not, you know?* (1.158) and this sense of responsibility to *push education forward* (1.45) came up frequently during interviews. Cath chose to engage in the project as she viewed herself as a reflective practitioner and *I wanted to learn more and… think, 'oh you know…how can I improve my practice?* (3.34) but her perception that research informed the wider educational field and needed to be disseminated to a wider professional audience seemed to be equally important:

> maybe I think that research, although it's, I know it is for yourself but you kind of feel like it's, it's for a purpose, you know, for some for other people to maybe read or… for other people to… talk to other people about
>
> (3.22)

The purpose of research, for Cath, therefore seemed to centre on informing and developing practice:

> The reason I was interested in it in the beginning, I think, is because I felt like it, you know, potentially could change my practice or make me a better practitioner and that's… I'm like, I'm always looking to do that because I think that's, you know, a reflective practitioner is the best practitioner, you know.. I think when you, if you suddenly think you know everything… then that's… personally think… you've lost it… because there's always something different you can do… So I think… that it could change my practice or… assist my practice
>
> (2.6-2.8)

This was an important element to consider, particularly when considering Cath's reasons for withdrawing from the project. As part of the research process Cath engaged with literature to position our research in the field of education. While the project continued beyond this, in her final interview Cath spoke of how engaging with this literature helped to develop her practice:

> When you're looking at your research or you're doing readings and you're thinking about how, what you could implement you know… When you're in it and… thinking about as well as, you know, reading, when I started reading some of the readings and all of… that just makes you… think more about what you, what you're doing and… how your everyday practice, you know, impacts on things… it automatically makes you think and… therefore you're already making your practice better because it's impacting your, your thoughts you know? …to read them are actually very useful because just doing the readings alone you get a lot out of…
>
> (3.60-3.62)

Potentially, therefore, Cath's needs were met by engaging *with* research and therefore her motivation to continue engaging *in* research was lessened as a result. Cath's interviews tended to be unspecific and vague. She spoke of *stuff* and *things*, referring to grandiose ideas of *pushing education forward* but did not contextualise these in her current practice nor specific aspects of the CCtPI that contributed to her feeling *scared* or being *empowering* or *inspiring*. The primary purpose of research for Cath was to develop her practice and other purposes, such as informing the educational field, she felt were *not her place*. This is further indicated in her exit interview when she explored her next steps in terms of research engagement, focusing on engagement *with* research rather than *in* research:

> I would think that I would hope that you know that I might be able to, sort of, find time to continue it or… certainly, you know, go over those sort of readings again and and look at them and pick out those those things that I might be able to actually, you know, implement and improve my practice… [and] probably my, you know, mental well-being in the world
>
> (3.34)

As such, the ongoing tension she felt between not being one of those *more academic people* (1.152) and being engaged *in* research was resolved; she developed her practice by engaging

with research, achieved her intended outcome for participating, had achieved something she could bring forward into her future practice and, perhaps most significantly, she did not have to continue with something that she felt she couldn't do:

> No, no I'm not a researcher… I'm not, I can't… I can't do a research project (3.88)

While a primary focus for Cath was that research supported the development of practice she also considered it to be a vehicle through which pedagogical approaches could be analysed to determine *whether that thing would work maybe in the classroom, that certain approach* (1.3) and *there is reasons why it works for those other schools…. and whether it would fit in with what you're doing, you know, with your school* (1.121). This idea that she should be questioning policy and practice and her assertion that it is *important that we question stuff and, and question whether that works for us and works for your school or not, you know?* (1.158) suggests she felt that there was a responsibility to engage critically in education and research not only facilitated this but was a key approach to establishing this critical stance. This responsibility of critical engagement also extended to her own practice *so that you don't just do what you've always done, you know… not just accept what you did like 20 years ago as still being okay… to see what actually happens* (1.45-1.55). Cath therefore seemed to place significant weight on the purpose of research; for her it held an esteemed purpose that *push[ed] education forward*, questioned policy and enhanced practice. This aligned with Cath's perception that it is *big*; while she recognised that a research project in itself may not be big - *I'm not thinking small enough* (2.12) - the purpose she perceived research as fulfilling was substantial. It was understandable, therefore, that she viewed the prospect of engaging in research and undertaking something of such magnitude, as with feelings of both inspiration and fear.

PET: Research sits apart from the Cath's world as a teacher

Cath's experience of engaging in research was her university dissertation which she stated *was quite minimal* (1.16). This aligned with her thinking that she was not an *academic* that engaged in research and seemed to underplay the value her dissertation had. That she had

engaged in research for her dissertation was a fact however this was not in sync with her idea that *it's not my place to do it* (1.44). Therefore, it could be that she was trying to align this contrast by lessening her experience of engaging in research. She seemed to further reduce the importance of her experience by making it clear that she had done her dissertation some time ago, potentially seeking to reinforce her assertion that, despite this previous experience of engaging in research, it was *something academics do* (1.148) and *not my place to do it* (1.144). More than this, Cath seemed to consider the concept of being a researcher as something intrinsic to a person, a *sort of thought process that… I feel is needed for doing the research* (3.18).

And yet Cath chose to participate, indicating that, on some level, she recognised that research was an activity she could engage in:

> I think it's like, you know, [I] don't know what I'm doing… but at the same time I want to
>
> (2.10)

though for Cath the quality of any research she could produce was always in question. Her conflicting views of not being able to engage in research yet being open to engaging in research resulted in seemingly contradictory statements throughout the interviews, from *you're not a researcher because you're not publishing papers* (3.84) to *anyone can publish a paper* (3.92). As her lived experience of the CCtPI continued, Cath's views seemed to change in terms of what research was and who could engage in research however any change seemed to be tempered with a further obstacle. In Cath's mind, for example, a researcher publishes papers however on recognition that anyone, including Cath, could publish papers she added *actually your outcomes then have to be judged by somebody else to make them, to validate them and, you know, that… research like just, just me on my own… doesn't constitute research as such* (3.92). This suggests that while Cath was recognising that she could publish papers and assume this aspect of the researcher role, any research she would undertake would potentially fail to stand up under scrutiny. There seemed to be a continued reluctance for Cath to consider research as something she could engage with - indeed, the point at which Cath withdrew was when the CCtPI was underway and becoming very much

a reality. Given that her frame of reference for her previous research was a university dissertation and her perception that research she engaged in would be *judged* in order to be validated, it seems likely that, for Cath, this would be a daunting prospect and account to some degree for this reluctance. In addition, it was increasingly evident that the CCtPI was going to continue to completion which meant that Cath, from her perspective, was potentially going to be judged as a researcher and the CCtPI scrutinised. This contradicted her view that she couldn't engage in research, that she wasn't a researcher and potentially left her feeling too vulnerable to continue. She had potentially met her needs, in terms of wanting to develop her practice, by engaging *with* research which was sufficient; she could then withdraw, avoid scrutiny and judgement and confirm her established view that *it's not my place to do it* (1.144). Cath recognised within herself a reluctance, despite the progress of the CCtPI, to adapt her thinking about who engages *in* research:

> I'm still in that sort of mindset, you know, I'm a bit fixed. Maybe I need to be a bit more growth
>
> (3.18)

She was prepared to state that at the beginning… *I felt like it was something more but actually, you know, when you looked at how far you got through with the project… it's actually something that is doable you know, that it's not out of reach* (3.76) and yet she still chose to withdraw from the CCtPI. This suggests that she did not fully embed this change to her preconceptions even when they were challenged by her lived experience. This is potentially further evident in her use of the second person, you, when speaking about the CCtPI and it was being more accessible than she expected. Not using the first person, I, suggests she did not identify her role in the project or feel she had ownership of it. If this was the case it is not unexpected therefore that her lived experience was insufficient to change her preconceived idea that *what you do for your children and… your everyday sort of thing that you do… you think that's not really, like, good enough for a research project, you know?* (3.22).

PET: There are bridges and barriers; collaboration can be both

> there will always be barriers, time barriers will always come into it… but it shouldn't, that shouldn't be a barrier really? It's, I think that's just life
>
> (2.12)

Time was a significant barrier for Cath in terms of being able to give time to the CCtPI and she cited this as the primary factor when withdrawing. She spoke of how *honestly, time just disappeared and I was suddenly, like, at the end of term* (3.64). Linked with this was the issue of priority; she did not feel that she prioritised the CCtPI *not that it wasn't important but, you know, because it was, it's just something that, you know, would be good to do* (3.12). This suggests that for Cath engaging in research turned out to be an optional extra and unconnected to her role as a teacher and as a result, when the demands of teaching increased the optional extras became less of a priority *which is sort of the irony of the whole thing, particularly about what the project is [time management]* (3.6). This separation of research and practice for Cath meant that while she could see *how that's useful, I could see how that works* (3.6) at the same time, when she needed to focus on another aspect of her practice, she did not equate this as research:

> I had a difficult class with… lovely but time consuming children that… I needed to do my own sort of reading on it… look into it and I had to do a course as well which therefore went higher up the list because it directly impacted on the class
>
> (3.8)

This direct impact on the class of her readings and course attendance did not seem to Cath to be research activity:

> I guess, I, yeah, I didn't think that, you know, I didn't think that. And I think that's probably because I don't, I'm still not… like I think I said probably right at the beginning… that research is not what you do you know… you don't naturally think 'oh I could yeah look into this' and you don't have, I don't know, don't have that sort of thought process that… I feel is needed for for doing the research… you just sort of think… well this is just what I do not that actually it could mean something or would be useful to look into further or, you know, attach any kind of research to… just what happens and that's what you do for your children and that's like your everyday sort of thing
>
> (3.18-3.22)

This perception of what research is, or perhaps more importantly for Cath what research isn't, seemed to be the biggest barrier to her engagement in research. This indicated that the idea that research is *big* and not directly related to her *everyday sort of thing* narrowed her perception that that of research being concepts and ideas that did not directly relate to her practice:

> I always think that when you're reading something it's quite, like, you know it's, like, the ideal isn't it… and you've got to be really careful not to make yourself feel bad when you're reading it because you're like God, like, these people like exist
>
> (3.6)

This suggests that even when engaging *in* research Cath felt removed from the findings of the research and research, for Cath, was misaligned with her practice; at times *useful* (3.70) but ultimately *you're going to bypass that* (1.129).

Yet Cath could identify the benefits of engaging in research activity as *it could provide the opportunity to, I guess to…. stand back and look and think, you know, you're just always doing and… actually don't necessarily have that much control over… things or what you know* (1.150). This element of control is linked to Cath's understanding of the time she could give to research and how high, or low, a priority it would have: *if the school could give you time to do that or if it was part of your, you know, sort of, planning time or whatever* (3.64). Throughout her interviews there was a sense that being able to engage in research was also out of her control - she had *a fixed mindset* (3.18), she didn't *have that, sort of, thought process* (3.18), she *wasn't really presented with that kind of level of academic reading* (3.62)

or *if it was in a different timescale, you know, if it was in the future* (3.44). This suggested that Cath did not feel able to take ownership of the research process and drive it forward because she considered so much of it to be beyond her control in terms of the process or the outcome and this was as much a barrier for her as finding the time to see the CCtPI through to completion.

The element of collaboration was supportive for Cath as she found it *definitely more motivating* (3.56) but there was also a sense that it added pressure as, when discussing next steps after withdrawing she spoke of how, were she to pick the project up again she would do it independently:

> I wouldn't want to say yeah… let's continue and then… I go oh sorry I haven't got any time for it to continue so it's, like, I would hate to… do you know what I mean, so I think that I would just, you know, maybe keep it to myself
>
> (3.36)

Cath referred to herself as being *long in the tooth* (3.186) and spoke of how *when I did my postgraduate and early years course… it's, like, years ago* (3.62) and this suggested an element of being established and more *fixed* in her practice as well as her mindset:

> that wouldn't happen in the real world… you know how am I going to actually do that when I've got you know twenty other things to do you know? Yes, you can sort of, I suppose, have this sort of idealistic view that you don't think necessarily is very real… just sometimes things don't always go… if you're reading about something you know you're not going to be able to do that all the time
>
> (3.64)

Again this implies a sense of feeling removed, of *how am I going to actually do that*, as Cath seems to struggle to align the research she engages in or with, to her *everyday sort of thing* which presented a barrier to her engagement. Potentially as a result, Cath then was unable to prioritise the CCtPI as she did not view it as having a direct impact on her classroom practice and it was therefore not important enough for her to ensure that she dedicated the time for it nor, potentially, did she want to dedicate this time. She noted herself that she had not been able to make this connection more explicit either for herself or to others in her

school and implied that, had she done so, she would have felt either a greater motivation or responsibility to continue:

> I think something like… that has, you know, sort of a direct impact… that would make you think… it just naturally makes the priority high of importance you know, because… you have to be quite self-motivated I suppose, like, because it's you, because it's just your project, you know… so maybe if I made it more of a something… to help the Key Stage 1 department or whatever… had something tangible… that sort of accountability I think that maybe would make a difference
>
> (3.44)

PET: Research incites conflicting emotions for Cath

For Cath from the first interview the prospect of engaging in research was positive:

> I think to have the opportunity to say that this has happened I've investigated this and this is what I research within my class and this had this effect is quite empowering really quite empowering
>
> (1.158)

The feeling of empowerment reflects the lack of control Cath spoke of in terms of her role and how she viewed research as an opportunity to regain some control. This prospect was *quite exciting… exciting I think… I want to find out and to be able to do that yourself and not just be told to do something that's, that's quite a nice feeling to have, that sort of control over something yourself* (1.152). The language Cath used was not only positive but was also implied a strong emotional charge. This suggests that research was more than a purely professional endeavour that might give Cath a greater autonomy in her practice but that it was also a strong emotional investment - it was more than *nice*, it was *exciting* and *empowering*. Cath compared research engagement to *a bit like when you go on a, like, a really good course. I think it would be something, like, something to inspire you to move something forward in, you know, and I like that, I like to be inspired by something* (1.156). Again, there is an emotional charge in this statement in Cath's view that engaging in research can be inspirational for her practice but also that of colleagues:

> I think it would be good… to share research and to share outcomes, something that has actually happened in, within the school… rather than something that someone else has done… you can do it and can directly show how that… affected the children or not, you know, that hopefully would then be quite inspiring for the other staff
>
> (1.158)

However as the CCtPI began so too did the way Cath spoke about engaging in research. It was at this point that there seems to be some tension in the way she spoke of how she viewed the project: *I don't know what I'm doing but at the same time I want to* (2.10). While this suggests that she still felt positively about it, there was an element of negative emotion emerging and a lack of confidence:

> I think the main thing is the confidence to do it, to just say that that is good enough
>
> (2.12)

Despite Cath viewing the prospect of engaging in the CCtPI with a positive perspective, there had been a gap of some months before she had been able to find time to begin the next steps of engaging with relevant literature and starting to discuss the project design. Cath noted that:

> I think partly the reason we haven't got going with it is because I'm, a bit like, I don't really, I'm not sure what I'm doing so I think… in a way I suppose a bit scared of it
>
> (2.8)

This is a significant change from the language Cath used in the first interview as she had gone from feeling excited, empowered and inspired to feeling afraid and lacking in confidence.

The feelings Cath shared in the first interview echo her perception of research; an activity that is *exciting*, *empowering* and *inspiring* aligns with one that is *big* and *can push education forward* (1.45). Articulating her view of research and the emotional impact it had for her, and could potentially have for others, could have clarified this for Cath and therefore brought into focus the implications of the CCtPI. It would therefore not be unreasonable for

Cath to feel the CCtPI had to *push education forward* and inspire others in the profession, and for her to find this to be an overwhelming responsibility, leading to her feelings of fear and lack of confidence.

The feeling of being overwhelmed was further suggested in Cath's later comments when she spoke of feeling *pounded from all directions* (3.12) and *how am I going to actually do that?* (3.64). While the collaborative element of the CCtPI was in some ways supportive for Cath:

> I think that just, it's having… that support to say, in to build you confidence to say yes, that is absolutely fine to research that, you know… would be worthwhile to do, you know, it's that… sort of confidence with that
>
> (2.16)

nonetheless the *slightly formal side of it… scares me a bit I suppose* (3.36) and the collaboration, while supportive, seemed insufficient to mitigate her fears.

There were a range of other factors that influenced Cath's decision to withdraw from the project:

> it was like you're being squashed, you know, there's a lot of management, there's a lot of parents, I had quite a difficult class with some time-consuming, lovely but time-consuming children, I had to do… an autism course as well which therefore like went higher up the list because it directly impacted on on on the class… and then on the other side I was, to be honest, just exhausted and we had, you know, staffing was a massive issue, you know, people isolate having to isolate left right and centre… and obviously because of covid we have quite a pressure to this whole catch up thing, you know, and then I've got a new curriculum in the EYFS come in and it was just, it was like you, sort of, like, felt like you were pounded from all directions
>
> (3.8-3.12)

These pressures may have influenced Cath's perspective of the CCtPI and exacerbated the potential of the CCtPI feeling like an overwhelming responsibility. This also suggests that Cath's world is one of action, of *doing things* yet this seems to be in contrast with her self-view as a *reflective practitioner.* When she shared this view of herself, she encompasses this contrast:

> I'm quite or like to think anyway that I'm quite reflective about about my practice
>
> I'm always trying to do the next thing
>
> Cath, 1.96

This suggests that she may have this perception but that she may not give the time to make this a reality, choosing action over reflection. This mirrors her approach to the CCtPI. Engaging *with* the research was a definite, familiar action which she could *do*. The wider conceptual ideas of collecting and analysing data were potentially less concrete actions and required time for contemplation, consideration and analysis; perhaps the different form of doing that *scared* Cath. Cath is an experienced teacher and has been teaching for a number of years, therefore her approach to her practice is likely to be well established. If this approach is one of direct action and less of reflection and analysis then it is not unlikely that she felt most comfortable seeking a similar approach to her CCtPI, withdrawing before she needed to engage in the less familiar, more uncomfortable aspects.

Cath had conflicting feelings about withdrawing, feeling *I've been so terrible at actually doing it* (3.36) and *a bit like I failed* (3.60) and yet retaining her original perspective of what engaging in research could be:

> You want to be excited about don't you, you don't want it to be that thing that, you know, you think oh God I haven't done that yet
>
> (3.38)

Again, despite her lived experience being quite different, Cath's preconceptions of engaging in research were still resistant to change and, even though she withdrew before completing the CCtPI she could align her thinking to the exciting, inspirational and empowering feelings she had at the start:

> when I was, you know, thinking about well as, you know, reading when I started reading some of the readings and all of that, that just makes you… think more about what you what you're doing and… how your everyday practice, you know, impacts on things and that's a good feeling… I think that's quite motivating, you feel like you're doing something worthwhile
>
> (3.60-3.62)

5.4.3 Max – *'contagiously positive'*

> I think that's where, when you're, when I'm dealing with little people and little human beings and what they're doing that's where I'm confident in looking at the findings, looking at the research and the outcomes and doing that bit about it, analysing what's happening and looking at how we can extend it or develop it or prove it… there's also the other bit is, as a school leader that you have to look at pages and pages of data and be analytical with that and you can identify trends and but then that's less exciting… it's that… number on a page; get the child, let me talk to him, bring his book and we'll have a look
>
> (1.258-1.262)

Max is a senior leader in a state school in Wales and throughout his career had been involved in *formal research projects* (1.4). He chose to participate in this project partly in response to the changes to the Teachers' Standards in Wales and also as he had engaged in research previously and was interested in continuing this. He viewed research activity as a vehicle for collaborative, supportive professional development and was keen to explore the possibilities of this further.

Max did not complete the CCtPI project, despite reaching the point of data collection and initial analysis taking place as we immersed ourselves in that data. The start of the COVID-19 pandemic halted the project part way through the data collection stage and, as a senior leader in the school who was also teaching, Max's priorities were supporting the staff, children and school community in managing the impact of the pandemic with *online teaching (which is good in one sense, as my class are engaging) pretty much 7am until 9pm!! In between that, I have been working in our Childcare Hub….with the spectre of full school reopening for us in Wales soon* (email June 2020). With the subsequent school year being *more hectic than usual* (email July 2021) for Max and the inevitable end point of my own data collection, I had fewer interviews with Max and the CCtPI did not continue to completion.

PET: Research informs the field; inquiry informs classroom practice

> I've been involved in sort of… formal research projects where we've published the outcomes of it and it's been shared with local schools and that kind of thing and that's been endorsed by the local authority or particular bodies so I've, that's, I see that as like something that I've done and it was based on my own practice but it was also slightly removed because it was a lot of extra reading and written data and theoretical, whereas now what I'm doing more so almost on a weekly basis cause I've got quite a tricky class is that sort of practice-based research where it's a case of identifying this issue, I need to fix this issue and then has anyone else out in the world got that solution for me has anyone else got a route I might try, right I'm going to try that myself let's see where we go with that… and I've seen quite a lot of benefits from that
>
> (1.4-1.14)

Max's prior experience of engaging in research meant he had developed a perception of what research was for him. He identified *formal research* as something that informed the wider field and was *endorsed* by those removed from the day-to-day practice of the classroom. He considered research to be something that anyone could *pick up and take from it what they can but they get the whole context* (1.70). He also viewed this as being *expansive* (1.64) and more quantitative in nature and aimed at proof:

> Research, a larger scale research, you know, you might be looking at some quantitative data, you know… you might be collecting surveys, you might be doing something more statistical, something a bit more concrete that you could share with someone else that they could go ah, right, there's your proof
>
> (1.158)

Max's perception of research differed from his perception of inquiry however he viewed there being an overlap between the two with *it working better from the classroom to the research, the research feeds into the classroom again but I think there's definitely a cross over from the two but… I think you do that class based stuff first to get that 'oh wow this is interesting' but that might spur you on to go and look more broadly* (1.74). Inquiry, for Max, was focused on the classroom:

> For me it's searching for a solution or searching for an alternative idea or an alternative approach so, it's, I might have tried everything I can possibly think of, I'm not getting anywhere or I haven't quite got that solution I want, so I'm going to search for someone else's solution… someone else's thinking, someone else's approach to see if I can apply it to my own
>
> (1.39-1.45)

> I think if I'm doing a classroom inquiry my evidence could range from my interactions with an individual child… it could be my assessment for learning… that would be my evidence as a class teacher, could even be the children's views on things
>
> (1.156)

This would suggest that Max's perceptions of research and inquiry are defined by the data collected; when the data is classroom focused and qualitative this is inquiry and when it is quantitative and draws from a wider range of educational contexts for data it becomes research. Another defining element seemed for Max to be the formality of the process. Research was formal and somewhat *removed* from the classroom whereas inquiry was informal and *essentially you're just doing the research activity every day* (2.48). It seems that Max's perception of inquiry resonates more with his classroom practice and potentially feels more accessible as a result. His prior experience with research activity means that this doesn't seem to be inaccessible for him, however inquiry is possibly more meaningful as he sees a clearer link between inquiry and practice:

> Research might… contribute to the broader profession where you might be, you know, working across a series of different schools working together to develop something whereas the inquiry I think is much more personalised to that teacher, that cohort, in that class situation
>
> (1.62)

PET: The purpose of research is to impact on practice

Max spoke of impact and being *impactful* (1.18, 1.22) and he saw a clear difference between the impact of research and of inquiry:

> I think the class based stuff just seems it's a little more informal but possibly more impactful for me because it's immediate it's there it's those kids it's that moment it's the next week it's the next week it's the next week, whereas the research projects I've done in the past they were impactful in that moment, they've sat, they're sat on a shelf now and practice has moved on and the probably the stuff in there is not relevant anymore… I think that there, there's a difference in the impact, you know, with the inquiry you're having an impact on one class or group of children whereas the more expansive research, because it's got a more solid foundation, is easier to communicate to others, might be more beneficial to develop the profession overall
>
> (1.18-1.64)

This suggests that, for Max, inquiry is conducted in a classroom or school for that teacher or school and its purpose is a form of continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers, whereas research is disseminated to a much wider audience and informs the field of education.

