Socio-collegial discursive spaces: an exploration of the importance of informal interactions and relationships within post compulsory education

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Abstract

This research explored the existence, value and function of socially situated, informal professional groups and relationships amongst teachers in different strands of the post compulsory education sector (PCE), and how their values, aligned to social justice, sat in tension with the experiences of working in PCE settings. It sought to conceptualise the nature of this phenomenon and understand how teachers created and sustained this within their institutions and in the wider context of PCE. Qualitative methods of enquiry were undertaken in the form of interviews, focus groups and multimodal data capture by participants. Multimodal data included written and photographic accounts of participants' interactions with their colleagues, as well as images and artefacts which they felt represented these interactions and relationships. Findings were analysed through a spatial and rhythmanalytical conceptual framework which provided a lens for interpreting participants' accounts within the context of their everyday environments. The concept of 'restrictive' and 'expansive' learning environments (Fuller et al., 2005) was also utilised to interpret the environments within PCE institutions where informal, collegial groups and relationships operated. Results highlighted the importance of what became termed *socio-collegial discursive spaces* for teachers' practice, identity and development, created and sustained by participants themselves, even within restrictive and challenging environments. Occupying the liminal spaces within teachers' day to day lives, and beyond the reach of institutional management, they were able to sustain teachers in their development and were aligned to their personal values and the work they undertook with their students. The findings have implications for institutions within the sector, illuminating the value that such spaces contribute to the very functioning of post compulsory education and the institutions in which it takes place.

Chapter One - Introduction

1.1.Aims and focus

The ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus set up a garden which provided a tranquil focus on community and conversation. In the changing and uncertain times which followed the conquests of Alexander the Great, the garden was a place for people to contemplate and come to terms with change (Bergsma et al, 2007). This research considers what can be discovered about today's communities of teachers working within what will be shown to be a changing and turbulent context. The garden idyll may now be a relic, a romantic mystique, however what other kinds of spaces exist for practitioners in post compulsory education (PCE), and how might these be illuminated by research? Epicurus was concerned with the pursuit of happiness and wellbeing, choosing people over fortune, and it is in this spirit that the research underpinning this thesis seeks to discover how teachers derive benefit and a sense of belonging and identity from their relationships with others in their work.

The research focus started as an investigation into what has been commonly termed 'communities of practice', a concept at the centre of theories connected to Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's extensive work on the 'fundamentally social phenomenon' of professional learning (Wenger, 2003, p. 3). As explored in detail in Chapter Two, although still of value, this seems to reflect only a part of the complex nature of interactions between teachers. Whilst learning is an important element arising within their relationships, there is perhaps a deeper process being enacted connected to beliefs and values but also as a means of adapting and surviving in a challenging working environment. From researching the literature around teacher collegiality and collaboration, (e.g. Hargreaves, 2002; Singh and Manser, 2002; Löfgren and Karlsson, 2016) it does seem that a wide range of factors influence the existence and nature of informal professional groups, including the quality of the environment in which they occur (Fuller et al, 2005; Kemmis et al, 2014). Finding a definition and 'label' which adequately explains the phenomenon of these groups, as an alternative to 'communities of practice' may be problematic (see Chapter Two). The phenomenon seems to be about an essence of something collective, part of the rhythms of our work, something which sustains us when we return from a challenging class, or want to

talk about a new approach we are thinking about, a difficult issue with a student, or something we have heard or read about and want to make sense of. Single word terms such as ‘collaboration’, ‘collegiality’ and ‘community’ have been used interchangeably and are unclear (Hargreaves, 2002); however, it will be necessary to move away from the over and increasingly misused term ‘community of practice’ (Roberts, 2006; Hughes et al, 2007). In view of this impalpability, the term informal professional groups (IPGs) will be used as a working term (see Chapter Two, section 2.3.4) up until the point where findings have been analysed and this phenomenon comes more clearly into sight. By the end of the thesis, it is intended that a more fully developed understanding will lead to a new term, capable of capturing the sense of this entity in contemporary settings. This will need to encompass the social and informal elements of such relationships that are the subject of the research, without evoking preconceived connotations.