Max also seemed to view research activity as an effective tool to explore practice, particularly new initiatives or approaches:

> We're trying so much here, we're trying to be so innovative here, we should be doing research to find out if that's actually working… to really develop our practice as a school
>
> (1.198-1.288)

This suggests that Max views research as having an element of assessment or judgement, determining the effectiveness of current practice in order to inform future practice. Aligning with this is the sense that, as the CCtPI progressed, he began to view research activity as integral to the role of the teacher, that it could be a built-in element of teaching practice:

> It also makes my life easier at the same time because I'm really focusing on what they need… it's part and parcel of my planning for lessons, it's what I'm doing everyday with the class so it's not really an extra, if anything it's making things easier because I think I'm a bit more effective in what I'm doing because it is more focused on that
>
> (2.72-2.80)

and that a purpose of research is to enhance practice, support a greater focus on specific aspects of practice and consider different approaches:

> I think having that distinct focus in your mind of 'oh I'm really honing in on this now' it does make you stop and think. And I've certainly adapted things and changed things with that mindset which I might not have done before
>
> (2.64)

Max also made a distinction between engaging *with* research and engaging *in* research and considering how both can lead to *spirals of inquiry* (1.10) but that the starting point is engaging *with* research before engagement *in* research can begin:

> We're all at different points but certainly everyone's moving toward that stage of 'oh research is some kind of purposeful action with the benefit on the kids'… so… there's been some dipping into the literature in the broad wide world out there but then that's started our conversations and our discussions as a staff
>
> (1.94-2.98)

As a senior leader in the school, Max noted from the outset that a motivation for his participation in this project was due to the changes in the professional standards for teachers in Wales and the significant encouragement for all teachers to engage in professional learning (initial email). He wanted to support staff to meet these expectations, one of his motivations for participating in the project, and so encouraging staff to view research as he does seems significant for him. Max uses language that infers that he is trying to influence staff to align their perceptions around engaging in research with his:

> It's got a purpose, I think that's where we'll start to pull people along… I think they're starting to see that, no, it doesn't have to be this very formal something extra… to really develop our practice as a school
>
> (1.92-1.98)

This suggests that Max considers the purpose of engaging in research to have a significantly positive influence on classroom practice but also ensures that staff meet government expectations in a way that is relevant and meaningful for them. In this, Max's dual responsibilities seem evident - as a teacher he views engagement in research as a way to

develop his own practice and as a school leader he recognises it as a required expectation that may be more effective if the team can recognise a purpose that enhances their practice and benefits the children they teach:

> that impact on teaching and learning that's, what's the point in doing it if you're not having some kind of goal to benefit you as a professional and the children you're teaching
>
> (1.144)

PET: Engagement in inquiry aligns with Max's world as a teacher

Before participating in this project Max had previous experience of engaging in research activity and was seeking to understand how to best support other teachers to do the same. He spoke positively about engaging in research and meeting *really exciting challenges* (1.19). Max recognised that elements of research activity were an inherent part of his practice as a school leader, particularly in terms of having *to look at pages and pages of data and be analytical with that and you can identify trends* (1.260) but he perceived research as having more scope to explore the wider context, collecting and analysing the qualitative data that would give a nuanced understanding of how something might *look different in here and here and here and here… not everyone's going to do it like little clones, 'cause that doesn't work* (1.226-1.30).

Max had a clear perception of how research might influence practice:

> making you more effective to support that child… it's all focused on a benefit to teaching and learning… that's what research can do… it's that impact on that individual or that class or that school depending on the scale of what you're looking at really
>
> (1.126-1.146)

> and how it aligned with his practice as a teacher, that it's not this disjointed thing it's actually purposeful and will improve your practice
>
> (1.92)

When engaging with the CCtPI Max's perception was *that it's easier now… because I can be working in that way constantly… actually the research now with the group of children you know on a daily basis is just easy because essentially you're doing the research activity every day, I know there are formalised points, but you're constantly thinking in that way* (2.42-2.48). He seemed to assimilate the CCtPI activity into his practice as a teacher and consider this to be a positive change:

> as a teacher you can fall into that habit of this is how I teach, but every cohort's different and as much as you do naturally adapt different aspects of what you do into those different cohorts I think having that distinct focus in your mind of 'oh I'm really honing in on this now' it does make you stop and think and I've certainly adapted things and changed things with that mindset which I might not done before
>
> (2.62-2.64)

While Max did not explicitly comment on his view of himself as a researcher, his bringing together of the research role and teacher role and his framing of this in terms of the positive impact he felt this had on his practice suggest that he was assuming the role of the researcher and that it did not result in a tension with his role as a teacher or as a school leader. Potentially therefore Max identified to some degree as a researcher, particularly as the CCtPI was a support for the development of his own practice as well as the children's learning. He viewed the inquiry as a way of adapting his practice within and beyond the project, benefitting the children and himself:

> as a teacher again you tend to recycle resources, I don't think I've recycled a single resource this year because [through the CCtPI] I've been really trying to tailor it exactly to their needs with a particular focus on that independence because… beyond the research is a big issue for that, so it's actually serving me as well because I need to grow that in them before they move on but it also makes my life easier at the same time because I'm really focusing on what they need
>
> (2.66-2.74)

The alignment between Max's preconceived ideas about research and his comments about his lived experience of CCtPI suggest that the research activity was not a conflict with his

practice as a teacher. He seemed to view the role of the researcher as *serving me well* and his identification as a teacher was not in conflict with this. This could suggest, while not explicitly stated, an identification as a researcher through the alignment and balance he found between the research and teaching activities and outcomes. His prior experience in research may have been an influence however he shared that those experiences were *slightly removed* whereas the CCtPI aligned with his perception of research as a vehicle for professional development that took place alongside his teaching practice:

> It's not like a sort of add on that I have to constantly think every time 'oh I must remember to do that, some of that this week'... so yeah, there's nothing really stopping me
>
> (2.80-2.82)

PET: There are barriers and bridges, and collaboration is important

Max's perception of the barriers to engaging in research were focused more on those experienced by the staff team rather than him personally; this could be in large part because he did not experience any barriers until the COVID-19 pandemic. Until the pandemic he shared that *this is easier than I was expecting it to be* (2.56). He recognised that this may not be the perception of other teachers and that *you just want everyone to see the value first… see the benefit of it and then we can look towards… doing things more formally in school* (1.118).

The collaborative element of engaging in research seems significant to Max as he noted that *if you were doing it in isolation it's harder to develop those skills, I think, but the fact that certainly we are doing it collaboratively makes a massive difference* (1.98). Not only in terms of the CCtPI but also in terms of supporting other teachers to engage with and in research, Max viewed the role of collaboration as facilitating professional discourse which could in turn facilitate such engagement:

> We'd all be talking around something we'd all been trying to do in our classes… so we said why don't we do something together then… [that] sparked something bigger… and that's where it turned into [a] research project
>
> (1.72)

This again reflects Max's dual perspective evident throughout the project; that of a teacher and that of a school leader. When exploring barriers and bridges, Max's focus was the other teachers in the school which suggests that while he did not experience the same barriers, he could identify these from working alongside colleagues and draw from his own experiences to support research engagement for the staff team.

Engaging *with* research presented as a barrier for Max, primarily in terms of accessibility and having time to source literature:

> I don't know if I, in my day to day crazy working life, if I'd have a huge amount of time to go and source it because I wouldn't be aware of a particular source to go to… in my head there's no a distinct place I would just to go as a, you know, a research hub or somewhere where I think there's a fab repository of information I can go 'ah, I'll look see what's in there', that would be a possible hindrance
>
> (2.102-110)

In addition, the context of the literature was an issue for Max:

> interestingly a lot of the research, there's not much research that I would certainly find applicable to me, it's not from Wales it's from other education setups, you know, even England are radically different in many respects now… I get a bit frustrated reading it
>
> (1.274-1.280)

Nonetheless, these issues did not deter Max; one aspect of the agreed roles we assigned ourselves as part of the CCtPI was that I would source relevant literature and share it (within copyright law) which Max felt would help *massively… some little signposts sort of look at that… yeah, that would be really helpful* (2.114-2.120). In terms of the context, while this was an issue for Max he also stated that *for me it certainly just more sparks off my own thinking and I'll go away and do something on my own* (2.178). Max's recognition of the issues indicates that he was not viewing the research process with an unrealistic perspective

nor that his lived experience was problem free, but that he sought solutions for the issues that arose. This could be influenced by his prior experience of research activity and therefore potentially an increased confidence in the process which facilitated an approach that focused on solutions to the problems that arose rather than them being insurmountable barriers.

Increased confidence was a factor that Max felt was important for the wider team when engaging *with* research:

> We've been through a period of change where we had people telling us we should be doing this better and that better and we are always thinking we were doing all right and that [local authority representative] came in and validated us and said no you're doing it really well. I think that's given the staff confidence to be more critical of information that's being given to them, of strategies that are being suggested, other approaches 'cause they're now going 'oh, but we might know what we're doing but we might take that bit of practice' rather than 'this person said we must do this, we must do this'
>
> (1.104)

It seems Max also felt a sense of autonomy was important when building confidence within the team and, as a school leader, perhaps Max recognises this within himself as he uses the first person plural in this instance, identifying with the staff team moving away from being instructed, to the freedom to engage critically with practice. While Max likely felt confident in his engagement *in* research, building on his previous experiences, the validation from external sources could potentially have given Max the confidence to participate in this project and begin to engage critically with practice through research activity.

Max shared that he considered a barrier for the wider staff team was the skill, or lack thereof, of critical engagement with the literature. Here again Max considered collaboration to play a key role in supporting and potentially addressing this:

> ‘cause some of the staff… considered… it had come from the head so it must be fine… I think it’s modelling for each other that critical thinking… and being able to evaluate… so we’re sort of learning that together and those staff who… were automatically doing that… you naturally model it for the people who are less experienced with it… doing it as a joint effort is helping people to be a bit more analytical when they’re reading things
>
> (1.102-106)

Collaboration served multiple purposes from Max’s perspective and was potentially a way to overcome a range of barriers to both engagement *with* and *in* research.

Max potentially perceives engagement *with* or *in* research to have an element of quality; simply engaging is insufficient if the quality of the engagement is lacking. He recognised in his staff that critical engagement was not always evident and it seems that he was of the view that this was necessary to ensure quality engagement. Here too he viewed that collaboration served to support critical engagement and a higher quality of engagement *with* research which, potentially, could lead to high quality engagement *in* research.

PET: Research is a positive experience for Max and could be for others

> That is the bit that makes you feel really excited, you see the benefit… it’s when you see it having a direct impact on those little people and that you get that, like, sort of, sense of achievement for yourself and them, it’s like ‘hey it works, team effort, hey!’... that ‘wow, it did something’, it wasn’t because someone told me to do it
>
> (1.326-1.334)

Throughout the interviews, Max spoke positively about his engagement in research. He spoke of excitement, achievement and enthusiasm at the prospect of research informing and enhancing practice to the benefit of not only the teacher but the children they teach. He also spoke of his desire for colleagues to share in this positivity:

> I think you can, you almost want to be contagiously positive about it, it's like 'come on, it was awesome, do it, try it, at least dip your toe in' I think and just that element of wow, and if you can share that wow bit, not just the 'we did this and they did this' if you can share the passion and the impact then why wouldn't you want to share it? If you've got that little fire you just want to spark it in other people
>
> (1.336-1.348)

and during the initial analysis of the CCtPI data he spoke of how the experience of data collection had been a *valuable experience* to inform his teaching practice which he hoped to share with colleagues:

> It's been a really, really interesting valuable experience and actually see that now through the rest of the year and, I think, probably this is something I might suggest for the whole staff as part of transition for next year
>
> (2.26-2.28)

This suggests that Max viewed each aspect of the research process as valuable in and of itself, from engagement with the literature to the early stage of data collection and analysis, Max recognised where each step could be something to *build in [as] something we do [as a teacher]* (2.36).

Max's lived experience was consistently positive and his withdrawal from the project the unexpected consequence created by the COVID-19 pandemic. From his first interview when he felt *really positive about it* (1.196) to the final attempts to facilitate a continuation of the CCtPI, Max was *contagiously positive* and enthusiastic:

> it's been fab
>
> (2.36)

5.5 Looking ahead

Chapters 2.1.1 and *4.1* explored the concepts underpinning Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and its commitment to the idiographic. In this chapter I examined the analytical process and the move from the descriptive to the interpretive. I

detailed the process of exploratory noting anything of interest, drawing from these to identify connections within cases that led to the Personal Experiential Themes (PETs). *Chapter 5.4* draws from the experiences of Tash, Cath and Max to illustrate the data analysis process, detailing the Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) or clusters of statements which relate to the individual, the experience and which recur throughout the experience, for each participant. Drawing on a selection of extracts from the interviews I detail the interpretative process from working with the raw data to make exploratory notes, to working with these exploratory notes to create experiential statements which were then clustered to form PETs. I continue in *Chapter 6* to detail how I moved from the idiographic to consider any aspects of the experiences that were shared across participants (see also Appendix 3). I detail the PETs for all of the participants and the patterns of meaning across these which were used to determine the Group Experiential Themes (GETs).

Chapter 6: Journeying, Part II

Each of the accounts of experience and resulting Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) reflected the unique experiences of my research participants engaging in research through Collaborative-close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI). It was, however, evident that while each experience of CCtPI was unique, there were some elements that were shared among them. Looking for convergence and divergence across the PETs, I identified 'patterns of meaning' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 31). These patterns were the basis for the Group Experiential Statements (GETs); I also explored patterns of convergence that were not subsumed into GETs and patterns of divergence across the lived experiences of my travelling companions as they engaged in research through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI). In this chapter, I detail the patterns by drawing from participant accounts, illustrating the process of interpretation that led to the formation for the GETs. Further detail as to the relevant experiential statements and extracts from the data which contributed to each GET are in Appendix 3.

6.1 Convergence and divergence: Group Experiential Themes (GETs)

The patterns of convergence or meaning which led to the formation of the GETs were not evident in every participant interview or overarching experience but were noted where I found these to be significant either because they were evident across a number of accounts or because they were repeated in the same accounts of a smaller number of participants. Table 3 below shows the GETs alongside the group level sub-themes, moving from the idiographic Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) to create subthemes which encapsulate the ''meaning-full'' (Smith et al, 2022: 63) convergence across cases. The sub-themes and GETs indicate the move beyond the idiographic to the cross-case analysis; the PETs are personal, the GETs and group level sub-themes are focused on convergence across all participants as the analysis demonstrates 'the unique individual way in which different participants are reflecting that shared quality' (Smith et al, 2022: 101). In this way, the analysis can shed light on what teachers' perspectives of research are when engaged in small scale Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry.

Group Experiential Themes (GETs)	Group level sub-themes
A *'This is easier than I was expecting it to be'*: the perception of engaging in CCtPI is not what is experienced	Research is perceived to be significant in size Inquiry is not as significant in size as research The prospect of engaging in research is different to the reality
B *'A massive benefit'*: engaging in research facilitates professional development	The research process provides space to consider theory and practice The research process supports making changes to practice
C *'Just something that would be good to do'*: a teacher's role or identity does not encompass engagement in research	Research is an optional extra Research is apart from the lived world of teaching Research is undertaken by academics or at university
D *'You're not alone'*: collaboration serves different purposes	Collaboration as a vehicle for learning Collaboration makes research manageable Collaboration as accountability
E *'To see where I sit'*: engaging in research has an impact beyond the research itself	Research gives an evidence base for a professional voice Engaging in research supports professional confidence and standing Engagement in research incites an emotional response
F *'Crazy chaos':* the lived experience of teachers researching	The day-to-day of teaching is demanding The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic 'I'm getting it done'

Table 3: Group experiential Themes and group level sub themes

6.1.1 GET A *'This is easier than I was expecting it to be'*: the perception of engaging in CCtPI is not what is experienced

As explored in *Chapter 1*, some early considerations of my study included the possibility of a misalignment of teachers' perception of research and what was intended by the language in literature and policy, the seemingly interchangeable use of the terms *research* and *inquiry* in the literature (Baumfield *et al.*, 2013) and if these were viewed by teachers to be the same activity. This therefore informed the questions and prompts that I used in the initial interviews with a view to understanding the perceptions of Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon. My intention was to try to determine if they made a distinction between the concepts of *research* and *inquiry*, however I was conscious that the questions needed to be worded

carefully so as not to influence the answers (Gill *et al.*, 2008). This was a challenge. I could not simply ask 'what do you consider the difference to be…' as I was conscious this assumed there was a difference and participants could feel obliged to suggest differences as a result, even if this was not an accurate reflection of their perspective. After much consideration, the first question I chose to address this was:

What do you consider research to be?

and, where appropriate based on the response, I used a follow up prompt:

So in terms of the words that are used when people talk about engaging in research, the actual term research what does it mean for you?

When trying to determine if they considered this to be different to their perception of inquiry, I asked:

So then if I said the term inquiry do you see that as different or the same or is there an overlap or…

I deliberately left the question unfinished so as to avoid the impression that I was seeking a specific answer.

These questions were open and allowed each participant to share their perspective at the start of their involvement in the process. As a result, each had a different perspective and not all of these were aligned confirming that the questions were not leading. I explicitly addressed this aspect in the initial interviews to gain an understanding of any perceived differences in language, however the perception of research and the Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI) was also evident in later interviews as each participant shared their experience to that point. As this was a longitudinal study it was unsurprising, though not always guaranteed (Farr and Nizza, 2019), that there was some change in perspective over time. The perspective of the shared aspects of the participants' unique individual experiences (Smith *et al.*, 2022) resulted in this Group Experiential Theme.

Research is perceived to be significant in size

Across a number of the responses there was reference to research having a size implication, with it being large or big. In Cath's words *it's supposed to be like a big thing that will change something* (Cath, 2.12). There is a sense that research is a significant undertaking, is demanding and there is an expectation of weighty responsibility to the entire professional field; that it *can push education forward* (Cath, 1.45). This is potentially a daunting prospect and it is unsurprising that there was also the perception that it would therefore involve a significant workload and, as Jon stated *I can only climb one mountain at a time* (2.14).

However, there was also a sense of change as the CCtPI process continued. Tash reflected on her prior perception that research needed to be *big* and the associated workload potentially unmanageable but that, for her, the lived experience led to a change in perspective:

> I started off with ideas that were too big, it's just… making it something that's actually quite manageable, something that's really simple but really effective
>
> (Tash, 2.88)

Cath's reflections on her prior perceptions also indicated change, though there was also the sense that this change was still in progress rather than being fully formed: ...*I feel like it's something more, that I felt like it was something more* (Cath, 3.76). This tension was present in much of Cath's thinking as she tried to engage with a process that seemed to be not quite what she was expecting and challenged her preconceived ideas of what research is. Despite their lived experiences challenging these, both Tash and Cath still struggled to fully adjust their preconceived perceptions of what research was for them. They both spoke of a change in perception yet still associated the term research with something large or significant and with a responsibility to impact the entire profession. I explored this in *Chapter 5* when focusing on the experiences of Tash and Cath in greater detail.

The language used when talking about research has a sense of these participants feeling removed from the process. They refer to it as 'something' frequently, potentially indicating a lack of ownership or involvement in the process. When taken as 'some / thing' there is a

sense of flippancy, an 'otherness' of an activity that they are aware of, have some knowledge of, but is essentially not a part of their world. This would align with the perception that research is either too *big* to fully comprehend, too significant to be a part of their role and therefore is a full-time role in itself and, as Tash so clearly stated, *research is almost like a job. I have a job; my job is teaching* (6.62).

Inquiry is not as significant in size as research

In contrast, inquiry seemed to be consistently perceived as an activity that was more accessible and directly related to the role of the teacher. Max summed this thinking up when he explained that, for him, *the inquiry I think is much more personalised to that teacher, that cohort, in that class situation* (1.58). When speaking of inquiry, it was linked with specificity and precision indicating that where research is broad and wide ranging, inquiry centres the activity onto one aspect or focus. For Liam *it would be a bit more specific to one area* (1.24) and for Jon *inquiry is more like asking questions into a particular, I don't know, it feels more, feels more specific* (1.12). This further suggests that research is viewed as influencing the field of education and carries with it the responsibility to impact the profession whereas inquiry is focused and has a closer connection to practice. Yet, despite this distinction, only Tash continued to complete her project - though in the absence of the COVID-19 pandemic I suspect Max would also have completed his.

There was also an uncertainty in thinking here, indicated in Jon's *I don't know* and *it feels more, feels more… .* This uncertainty was also in Paul's response:

> Research will be a sub of the inquiry but then again they are on the same level aren't they? No, but then again you can't do the inquiry without the research so perhaps the research then goes on top of the inquiry, hmm... I suppose realistically they're going to interlink aren't they? Yeah, so I figure they would be tightly woven together. Tightly? Loosely woven together shall we say
>
> Paul, 1.12-16

The use of *I don't know* at the beginning and as part of responses was not uncommon in responses from a number of participants and suggests that while there was a perceived

distinction between research and inquiry, this was not a fully formed view nor embedded in thinking. As such the lived experience of Collaborative Close-to-Practice *Inquiry* was still perceived as research, which still *scared* Cath and was a *mountain to climb* for Jon despite inquiry being perceived as having more direct links to practice and a specificity which could be associated with a smaller scale, less intimidating project and a reduced time commitment as a result.

The prospect of engaging in research is different to the reality

The perception of research and inquiry, perceived as distinct concepts but seemingly interchangeable in practice, was noted by participants as being different to the reality of engaging in the CCtPI. There was a change in thinking for participants as the process continued and a new perception of research and inquiry and what these entail. For Paul this was centred around what research involved; having previously held a perception of a rigid, fixed process he almost expressed surprise at the realisation that it was, in practice, quite flexible. Paul had spoken of his previous experience of research activity being his assignment experiences of his teacher training course, his wife's doctoral studies and colleagues' Master's study. Each of these were formal qualifications and it is not surprising that his perception of research was of an activity that had rules to follow and specific academic criteria to be met. That the CCtPI was to be focused on practice and exploring an element of Paul's school experience and there was no right or wrong approach to take, only the one that best suited the project, seemed to be somewhat of a revelation for Paul that *you can do different… ways of research* (Paul, 2.136).

Cath also indicated a change in her thinking. Previously Cath had spoken of research being *something academics do* (1.148). As explored previously in *Chapter 5*, this indicated that she viewed herself as being apart from the activity of research and inquiry and that it was beyond her role as a teacher. Her experience changed her thinking and she spoke in a later interview about how it had become *actually something that is doable, you know, that it's not out of reach* (Cath, 3.76). This suggests that the CCtPI was accessible to Cath and that she viewed it as an activity that she was capable of undertaking, yet her reluctance to engage with the

process and subsequent withdrawal would indicate that she had not fully established this change in thinking and altered her perception of research as a result.

Tash, in contrast, was determined to complete the project despite the personal and professional challenges she faced during the CCtPI process. As a result, she seemed to take a greater sense of ownership of her project and the responsibility for seeing it through. She then noted that *this isn't very much work at all… it's just finding the hour to sit down and just do it* (Tash, 3.62). This could indicate that she had expected the process to take considerable time and carry a significant workload, but her experience evidenced that this was not the case. Her perception of what was involved and her lived experience were quite different.

This was echoed by Max. He seemed to have also anticipated a challenging project ahead, suggesting that while he was enthusiastic and passionate about research and the potential of it to develop practice, it was a difficult process to engage in. For Max, his lived experience was cut short by his responsibilities as a school leader during and after the global pandemic, however prior to this he was prepared to meet the challenge and use the opportunity to develop his practice. Like Tash, however, he found that the reality of engaging in the CCtPI was in contrast to his expectations: *this is easier than I was expecting it to be* (Max, 2.56).

6.1.2 GET B *'A massive benefit'*: engaging in research facilitates professional development

When discussing both research and inquiry Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon all referred to the role of research in informing practice in the classroom. How this was perceived to take place varied between participants however. For Cath it involved *putting theory into practice and finding some real results* (1.57), for Paul it was *a bit of classroom observation mixed with asking teachers their point of view* (1.12), for Liam *probably scores for example tests… and also maybe conversations with the children and conversations with adults... getting their thoughts and views* (1.24). Throughout these aspects of the interviews however none of the participants commented on the research process itself and how this might support or inform practice. Yet as they engaged with the CCtPI participants commented on how different stages of the process were supporting, informing or developing their practice. This in part could have been due to the fact that most of the participants had not been

involved in classroom-based research previously and so were not aware of what it would mean for them to undertake the various stages in the process. However even Max who had spoken of his experience of the research process in previous roles focused on the outcomes of the research as informing practice rather than the process itself. In addition, both Paul and Cath in their final interviews spoke of how they did not consider themselves to be researchers because they had not completed their CCtPI project and did not recognise what they had achieved to that point. This suggests that there is a significant focus on the outcome of research and the value of the process is dependent on the outcome, yet as this GET illustrates, as a lived experience the undertaking of the CCtPI process itself was perceived to have a role in professional development.

The research process provides space to consider theory and practice

Max's CCtPI focused on an exploration of a specific aspect of his practice in the classroom and data collection involved observing classroom behaviours of the children Max would be teaching the following year. This, for Max, turned out to be not just an approach to data collection but gave him time to gain an awareness of the children he would be teaching before the school year began and consider the implications for his practice. He commented that *you don't often get to sit and just look at that dynamic* (Max, 2.14-16), which connects with GET: F and the consequences of his *crazy working life* (2.102). The data collection process provided Max with a reflective space to observe these children which he felt he otherwise would not have had. Max noted that this was a *massive benefit* (2.102) and a *really really interesting valuable experience and actually see that now through the rest of the year* (2.26).

This sense of the stages of the CCtPI process providing a reflective space was echoed by Cath when she was engaging with the relevant literature to situate her CCtPI project in the field. She noted that while she was reading for the purposes of the project, she was also considering her practice as a whole and what she could learn from the literature: *When you're looking at your research or you're doing readings and you're thinking about how, what you could implement you know, you don't really have that, so that's really nice to do that*

(Cath, 3.62). Her comment that *you don't really have that* again alludes to a sense that the teaching role limits the opportunity to engage with the literature and use this to reflect on practice. That this stage of the CCtPI process facilitated this again implied that a space is provided for this to take place which was a positive experience for Cath:

> I started reading some of the readings and all of that… makes you think more about what you're doing and what you're… how your everyday practice, you know, impacts on things and that's a good feeling
>
> (Cath, 3.60)

Having this space provided Tash with the opportunity to consider her practice from a less subjective standpoint. She had been trying to meet the expectations set out in her support plan *but it's that reflection kind of on what's happening* (Tash, 1.58) that the CCtPI process facilitated for her. She reflected that it *really helped, almost it allows you to take a step back and almost look on it from the outside perspective* (Tash 2.83). It seems that, for Tash, she was immersed in the challenges and pressures of meeting the requirements of her support plan while navigating the *chaos* (3.58) of teaching but lacked a reflective space to consider her practice. By the end of the CCtPI, Tash had been signed off her support plan and *I don't think questioning would have been where it is now without it, definitely* (3.96-102).

The research process supports making changes to practice

It does make you stop and think and I've certainly adapted things and changed things with that mindset which I might not have done before (Max, 2.64). This reflection from Max indicates how his experience of the CCtPI process influenced his practice as it was taking place. His feeling that this was a *massive benefit* led him to consider how this could be implemented across the school, commenting on the data collection process that *I think probably this is something I might suggest for the whole staff as part of transition for next year* (2.26-28). Max did not complete his project for a number of reasons, the most influential seeming to be the global pandemic, yet the process itself informed his practice. This suggests that the informing and development of practice by research is not confined to the outcomes of that research but that engaging in the process itself can also afford this

opportunity. This was also evident in Tash's experience. She found that the process of *reading all about it and then putting it in practice and reflecting on it in this kind of sense has really helped* (Tash, 2.20). There is a sense that this process reflected the developmental process she needed to progress through in order to develop her questioning skills and meet the requirements of her support plan.

Cath, like Max though for different reasons, did not complete her CCtPI project. Nonetheless she also reflected that she not only found that the process itself had informed her practice as stated above but also could see that, had she been able to continue, that this developmental aspect would have continued: *I felt like it, you know, the project would have done, you know, would have… improved my practice* (Cath, 3.34). This implies that the research process brings with it a learning opportunity not only in terms of the research process but also in terms of classroom practice.

6.1.3 GET C *'Just something that would be good to do'*: a teacher's role or identity does not encompass engagement in research

When first narrowing the scope of my study, while I recognised that the construction of a teacher-researcher identity was a likely relevant and key consideration within my chosen research area (Taylor, 2017), I had decided that a delimitation of my study would be to 'screen [this] off from view' (Simon, 2011: 275). This at the time seemed to be an appropriate choice to make; I had to make various choices as to the scope of my study and this was one of them. I had not structured any interview questions with a particular focus on examining this aspect of the lived experience as a result. Yet when exploring the experiences of Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon I noticed that the concept of identity was not so easily bracketed. Indeed, the concept of who engages *in* research and the place of research in the teacher role came through so frequently across the data that the concept of the teacher-research identity became a GET. This is, for me, a confirmation that I have stayed true to the data that were shared and a recognition that this aspect of the lived experience is not one that can be disregarded.

Research is an optional extra

The concept of research as an ambiguous 'some / thing' persisted through to later interviews. While there was frequently enthusiasm expressed at the prospect of engaging in research, as explored in GET: E, there is a contrasting sense of vagueness and an indifference during the final interviews when reflecting on the motivations for taking part. Jon referred to it as *something I wanted to do* (2.12) and Cath's comment was similar in that *it's just something that, you know, would be good to do* (3.12). Such comments suggest a lack of ownership of the process and neither seem to attach any importance or great value to the process. This suggests that they view research as sitting outside of their remit as teachers, and lacking the weightiness of the work a teacher is required to do; the work that they stated was subsuming any time and space they could use for the CCtPI. This suggests that the CCtPI was viewed as a subsidiary that had potential but was not important nor valued enough to be pursued when other challenges were presented. This is in contrast to the initial interviews when language such as *inspiring* and *exciting* were used. This could indicate that either there was a sense of disengagement from ownership and commitment to the CCtPI as the decision to withdraw from my study had already been made or that viewing the CCtPI with a greater sense of indifference lessened the sense of guilt at withdrawing.

Research is apart from the lived world of teaching

This sense that research activity is not part of the profession or the day to day lived world of teachers was reflected in the time my co-researchers, or research participants, had intended to allocate to their CCtPI project. For Paul, he stated that *I thought I could do research in my half terms* (2.42) and therefore when unanticipated demands arose in his personal life, the space to engage was reduced. Tash shared a similar intention: *obviously after school is when it would be done, on the weekends* (3.52) suggesting that there was no time allocation within the working day to give to the project, reinforcing the perception that research is an additional, optional activity that is not part of the teacher role. In Jon's words, *it was separate from the school* (2.6).

Cath's experience is also indicative of this separation of the CCtPI and the teaching role. *I had to do a course…which therefore went higher up the list because it directly impacted on the class* (Cath, 3.8). The priority for Cath was what she perceived would have the immediate influence on her practice. It is likely that attending a course was a familiar approach to developing her practice and an already established approach to professional development, and so this was viewed as part of the teaching role. Therefore, it is unlikely she viewed it as an optional addition to her practice; she had identified that she needed to develop an aspect of her knowledge and practice and so attending the course was the appropriate course of action. We explored if she had considered changing the focus of her CCtPI project in order to support this professional development need:

> you know I didn't think that… you think, well, this is just what I do, not that actually it could mean something or would be useful to look into further or, you know, attach any kind of research to… just what happens and that's what you do to for your children and and that's like your everyday sort of thing that you do
>
> Cath, 3.18-22

This further indicates the perception of separation between research and the teacher role. For Cath, the *everyday sort of thing that you do* does not include research activity, even if there is the possibility that the research activity can be aligned with a professional development need.

Therefore, when professional or personal demands arose throughout the project and *something had to give* (Paul 2.42), the CCtPI became the least relevant activity to the professional role and therefore the least important.

Research is undertaken by academics or at university

When exploring if she had considered refocusing her CCtPI project, Cath continued on to say:

> I don't know maybe I think that research, although it's, I know it is for yourself, but you kind of feel like it's for a purpose, you know, for some, for other people to maybe read or for other people to talk to other people about and you think, oh that's not really, like, good enough for a research project, you know?
>
> Cath, 3.22

This sense of *other* arose in a number of the interviews, a sense that *someone* else or *they* do research, reminiscent of the 'some / thing' use of language explored previously. Tash seemed to summarise this perception in her final interview: *You're at the university, we're just at school… researchers are the ones with the big degrees* (Tash, 6.40-6.52). There was a thread throughout that research is an activity undertaken at university - in Max's words *research being something that someone does if they're on a university course* (Max, 1.90) and Tash referred to a feeling of being back at university during the CCtPI process: *I feel almost like a uni student again* (Tash, 2.22). Given that, for all of the participants except Max, their experience of engaging in research was through their university qualifications this is not unexpected. The fact that they were participating in doctoral research with a HEI academic potentially reinforced this perception. There is also the sense of being less capable or moving outside of what is expected of teachers in Tash's use of the phrase *just a teacher* and Cath's perception that her practice is not *good enough for a research project*. This suggests a reason for a lack of ownership and dis-identification with the role of researcher.

The divergence within this GET in this is evident in Tash's interviews. Tash experienced a number of challenges, both personal and professional, throughout the CCtPI. Yet she persisted despite these and continued to see the project through to the end. However, for Tash, she had chosen a focus that was intrinsic to her practice and her role as teacher. In aligning her CCtPI project with her support plan, she had brought together her role as a teacher and this role as the researcher. Further, we had designed the project to be Participatory Action Research, where Tash was both co-researcher and participant, potentially affording her a greater sense of ownership of the project as a whole. These combined elements may have led Tash to 'blur boundaries between teachers and researchers' (Gade, 2015) or, in Tash's words, *kind of see what we do in almost everything that I do in school* (6.33).

6.1.4 GET D *'You're not alone'*: collaboration serves different purposes

As stated by Nelson and Campbell in 2017, 'opportunities for collaboration, co-creation, sharing and application of professional knowledge… can be beneficial' (p131). The collaborative element of the CCtPI was commented on as an important element of the process by all of the participants; in Paul's words it is *really vitally important* (1.26). However, as I immersed myself in the data in response to the question in the initial interview:

how do you see collaboration in terms of engaging in research or engaging in inquiry?

I noticed that collaboration was perceived as serving different purposes throughout the process and therefore required a more 'nuanced understanding' (Godfrey, 2017: 442) beyond a recognition that collaboration is an important element in supporting teacher research (Campbell *et al.*, 2017).

Collaboration as a vehicle for learning

Collaboration was perceived as a support for learning and developing as a professional. This was not limited to the CCtPI as participants referred to the role of collaboration in their day-to-day school practice. Jon stated *I'm always learning from other people… there's always more opportunity to learn from them* (1.16) and that without collaboration *I'm not going to have anyone to learn from* (Jon, 1.18). This was reflected in Cath's reflection on her own approach to her practice in that *I am someone that probably works better in a team, you know, or with somebody else* (3.58). However, this seemed to be less about learning something new than developing ideas or concepts that were already forming and this was the case in the context of the CCtPI. Tash spoke of the supportive aspect of collaboration but also the reassurance of being able to explore her thinking, *to kind of help and bounce ideas off of… I think it is that just another person* (5.39-45). For Tash, moving beyond the CCtPI and repeating the research process in other aspects of her practice, she noted that she had originally thought she was benefiting from the collaborative element as I was a HEI researcher but that, on reflection, she did not consider that to be the case:

> interestingly, I thought, perhaps this project has only worked so well because, like, of your knowledge and where you are in your career and the fact that, not in a mean way, not you're gonna tell. [My partner teacher] says fine, I'll tell you but in a sense that you always know more than she does because of where you are, actually, she knows, like, she's been able to signpost me almost as easily as you have so when you say look at this research article she's always been able to do exactly the same and say, well, have you looked at this research? Have you looked at this website? Have you looked at this? So I did kind of think, well, you know, if I ever try to do something like this in school without you, then it's not going to work because you're the, like, academic person, not that she's not, because that's really rude, so that's been quite interesting, that's been quite nice to see I'm not that, I think it helped you just share that with you… it does just tell you
>
> *it doesn't necessarily have to be with a university academic…*
>
> No.
>
> Tash, 5.59-5.67

Max shared a similar experience, that it was the sharing of ideas and having dialogue that was the source of learning and development, that he *just needed… to sound it out and talk through what is it, how does it work and then it clicked* (2.98). As with Tash, he also viewed the collaboration as being a purposeful source of guidance to resources and *some little signposts, sort of, look at that, that would be really helpful* (2.118-2.120). The teachers perceived that they were learning through the collaboration but there is the sense in their comments that this learning was from the experience and the CCtPI process whereas the collaboration served to clarify their thinking and provide reassurance as they proceeded. Nonetheless, there was also the sense that the collaborator needed to have knowledge themselves to be able to support the *talking through* and to *signpost*, facilitating the learning taking place. The collaboration therefore seemed to serve as a vehicle for learning rather than solely a space to learn from others.

Collaboration makes research manageable

The responses from the participants throughout their interviews indicate that the collaboration facilitated engagement in the process. Working together on the project provided reassurance and comfort, *that kind of sense that you're not alone* (Tash, 5.51), that

there's always somebody there (Tash, 6.35). Responses also indicated a lack of confidence in the process itself; in Paul's words: *I'd say collaboration is really vitally important… because I wouldn't know where to go to be perfectly honest with you* (1.26). This suggests that the collaboration provided a scaffold to the CCtPI process. It also seemed to build confidence by serving as a reassurance and *support to say, you know… that's absolutely fine to research that… would be worthwhile to do* (Cath, 2.16). Each of the responses suggest that the collaboration contributed to making the CCtPI accessible and supporting the participant's confidence to engage in it.

There was also a sense of being able to consider different perspectives through sharing *ideas and things about how you could do it this way or could you do it another way* (Liam, 1.28), suggesting that the CCtPI was a shared responsibility which contributed to it being a manageable process. As Tash stated, *I know it helps, it has helped, it's less daunting* (Tash, 5.53)

Tash and Max commented on the collaborative aspects being useful in reducing the workload of their project. Max referred to the time needed to search for relevant readings and that to be signposted to specific relevant literature would save time. For Tash, it was in the data analysis and interpretation that the collaboration supported workload: *it might have just taken a longer progress because it would have possibly required me to apply it on my own* (6.44). Yet for Cath, who reached the same point in her research as Max, the collaboration was insufficient at reducing the time barrier suggesting that while collaboration can serve to mitigate the challenges of workload and time, it is not always sufficient in overcoming these barriers.

Collaboration as accountability

Cath, Paul and Jon each spoke of the need to remain current in their practice and not have *that sort of like stale kind of approach to things* (Paul, 2.136) and *not just accept what you did like 20 years ago as still being ok* (Cath, 1.55). For Jon the collaborative approach was a way in which he ensured he was abreast of current practice: *if I don't work collaboratively I'm working in isolation and I'm kind of out of touch with other things that are going on* (Jon,

1.18). For these participants therefore the CCtPI supported this sense of being accountable for being aware of changes in the educational landscape. It supported ongoing analysis of their practice to ensure that it reflected current thinking around best approaches to teaching and learning for the children they teach.

For Tash this sense of accountability was more developed as she continued further through the CCtPI process. She was conscious of her enthusiasm and the many potential directions the research could take and felt the collaboration helped delimit her research and maintain her focus: *I know that this is going to take me in a different direction that somebody else will be going that's really interesting and you go, yeah but, and they go, no come on* (Tash, 6.37). This also suggests that the collaboration helped to maintain the momentum of the project, keeping it on track and ensuring that she did not waste time by investigating other interesting, but potentially irrelevant, avenues of inquiry that would use her limited time unnecessarily. Tash also indicated that, by being both co-researcher and participant, that there was an immersion in the project that was beneficial but that, without the collaborative approach, could have become overwhelming: *when you're in it, quite intensely, I think having another person almost drags you out of it because you have to talk about it, it makes it something else* (Tash, 5.91).

For Jon there was a sense that the collaboration added an accountability that was not always positive. It added pressure and guilt to continue with the project *I didn't want to let you down* (Jon, 2.6) and to contribute when he did not feel he had the time nor the capacity to do so *I didn't feel like I was giving my best effort… I like to give everything I've got* (Jon 2.16). This suggested that the accountability that collaboration provided was not always an affirming experience; that there is a negativity that collaboration can bring to the experience, however unintended.

6.1.5 GET E *'To see where I sit'*: engaging in research has an impact beyond the research itself

Richert's (1996) US study on teacher engagement in research and inquiry for the Bay Region IV Professional Development Consortium studied the effects of teachers engaging in research and inquiry. Richert found that 'the research experience restored in teachers a

sense of professionalism and power in the sense of having a voice' which reflected the findings of research at that time (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2004: np). In recent years there is less literature on this area, perhaps in part due to Leat *et al.*'s (2014) findings that in 'research partnerships between HE (higher education) researchers and teachers, teacher involvement is often not the focus of the resultant writing [and] where teachers write it is unusual for them to write reflectively about their engagement with research; they focus on their selected topic, which is usually associated with some aspect of student learning or experience' (Leat, Lofthouse and Reid, 2014). As I explored in *Chapter 2* I had initially been drawn to this emancipatory element of my study, to using it for this sense of enhanced teacher professionalism and power through having a voice. However I was increasingly drawn to listening to what their voices had to say. I therefore did not include in my interview structure any questions which sought this aspect of the participant's perspectives. Nonetheless, throughout the interviews there were indications of an alignment with Richert's (1996) findings as the participants spoke of research bringing a sense of having a voice and contributing to their professionalism.

Research gives an evidence base for a professional voice

In their initial interviews, both Tash and Cath referred to the sense of *power* that they felt would result from engaging in research: *I think to have the opportunity to say that this has happened I've investigated this and this is what I researched this within my class and this is had this effect is quite empowering really quite empowering* (Cath, 1.158); *I think empowerment, like that you could do this, you could start this and you're going to be listened [to]* (Tash, 1.40). For both, however, this empowerment or voice seems to be in different forms. For Cath it seemed to be having an evidence base that supported claims she would make, that would support and strengthen the point she was making, thus providing a conviction for her voice through *finding some real results you know potentially that could say hey do you know what? this actually works or doesn't* (Cath, 1.57). Cath spoke of the directed aspect of teaching and being told *you have to do this* (1.158) and the empowerment for her seemed to be around being able to question or challenge this direction, drawing an

evidence base from research. Tash spoke more directly about being *listened* to and this seemed to relate to her experiences of being on a support plan. Tash spoke of her discussions with the school leaders about her support plan and the feedback she was receiving: *he kept picking up on the same things and then was saying well you haven't acted on it and I'm like I have tried, I've tried* (1.60). There is a sense in this discussion that Tash was not feeling listened to in the process and therefore the CCtPI could provide evidence that would prove that she was engaging in the process and that she had *tried*. Toward the end of her CCtPI project, Tash seemed to be feeling much more confident with this sense of empowerment and having a voice coming to fruition: *I'm more quick to challenge her now* (Tash, 5.75).

An element of this *empowerment* was that the CCtPI outcomes could inform the profession beyond a single classroom or teacher; that it could *have a purpose wider than me… an impact somewhere wider than just the children* (Tash, 6.12). Tash found this to be an empowering prospect and, as such, disseminating the outcomes of her CCtPI project through publication in a journal was important to her. Cath and Paul also spoke of the importance of having completed and produced a written, publishable outcome for their projects. Having withdrawn before reaching this stage they both responded that they did not consider themselves to be researcher but that *if I was to complete a research project then absolutely yeah, I'd be a hundred percent, like, see myself as a teacher and a researcher* (Paul, 2.138).

I think it's because I consider, because I haven't written a thousand words on it that it hasn't happened, you know, the process hasn't happened so therefore you're not, you know, you're not a researcher because you're not publishing papers (Cath, 3.84). This suggests that having a purpose beyond a classroom or teacher is intrinsic to a self-perception as a researcher. While professional development may be an important driver for engaging in research, it is potentially the dissemination of the outcomes to the wider profession that defines a person as a researcher.