The study will focus on how contextual issues within a now marketised sector in PCE (Ball, 2012; Illsley and Waller, 2017; Lucas and Crowther, 2015) might influence the growth of IPGs and affect their function in terms of social practice, enacting social justice and support, and undertaking professional learning. The wider context of neoliberalism and the marketization of further education (FE) is discussed in Chapter Two and, within this landscape, IPGs could have the potential to give teachers a democratic voice within the sector, or conversely stifle this voice through discourse being influenced by the managerialist context in which they operate. My aim is to illuminate the nature of IPGs in PCE institutions, how they function and are sustained within their contexts. The link between the relationships within IPGs and teachers’ professional identity will be considered, and how informal social interactions and processes can operate effectively against the backdrop of turmoil in a sector which has been likened to a train set with which the state constantly tinkers (Keep 2006), a feature which seems to ever continue (Hill, 2017). This unsettled backdrop extends to the many recent policy pressures and curriculum changes, such as local Area Reviews, the introduction of T Levels, qualification reviews and Local Skills Improvement Plans, to identify just a few examples. Policy making in the sector has consequently been linked to relationships characterized by ‘strain’ and ‘distrust’ (Donovan, 2019).

The research therefore aims to explore the extent to which practitioners in PCE perceive themselves to be part of a collegial entity within this policy context, and how this relates to their practice and wider identity. Within such an environment the sharing of practice, and the strength of this compulsion, could be challenged by a managerialist approach requiring teachers 'to comply with a stream of internal and external policy changes' (Scales, 2011, p4). If sharing a collective identity is important to learning and development (Wenger 2000), then there is a need to explore the practical mechanisms through which this can operate in the 'fractured environment' of FE (Plowright and Barr, 2012, p.13), and amidst the shifting sands of what has been termed 'policy hysteria' (Avis, 2009; Stronach and Morris, 2009). The pace of change has not abated and continues, despite calls for this to end (Hill, 2017); PCE continues to deliver transformational education on shifting sands (e.g. Joyce, 2021; transforminglives.web.ucu.org.uk, 2021), and this provides the landscape within which the teacher relationships in the research must operate.

Consequently, the research questions to be addressed are identified as follows:

- **To what extent and why can socially situated informal professional groups be seen to exist within different strands of the PCE sector and how can these be understood using a spatial and rhythmanalytical framework?**
- **What is the value of these groups to teachers' practice and their professional identity and how are they created and sustained?**
- **How do macro and micro conditions affect the existence, growth and function of these groups within the context of PCE in England?**

In order to address these questions, participants were recruited from different strands in the PCE sector: FE colleges, adult and community education, offender learning and military vocational education and training. The rationale for the inclusion of these different strands is detailed in Chapter Four (methodology) and responses are presented through participant accounts and visual records of collegial activity in Chapters Five and Six (data analysis). These questions will be considered again in Chapter Seven through a summary discussion of the conclusions arising from the research.

1.2.Rationale for the study

There is a gap in existing research whereby teacher collegiality and practice in PCE is placed within a managerial context. Whilst 'decades of research have revealed that collaboration and collegiality are essential for school improvement' (Datnow, 2001), and has provided the basis for continued debate about collegial relationships, this has primarily related to education within the school sector (Hargreaves, 1994, 2001, 2002; Fuller et al, 2005; Hoyle and Wallace, 2007). Research has also evaluated communities of practice (CoPs), and in some cases offered an alternative model, but similarly this has been lacking in relation to PCE (Cheng and Lee, 2013; Hughes, 2007; Engström, 2001). Research into the specific impact of informal social groups on teachers working in PCE and their practice has therefore been limited and non-specific in terms of the unique nature of the sector. This research provides further insight through considering IPGs, and their operation and function, within a managerialist environment, through a spatial lens (see section 1.5, conceptual framework below). Existing research has applied Lefebvrian concepts within the field of education (for example Middleton, 2014, 2017), however where my research is unique is the application, not only within PCE, but across various strands within this sector, as outlined below.

The rationale for the research is to therefore explore what I have termed informal professional groups (IPGs) within the current context of PCE, making comparisons between different types of settings, or strands, within the sector. These are introduced below. It is my intention to include teachers' experiences across different types of setting within the sector. The primary reason for this is to reflect the sector as fully as possible, rather than just the college setting with which I am most familiar and with which the wider population most associate FE. As I discuss below, I have previously met teachers in other areas of the sector who have felt isolated in their practice, and it is my intention to include as many facets as will be possible and practical. As defined by Crawley (2013) the sector is diverse:

> If you are teaching in FE, community development learning, workplace learning, 14–19 provision, public services training or offender learning which is not delivered by school teachers, you are working in post-compulsory education. (Crawley, 2013, p. 3)

Including a range of settings will also enable me to compare and contrast the different experiences of participants in the research and highlight any commonalities in experience

across the different settings, therefore enriching the data analysis, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, specifically section 4.8.

In developing the rationale for the research, the utility for future implementation was considered. For example, the role IPGs might have in professional learning and identity formation and development through a process 'buried within everyday workplace activity' (Fuller et al, 2007a, p.744). To consider the value of informal social interactions within the setting of an increasingly performative culture could also enable a deeper understanding of how teachers derive benefit and share and develop practice within a climate where there is a 'systemisation' of their work, 'shaped by ever-increasing pressure to improve student performance' (Datnow, 2011, p.148). This would support practices which allow space and consideration for a process through which,

> Learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world. This world is socially constructed.
> (Lave and Wenger 1991, p51)

IPGs might also have an important function in providing opportunities for the cultural continuity of values-based practice (Biesta, 2010). It is possible that such relationships provide a counterbalance to the measurement driven neoliberal practices permeating the sector (Ball 2012), discussed further in Chapter Two. The originality of the research is its aim to have as its focus the illumination of the rhythms and dynamics around how teachers in PCE converse together about their knowledge in everyday spaces, when it is argued that 'market relevance is becoming the key orientating criterion for the selection of discourses' (Bernstein, 1996, p.103). The extent to which issues such as trust and management culture (Avis, 2003) influence the nature of interactions and discourse within PCE institutions has implications for how teachers in different parts of the sector experience the quality of their working lives and relationships, but also how they perceive the sector and their place within it.

Teacher collegiality is not a new concept, however it has not yet been specifically applied within the PCE sector, and to illuminate and compare several different communities is a new approach, particularly in conjunction with managerialism and spatial concepts. As illustrated below, my own experience has informed this enquiry, and this further explains my desire to research these relationships and tensions.

1.3.My professional journey through the lens of community and the rise of marketisation

The connotations evoked by Epicurus's idealised garden at the start of this chapter resonate with my career in FE, which has been characterised, defined and inspired by a diverse range of enriching interactions with groups of colleagues, both within the colleges and the university where I have worked, as well as with external contacts and partners. The entity I began to see at the beginning of this research as communities of practice or CoPs (Wenger, 2003) has shaped my learning and development as a teacher and presented different perspectives which continue to challenge and shape my own professional identity and practice. The specific notion of 'CoPs' will be explored further in Chapter Two, however my sense of being part of a collective entity of some kind, a community of teachers, has helped sustain me and has enriched my working life over twenty-six years of practice. This experience has inspired my research and I will therefore begin this chapter with an account of why this subject became important to me. Below I have illustrated this through an account of my emergent sense of being part of a wider collective, and the impact it has had on my professional journey.

This process began within a period of significant change within the sector, when I entered FE in 1995 as an agency-employed, hourly paid lecturer. I taught an excessive number of hours per week and must surely have been seen by colleagues as a representation of the new more fractured, casualised workforce, which was a corollary of re-structuring within the sector, following the incorporation of colleges as they were removed from local government (Lucas and Betts, 1996, Fletcher et al, 2015). As a new teacher, I joined the PCE sector during an era which was characterised by conflict and low morale (Fletcher et al, 2015), and it would have been unsurprising if resentment were felt by my more veteran colleagues. For example, Williams (2003, p.309) cites a college principal, reflecting on incorporation and the associated disruption and job losses at this time:

> I think it has created a nervousness in some staff who hadn't been used to the idea that jobs can actually disappear.