Engaging in research supports professional confidence and standing

The sense of having a voice seemed to extend into having a stronger professional standing within the school for Tash and Cath. Tash wanted to have an impact not only on her support

plan and her own professional development but also that of others in the school. There was a sense that she considered this to be important professionally and wanted this to be recognised by colleagues in school: *I kind of want them to be interested in it and given it can impact the school, I want them to show some interest* (Tash, 3.94). This is further indicative of the sense of disempowerment Tash may have been feeling at the time in school and that the research could provide this sense of having something significant to say as a result. Her understanding of how this was perceived by the senior leadership team would allow her *to see where I kind of sit* (Tash, 6.48). It could perhaps determine if the research and the positive impact it had on her progress toward her support plan targets provided her with a stronger standing in the school. Cath also sought to have this recognition in the school but rather than seeking to clarify her position it seems she viewed it as serving to inspire others, perhaps giving her subject leadership further weight and supporting her career development into other leadership positions: *to actually have something that has happened in the school and the… you can do it and can directly show how that has affected the children or not ... you know that hopefully would then be quite inspiring for the other the staff you know ... and they actually think that's relevant* (Cath, 1.158).

Paul commented that *I was feeling very unfulfilled and, for want of a better phrase, bored* (2.36). He perceived research as a way to relieve this professional ennui and this was, in part, his motivation to participate. However he was still pursuing promotion, ultimately succeeding which resulted in his withdrawal from my the CCtPI. This suggests that while research can be perceived as *exciting* it was insufficient to alleviate professional unfulfillment, perhaps in part due to the separation of research activity from the lived world of the teacher.

Paul indicated that the CCtPI provided a sense of freedom, echoing Tash and Cath's feelings when finding their professional standing. While he did not intimate feelings of disempowerment, he spoke of being directed which could relate to his unfulfillment with his role. He intimated a sense of freedom through the CCtPI to find his own outcomes and basis for his practice: *you just sort of do what you're told to do, so yeah, I think that side of that was quite surprising and actually quite, I think, quite exciting* (Paul, 2.126-8).

Engagement in research incites an emotional response

The affective response of most of the participants in response to their lived experience was evident throughout the interviews. The perception of research and engaging in the CCtPI was expressed in strongly positive terms:

> *Makes you feel really excited* (Max, 1.326)
>
> *I love it, this has been so fascinating* (Paul, 1.108)
>
> *I'm really excited, it'll be fun* (Tash, 1.2)

These emotions seemed to be tempered as the CCtPI process continued and this change varied between participants.

For Cath there was an emotional tension throughout the process. She stated that she found the prospect of the CCtPI *quite exciting… exciting I think* (1.152). In her second interview she commented on her lack of confidence and in her third interview she stated that the concept of engaging in research *just kind of, you know, scares me a bit I suppose* (Cath, 3.38). This was reflected in her behaviour as she was increasingly reluctant to engage throughout the project; I noted in my research journal that *she has been very elusive throughout the process. She is still willing to be involved but actually allocating time to be involved has been a challenge* (January, 2020). Later that year, I noted:

> She refers to this as being exciting, empowering, and inspiring yet this is coupled with being scared and viewing research as something others, like academics, do. It's almost like research is this huge, big massively influential activity - the words she uses to describe her feelings of being involved with it suggest big emotions and that this is something of great significance for her. This could be why she is fearful of it and doesn't feel confident with engaging in it - and the two combined mean it's unsurprising that the project never really got off the ground.
>
> October, 2020

In contrast, Tash indicated that her lived experience continued to be positive despite the challenges she faced. This seemed to encourage her to inspire colleagues to engage in the process: *she goes, I just couldn't do it and I'm like, but you could do it, do it, you have to do it* (Tash, 6.33). Tash's excitement and sense that the CCtPI is *fun* seems evident in this

encouragement of her colleague, suggesting her positive emotional response to the CCtPI was consistent throughout perhaps an underpinning connection with her completing her project.

There was also a consistent positivity in Max's responses to the project and, as explored in GET B, a desire to encourage colleagues to benefit from his lived experience. Max's positive responses and persistence despite the challenges and demands of school life mirror Tash's and suggest that he potentially would have seen his project through to completion if not for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Withdrawing from the CCtPI was also an emotional experience for those who met with me for a final interview. There was a sense of failure at not completing the project: *I feel like it's a bit like I failed, you know* (Cath, 3.60). There was also a sense of guilt which seemed to be twofold; guilt at not committing to the project fully prior to withdrawing and guilt at needing to withdraw. In Jon's words: *I had to give something up just to free myself… there was just too much pressure… as much as I feel like I was letting you down, and I appreciate you said that I'm not, I would also feel like I'm letting myself down because I'm not giving it everything* (Jon, 2.6-16). The research, which started as *exciting,* became an additional burden. The participants felt guilty for not continuing yet simultaneously guilty if they were not prioritising their teaching related work.

6.1.6 GET F *'Crazy chaos'*: the lived experience of teachers researching

'The activities of schooling are multifarious… conducted by practitioners with a diverse range of roles and responsibilities' (Cain *et al.*, 2019: 1074). This was evident in the comment from participants across interviews as they shared the context in which their CCtPI project was taking place. This was not surprising; I recall all too well my own lived experience as a primary school teacher working twelve hours on site and working again evenings and weekends. Working in an Initial Teacher Education programme (ITE), I am aware that little has changed in the intervening years. Added to this, the COVID-19 pandemic hit at the time when all of the CCtPI projects were taking place. A time when participants may have had 'competing responsibilities, such as home schooling their own children, caring for vulnerable family

members, and/or managing their own mental health. All of this [running] parallel to teaching their pupils remotely and continuing the non-teaching elements of their job, and the combination of these circumstances can present a potentially highly stressful situation for teachers' (Kim and Asbury, 2020). The pandemic and the demands of teaching formed part of the lived experience for all participants and it is therefore unsurprising that it arose in discussions about their lived experience of the CCtPI.

The day-to-day of teaching is demanding

My day-to-day crazy working life (2.102) is how Max described his world in school. He spoke with affection throughout the interviews, sharing his passion for the role and supporting quality first teaching, as well as his desire to ensure that the children had the very best education the school could provide. Therefore when he spoke of his teaching role being *crazy* it was without negativity; more a statement of fact. Tash also spoke in this way when she spoke of *the whole end of year chaos* (Tash, 3.58), that this was a typical situation and to be expected. She did not offer any further explanation and simply spoke as though she expected me to fully understand what she was referring to. Having been a teacher in recent years, I did. Both Tash and Max spoke of the demands of teaching that are commonplace and reflect my own experience. In these moments we were recognised colleagues in the same profession; I became less of the *other*, the *academic* and, in our mutual understanding, we were teachers together. The language they chose is reflective of the demanding nature of teaching: *crazy chaos*. It does not seem to be a world conducive to assuming additional roles or responsibilities such as a CCtPI project and *crazy chaos* brings with it an understanding as to why the CCtPI would take place in half terms, evenings or weekends. For Cath, this seemed to be a step too far as she spoke of *being squashed… I was, to be honest, just exhausted* (Cath, 3.8). As with Tash and Max, her vocabulary choices when speaking of these pressures are evocative: not only *squashed* but being *pounded from all directions* (Cath, 3.12). Her comments indicate the pressures she felt staying abreast of her teaching role and the demands that came with it. Adding the CCtPI was, for Cath, simply too

much to commit to regardless of how small, focused or manageable the project was designed to be.

While Tash completed her project, her experiences was not without challenges due to the demands of her role as a teacher. She cancelled research meetings at the last minute, explaining in a rescheduled session that *I had all sorts kicking off with a child* (Tash, 5.8). The flexibility of the CCtPI was essential in these moments; rescheduled meetings and adjusting timescales was a common feature of the CCtPI as we progressed. For Tash she had the additional pressure of the support plan *looming over my head* (Tash, 3.100). Again her vocabulary choice is telling here; *looming* gives the sense of foreboding, of its negative presence constantly nearby with threatening undertones. This is perhaps a mitigating factor in her completing her CCtPI despite the challenges and demands of teaching; her CCtPI project was the fresh wind that would hopefully blow away this *looming* presence, freeing her from its constant threat.

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic heralded the end of most of the CCtPI projects though this was not an immediate response. For many participants there was simply no contact as they navigated 'the needs of their communities, while preserving their own well-being and that of their pupils' (Kim and Asbury, 2020). Gradually, over time as contact was initiated, the participants either attempted to continue or simply withdrew at this point. Paul was the only participant to withdraw who did not cite this as a significant reason.

Liam emailed referring to *a crazy first term, very busy and strange at times* (Liam, Oct 2020). He did not refer to his own experiences of managing during the lockdowns and this was his only reference to the pandemic and its impact. Nonetheless it was significant enough for him not to continue with his project indicating that *crazy*, *very busy* and *strange* was a level of challenge that did not facilitate engagement in research. We were unable to schedule an exit interview.

For Jon and Cath the language used was, once again, evocative. In Jon's words he was *grinding along* (Jon, 2.26), indicating the pressures he was feeling. He had spoken of his new leadership role and the additional responsibilities he felt for the education, wellbeing and safekeeping of the staff and pupils and *grinding* is indicative of the weight he carried and the workload he was managing as a result. Cath also spoke of teaching during the pandemic *taking a toll in all honesty* (Cath, 2.12) and commented on the burden she observed this placing on colleagues: *staff just feel overwhelmed all the time* (Cath, 2.91). Cath shared a seemingly constant sense of overburden and this was the breaking point in terms of the CCtPI. She had already indicated that she was feeling scared and under confident throughout the process; experiencing these in the context of seemingly constant pressure made it unsurprising that she felt she could not continue.

Tash, despite finding a path through the challenges of the pandemic, also spoke of the pressures and impact it was having on her and her colleagues. Her CCtPI process continued during the lockdowns, aided by the fact that it was a Participatory Action Research project in which she was both co-researcher and participant thus affording a flexibility to the project that she was able to navigate as new routines were implemented. Nonetheless the demands of the pandemic were evident and b*y the half term we were hanging* (Tash, 3.54).

I'm getting it done

When exploring the challenges that they experienced during their CCtPI both Cath and Jon made references to 'doing' in their practice. They spoke of this 'doing' as their priority and, in busy high-pressured moments, 'doing' was sufficient:

> I'm doing it but not thinking about it as well, does that make sense? It's like I'm doing it… I'm relying, I'm using my, kind of, experience and what I know and previous resources I'm drawing on my partner teacher's experience… and and things like that and I'm doing, kind of, there's a structure and I'm not really thinking about adapting it at the moment, it's kind of, like, it is what it is I'm getting it done
>
> Jon, 2.12

For Jon, it seemed, when there were many demands on his time *getting it done* was the priority and the CCtPI was *extra pressure on that planning which would have made that which would have made it a bigger task* (2.12). Cath's spoke similarly about having *twenty other things to do* (3.64). She also shared that she had to *do a course as well which therefore, like, went higher up the list because it directly impacted on the class* (3.8). In fact, when she spoke of the course this was part of a list of all the different demands and her teaching world was so filled with 'doing' that she did not have time for anything else:

> there's a lot of parents… I had quite a difficult class with some lovely but time-consuming children that needed their own, you know, I needed to do my own sort of reading on on it, I had two children that were on the spectrum and they're in mainstream and I needed to put in direct strategies to help them, as we know no child on the spectrum is the same so you you have to look into it and I had to do a course as well… and the expectation of the parents so that was a big factor of the time and then on the other side I was to be honest just exhausted and we had, you know, staffing was a massive issue, you know, people having to isolate left right and centre and it just, I just really honestly, time just disappeared and I was suddenly like at the end of term and you know what it's all like and obviously because of COVID we have quite a pressure to this whole catch up thing you know and then I've got a new curriculum in the EYFS come in and it was just… and yeah, that's it really that just sort of stopped it because I didn't prioritise it… not that it wasn't important but because it was just that something that, you know, would be good to do
>
> Cath, 3.8-3.12

This suggests that when the demands of teaching become potentially overwhelming, that Jon and Cath reverted to just *getting the job done*. Anything else beyond this including Jon's analysis of dual coding and using this to support progress in mathematics and, somewhat ironically perhaps, Cath's exploration of an approach to manage teacher workload required time and capacity that 'doing' did not.

6.2 Convergence and divergence: gems

Not all of the shared experiences became GETs; each GET was evident in the PETs and experiential statements of a number of participants. Nonetheless there was convergence elsewhere, each a 'gem' (Smith, 2011: 6) which stood out and demanded attention in the

accounts which appeared in the experiences of other participants. These gems were empowerment, gender, low stakes in relation to increased attrition and Tash's sustained engagement.

6.2.1 Gem i: Empowerment and participant gender

As explored above, the perception that research could facilitate a professional voice was evident in a number of interviews. This seemed to be associated with perceptions of engaging in research as being *empowering*. However, while the men referred to research as being *fascinating* (Paul, 1.108) or *exciting* (Max, 1.326) there was no intimation of a feeling of disempowerment or not having a voice in their schools. The references to empowerment are only evident in the responses from the women in the participation group - Tash and Cath.

This may be influenced by their stage of career. Tash was at the beginning of her teaching career and Cath had subject leader responsibility. Max was a senior leader and, as transpired in their final interviews, Paul and Jon both had success in achieving promotions to leadership positions in their schools. This would suggest that the men in the group held, or were confident they had the potential to hold, positions of influence in the school and therefore did not feel that they did not have a voice. Whereas Tash and Cath felt a need to develop an evidence informed voice through research. Gender could also be a factor here, reflecting the challenges of having a voice that women experience in education with men already 'having been given legitimation as voices of authority' (Featherstone and Porritt, 2020: 163). This brings another layer to the sense of identity that was noticed in the interviews. For Tash and Cath, there is potentially not just the perception of being a teacher and being a researcher, but being a teacher, being a researcher and being a woman in a field where 'much research… may be developed by men to be utilized by and for a majority workforce of women' (Mogadime *et al.*, 2022).

6.2.2 Gem ii: Low stakes - increased attrition

For both Paul and Jon, participation in my study was a way of filling a gap; both referenced seeking a challenge. Jon used language that referred to this search for *that extra challenge*

(2.14) viewing engagement in research as this challenge. This suggests that Jon, while part of school culture that encouraged engagement with research, was not confident with the research process nor with the prospect of engaging in research. It was something to be overcome, a mountain to climb and, as he shared when discussing the reasons he could not continue *I can only climb one mountain at a time* (2.14). This choice of language could be indicative of Jon's world at the time. He withdrew in November 2020. Schools were reopening fully following the pandemic yet in ways that were new and challenging and Jon spoke of the practical challenges faced by many teachers at the time (Kim *et al.*, 2021): Mountains to climb. *I feel a much… bigger moral obligation to keep the children safe and do every absolutely everything I can to keep them safe during this pandemic, but also that an even bigger kind of sense of, they need to catch up* (2.20). Mountains to climb. Jon had successfully attained a leadership position in the school and so not only had the responsibilities typical of the post, there were additional challenges given the new context. Mountains to climb. And so, while he had originally viewed participation in the project as a way *to develop myself* (2.14) it had become yet another mountain to climb in what was becoming a mountain range. At this point, we had progressed through the CCtPI to the point that we had designed the project and gained ethical approval for it to continue. Jon, therefore, had experienced much of what the research process would entail and, despite it becoming an insurmountable mountain for him at this point, it had been a positive experience. He did not want this to change, by *like plodding along and barely scraping by and then… have a kind of negative view towards it… end up resenting it* (2.18).

Paul shared elements of his experience with Jon. He too agreed to participate as part of his search for a professional challenge, feeling *very unfulfilled and for want of a better phrase, bored and not in any way challenged in my current role* (2.36). This search for a challenge was reminiscent of Jon's and, like Jon, one of the reasons for Paul withdrawing was that he secured a promotion and this need for a challenge was being met in school. As a result, he did not need to find it in research activity. Paul spoke of wanting to move on to *the next thing* (2.116) and that, once he was feeling confident in his new role *then maybe the research could be that thing* (2.116). It seemed that, for Paul, research was an interesting sideline that

appealed in its flexibility; he could *dip my toe in* (2.132) but not be tied to a firm commitment, returning to it when he felt he needed another challenge. The prospect of engaging in research was potentially more enticing than the reality.

Whereas Jon's withdrawal from the project was during the full reopening of schools following the pandemic, Paul withdrew from the project in May of the following year. He did not cite the pandemic as part of the reasons for his withdrawing but along with his promotion there had been significant changes in his personal life which impacted on his lived world outside of school. Paul's perception of engaging in research was that, while it would directly influence practice, the process sat apart from his lived world of teaching and he expected therefore to *research in half terms… geek out for four or five hours, doing some reading or something at home* (2.42-114). However, *with all the will in the world, I just couldn't find the time to do it properly* (2.42). In Paul's words, *something had to give* (2.42) and that something was the CCtPI.

It seems for both Paul and Jon there was a lack of challenge in their professional lives and they were attracted to participation in my study as a way to fulfil a need for more. However, the prospect of research was not enough. The process of research was not enough either; they were both still seeking opportunities in school. This suggests that research is not part of what fulfilled them professionally; it may inform teaching practice or *sort of keep things fresh and keep things interesting* (Paul, 2.138) but it does not speak to what motivated either Paul or Jon. In addition, it was optional. Of all the mountains they chose to begin climbing, they could climb back down from this one. There were no ramifications, there were no risks. They could just stop and, in line with my ethical research practices, withdraw without consequence. They had the power to walk away. Without this accountability they had no reason to continue when the pressure increased, and their time was in demand.

When Jon spoke of his new role, he referred to feeling *like I'm back in my first year of teaching because I'm completely finding my feet with every single role* (2.14). This feeling of being back in those first years of teaching was echoed by Tash, albeit for different reasons:

the support plan put me almost back into that NQT feel (3.100). However, Jon withdrew, and Tash did not.

Tash had much more at stake than Jon or Paul. She was on a support plan and struggling to develop the areas of her practice her school had noted as a concern. Tash was not only interested in engaging in research but also viewed this as a process that *will really help, those kind of things that I'm always picked up on* (1.48). While she viewed engaging in research as a way to develop practice and was enthusiastic about the prospect of engaging, professionally she had potentially much more to gain. The CCtPI became a potential lifeline for her as she attempted to navigate the expectations set by the school: *I've tried and tried and tried and tried* (Tash, 1.58). When Tash encountered challenges such as her health *I now have to go in and see a doctor at 4. This has been my 6th [appointment] this half term already too!* (Tash, Oct 2020), the day-to-day lived world of teaching *I've got a bubbly child and mixed with my own health issues this week has not gone well so I have a couple of sudden meetings this evening* (email, Oct 2020) and the pandemic *today's been utterly awful* (email, Oct 2020), these slowed the CCtPI but did not result in her withdrawing.

The divergence of motivations seems to be of note; both Paul and Jon were interested in engaging but there were low stakes. Therefore, when an opportunity more professionally fulfilling presented itself, this became their priority. From their perspective these opportunities were more closely aligned with their practice and their career aspirations, incentivising them more than the research did or could. However, Tash aligned her engagement in research with her support plan. This therefore made the stakes that much higher and ensured her commitment to the project as her practice, and potentially her success in her career, became potentially dependent on the outcome.

6.2.3 Gem iii: Why Tash?

At points in this section, I have drawn on the experiences of participants and begun to identify ways in which these shed light on existing literature or vice versa. In *Chapter 7* however, I will explore this in more depth. Nonetheless, as with so much of this research, there are multiple intersections and crossroads where ideas, concepts and new perspectives

meet and have changed my course. One such instance was in relation to my research questions. I explored in *Chapter 2* grappling with my research questions then. I encountered another moment when immersing myself in the data, listening and noticing what was being shared by Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon. Throughout all of their experiences, listening to their excitement and enthusiasm, their reasons for withdrawing, I wondered why Tash had seen her project to completion when no other participant had. It was a notable divergence from the other participants. It therefore felt significant and not just another data point. Understanding why is more complex and required a greater depth of interpretation and analysis of the experiences shared with me.

Tash's perception of research was aligned with that of other participants. She was *excited* at the prospect; yet so were Paul and Max and Cath. In this there was convergence rather than divergence. She was also in her first five years of teaching however so too was Liam. This may be a contributing factor but the data would not necessarily support this.

However the first aspect of Tash's circumstances that significantly diverged was that she was on a support plan and had been for some time. She commented that she not only viewed participation in my study as an *exciting*, *fun* activity but that *I think it will really help... those kind of things that I'm always picked up on like pace or questioning* (1.48). Questioning in particular was the target of her support plan and suggests *like pace or questioning* rather than being an offhand suggestion, were aspects of her practice she was required to focus on. She also commented that she had been on her support plan four months at the point of participating. She spoke of how, in those four months, she had *tried and tried and tried and tried* (1.58). She also shared the feedback she was hearing:

> then I give it a go and the next time they come in to observe me like 3 months later they go well you still haven't improved
>
> (1.50)

> he kept picking up on the same things and then was saying well you haven't acted on it and I'm like I have tried, I've tried…
>
> (1.60)

From Tash's perspective, her perceived limited progress was not due to a lack of effort on her part. She spoke of how *I've been telling him for ages that I've read so many different articles, I've read lots of research, I've read lots of books, I've tried to take it from the readings and put it into practice but it didn't work* (1.60).

Therefore it seemed from the outset that Tash viewed the CCtPI as a vehicle to make progress toward her support plan targets. This therefore added weight to her project, giving it higher stakes than it potentially would otherwise have had as discussed in the previous section.

Of the CCtPI projects designed by the other participants none were quite as personalised to practice needs as Tash's. Some focused on classroom practice, some had a focus on wider school issues that were of interest. *Table 4* details the titles, timelines, progress and reasons for withdrawal for each CCtPI project. For ethical reasons, as Tash's CCtPI was published, to maintain her anonymity I have only added a broad indication of the area of focus of her CCtPI.

Participant	CCtPI project focus	Timeline of project	Stage of project at point of withdrawal	Reasons for withdrawing
Tash	Exploring the development of a teacher's questioning skills	Jun 2020 – Sep 2020	Completed and published	n/a
Cath	Vaden's permissions: can they impact teacher workload management? A reflexive case study	Feb 2020 – Apr 2020	Data collection	COVID-19 Workload Time

Max	Co-constructing success criteria: does it have an effect on children's own responsibility for learning?	Jul 2019 – Apr 2020	Data analysis	COVID-19
Paul	Teachers' perspectives of whole school safeguarding training in context	Jan 2021 – Jun 2021	Ethical approval	Promotion Personal commitments Time
Liam	Teachers' perspectives of an online gap analysis program as a tool to support progress	Mar 2021 – May 2021	Ethical approval	No contact
Jon	Do children view a dual coding reading strategy supportive in developing confidence and understanding in mathematics?	Sep 2020 – Nov 2020	Research designed	Promotion COVID-19

Table 4: The six CCtPI projects

Each of these foci were initiated by the participants. We discussed the areas they were interested in exploring and which, in Paul's words, were *something interesting. I suppose yeah something that grips me* (2.102). For Tash however it went beyond mere interest. While she did not explicitly state this, the fact that she was on a support plan suggests that a capability procedure was in place. This procedure of 'formal monitoring, evaluation, guidance and support' (DfE, 2019) reflects the references Tash made to her experience while on her support plan. The consequences of the process are significant for 'if performance remains unsatisfactory, a decision, or recommendation to the governance board, will be made that the teacher should be dismissed or required to cease working at the school' (DfE, 2019). As such, Tash had a significant investment in her CCtPI. She had *tried and tried to take it from the readings* and been to *observe other teachers* (1.58) and was not being seen to make progress. Therefore, if she was to engage with the CCtPI as a way to make this progress there was the motivation to follow it through to completion; it was not merely a choice, an extra or *something interesting*. It was, perhaps, a chance to keep her job.

While such high stages are not likely to be the typical motivator for teachers to engage in research, there is a suggestion that the cost-benefit ratio is perhaps the most significant

influence on engagement in research. I explore this further in *Chapter 7: Reaching a destination.*

6.3 Looking ahead

This chapter and *Chapter 5* have been accounts of my immersion in the data shared with me by my research participants. I examined the interpretative process as I searched for patterns of meaning across cases to create the Group Experiential Themes (GETs). I have also identified the gems, or the ‘‘meaning-full’’ (Smith et al, 2022: 63) aspects of empowerment, gender, low stakes in relation to increased attrition and Tash’s sustained engagement, which did not become PETs or GETs yet seemed significant in the accounts of participants. I have explored their worlds, interpreting what they have said - and, at times, what they have not. It has been a privilege to engage with their accounts of their experiences of engaging in research through CCtPI and I have sought at every step to remain focused on what they have shared. My interpretation included the descriptive and moved beyond this into deeper levels of interpretation as I sought to understand their unique experiences and searched for the ‘‘meaning-full’’ (Smith et al, 2022: 63) patterns across their experiences. In line with my intentions in *Chapter 2.2* and *Chapter 2.3*, I have spent innumerable hours wondering, listening and noticing, maintaining a focus on each participant’s experience and setting aside, or at a minimum being highly conscious of, my own thinking and preconceived ideas. I have presented in these two sections a ‘detailed, nuanced [analysis] of *particular* instances of lived experience’ (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 31). While these accounts have been entirely the words of Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon, the semi-structured interviews during which they were shared were dual layered: the first a safe and open space for sharing and the second a series of prompts for discussion guided by my research questions (see Appendix 1). In this way I was able to ensure that the conversations we had would shed light on my research questions and still leave space for sharing all aspects of their experiences beyond those prompts. As a result, the GETs that were created from the PETs not only ‘highlight the shared and unique features of the experience across the contributing participants’ (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 100) but also speak to my research questions. Each GET can be situated within the

concepts each of my research questions address: the teacher as researcher, collaboration and sustained engagement in research.

In *Chapter 7*, I draw from the GETs, as well as the literature I explored in *Chapter 3* to place my findings in the wider context. I interrogate my findings in the context of my research questions and literature and show how my study can shed light on existing research in the field. And, above all, I identify what teachers' perspectives of research are when engaged in small scale Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry.

Chapter 7: Reaching a destination

This chapter explores the outcomes of my analysis, the Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) and Group Experiential Themes (GETs) (Smith et al, 2022) in relation to my research questions (RQs). My research questions each focus on a specific concept within the broader scope of this thesis – the teacher as researcher, collaboration and sustained engagement in research - thus combining to contribute to a deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives of research when engaged in small scale Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI). As detailed in *Chapter 6* through the GETs (Appendix 3) I have gained additional insight into each of my research questions and I explore each in turn:

RQ1: What are teachers' perspectives of engaging in small scale research in their classrooms? centres on the teacher as a researcher. Drawing from my critical engagement of the literature in *Chapter 3.1*, in this chapter I explore how this research question is informed by GET A ('*This is easier than I was expecting it to be*': the perception of engaging in CCtPI is not what is experienced), GET B ('*A massive benefit*': engaging in research facilitates professional development) and GET C ('*Just something that would be good to do*': a teacher's role or identity does not encompass engagement in research) and the divergences that were explored in *Chapter 6.2*. *Figure 6* illustrates the links between GETs A, B and C, gem i (empowerment and participant gender) and gem ii (low stakes - increased attrition) and RQ1.

RQ2: What are teachers' views of collaborative inquiry? centres on the concept of collaboration and draws from the critical engagement with the literature in *Chapter 3.2* and the interpretative phenomenological analysis that informed GET D ('*You're not alone*': collaboration serves different purposes). *Figure 6* illustrates the link between GET D and RQ2.

I will draw from the extant literature explored in *Chapter 3.3* and GET E ('To see where I sit': engaging in research has an impact beyond the research itself) and GET F ('Crazy chaos': the lived experience of teachers researching) to examine how these shed light on *RQ3: What*

influences teachers' sustained engagement in research and the concept of sustained engagement in research. *Figure 6* illustrates the links between GETs E and F, gem i (empowerment and participant gender), gem ii (low stakes - increased attrition) and gem iii (why Tash?) and RQ3.

I then explore, assuming a reflexive stance, the unexpected experience we all encountered during the time I was completing my data collection - the COVID-19 pandemic. This was not, and is still not, a focus of my study. However, I chose a phenomenological study examining the lived experience of teachers engaging in research. All of the participants engaged in their CCtPI project during the pandemic and therefore the pandemic formed part of that lived experience. The experience of living through and responding to the pandemic influenced their sustained engagement and contributed to GET F (*'Crazy chaos'*: the lived experience of teachers researching). As explored in *Chapter 2.2*, the pandemic impacted on my study design and approach to engaging participants. As such, it provides insight into the reasons for attrition and on motivations to participate in my study. It provides a backdrop to the CCtPI projects in that lived experience and sheds light on engaging in research not just as a teacher but as a teacher responding to the challenges and uncertainties of a global pandemic.

This chapter examines the participants' empowering, challenging and enticing experiences of engaging in research through CCtPI. These experiences shed light on the fragility of the teacher researching and the complex nuances of collaboration and the changing affective responses to the process. From setting out with anticipations of the inspirational, journeying through tensions borne of pressure, the misalignment of expectation and reality and even, at times, fear, before reaching an end point that leaves a sense of curiosity and, perhaps, the beginning of a reworked teacher identity.

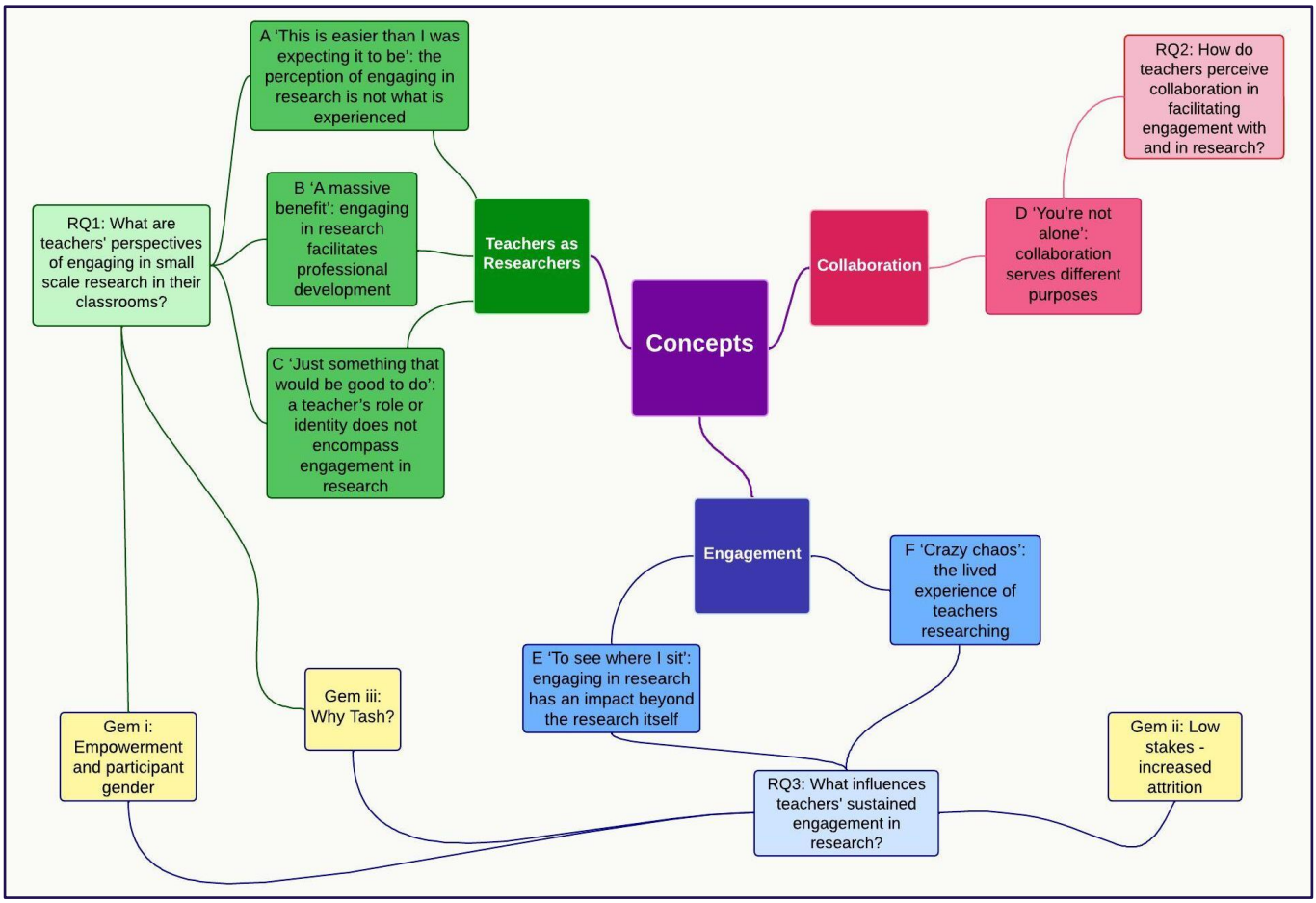

Figure 6: Linking concepts, GETs, gems and research questions

7.1 RQ1: What are teachers' perspectives of engaging in small scale research in their classrooms?

For this research question I will be drawing from GETs A (the perception of engaging in CCtPI is not what is experienced), B (engaging in research facilitates professional development) and C (a teacher's role or identity does not encompass engagement in research). These GETs each offer insight into the concept of the teacher as researcher from the perspective of the teacher. GET A brings an awareness of the potential disconnect between the perception and reality of engaging *in* research, GET B an understanding of the benefits gained from engagement *in* research through CCtPI and GET C an insight into teacher identity and how, or if, a researcher identity can be encompassed within it. I will draw conclusions that inform

this research question and identify where these conclusions make a contribution to the field of educational research.

The teachers who participated wanted to develop their practice and this was the case regardless of the number of years in the profession. From senior leader long serving teacher Max, long serving teachers with 10 or more years' experience (Chiong *et al.*, 2017) Cath and Paul, to Tash, Liam and Jon who had been teaching for three years. Each recognised the importance of professional development with Max, Cath and Paul specifically referring to the desire for their practice to not become stale or repetitive:

> do the next thing or do, you know, make it better rather than just be like that's fine I know what I'm doing… I've been teaching for 10 years that's it, you know, I want to like, keep moving forward with it
>
> (Cath 1.96-1.98)

> God I'd just hate to be one of those teachers who just sits and complains and moans, and you know, just that sort of like stale kind of approach to things
>
> (Paul, 2.136)

This challenges Wiliam's assertion that 'all teachers slow and many stop improving after three years' (2015: np) in that all of the teachers participating in my study were seeking ways to improve and develop their practice, and all were beyond his three-year benchmark. This indicates a strong willingness and commitment of teacher to develop their practice and to seek out ways of doing this, and one way in which they perceived they could achieve this was through engagement *in* research. This indicates a willingness to develop professional practice through research activity. While this may not be the case for all teachers, and the challenges I experienced in recruiting participants would support this, nonetheless there is an interest in the profession to pursue such endeavours. To claim, therefore, that teacher should not engage in research because academics 'don't have time for making teachers researchers' (Hattie in Stewart, 2015) or that teachers produce research of questionable quality (Goldacre, 2013) seems dismissive of those in the profession willing to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, potentially increasing the divide between research and practice (Anwer and Reiss, 2023). The assumption with much of the literature cited here is

that teachers have no knowledge or skills for engaging *with* or *in* research when this is not the case. Cath and Paul explicitly refer to researching as part of their teacher training university experiences and, as an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme leader, such programmes include the development of such knowledge and skills, belying Goldacre's wish that 'teachers would be taught this in basic teacher training' (2013: 17). It seems, for these participants at least, they are.

My study contributes to the field of educational research by offering insights into the area of the teacher as researcher from the perspective of teachers as they lived the experience of researching their practice in the early 2020s. There has been a significant shift in teaching in recent years with an increased advocacy for the use of schemes of work or pre-prepared resources for teachers to use:

> Senior and middle leaders should ensure, as a default expectation that a fully resourced, collaboratively produced, scheme of work is in place for all teachers for the start of each term… Teachers should consider the use of externally produced and quality assured resources, such as textbooks or teacher guides
>
> DfE, 2016: 11-12

and with recommendations that this practice be furthered:

> An independent, impartial resource hub may be beneficial in the long-term. This would be a central resource, regularly updated with content linked to the curriculum
>
> DfE, 2018: 61

It is perhaps not coincidental that this is in parallel with the increase in Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) within which consistency and parity of provision across potentially large numbers of schools and wide geographical spreads may be easiest ensured through prescriptive approaches to practice. Alongside this, the 'What Works' movement and the designation of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) as the designated What Works knowledge producing research centre for education with millions in government funding, there is a trend toward teaching becoming deprofessionalised and teachers relegated to the role of technician (Hordern and Brooks, 2023). The perception of constraint by the government was

recognised by Cath. Despite working in an independent school and not as beholden to the statutory guidance and expectations of state schools which can guide or dictate teachers' choices (Bryan, 2007), she was aware of the current political education climate and the possibilities that engaging in research offered as a way of retaining professionalism:

> I don't have, I'm not constrained as much by the government but I think there's a lot of ... you have to do this and you've just piled it on with things and I think to have the opportunity to say that this has happened I've investigated this and this is what I researched this within my class and this is had this effect is quite empowering really quite empowering
>
> (Cath, 1.58)

The perception of what research is and who it is for is of significance, has been explored in *Chapter 3.1*. The significance, as evidenced in GET A (the perception of engaging in CCtPI is not what is experienced), was the misalignment between the perception of what research is and what it became in reality through CCtPI. There was a commonality that research is big or large, time consuming and overwhelming, rigid, scary and generalisable. As Cath shared, it is for those in academia to undertake and not for mere teachers, echoing the voices of those critical of the teacher as researcher explored in *Chapter 3.1*. Yet if teachers can influence the direction of research through the setting of research questions (DfE, 2016) it is not unreasonable to support teachers in answering those that can be explored in the context of their own practice. Over time, the research became *doable* for Cath indicating a shift in thinking and a contrast between her perception of research and her lived experience of it. This is a significant distinction that was shared across others in the group such as Max who shared that *this is easier than I was expecting it to be* (Max, 2.56). The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach offered insight into the teacher voice based on their experience. While teachers' perceptions of research could have been ascertained from interviews focused on this area, such interviews would have drawn from teachers' understandings and perceptions of what they considered research on their practice to be. My study design focused on undertaking such research with teachers thus creating the lived experience of it. Their perceptions and therefore their voices, were grounded in the realities of research in practice. In the midst of a landscape where recommendations, decisions,

policies and evidence are produced by 'those 'outside' classrooms' (Lambert, 2018: 366), the voice of the teacher based on lived experience ensures a holistic understanding of the concept and reality of the teacher as researcher.

Teacher engagement *with* research is recognised as a way to inform and develop practice, alongside professional judgement over how knowledge from research can be applied, when and how (Levin, 2013). However, 'it can take many years for a significant number of studies to be done as the basis for reliable knowledge' (Levin, 2013: 4) and, as in England, directing teachers to a specific body of research as the preferred source of knowledge may narrow the scope of teachers' engagement with a breadth of research (Hordern and Brooks, 2023). There is 'a disconnect between the generators of research and practitioners' (La Velle and Flores, 2018: 525) yet findings from research can be useful in making 'problem solving more intelligent' (Biesta, 2007: 18). While teachers engaging *in* research is viewed as 'unhelpful' (Lambert, 2018: 366), the process of engaging in the CCtPI, even if they did not complete their project, supported participants developing their practice. For Cath, engaging with the relevant literature for her project supported consideration of how to implement research findings into her practice, with the CCtPI facilitating dedicated time to engagement *with* research. Tash had already engaged *with* research in an attempt to develop her practice and meet the targets for her support plan, however it was contextualising this in the CCtPI project that facilitated a greater synergy between research and practice. This suggests that engagement *in* research supports the development of practice throughout the process as well as from the findings that result from such projects. Alongside the benefits that Max experienced through the data collection process which he shared as being a *really really interesting valuable experience* (2.26) that would inform his future practice, this is likely to be a consistent, helpful, benefit rather than 'exceptions that serve to prove the rule' (Lambert, 2018: 366).

The findings of my study also speak to the importance of understanding the distinction between research and inquiry from the perspective of the teacher as explored in *Chapter 1.2*. If teachers perceive research to be a potentially insurmountable, large and overwhelmingly time-consuming endeavour as indicated in GET A, then engagement or

sustained engagement is unlikely. If inquiry is perceived as something more accessible, relating more meaningfully to their practice then there is a potentially increased likelihood of engagement in this as a form of professional development. As such, it could be that encouraging teachers to engage in CCtPI as a form of research to inform their practice is *more doable*. In this way the connections between research and practice can be strengthened as teachers engage with existing research literature as part of the CCtPI process, combining both the existing research and their own findings to grow and develop as professionals. A *massive benefit* (Max, 2.16) explored in GET B, reminiscent of, yet potentially more valuable than, Goldacre's 'huge prize' (2013: 7).

While inquiry may be perceived as being a more accessible and *doable* activity, this does not mean it is without challenges, as indicated in GET C (a teacher's role or identity does not encompass engagement in research). A teacher identity 'is something that one develops and then preserves as part of role identity' (Kim and Asbury, 2020: 1064); a professional identity that is influenced by policy, the school context and teachers' own sense of professional direction (Bryan, 2007). As such, if teaching experiences from teacher education and beyond into the Early Career Teacher (ECT) years and beyond do not encompass engagement *with* or *in* research as an integral element then it is unsurprising that the CCtPI experience was an optional extra or *just something that would be good to do* (Cath, 3.12). Engagement *in* research does not form part of the teacher identity if it does not feature as part of the teacher role throughout their career. The exception to this was Max who had engaged *in* research at various points in his career. He viewed a strong parallel between the CCtPI and the practice he was engaging with as a teacher:

> whereas now what I'm doing more so almost on a weekly basis cause I've got quite a tricky class is that sort of practice-based research where it's a case of identifying this issue I need to fix this issue and then has anyone else out in the world got that solution for me has anyone else got a route I might try right I'm going to try that myself let's see where we go with that and sort of following that sort of like spirals of inquiry thing you know
>
> Max (1.10)

Max also viewed the CCtPI from his perspective as a senior leader in the school and frequently referenced using the experience to further understand how to support the teachers in his school to both engage *with* and *in* research to support and develop their practice. Max's prior experience of research and his responses to the CCtPI would therefore suggest that it may have formed part of his understanding of his role as a teacher. Therefore, the move to encompass the identity of a researcher for Max may not have been a significant reconstruction of his teacher identity.

The comments from Tash regarding her desire for her project to be seen and recognised by the senior leadership team in her school echo the findings from Myers' (2016) case study participant for whom 'to identify as a researcher, she needed others to reinforce and validate this way of being' (p6). The formation of a teacher identity appears to be influenced by the perception of the importance of engaging *in* research by others. As Cath noted:

> your outcomes have to be judged by somebody else to make them, to validate them and, you know… that sort of… research like just me on my own sort of thing is, doesn't constitute research as such
>
> Cath (3.92)

The conclusion of a project seems significant in developing a researcher identity. For Tash, the completion of her CCtPI project and the publication of the outcomes led to this development with her identifying as *a little researcher* (Tash, 6.50) in her exit interview. Paul and Cath also noted that they would have been some way to identifying as a researcher had they completed their projects:

> *So you are a teacher. Are you a researcher?*
>
> Cath: No
>
> *Why?*
>
> Cath: Why not? Yeah, okay, because I didn't finish it.
>
> Cath, 3.79-82

Taylor (2017) notes that 'there is a lack of empirical work that explores how teachers might be supported in constructing identities as teacher researchers' (p.17). My study contributes to this gap, suggesting that, with an understanding of identity formation as 'ever-developing' (Olsen, 2011: 259), a researcher identity can become part of the teacher identity through engagement *in* research if the project is seen to completion.

It could be therefore concluded, in relation to the question *What are teachers' perspectives of engaging in small scale research in their classrooms?* that teachers continue to demonstrate interest and willingness to engage *in* research as a form of professional development in the sense of 'a method of obtaining critical insight… in order to learn from the experience for future action' (Lunenberg *et al.*, 2007: 15). There is therefore opportunity for teachers to go beyond being consumers of research and technicians of practice to be professionals engaging in systematic inquiry of practice. However, research is perceived to be large and significant, time consuming and potentially overwhelming whereas inquiry is accessible and considered more relevant to practice. As such, supporting teachers to engage in inquiry as a form of research may be perceived as a more accessible approach and this in turn supports engagement *with* research. However, support is needed for teachers to see projects to completion to facilitate the development of a researcher identity alongside that of the teacher.

7.2 RQ2: What are teachers' views of collaborative inquiry?

As explored in *Chapter 3.2*, it has been established that 'there should be close collaboration between researchers and practitioners' (Anwer, 2023: 333). Partnerships between teachers and higher education institution (HEI) researchers can be mutually beneficial (Dimmock, 2016; Nelson and Campbell, 2017; Leat *et al.*, 2014). There is an understanding of what these collaborations will entail. These include the researcher undertaking the role of a critical friend (Husbye, 2019), supporting teachers in the research process (Husbye, 2019), the importance of dialogue and recognition of the knowledge, expertise and contributions that all involved, both teachers and academics, bring to the project (Olin, 2023) as well as the dissemination and exchange of knowledge (Fordham, 2016; Nelson and Campbell, 2017). In

short, the ‘collaboration in itself must be well informed… being able to understand how productive collaboration works’ (Olin, 2023: 260) with some evidence that ‘[it] is only research if a university is involved’ (Bryan and Burstow, 2017: 700). My study echoes this literature, but I have gained additional insights into the complexities of the collaborative research process from the perspective of teachers and so contribute to a more ‘nuanced understanding’ (Godfrey, 2017: 442) of collaboration in research. My findings show that collaboration is multi-layered and was perceived as serving purposes beyond those noted in the literature.

Collaboration was perceived as a form of support for professional learning. This echoes the literature that advocates ‘close collaboration between researchers and practitioners’ (Anwer, 2023: 333). However on closer analysis this collaboration did not necessarily need to be with a university academic. It was the sharing and the person to *bounce ideas off of* (Tash, 5.39). Max spoke of sounding out ideas and Jon of learning from other professionals prior to engaging in the CCtPI, indicating that the collaborative aspect of teaching as well as researching serves as a support for professional learning and development. In this sense the professional role of the collaborator was not as important as having a professional to collaborate with. This contrasts with the literature and the tendency toward ‘close collaboration between researchers and practitioners’ (Anwer and Reiss, 2023: 333), ‘university-school collaboration’ (La Velle and Flores, 2018: 532) or ‘collaboration between both sectors’ (Oates and Bignell, 2022: 108). The point at which the collaboration with a HEI academic became important was understanding the research process; as Paul shared, *I wouldn't know where to go* (1.26). The experience of being an academic with an understanding of the research process was also a support in accessing and signposting to relevant literature. Max spoke of not having time to search for relevant literature for his project and being signposted to specific readings meant this was less of a barrier. Related to this is the persisting issue of access to literature; I found it frustrating myself to search for an article that I wanted to share but was unable to as it was not open access. As such, the support this aspect of the collaboration could provide was limited; while I had access to the university library resources, the teachers did not. Therefore, my role was, in part, to support

understanding of the research process - though note that a teacher with similar knowledge and understanding of this process could bring the same benefits to a collaboration. Yet supporting teachers in developing this knowledge and understanding is contested, with it being seen as 'unreasonable and unnecessary' (Lambert, 2018: 366) and academics such as John Hattie stating 'I don't have any time for making teachers researchers' (William, 2015: np). Indeed, as noted by Gewirtz *et al.* (2009) 'facilitating teacher research does not simply, or even primarily, involve disseminating the tools and techniques of knowledge creation but has at its heart the reworking of subjectivities, dispositions and identities both of teachers and academics' (p.567). In this, the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) HEI academic is potentially uniquely placed to collaborate *in* research with teachers. Having come from teaching I have an established teacher identity yet working in a HEI have also developed a researcher identity. In this sense, I identify as both teacher and researcher and brought this knowledge and understanding of both professions to the collaboration. Therefore, while the collaboration may not always need to be with an academic as indicated in this GET, the role of the ITE academic may serve to not only ensure teachers feel *you're not alone* (Tash, 5.51) but also support the learning and development purpose through their dual identity and thus a more meaningful collaborative partnership.

There was also a sense that the collaboration brought with it a sense of accountability, keeping the project on track either by encouraging progression or maintaining focus on the subject of the inquiry. Again, this did not seem to require the knowledge or expertise of a HEI academic specifically; it was undertaking the project as a collaborative endeavour that facilitated this accountability. There was, however, a negative aspect to this accountability aspect of the collaboration. The teachers felt obligated to continue with the project despite challenges they were facing and, for those who were able to engage in an exit interview, unanimously spoke of the feeling of letting me down by withdrawing. This may be unsurprising but has potential implications for future collaborations in that when the teaching role becomes *crazy* (Max, 2.102) and teachers are unable to give *my best effort* (Jon 2.16) that the collaboration becomes a hindrance rather than a help. Developing the skills to engage in Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI) is not necessarily achievable

through a single project. I anticipate that, at the appropriate time, when there is not an uncertainty and changing response to a global pandemic, I could contact Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon and engage *in* research again, possibly to the point of completion. Part of facilitating this was the final interview when we explored the progress of their project. Cath spoke of having *failed* (3.60) and Paul of needing to complete a project to *see myself as a teacher and a researcher* (2.138). Yet when we explored the progress we had made on the project, the learning that had taken place there was a sense of achievement *actually you know when you looked how far you got through with the project… it's not out of reach* (Cath, 3.76). This suggests that, with prompting, benefits of engaging *in* the research process, even if the project is not seen to fruition, can be realised. This could then begin to lay the groundwork for future engagement *in* research, collaborating to build on the familiar and the positive learning experience to develop, over time, skills and confidence in the research process.

It could be therefore concluded, in relation to the question *What are teachers' views of collaborative inquiry?* that collaboration is perceived to be of benefit in undertaking inquiry, though this does not necessarily have to be with a HEI researcher. A colleague who is knowledgeable and understands the research process can be perceived as an equally valued collaborative partner. Collaboration is nuanced and multi-layered, supporting teachers in a range of ways but can also bring with it unintended pressures to engage. Multiple unsuccessful attempts may be needed to support teachers to engage *in* research and develop confidence in the process.

7.3 RQ3: What influences teachers' sustained engagement in research?

The experiences of Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon would suggest that there is a fragility to teachers engaging in research. This is not a process that is automatically robust and this is likely to link to their identity as a researcher and where research is aligned with their identity as a teacher as explored in *Chapter 7.1*. For Tash, Cath and Paul, the CCtPI served to establish themselves professionally. For Cath and Paul, completing a project and sharing the outcomes with the education field was a defining element of becoming a researcher, more

so than engaging in the research process. For Cath it was *empowering* (1.158) to be able to justify practice based on more than professional judgement. Tash also felt empowered by the CCtPI however this was as focused on the context of her school and how she was perceived by senior staff as it was contributing to the wider educational field. For Tash it gave her a voice to *challenge* views of her practice and address her shaken sense of who she was a professional, to *see where I sit in my classroom… as a teacher* (5.75). She wanted the school to show interest in her project to assert her position in that community. Cath also wanted to inspire interest from her school in her project however the purpose of this was also in parallel with Max viewing it as a form of professional development for others thus demonstrating her leadership position in the school hierarchy. Both Paul and Jon sought the CCtPI to address a sense of professional ennui, as they were seeking a professional next step. However, neither the sense of having a stronger voice nor offering a new challenge were sufficient to sustain engagement in the CCtPI projects, suggesting that greater motivations are needed. Nonetheless there was recognised learning and development from the incomplete projects. Cath felt like she had failed as she didn't complete her project but was also able to identify what had been achieved; by engaging *in* the research process *you're already making your practice better because it's impacting your, your thoughts you know?* (3.62). As such, focus on the process as much as the outcomes is significant; 'when a project 'fails to deliver', reflect on it (from its conceptualization to many of the ensuing actions taken) and learn from the experience… with this positive attitude, no… project is a failure' (Soh, 2011: 21). This in turn can facilitate 'the next round, and the next round' (p.21) of research and thus, sustained engagement *in* research.

And so, to Tash. Of all the participants, only Tash completed her project and disseminated the outcomes. To further understand the implications of this, I have considered Tash's experience through 'detailed, nuanced [analysis] of *particular* instances of lived experience' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 31) to further 'understand complex educational situations' (Simons, 1996: 231). Thus, rather than being the exception that proves that teachers should not engage in research (Lambert, 2018), it is 'a means of troubling… [such] assumptions, preconceptions and theories' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 25) and 'shed light on the existing

nomothetic research' (p32) on the potential implications in supporting sustained engagement in CCtPI.

Tash was not unlike other participants in various ways. As with Liam and Jon, she had been a teacher for three years at the time of participating in my study. She, like the others, viewed the CCtPI as a form of professional development and a way to further understand her practice. The distinction for Tash was that she was on a support plan and had been for some time. This seemed to have been a source of frustration for her as she struggled to meet her targets, primarily as she felt she had been working hard towards these, including engaging *with* research, but feedback indicated that this was to no avail:

> I've read so many different articles, I've read lots of research, I've read lots of books, I've tried to take it from the readings and put it into practice, but it didn't work… he kept picking up on the same things and then was saying well you haven't acted on it and I'm like, I have tried, I've tried…
>
> (Tash, 1.60)

There are a range of factors that may have influenced Tash's experience of not finding that her engagement with research supported the development of her practice. These may have included not having the 'knowledge and skills… to be able to find current work, to assess the quality of the work, or to understand the meaning in practice of findings… knowledge of research findings does not necessarily translate into… practice' (Levin, 2010: 308). As a consequence, engagement *with* research was insufficient to support the development of Tash's practice.

Tash's understanding of research is also worth noting. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines research as:

1. : studious inquiry or examination
   especially: investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws

2. : the collecting of information about a particular subject

3. : careful or diligent search

(Merriam-Webster, 2023: np)

and Tash's understanding of the term research not only aligns with all three of these activities but encompassed them interchangeably. It took careful examination of her accounts at times to understand which form of research she was referring to when she used the term or responded to my use of the term. For Tash, therefore, searching for a teaching resource was as much research activity as reading peer reviewed academic papers, theoretical writings or engaging in empirical study. However, while she situated each under the same umbrella term, they were for her distinctly separate activities with different aims and purposes. Exploring her understanding of inquiry became important therefore in order to establish the remit, roles and purpose of the CCtPI but also to determine her understanding of both that term and of research as it related to the CCtPI. The distinction between research as an empirical activity and inquiry for Tash, was active involvement in the process. Research was done by someone else and teachers may be involved on the periphery, as participants for example, but inquiry was when *you're the primary person going out and finding the data and what's going on* (Tash, 1.20). This suggests that inquiry had a distinct course of action for Tash, a clarity in terms of what she needed to do and a process she could follow. The implication therefore being that clarity over the terms research and inquiry and what is meant by these is essential in supporting teachers to engage *with* or *in* research. A lack of a mutual understanding of what activities research involves may contribute to the research practice divide.

For Tash, therefore she had a significant issue in her practice with clear targets as set out in her support plan and the CCtPI provided a clear process by which to work towards addressing the issues within the support plan. This high stakes nature of Tash's professional situation

was unique within the group and was likely a contributing factor in her sustained engagement. It gave a clear purpose to the CCtPI and clear incentive for her to persist despite the challenges she faced which included ongoing health issues, the COVID-19 pandemic and the, at times, *chaotic* demands of her teaching role. This suggests that a clear, defined purpose, a direct link to tensions or needs in practice and structured engagement *with* and *in* research all supported sustained engagement in the CCtPI. The clear purpose and collaborative partnership supported the learning and understanding of the process, the direct link to tensions or needs supported investment and ownership of the project and the structured, collaborative approach provided support and reassurance throughout.

This, however, does not presume to resolve all of the issues participants faced when engaging with their CCtPI projects. Research for all of them incited a range of emotions which were changing over time. All began their participation in my study with a positive view. However there was a commonality in responses that went beyond the positive and indicated strong positive emotions including excitement, empowerment and fascination as detailed in *Chapter 6.1.5*. Cath's affective experience also included being fearful of the project and subsequently avoiding participation and, for all but Tash, the pressures of schooling amid the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a reduced engagement and subsequent withdrawal from their CCtPI projects. These withdrawals were not without associated emotion as all expressed the tensions they were facing between the *crazy* (Max,2.102) *chaos* (Tash,3.58) of their teaching life *I'm letting myself down* (Jon,2.16) and guilt or disappointment at no longer continuing, *I feel like I was letting you down* (Jon, 2.6), *I feel like it's a bit like I failed* (Cath, 3.60). This echoes the 'practical, emotional and explanatory factors' (Gewirtz, 2009: 575) of teachers in engaging in research determined previously, but evidence that these persist more than a decade later and are as relevant for teacher research as they have been previously.

It could be therefore concluded, in relation to the question *What influences teachers' sustained engagement in research?* that external events and the context in which teachers are engaging professionally will have a significant impact on their capacity to engage *with* and *in* research. However this does not preclude teachers from wanting to engage. Projects

with a clear purpose, an identified tension or need that relates directly to an aspect of the teacher's practice that they feel strongly about and which matters to them, alongside a structured, small scale approach to researching this may support sustained engagement in research. An open and honest partnership is important in ensuring that when teachers feel they do not have the capacity to continue that they are able to share this, thus minimising feelings of guilt, disappointment and failure with the relationship facilitating a recognition of may have been achieved at the point of withdrawing.

7.4 Looking back: researching in and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic

An unexpected contribution of my study is the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic in which it took place. In 2020, in response to the pandemic, school closures were introduced around the world to manage the spread of the virus. In England, schools closed in March 2020 though teaching and learning continued on site for vulnerable children and for children of key workers, and shortly after continued online for all school pupils (Kim *et al.*, 2021). Partial openings were put in place in June of 2020 and followed by a full reopening the following September. At this point in my study, as explored in *Chapter 2.1*, I had begun data collection with a group of teachers who subsequently withdrew and begun CCtPI projects with Cath and Max. I was still seeking teachers to participate when the pandemic struck and I adapted as detailed in *Chapter 2.2*. The remaining participants joined after the first lockdown.

This not only indicated a willingness and interest in engaging in research as professional development but a willingness and interest despite the 'potentially highly stressful situation' (Kim and Asbury, 2020: 1063) of the pandemic. While for all participants, with the exception of Tash, the ongoing changes in schools in response to the pandemic which continued through the 2020/2021 academic year proved too demanding to be able to continue with the CCtPI, the exit interviews in 2021 gave insight into teaching at that time. Using language such as *grinding along* (Jon, 2.26), *taking a toll* (Cath, 2.12), *hanging* (Tash, 3.54) and *crazy, very busy and strange* (Liam, Oct 2020) participants captured the pressures felt by teachers. In response, as articulated by Jon and Cath, there was a move to *getting it done* (Jon, 2.12).

It seemed professional development dropped lower on the agenda. Instead, participants were responding and adapting practice in the moment rather than engaging strategically in their learning and understanding as professionals through engagement with theory and research; a move to 'premature closure on diverse ideas' (Campbell, 2007: 1) in response to stress. Participants were not just contending with the *crazy chaos* of teaching but the *grinding toll* as a result of the pandemic, and the CCtPI was the casualty.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is still evident in the UK and guidance for schools remains in place (DfE, 2023). Through their accounts of their lived experience my study sheds light on the experience of engaging in research while navigating the impact of the early months of the pandemic in education. The pressures of teaching changed significantly in response to the pandemic, and yet there was still a willingness and interest in engaging *in* research. Yet for Paul, Liam and Jon the pandemic was not cited as a factor in their withdrawal from their CCtPI projects; for Paul and Jon it was career progression. Tash's CCtPI project was a case study and assumed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, for which she was both researcher and participant. As a result, she could continue with her project during the pandemic as she could be flexible and adapt timings as needed without working to the schedule of others. For Cath and Max, it reduced capacity; as a senior leader Max was focused on supporting the school community through the pandemic and for Cath it became overwhelming. Yet they began with excitement and looking forward to the prospect of engaging despite the pandemic, demonstrating a commitment to professional development and a desire to *keep moving forward* (Cath, 1.100).

7.5 Looking back: my contribution to the field of educational research

As noted in Chapter 1, this thesis is located in the field of educational research and has been focused on understanding the lived experiences of teachers engaging in research through CCtPI. This thesis foregrounds not just the voices of teachers that are largely absent from the long-standing debates on the teacher as researcher but also seeks to present them as persons, as travelling companions who not only shared with me their experiences of engaging in research through CCtPI as part of the data collection process, but from whom I

have learned more about myself as a researcher and educator. The key findings pertaining to PETs and GETs as detailed in this chapter challenge the assertion that it is 'unhelpful… to expect the role of the teacher to expand to become a researcher too' (Lambert, 2018: 366), that the teacher as researcher is a 'delusion' (Wiliam, 2015: np) or that academics 'don't have any time for making teachers researchers' (Stewart, 2015: np). As a blanket expectation for the entire profession it may be unhelpful for, as was seen with all my participants except Tash, there are times when circumstances preclude engagement *in* research. However, Tash clearly benefited from her CCtPI project, her practice improved, her support plan was signed off and she was able to recognise the impact on the children's learning: *they kept saying, like, your questioning has improved and I can see it myself now when I'm teaching and if I've lost the children's interest* (3.100). This would suggest that, for those teachers who show interest, as HEI researchers it would seem more beneficial to find the time to support teachers to engage both *with* and *in* research, drawing from the existing literature in the field while contextualising it in an area of their own practice. The participants viewed engagement *in* research as a form of professional development and engagement *with* research was part of this process. There is, therefore, potential for engagement *in* research to close the gap between research and practice (Anwer and Reiss, 2023). Potentially supporting this is the reframing of teacher research as inquiry, specifically Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI). The collaborative approach provides support, partnership and reassurance, the close-to-practice aspect supports the relevance of the research to practice and the reframing as inquiry facilitates a perception of the activity being accessible and of small scale to be relevant to teachers. In shedding light on the nuance and complexity of teachers' empowering-challenging-enticing experience of engaging in research through CCtPI, this thesis offers new insights into the phenomenon of the teacher as researcher and points to CCtPI as an important form of continuing professional development. Through this, teachers can be supported to engage *in* small scale research on their practice alongside engagement *with* research on a wider scale, recognising teachers as professionals rather than technicians of practice.

7.6 Looking ahead: future travels

This thesis considers the role of engaging in research as a form of professional development for teachers, however I have also come to realise that my development has not only been as a researcher but also in how I might engage with teachers engaging *in* research in the future, specifically 'how can I improve my practice… my educational influence in my own learning and life, the learning and lives of others, and the social formations within which we live?' (Whitehead, 2018: 1). In this, it has also been a form of professional development for me. I have learned so much from Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon which will inform my practice moving forward. From all of them I have determined the importance of the term inquiry and how this can be a more accessible term to use when approaching teachers to collaborate in research. I have learned that any future project will begin with a frank discussion of what research and inquiry are perceived to be and where these perceptions can align with the project we then embark on. From Tash and Max, I have seen the resilience teachers have when they are engaged in a project they can identify as immediately beneficial to them. From Cath, Paul and Liam I have recognised that projects that have whole school change as a focus may be less likely to reach completion; in any new collaborative project, I would address this from the outset, sharing my experiences from these CCtPI projects and using these experiences to refine and define the scope. I have identified the safe, collaborative spaces I created with my research participants, evident in the frank richness of the interviews and their willingness to engage in exit interviews upon withdrawal from their CCtPI projects. However, I also recognise the value of a stricter schedule, with clearly defined points throughout the process to work towards; in being completely flexible projects started to drift and lessen in priority and, on reflection, I feel a more defined schedule may have mitigated this. Some of these potential future changes, particularly those that would involve discussions of concepts, were not appropriate in this context as the CCtPI projects were part of my study and there was the risk of influencing responses to my interview questions. Other elements are part of my learning and development through my lived experience of engaging in research with teachers through CCtPI.

A key consideration for my study was also the implications for teachers engaging in research and what this meant for them in terms of their understanding of what this entailed, their confidence to engage, how it related to their role as a teacher and the context in which they were engaging as professionals. The time in which my study was undertaken included the period of the COVID-19 pandemic which was an unprecedented time of global change, the impact of which is still evident in education. Yet the impact of the pandemic did not affect the 'changing raft of initiatives at an already uniquely challenging time [which] could further damage the sector's ability to provide the right depth and breadth of research knowledge and skills' (British Academy, 2021:2-3). The initiatives referred to here are the introduction of the Initial Teacher Training Market Review, the Core Content Framework (CCF) and the Early Career Framework (ECF). Each of these placed additional pressure on the sector; the CCF became a statutory requirement and ITT providers were required to embed it within their curricula while submitting evidence for re-accreditation to continue as providers of teacher education under the new Market Review and the Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) status was replaced with Early Career Teacher (ECT) status and would be for two years rather than one. The University of Cambridge argued that the changes could 'reduce opportunities for trainees to develop as critically engaged professionals, who are ready to take on the complexities of their role, rather than simply operate as technicians. The status of teaching as a profession depends in part on it being an intellectual endeavour' (University of Cambridge, 2021: np). These changes have since come into effect and are an additional lens through which the findings of my study can be considered. The ITT Market Review and requirement to embed the CCF in teacher training provider curricula created additional workload for HEIs and other ITT providers (British Academy, 2021; University of Cambridge, 2021) and this increased workload potentially reduced the capacity for ITE academics to undertake collaborative research as explored in *Chapter 7.2*. However, while this is an important consideration, this is a potentially transient context; the reaccreditation process has a fixed term and a specific timeline with changes implemented by the 2024/25 academic year (DfE, 2021) therefore a reduced capacity of ITE academics to support teacher research could also be temporary.

Tash, Liam and Jon were in their first few years of teaching when they agreed to participate in my study. This indicated an interest in and a willingness to engage with and in research from the beginning of a teacher's career, however the introduction of a two year ECT programme potentially limits the time teachers have to engage in research not only in these first two years but also in the first years after the ECT period as these teachers establish themselves in the role without an additional framework for which to work toward and provide evidence. However, the potential prescriptive nature of the CCF and ECF that the British Academy (2021) warns against, echoes Tash's and Cath's desire to engage in research as a way of finding their voice after being *constrained as much by the government… a lot of ... you have to do this'* (Cath, 1.158). This is an indication that such constraints inspire action to seek out a vehicle through which the professional teacher voice can be heard in the context of understanding classroom practice: *just because it works somewhere else doesn't mean you can just take it off the shelf and apply it to you because people are different, the place is different, the school ethos is different, we're all there for the children but everyone's got a different approach so I think it's that element of looking at what works elsewhere so you can then critically evaluate it and take the bits that you think, ah, that'll work for us and that'll fit our context* (Max, 1.206-208). Therefore, such prescription may, perhaps unintentionally, encourage and inspire teachers to engage in research.

A further change for teachers and school leaders, implemented in 2020, was the redevelopment of the National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) with participation funded by the Department for Education (DfE, 2020a). 'Designed to support the professional development of teachers and school leaders at all levels' (DfE, 2020b:5), each qualification focuses on specific responsibilities held by teachers. Using the accompanying frameworks, there is a curriculum designed by providers and a clear structure to follow as a result. This is in contrast to teacher-led research which, without a specific framework, is less prescriptively defined from the outset and led by the research interests of the teacher. As such, being funded by the DfE, NPQs indicate the areas in which teachers are encouraged to focus development – leading teacher development, behaviour and culture, leading teaching, and senior leadership skills. By engaging in research however, teachers can identify the areas of

development based on the needs in the classroom therefore there is potentially greater flexibility in professional development through engagement in research. Therefore, the NPQs and teacher engagement in research can provide professional development in different forms, though when collaborating with teachers in future CCtPI projects it may be important to recognise that the former may have greater support from senior leaders in school as they are government funded qualifications.

As indicated by the CCtPI projects in my study, teacher engagement in research can employ a range of research designs. My study was phenomenological with a Longitudinal Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (LIPA) approach. Tash's and Cath's CCtPI projects were Participatory Action Research (PAR), Max's project employed an observational approach, Paul and Jon chose an interpretivist approach using interviews and focus groups to understand participants' perspectives and Liam intended to analyse a survey of quantitative data. Each of these sought to gather data using a range of methods, some with the aim of developing teacher practice and some more explicitly focused on children's progress; though even in the former, the intent was often to *improve the children's experience at school* (Liam, 1.30). However, while there were a range of methodological approaches and methods employed in the CCtPI projects, the aim of my study was to understand the participants' lived experiences of engaging in research through their CCtPI projects. Therefore, the LIPA perspective is likely to have influenced the subsequent projects as I had an alternative agenda to that which teacher research may stem from. My study was designed around the values upon which my perspective was based, including the importance of seeking an understanding of teachers' perspectives in a landscape from which it is often absent (Leat et al., 2014), explored in *Chapters 2* and *3.* Without this phenomenological lens the CCtPI discussions may have differed, perhaps with a greater focus on the values, or motivations, of the teachers with whom I was co-researching: *to make a difference to the children because at the end of the day that's what I want to do is to make a difference to their education* (Cath, 1.156).

Moving forward, therefore, it would be prudent to keep in mind for future CCtPI collaborations that the values I bring to a project may differ from those to which I brought

to my study and this thesis. With consideration that research is 'a values-laden… process' (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2022:2), future CCtPI projects are likely to focus on teacher professional development and those values that teachers bring to their research as well as the impact of that research on those they teach. As with Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon's CCtPI projects, there will need to be a continued awareness of the breadth of philosophical perspectives and methodological approaches that can inform research design but that in future these choices could likely be viewed through lenses quite different to the phenomenological. In this, I continue to learn alongside future co-researchers, as we examine our shared values and motivations, what we perceive the purpose of our research to be and the implications of each for the CCtPI projects we embark on together.

This study has been phenomenological, 'capturing particular experiences as experience for particular people' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 11). With my research participants as co-researchers, I have engaged in CCtPI to varying extents, to gain insight into their interpretations of that lived experience. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is usually a reflection on 'personal experience… we witness it after the event' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 26-27). My research design however diverged from this practice in that I created the lived experience and recorded participant reflection as they lived the experience rather than after the event. Thus, my study moves away from the significance of the 'ordinary everyday experience' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 26-27) instead focusing on the person trying to make sense of an event which is neither ordinary nor everyday for the participant yet one which they have chosen to engage in. Nonetheless it remained ''experience close'... they do things in the world, they reflect on what they do, and those actions have meaningful, existential consequences' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 27-28). As a result, this was time-consuming and challenging research, from engaging participants to engaging in the CCtPI projects over considerable periods of time. On reflection, I could have engaged participants such as Max who had engaged in research and interviewed them about that experience. This would have been a more efficient approach that remained within the remit of IPA and the phenomenological approach though would have sacrificed the contemporaneous nature of my study. However, this could be a next step in developing the insights of it further, exploring the experiences of

teachers engaging in research pre- and post-pandemic to shed a wider light on the reality of the teacher researcher, the role of collaboration and/or the factors that supported sustained engagement in the process.

I was primarily seeking the teacher voice in a landscape filled with voices of many who are not, and never were, teachers. I feel in this I have succeeded and while the resulting outcomes are neither neat nor simple, there is a willingness on the part of teachers to develop practice through engagement *in* research. Supporting this is nuanced and careful use of language, collaborative partnerships and foci of inquiry are contributing factors. As such, from the accounts of Tash, Cath, Max, Paul, Liam and Jon my study sheds light on *Teachers as Researchers: Understanding the Lived Experience of Engagement in Research Through Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry*.

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Appendix 1: Interview schedule and indicative prompts used for interviews

This appendix includes the schedule for all interviews which took place for each participant. At the end of each interview, the date was set for the subsequent interview. Long gaps between interviews were the result of the agreed meetings being rescheduled due to other unanticipated commitments arising. The absence of an exit interview date is indicative of not being able to arrange one with that participant.

It also details illustrative interview prompts that were used for initial, interim and exit interviews. The initial interview prompts indicate those which were drawn from the initial survey which was used to guide these interviews.

Participant	Initial interview	Additional interviews	Exit interview	Total number of interviews
Tash	18 Jun 2020	29 Sep 2020 27 Oct 2020 26 Feb 2021	08 Apr 2021	5
Cath	23 Jun 2019	17 Jan 2020	02 Sep 2021	3
Max	16 May 2019	19 Nov 2019	--	2
Paul	11 Jun 2020		26 May 2021	2
Liam	09 Jul 2020		--	1
Jon	18 Jun 2020	05 Nov 2020	Nov 2020	2

A1.1: Table showing the interview schedule for all participants

A1.2 Initial interview prompts

So in terms of the words that are used when people talk about engaging in research, the actual term research what does it mean for you?

So then if I said the term inquiry do you see that as different or the same or is there an overlap or…

How do you see collaboration in terms of engaging in research or inquiry?

What do you think are the key elements of encouraging teachers to engage in research?

We've talked about [research, inquiry, collaboration *add as needed*], so in terms of the research I'm doing what are your reasons for taking part? What's your thinking around it?

So, following on from the survey you've already filled in, I've just some questions to build on your thoughts there.

> You chose [*option*] that [*statement*]:
>
> What does that look like for you?
> Can you tell me more about…
> Where do you access…
> How does this impact on your thinking around…
> Why is this…
> In what ways does this…
> What was your thinking…

A1.3 Interim interviews

Build on project development to date.

What does it feel like to do this research? *Contextualise to the design of the CCtPI*

How do you feel about continuing on?

Is it something you would encourage other teachers to do?

What is the outcome of your research intended to do? Do you see it as professional development or wider than that?

What do you think the collaboration does? Does it generate any feelings for you when you think about that collaboration?

What are the barriers so far?

What could have stopped it dropping down your priority list?

We're coming to the end of the project. What aspects of it stand out for you?

A1.4 Exit interview prompts

Highlight understanding of decision and interview is seeking to understand; not critical or accusatory, merely trying to capture and explore thinking in different ways. Encourage honesty, draw on relationship and reassure no need to sugar coat; frankness is appreciated as it is all relevant to my research.

So, what happened from your end of things? Why did you feel you couldn't continue at this stage? *Leave space for sharing… allow silences to stretch if needed*

For Tash

Discuss finalising project and submission to journal as precursor.

Do you think it's important to you that other teachers read what you found out?

Is the CCtPI process one you would do again? *Link to other projects Tash has mentioned – would she take the CCtPI approach with these*

Largely open ended to capture participant's thinking but ensure have explored:

A revisit of *research* and *inquiry*
Experience of process to date (RQ1)
Do you see yourself as a researcher? (RQ1 and RQ3)
Where does the collaborative approach sit? In general terms and in terms of the barriers/motivations to research (RQ2)
Motivations to continue – what are they and why (RQ3)
Challenges of engaging -what are they and why (RQ1 and RQ3)

Appendix 2: Sample interview transcripts

This appendix incudes sample interview transcripts from different participant interviews. Both extracts serve to illustrate the outcome of the transcription process leading to verbatim records of interviews and the interview process in more detail. The transcription of Max's interview illustrates how the prompts detailed in Appendix 1 were used in the interviews and the responses these elicited.

My prompts and questions are in **bold** and participants' words are in normal text. Punctuation marks such as commas or full stops were not used so as not to influence meaning in the text; these transcripts were analysed alongside listening to the audio records of the interviews and meaning ascribed to the words was interpreted from these recordings rather than solely the words in the transcript. Where any comments may potentially identify the participant or their school, the extract is redacted.

A2.1 Cath – extract from exit interview September 2021

CM.3.1. **okay so if I just kind of em just just start with a very kind of open question cause it's been a while since we've spoken about the project**

CM.3.2. Yep

CM.3.3. **And the last communication we had em was we had the ethical approval so**

CM.3.4. Yeah

CM.3.5. **Em do you want to kind of pick it up from there and how did you find kind of the next steps? Where did you feel you could go from there? If you could go from there or kind of what then happened from your end of things?**

CM.3.6. Well yes so from my end so that was all great and um it was it was about me doing the readings first of all and and looking at them which em I started doing um and you know I found them interest interesting um to be honest and you know um I always think that when you're reading something it's quite like you know it's like the ideal isn't it the ideal it's to it's you know and you've got to be really careful not to make yourself feel bad *laughs* when you're reading it because you're like God like these people like exist like the you know so you sort of but anyway you read through you're thinking you know I could do that you know I could see how that's useful I could see how that works and um so yes so that's that was a sort of start start of it but then then on the other side of it school was really pressurizing and um and there's like no there was a number of factors that sort of to be honest stopped it going any further and it was just sort of time really it wasn't the want to to not do it or anything like that it was it was time and I mean I know that we sort of say but like time just disappears you know um you think oh I'll I'll do that and what you don't do which is sort of the irony of the whole thing particularly about what the project is you don't prioritise it *laughs* um and

I really should have read you know and yeah you you don't pr- prioritize it because you are under pressure from from other things and I kind of thought that you know school was sort of getting back to normal but it didn't it got worse I found the the second lockdown was very difficult as it was I'm sure for everybody um particularly that the first one was busy you know I was working through the whole the whole time you know uh I think because I work for an independent school um you have that expectation and there's a very high parental expectation um because they're paying for something you know and so you have different pressures some better some you know but you have different pressures um but we had a lot um we're we're also due an inspection in September

CM.3.7. Mmm hmm

CM.3.8. there was a lot of um it was like you're being squashed you know there's a lot of management there's a lot of parents I had quite a difficult class um with some time-consuming lovely but time-consuming children that needed their own um you know I need to do my own sort of um reading on on it I had two um children that were on the spectrum and they're in mainstream they're reception they're in mainstream and I needed to put in strategies um direct strategies for to to help them which I hadn't really had anyone you know maybe not or certainly not for a while that that was or in the same presented in the same way I mean no no as we know no child on the spectrum is the same so you you have to look into it and I had to do a I had to do a course on um an autism course as well um which therefore like went higher up the list because it directly impacted on on on the class you know um and and the expectation of the parents so that was a big that was a big factor of the time and then on the other side um I was to be honest just exhausted um and we had um you know staffing was a massive issue

CM.3.9. Mmm hmm

CM.3.10. Um you know people isolate having to isolate left right and center um and it just I just really honestly just time just disappeared and I was suddenly like at the end of term and you know you know what it's all like trying to and you've got and and obviously because of covid we have quite a pressure to this whole catch up

CM.3.11. Yeah

CM.3.12. Um thing you know um and and um yeah and then I've got a new curriculum in the EYFS um come in and it was just it was like you sort of like felt like you were pounded from all directions um and yeah that that's it really that is and it it just sort of stopped it because I didn't prioritise it because I didn't I guess em sort of yeah not that it wasn't important but you you know because it was it's just that something that you know would be good to do and you know it was it yeah and and it and I feel like it literally was just time that that sort of stopped um stopped it

CM.3.13. Yeah

CM.3.14. Sort of in it's tracks in terms in terms of the project really

CM.3.15. Yeah

CM.3.16. And and and I yeah that's all I can honestly say was that that it just sort of disappeared and you're suddenly there at the end of term and thinking God, what happened you know where did that where'd that time go and and yeah all of that's all stuff so yeah that was sort of what that really with it

CM.3.17. And did you think at any point particularly when you were doing kind of the readings and the training for the on the autism and understanding the autism spectrum did you think at any point that actually why don't we do this as a project?

CM.3.18. Yeah I guess I yeah I didn't think that *laughs* you know I didn't think that um um and I think that's probably because I don't I'm still not like in that like I think I said probably right at the beginning although it was I know it was a long time ago that we actually had that first meeting god um that cause you kind of think that research is not what you do you know I think I'm still in that sort of mindset you know I'm a bit fixed maybe I need to be bit more growth um but yeah it's um yeah you sort of think you don't naturally think oh I could yeah look into this and you don't have I don't know don't have that sort of thought process that that I feel is needed for for doing the research but for it to automatically come I'd have to sort of yeah think about it really but

CM.3.19. So it's kind of linked to you don't see yourself as a researcher

CM.3.20. Yeah Yeah

CM.3.21. as such so when you do activities that might lead to a research project you don't necessarily make the connection

CM.3.22. Yeah absolutely that's that's absolutely it um you just sort of think that you're not um yeah that you think well this is just what I do um not that actually it could mean something or would be useful to look um into further or you know attach any kind of research to you just just what happens and that's what you do to for your children and and that's like your everyday sort of thing that you do rather than something that um I think I I don't know maybe I think that research although it's I know it is for yourself but you kind of feel like it's it's for a purpose you know for some for other people to maybe read or or for other people to um to to talk to other people about and you think oh that's not really like good enough for a research project you know?

CM.3.23. Yeah

CM.3.24. Cath: Yeah Yeah

CM.3.25. Do you think I'm coming out the other side having done your reading and your course and kind of done all your learning online, do you think that could have been, looking back, do you think there could have been a project in there?

CM.3.26. Definitely actually Yeah Yeah There could have been it was It's so some Yes Certainly the impact of the different strategies that you know that I had to do I implemented and how they worked and how you had to develop And One of those things Yeah they're probably Well definitely been

CM.3.27. Yeah

CM.3.28. So research project in that yeah for sure

CM.3.29. Yeah So in terms of the one which as you said kind of slightly ironic because our session our project is on time

CM.3.30. Yeah Definitely something I need Yeah

CM.3.31. Is it something you'd want to, to continue on and see the end of, or do you feel as you say we're so many years in now

CM.3.32. Hmm mmm

CM.3.33. just it's been so long you want to put it to bed or where are you in terms of your view on the project itself at this point?

CM.3.34. oh I'm not entirely sure really I think the definitely the the time length you know which I mean we can blame Covid for a lot of things coming But I think that that was because of the whole covid situation And and the fact we weren't in school for that for that amount of time So it does seem a long time ago And I remember I do remember I thinking about when I first said Oh yeah I'm interested that I help you out and stuff like and it was because I wanted to you know I I consider that I am reflective you know practitioner and and I I wanted to learn more and wanted to think Oh you know I You

know how can I improve my practice and that's what I felt like it you know the project would have done you know would have been improved my practice so I definitely don't think that I would put it completely to bed you know? I would think that I would hope that you know That I might be able to sort of find time to continue it or look or look certainly you know go over those sort of readings again and and look at them and pick out those those things that I might be able to actually you know implement and and improve my my practice I'm probably my you know mental well-being in the world In turn But yeah yeah

CM.3.35. So something you'd want to kind of continue formally and continue as a project or would you just rather kind of take it and kind of model it informally

CM.3.36. yeah uh yeah I think you know potent… probab… probably informally or informally but um but then probably because um the formality of it it's like I kind of think that you know ugh I've I've sort of because I've been so terrible at actually doing it you know I think God I wouldn't want to say yeah no yeah let's continue and and then it and then I go oh sorry I haven't got any time for it to continue so it's like I would hate to to sort do you know what I mean so I think that I would just you know maybe maybe keep it keep it to myself you know and the slightly formal side of it and that whole writing of it you know just kind of you know scares me a bit I suppose in that in that in that sense you know and and yeah that has been a long process and I think it's you don't

CM.3.37. Yeah

CM.3.38. want it to be that thing that you you know you want to be excited about it don't you don't want it to be that thing that um you know you think oh God I haven't done that yet but I haven't done

CM.3.39. Yeah

CM.3.40. Cath: if that makes sense

CM.3.41. Would it have made a difference if it was part of your say your professional development or your appraisal targets were to be to do this and your way of meeting that target say your appraisal target was to manage your time better it would never be an appraisal target but

CM.3.42. Yeah

CM.3.43. would you do you think would it would have stayed higher in your priority list or do you think it just still would have dropped because there were so many other things that would've taken precedence

CM.3.44. I think um I think whether it been on my appraisal targets or not and that would make a difference but not I don't think over the last year like 18 months I don't think that would have made made the difference um because it just you know it wasn't this Yeah it just wasn't you know the pressure was it was sort of I really did feel that feel feel the pressure and from other other things and other factors And um you know and having to sort of um I had to like learn a lot more you know like I'd you know another I'm not I'm computer literate but not like I had to become suddenly making videos and all this you know like that you had to do in lockdown And it was you know had yeah So I'm not sure that it would have made a difference in the last 18 months but future wise um that I could see that if it was in a different Time scale you know if it was in the future or if it been no covid Definitely I think something like that If it's on your appraisal that has a you know sort of a direct impact on on on your uh management or school you know? Yeah that would make make you think Oh because it just naturally makes the priority higher of of importance you

CM.3.45. Mmm

CM.3.46. know because it's just sort of um uh you have to be quite self-motivated I suppose like because it's you because it's just your your project you know? It's not um

CM.3.47. Mmm

CM.3.48. Yeah so maybe if it was if I made I made it more of a something that I of course I could share it with with people but I'd maybe presented it different to this is what I'm going to do and I'm going to do this and then I'm going to show you might findings or you know um to help the Key Stage One department or whatever I think something like that would definitely you know So you had something tangible that you were like Um yeah

CM.3.49. Yeah that greater sense of accountability within your school

CM.3.50. Yeah that's sort of accountability

CM.3.51. Mmm

CM.3.52. yeah yeah I think that maybe would

CM.3.53. Mmmm

CM.3.54. make a difference I think

CM.3.55. And you're talking about being self-motivated did did working together impact motivation at all? Or was it just didn't not really make a difference or

CM.3.56. Definitely So when you and I would talk about it or have you know that would def… that's definitely more motivating because because you like question things or you are experienced in in in the sort of field so you Yeah it just makes you makes you more motivated I would say definitely I think

CM.3.57. Mmm

CM.3.58. Always aren't maybe I'm just I am someone that probably works better in a team you know or with somebody else Yeah

CM.3.59. So then looking back, when and you kind of think about that experience that you have had, how do you feel about that? What do you think about when you think about it and how does it make you feel to look back on that?

CM.3.60. Uh well obviously because I didn't you know like complete it such there's it So looking back I feel like Oh it's like a bit like I failed you know To do something But when when you're it when you're I don't know when you're when you're in it and you are when I was you know thinking about well as you know reading when I started reading some of the readings and all of All of that That just makes you that makes you think More about what you what you're doing and what you're every and how your everyday practice you know impacts on things And that's a good feeling because You know Because it is yeah So you're yeah Yeah The I think that's quite motivating You feel like you're doing something? Worthwhile other place in that sense Yeah

CM.3.61. And so even though you didn't finish it do you feel that you got you got something out of it

CM.3.62. Yeah definitely Yeah absolutely Absolutely And you know I think that just Because in all honesty you know when when I look back it's not been since I first trained like uni or certainly when I did my my posts graduate and early years course that you actually haven't done that sort of academic reading Like It's not something that you're really well certainly I'm not anyway where I work maybe other Schools are different but we're not really presented with that kind of level of academic reading you know it's like you So when you've been teaching for a long time you know it's like years ago the that's not you know time goes by but it's years ago you're sort of you're sort of in that mind you know When you're looking it you research or you're doing readings and you're thinking about how what you could implement you know you don't really have

that So that's was really nice to to do that And I think that that's you know and I'm you know I've got those sort of suggestions I think it's a suggestions like when you suggested the readings and it was like All right Yeah that's that's good I like you know it's I think sometimes it's a bit of a minefield with academic sort of readings you don't really know where to start and what's you know? So having those recommendations and to read them are actually very useful because just doing the readings alone you get a lot out of because you read it and and you are And you read it and and you are automatically obviously thinking about it and thinking how you can Implement maybe some of the things or you think actually I wouldn't do that Or I do it slightly differently It's automatically makes you think And and that makes you therefore you already making your practice better on you because it's impacting your your thoughts you know

CM.3.63. And so what's the flip side of that? What's the, what's the negative? What what would stop you from doing it again or, you know, when you look back you think that wasn't so good or so hot or so enjoyable necessarily

CM.3.64. I think what would stop you doing it would be the time the time time to do it you know you know it'll be amazing if you could think you had the energy or the time to to do that like regularly you know? That would be yeah And yeah and if the school could give you time to do that or if it was part of your you know sort of planning time or whatever whatever it would be um yeah that would be Yeah so I think it's something so time would definitely stop me doing it again um and you know I suppose the only negative thing is like I sort of sort of said is that you know sometimes depending on how it's written you know you it's all a bit you sometimes feel that Yeah that wouldn't happen in the real world or you know how am I going to actually do that when I've got you know 20 other things to do you know or um Yes you can sort of I suppose have this sort of idealis- idealistic view that you don't think necessarily is very real Like sometimes when when you talk about things but I didn't necessarily feel that like with that with the readings that I was doing but but you can sort of feel like that sometimes it's like even you know

CM.3.65. in terms of what's been said in the literature?

CM.3.66. Yeah yeah So yeah Just sometimes things don't always go to their how If you're reading about something you know you're not going to be able to do that all the time because it's human nature to To um forget or you know that's why you need to keep reading So you remember you know I remember how to do it or So yeah I think that's what I mean you know just that it's yeah I guess that could be you know negative in terms of that

CM.3.67. Mmm

CM.3.68. I would say this much really negative about Doing academic reasons and doing a research sort of thing I didn't get there but there's nothing to you know I don't think there's anything really negative about it really because it's just if you're open to it then then that's you know Yeah you're only gonna you're only

CM.3.69. Mmm

CM.3.70. gonna gain from it I feel you're gonna gain from it You either gonna gain something that This useful or you're going to think no that doesn't work for me or doesn't fit with me you know

A2.2 – Max – extract from initial interview May 2019

M.1.180. I think the culture has been certainly in Welsh schools for a long time that you haven't done anything unless you've got evidence for it and the only justifiable evidence that has been accepted for a long time and that's changing now thank god has been only what's in the pupils' books and only the data about that child

M.1.181. Yeah

M.1.182. So that more assessment for learning sort of interaction based stuff, teacher observation, pupils' own opinions that's been like oh that's not valuable cause someone can't come in and take it to a room and pour through it and write something about that thing I think that culture's changing now so it's that I think we're moving towards the point where any form of professional judgement as a form of evidence is now

M.1.183. Mmm

M.1.184. More valued

M.1.185. Mmm

M.1.186. I think for a long time that professional judgement bit was undervalued because there was a lot about all schools have to do things exactly the same if you didn't do it this way you weren't doing it properly it's not in the book so you haven't done it you know that kid of culture you know and and that wasn't helpful to anyone I don't think

M.1.187. Yeah

M.1.188. Whereas now that more reasoned approach I think that more realistic view of well yeah you talking to that child and giving them some feedback and doing something as a result, that's research that's you doing inquiry people are going oh right at last I am a teacher after all I think that the shift is happening

M.1.189. So in terms of then so you've talked about collaboration we've talked about inquiry and research and your school culture and things that are changing here, so in terms of the research that I'm doing, what kind what's kind of what's your reason for taking part and participating, what's your thinking around it

M.1.1810. I think because we we don't fully understand exactly what research and inquiry will become for us I'm interested in finding out what works elsewhere, if you know how other schools are approaching it, if there's a really successful model that's already there that we could learn from that's what I'm interested in because that there's enough change and new stuff happening you know if you ideally you want to avoid going down those dead ends

M.1.1811. save time

M.1.1812. And and and for staff motivation too I want to be able to sort of keep the staff motivated to take on all these really exciting challenges

M.1.1813. Mmm

M.1.1814. but challenges nonetheless

M.1.1815. Mmm

M.1.1816. and feel really positive about it not like oh that didn't work and oh this didn't work and oh I've been doing this for 6 weeks and that was a waste of time we'll start something else so I'm just really interested in models of inquiry and how that's being approached in different places really

M.1.1817. Yeah

M.1.1818. To really develop our practice as a school

M.1.1819. Mmm

M.1.1820. And also more broadly across our cluster cause we're increasing we're increasingly working with our cluster schools in a well some of our cluster schools in a collaborative way not a competitive way because there's been a lot of competition between schools in the past ten years I'd say because everyone's vying for how many kids they can get cause there's no budget and all that *unintelligible* but increasingly we've got two schools in our cluster that are genuinely wanting to collaborate not just do well we do this you should do that as well

M.1.1821. Yeah

M.1.1822. Or we'll do this if we get some money ...so I think that element of us finding out about inquiry and being able to share that with others and bring that in that's that's why I thought that's what piqued my interest I thought oh that sounds good

M.1.1823. and you talked about you used that term what works and I I hear that a lot whenever and it's around a lot it's in the literature a lot... this idea of if it works there it'll work here

M.1.1824. Yeah and it's all relative I think it's

M.1.1825. Mmm

M.1.1826. Just because it works somewhere else doesn't mean you can just take it off the shelf and apply it to you because people are different the place is different the school ethos is different we're all there for the children but everyone's got a different approach so I think

M.1.1827. Mmm

M.1.1828.it's that element of looking at what works elsewhere so you can then critically evaluate it and take the bits that you think ah that'll work for us and that'll fit our context and

M.1.1829. Mmm

M.1.1830. yeah the fact that we do have these plazas in many cases if we're if we're being encouraged to go and visit other schools to look at their practice well they're in classrooms completely different learning environment

M.1.1831. Of course

M.1.1832. From the outset so there are things we'll go and say well we couldn't do that because of x y and z but after you've we've got these benefits here we could

M.1.1833. Mmm

M.1.1834. So it's got to be applicable and adapted to your own setting I don't think I think there'd be lots of people making lots of money if they could just go ta daa

M.1.1835. Mmm

M.1.1836. There it is

M.1.1837. Mmm

M.1.1838. and it was perfect for everyone

M.1.1839. Of course

M.1.1840. But it it is looking at looking at what's there and then making it your own

M.1.1841. Mmm

M.1.1842. It's a bit like the the way they've structured the new curriculum around these what matters statements so they've very clearly said well in this area of learning this is what really matters how you interpret it is up to you

M.1.1843. Mmm

M.1.1844. because you've got to make it your own curriculum and these things should be everywhere

M.1.1845. Mmm

M.1.1846. but it's going to look different in here and here and here and here and here

M.1.1847. Mmm

M.1.1848. it's not everyone's going to do it like little clones

M.1.1849. I see

M.1.1850. cause that doesn't work. They've finally realised

M.1.1851. Very good. Eh okay so ...what I've also looked at the questionnaire that you filled in already and just kind of come up with a few questions just to kind of build on your thoughts there... so you talked about... being confident analysing the information research conducted in your school and... that you agreed with that so... can you expand on that on a little but more what research conducted here what information might be you be analysing kind of explore that a bit more

M.1.1852. So for example we've got our year 6 teacher who this year decided that she'd like to explore the approach of whole class reading because we do guided group reading across the school

M.1.1853. Mmm

M.1.1854. But she had a group of year sixes who are either really really confident readers or not very confident at all

M.1.1855. Mmm

M.1.1856. And she does reading and came across whole class reading and she said to myself and the … could we try this and I said yeah great go for it

M.1.1857. Mmm

M.1.1858. So we invested some money in it so they had enough books for everyone and after half term she was saying she was loving it it was great it was amazing it was brilliant and I said right can I just pop in and just see what's happening then

M.1.1859. Mmm

M.1.1860. And being the person just sitting back and just seeing what was going on it was really really evident and you know this was my I suppose looking at the findings it was me sitting there and seeing what was actually happening. She was in love with this book and the good readers were loving this book. The struggling readers were flicking pages and looking out the window.

M.1.1861. Mmm

M.1.1862. And and I so I said to her afterwards I said yes it's really benefiting those but what about x y and z and she went oh well I'm just assuming they're going to sort of just like they're going to pick up as we go

M.1.1863. Mmm

M.1.1864. And I said well, assuming I said you know that this go another half a term and what if it hasn't happened and she went oh yeah yeah. So then so that finding Ii suppose of right working brilliantly so there's something in this for these kids but these are missing out what do we do, we then sat down together, reviewed that, so keep the bits that are working really well how do we address these so then we brought in elements of our group reading across the school where they do a response activity so we brought so rather cause she was just doing reading the book every day and talk about it

M.1.1865. Right

M.1.1866. Which the kids some of the kids were loving

M.1.1867. Yeah

M.1.1868. But she didn't then have the time to interact with all the children in different ways

M.1.1869. I see

M.1.1870. So we brought in a response focus where every other day everyone would do a response activity which freed her up now to do the reading so then she could go and sit with those children who were more struggling revisit sections of the book read them together and then I went back in sat with those kids had a chat to them and you then know informal pupil … and they could tell me about the book they could tell me about the characters which they were automatically already engaged just because they'd had that bit of quality time

M.1.1871. Yes

M.1.1872. And that for me that was you know the research in the first place her doing that reading finding that approach and principle applying it but maybe not applying it as critically as she should have because she was just loving it

M.1.1873. Yeah yeah

M.1.1874. thinking this is great

M.1.1875. Mmm

M.1.1876. but then that moment of collaborative oh now let's reflect on what's happening is it benefiting everyone and she went yeah I see it now I can see this it's that's not working is it I mean she's quite, she is quite honest

M.1.1877. Mmm

M.1.1878. with reflection and that but then that step forward and we recently had a peer review we had other schools coming in to have a look at what we're doing they went in and actually acknowledged yeah this is going really well, talked to all the children and could see everyone was engaged. So I think that's where when you're when I'm dealing with little people and little humans beings and what they're doing that's where I'm confident in looking at the findings looking at the research and the outcomes and doing that bit about it analysing what's happening and looking at how we can extend it or develop it or prove it. So that's like a real world example I suppose.

M.1.1879. Of course that's really interesting yeah

M.1.1880. There's also the other bit is as a school leader that you have to look at pages and pages of data and be analytical with that and you can identify trends and but then that's less exciting.

M.1.1881. There's no little people involved in that.

M.1.1882. No it's that oh number on a page. Get the child let me talk to him. Bring his book and we'll have a look.

M.1.1883. Lovely that's really interesting actually that's a that's a lovely example of exploring that with a colleague

M.1.1884. Yeah and I think with the collaboration it was you know no one had done anything wrong it wasn't like I was going in and saying this is crap get out. It was just that it's not terrible it's working for some could be better let's make it better. And she was up to it fortunately.

M.1.1885. That always helps.

M.1.1886. Not all teachers are like that. There are some that you think oh god no. I've got to say this oh no. I say it anyway but.

M.1.1887. Possibly not the most pleasant of conversations.

M.1.1888. Yes I went home first.

M.1.1889. Right so lovely then you also said that... you were in terms of research conducted somewhere else, and how the role it plays in your own teaching practice

M.1.1890. Yeah

M.1.1891. You put neither agree nor disagree.

M.1.1892. Yeah

M.1.1893. I was wondering what were you kind of thinking there?

M.1.1894. I think it's that element of, well interestingly a lot of the res*earch* there's not much research that I would certainly found applicable to me. It's not from Wales it's from other education set ups. You know, even England are radically different in many respects now so I find it often you find really something you think this is great I could do that and you think oh well oh that's different the context is really quite different and we can't achieve that same so that's where I've just found it sometimes a bit like oh okay

M.1.1895. Mmm

M.1.1896. But it's in some cases so different from the context we're working within it's hard to make it really have an impact and you can't just be taking that and using this

M.1.1897. Mmm

M.1.1898. It's it's for me it's certainly just more sparks off my own thinking and I'll go away and do something on my on my own

M.1.1899. I'm with you

M.1.18100. Rather than I'll take that apply it wholeheartedly and see what happens cause I just get a bit frustrated reading it going oh, okay. Oh right. There are some like amazing things that I've wanted to engage with with the education endowment but it's all for England only and oh, bugger. So it's that kind of oh right well there's interesting stuff out there but I can't just

M.1.18101. Mmm

MB.1.18102. bring it in and apply it cause often it's quite a different approach.

MB.1.18103. So do you feel it's important then to engage with research in the country that you're in

MB.1.18104. Oh absolutely

MB.1.18105. It's it's more

MB.1.18106. Certainly the culture that we're moving towards with our curriculum now and the way the schools are working and they're changing the standards of the teachers I think it's essential that we've got something that's directly relevant as well as being outward looking and seeing what else is happening in other countries around the world

MB.1.18107. Mmm

MB.1.18108. But because we're trying so much here, we're trying to be so innovative here,

MB.1.18109. Yes

MB.1.18110. We should be doing research to find out if that's actually working

MB.1.18111. Lovely

MB.1.18112. Because we could just all have these lovely ideas and let's do this, we've got to see whether it's actually having an impact and then that is going to be massively beneficial to other schools because it's so directly relevant to what you're trying to achieve with the given differences between schools but it's we're all talking a common language then

Appendix 3: Group Experiential Themes (GETs), group level sub-themes and relevant experiential statements from contributing participants

A 'This is easier than I was expecting it to be': the perception of engaging in research is not what is experienced	
Group-level sub-theme	Relevant experiential statements from contributing participants
Research is perceived to be significant in size	Perception that research should have an impact 'It's supposed to be like a big thing that will change something' (Cath, 2.12) Research is significant '...I feel like it's something more, that I felt like it was something more' (Cath, 3.76) Perception that research should impact on the wider field 'Can push education forward' (Cath, 1.45) Perception that there is an expectation of what should be researched 'I started off with ideas that were too big, it's just… making it something that's actually quite manageable, something that really simple but really effective' (Tash, 2.88) Perception that research is an onerous undertaking 'I can only climb one mountain at a time' (Jon, 2.14)
Inquiry is not as significant in size as research	Perception that inquiry is more focused 'It would be a bit more specific to one area' (Liam, 1.24) Feeling like inquiry is more related to teaching activity

	'Inquiry was more like asking questions into a particular, I don't know, it feels more, feels more specific' (Jon, 1.12) Research informs the field; inquiry informs classroom practice 'The inquiry I think is much more personalised to that teacher, that cohort, in that class situation' (Max, 1.58)
The prospect of engaging in research is different to the reality	CCtPI is not as difficult as anticipated 'This is easier than I was expecting it to be' (Max, 2.56) Own time management plays a role in research 'This isn't very much work at all… it's just finding the hour to sit down and just do it' (Tash, 3.62) Research is significant and conducted by others 'it's actually something that is doable, you know, that it's not out of reach' (Cath, 3.76) Research is flexible 'You can do different… ways of research' (Paul, 2.136)
B 'A massive benefit': engaging in research facilitates professional development	
Group-level sub-theme	Relevant experiential statements from contributing participants
The research process provides space to consider theory and practice	There is time to observe what is happening in the classroom 'You don't often get to sit and just look at that dynamic… that's been a massive benefit' (Max, 2.14-16) Engaging *with* research supports reflection 'I started reading some of the readings and all of that… makes you think more about what you're doing and what you're… how your everyday practice, you know, impacts on things and that's a good feeling' (Cath, 3.60) The purpose of research is to question and develop practice 'When you're looking at your research or you're doing readings and you're thinking about how, what you could implement you know, you don't really have that, so that's really nice to do that' (Cath, 3.62)

	Research is learning and empowerment 'That's really helped, almost it allows you to take a step back and almost look on it from the outside perspective' (Tash 2.83) The CCtPI supported the development of Tash' practice 'I'm no longer on my support plan… I don't think questioning would have been where it is now without it, definitely' (Tash, 3.96-102)
The research process supports making changes to practice	There is an opportunity to apply theory to practice 'Reading all about it and then putting it in practice and reflecting on it in this kind of sense has really helped' (Tash, 2.20) There is a desire to impact the practice of colleagues 'Probably this is something I might suggest for the whole staff as part of transition for next year' (Max, 2.28) The purpose of research is to impact on practice 'It does make you stop and think and I've certainly adapted things and changed things with that mindset which I might not have done before' (Max, 2.64) Even when unable to continue, recognising the potential value in continuing 'I felt like it, you know, the project would have done, you know, would have… improved my practice' (Cath, 3.34)
C 'Just something that would be good to do': a teacher's role or identity does not encompass engagement in research	
Group-level sub-theme	Relevant experiential statements from contributing participants
Research is an optional extra	Research is a choice 'Something I wanted to do' (Jon 2.12) Research is not a necessity 'It's just something that, you know, would be good to do' (Cath, 3.12)

Research is apart from the lived world of teaching	Research is not part of the professional school culture 'It was separate from the school' (Jon 2.6) The research activity was not part of the teacher role 'I thought I could do research in my half terms' (Paul 2.42) There is no time in the school day for the research 'Obviously after school is when it would be done, on the weekends' (Tash, 3.52) Research sits apart from the teacher's world 'I had to do a course…which therefore went higher up the list because it directly impacted on the class' (Cath, 3.8) When the choice came, research was the lowest priority 'Something had to give' (Paul 2.42)
Research is undertaken by academics or at university	Research is part of further study 'Research being something that someone does if they're on a university course' (Max, 1.90) Viewing education academics and teachers in different ways 'You're at the university, we're just at school… researchers are the ones with the big degrees' (Tash, 6.40-6.52) Associating research with university 'I feel almost like a uni student again' (Tash, 2.22)
D 'You're not alone': collaboration serves different purposes	
Group-level sub-theme	Relevant experiential statements from contributing participants
Collaboration as a vehicle for learning	We learn more when working with others 'I'm always learning from other people… there's always more opportunity to learn from them' (Jon, 1.16) Collaboration is supportive 'To kind of help and bounce ideas off of… I think it is that just another person' (Tash, 5.39-45)

	There are bridges and barriers; collaboration can be both 'I am someone that probably works better in a team, you know, or with somebody else' (Cath, 3.58) Dialogue helps clarify thinking 'Just needed a bit to sound it out and talk through what is it, how does it work and then it clicked' (Max, 2.98)
Collaboration makes research manageable	Collaboration makes the research a shared responsibility 'Is that kind of sense that you're not alone' (Tash, 5.51) Collaboration is reassuring 'There's always somebody there' (Tash, 6.35) Collaboration facilitates efficiency 'It might have just taken a longer progress because it would have possibly required me to apple it on my own' (Tash, 6.44) Collaboration helps build confidence 'Having that support to say, you know… that's absolutely fine to research that… would be worthwhile to do' (Cath, 2.16) There are barriers and bridges, and collaboration is important 'Some little signposts, sort of, look at that, that would be really helpful' (Max, 2.118-2.120) Others bring different ideas or approaches 'I think working with others is really important…share ideas and things about how you could it this way or could you do it another way' (Liam, 1.28) Collaboration as a scaffold 'I'd say collaboration is really vitally important… because I wouldn't know where to go to be perfectly honest with you' (Paul, 1.26)
Collaboration as accountability	Others help maintain focus 'I know that this is going to take me in a different direction that somebody else will be going that's really interesting and you go, yeah but, and they go, no come on' (Tash, 6.37)

	Collaboration helps maintain a professional distance 'When you're in it, quite intensely, I think having another person almost drags you out of it because you have to talk about it, it makes it something else' (Tash, 5.91) Collaboration as a vehicle for staying current 'if I don't work collaboratively I'm working in isolation and I'm kind of out of touch with other things that are going on and… I'm not going to have anyone to learn from' (Jon, 1.18) Collaboration makes research seems less intimidating 'I know it helps, it has helped, it's less daunting' (Tash, 5.53) Collaboration means committing to others 'I didn't want to let you down' (Jon, 2.6) There is an expectation of self to commit fully at all times 'I didn't feel like I was giving my best effort… I like to give everything I've got' (Jon 2.16)
E 'To see where I sit': engaging in research has an impact beyond the research itself	
Group-level sub-theme	Relevant experiential statements from contributing participants
Research gives an evidence base for a professional voice	Research qualifies claims 'finding some real results you know potentially that could say hey do you know what? this actually works or doesn't' (Cath, 1.57) The purpose of research is to develop practice and a professional voice 'I think to have the opportunity to say that this has happened I've investigated this and this is what I researched this within my class and this is had this effect is quite empowering really quite empowering' (Cath, 1.158) I think empowerment, like that you could do this, you could start this and you're going to be listened [to]' (Tash, 1.40) CCtPI can inform the wider educational field

	‘Have a purpose wider than me… an impact somewhere wider than just the children’ (Tash, 6.12)
Engaging in research supports professional confidence and standing	The purpose of research is to develop practice and a professional voice ‘Allowing to see where I kind of sit’ (Tash, 6.48) ‘I’m more quick to challenge her now’ (Tash, 5.75) Desire for research to be seen to have an impact ‘I kind of want them to be interested in it and given it can impact the school, I want them to show some interest’ (Tash, 3.94) Disseminating research outcomes is important ‘to actually have something that has happened in the school and the… you can do it and can directly show how that has affected the children or not ... you know that hopefully would then be quite inspiring for the other the staff you know ... and they actually think that's relevant’ (Cath, 1.158) Research is insufficient in relieving professional ennui ‘I was feeling very unfulfilled and, for want of a better phrase, bored’ (Paul, 2.36-42) A sense of freedom ‘You just sort of do what you’re told to do, so yeah, I think that side of that was quite surprising and actually quite, I think, quite exciting’ (Paul, 2.126-8)
Engagement in research incites an emotional response	Enthusiasm at the prospect of engagement ‘Makes you feel really excited’ (Max, 1.326) ‘I love it, this has been so fascinating’ (Paul, 1.108) Research incites strong positive emotions for Tash ‘I’m really excited, it’ll be fun’ (Tash, 1.2) Wanting to encourage others to engage in research ‘She goes, I just couldn't do it and I’m like, but you could do it, do it, you have to do it’ (Tash, 6.33) Research incites conflicting emotions for Cath quite exciting… exciting I think (1.152)

	‘just kind of, you know, scares me a bit I suppose’ (Cath, 3.38) Feeling of failure when not continuing ‘I feel like it’s a bit like I failed, you know’ (Cath, 3.60) Guilt when deciding between commitment to research and commitment to job ‘as much as I feel like I was letting you down… like I’m letting myself down because I’m not giving it everything’ (Jon, 2.16) Research as an additional burden ‘I had to give something up just to free myself… there was just too much pressure’ (Jon, 2.6)
F ‘Crazy chaos’: the lived experience of teachers researching	
Group-level sub-theme	Relevant experiential statements from contributing participants
The day-to-day of teaching is demanding	There are multiple pressures in teaching ‘You’re being squashed… I was, to be honest, just exhausted’ (Cath, 3.8) The teacher role does not always facilitate engagement in research ‘You were pounded from all directions’ (Cath, 3.12) The role is consistently demanding ‘Day to day crazy working life’ (Max, 2.102) Individual incidents can impact on availability ‘I had all sorts kicking off with a child’ (Tash, 5.8) Being a teacher does not always facilitate engagement in research ‘The whole end of year chaos’ (Tash, 3.58) Tash’s support plan added another pressure ‘Looming over my head’ (Tash, 3.100)

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic	The pandemic added uncertainty to the teaching role 'It has been a crazy first term, very busy and strange at times' (Liam, Oct 2020) The pressure was significantly increased 'We're grinding along' (Jon, 2.26) Teaching in lockdowns was difficult 'These lockdown situations have been really tough and taking a toll in all honesty' (Cath, 2.12) The additional pressures overburdened teachers 'Staff just feel overwhelmed all the time' (Cath, 2.91) 'By the half term we were hanging' (Tash, 3.54)
'I'm getting it done'	'Doing' overrides reflection and/or analysis when pressured 'I'm doing it but not thinking about it as well, does that make sense?... it is what it is I'm getting it done' (Jon, 2.12) What has a more immediate impact on the class is a higher priority 'do a course as well which therefore, like, went higher up the list because it directly impacted on the class' (Cath, 3.8) Getting the job done supersedes everything else 'there's a lot… it really that just sort of stopped it' (Cath, 3.8-3.12)

Appendix 4: Glossary of acronyms and explanation of terms

Descriptions of the purpose and remit of organisations have been taken directly from that organisation's website. Definitions of terms are included for those not immediately evident from the name itself and many of these are very brief definitions of complex ideas, concepts and theories than are captured here and should be explored further for a fuller understanding.

British Educational Research Association (BERA)
The leading authority on educational research in the UK, supporting and representing the community of scholars, practitioners and everyone engaged in and with educational research both nationally and internationally.

Collaborative Close-to-Practice Inquiry (CCtPI)
A systematic approach to engagement in small scale research as collaborative professional learning, designed by practitioners to examine and support critical engagement with their practice.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The practice of undertaking learning and training that supports knowledge and understanding of teaching.

Critical Realism (CR)
'A philosophy of science, a theory of what (good)science is and does' (Gorski, 2013: 660); the 'view that the possibility and necessity of experiment show that reality is structured and stratified… a non-reductive explanatory account of human sciences' (Collier, 1994).

Department for Education (DfE)
The Department for Education is responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England.

Early Career Teacher (ECT)
A teacher in the first two years of practice after gaining Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)
The Education Endowment Foundation is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. We do this by supporting schools, colleges, and nurseries to improve teaching and learning through better use of evidence.

Experiential statements
Previously emergent themes, the statements that 'relate directly to the participants' experiences… or to the experiences of making sense of the things that happened to them… an initial preliminary marker of… analytic work' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 86-87).

Group Experiential Themes (GETs)

The result of 'cross case analysis… to highlight the shared and unique features of the experience across the contributing participants' (Smith *et al.*, 2022: 100).

Higher Education Institution (HEI)
Third level education, usually universities or Further Education colleges, which includes study at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
An approach to qualitative research informed by phenomenological, hermeneutical and idiographic philosophies of knowledge.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE)
Also known as Initial Teacher Training (ITT), the route to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in the UK.

Longitudinal Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (LIPA)
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis research (see above) conducted over time with data collected at different time points and includes an exploration of change over time.

Multi Academy Trust (MAT)
Multi Academy Trusts are companies with not-for-profit status which are responsible for running more than one academy. Academies are state funded schools that are outside of local authority control and directly funded by the Department for Education (DfE).

Participatory Action Research (PAR)
'Doing research *with* people and communities rather than doing research *to* or *for* people and communities… premised on the view that research can be conducted by everyday people rather than an elite group of researchers' (Cohen *et al.*, 2018: 56).

Professional Development (PD)
The commitment to the ongoing understanding and critical engagement with theory and practice to further develop as a professional.

Personal Experiential Themes (PETs)
Clusters of experiential statements based on patterns within the statements.

Research Capacity Building (RCB)
'Promoting the use of evidence, enquiry and evaluation to prioritise the role of research and to make time and resources available for research engagement' (BERA, 2014: 27).

Randomised Control Trials (RCTs)
A methodology 'for causal inference… [involving] a collection of subjects that will be allocated randomly to either the treatment or control arm of the trial… to allow the identification of the two (marginal) distributions… of outcomes… in the treated and untreated cases within the trial sample' (Deaton and Cartwright, 2018: 2-3).

Research Questions (RQ)