Within this insecure and unsettled environment, instead of hostility and resentment, I found myself welcomed into a culture which was supportive and nurturing. I worked informally

with staff who shared resources and gave their time, advice and support, some of whom remained in dispute with their employer on the very restructuring my own contract was seeming to symbolise. I absorbed the values and principles of what I felt to be a community; one whose members shared their knowledge and skills freely and put students and learning at the heart of their working lives, regardless of any personal dissatisfaction with the changes underway; an enduring and characteristic feature of teachers within the sector (Fletcher et al, 2015). Being accepted as part of such a community with its strong sense of purpose was instrumental in allowing me to reflect and develop as an individual, and to develop my professional skills as an educator.

Since then, I have been part of teacher 'communities' (which I would now term IPGs, as discussed above) which consistently echo the importance of informal and social interaction within the professional context. Again, these groups have involved teachers working and interacting together with a clear, shared purpose in mind. For example, working with an awarding body committee responsible for access programmes across the country, I shared a sense of purpose linked to the wider educational philosophy of equality of access to higher education, which had a unique and specific focus for teachers within the access curriculum area of 'constructing emotional and academic support' (Busher et al, 2015, p. 127). My interactions with members of this group reinforced my professional priorities and belief systems as we worked together to safeguard and develop opportunities for students where a more traditional educational route had not been possible for them. We believed that we had a role in providing a 'second chance' for a diverse range of people who were taking a brave and unfamiliar step in returning to education, often against a backdrop of social and economic disadvantage, poor school experiences, resistant partners and families, and frequently receiving limited (if any) form of support (Reay et al, 2002). This was undoubtedly perceived as a collective social mission, not only in this programme area but across the curriculum. Similarly, my work with foundation level students, all of whom had achieved no qualifications at sixteen, and in some cases had been excluded from school, I believed politicised me, as I recognised a clear sense of purpose in working alongside my colleagues to help improve the opportunities available to the young people we were teaching. We shared the stories of our students, the positive achievements as well as the disappointment when some returned to the patterns of their formative lives and learnt

behaviours. Our relationships with our students were significant in a process through which students made a 'shift from being disaffected learners to becoming accepted as students' (Bathmaker, 2001, p. 81). Hytten & Bettez's (2011) discussion of social justice in education resonates with the sense of mission inherent in our conversations; there is a parallel between the written 'passionate and evocative' narratives they describe, and the interactions I experienced with my colleagues. In Hytten and Bettez's descriptions, as in my own experiences, teacher interactions about students were:

> portraits of injustice related to schools and education, reflections by educators committed to social justice, and narratives about personal experiences of lived injustice.
> (Hytten and Bettez, 2011, p.14)

These discourses heightened our motivation and formed the basis of our shared strategies. Together we constructed a plan for each individual which took into account their past influences, supported them to overcome their present challenges and situations outside college, and encouraged them to re-write any negative self-perceptions. This was not recorded or written down but took place amidst conversations in the staffroom, often over coffee or lunch, within the gaps and transitions between teaching or other college tasks and events; they found their place within these liminal spaces of transition between day-to-day events. Working collectively, we felt could achieve this, if not in every case, to an extent where we felt we could make a difference. As a newcomer, I learnt from colleagues informally through a social discourse. Like the students I was teaching, I felt a sense of acceptance by colleagues 'as a whole person acting in the world' (Lave and Wenger 1991, p49); this acceptance extended to colleagues and students alike. Those students who succeeded had begun to develop the social and educational literacy to re-write their futures; social and economic capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Bourdieu, 1985) had been enhanced through the success of the individuals we taught, which further fuelled our shared sense of purpose.

In explaining my motivation to investigate communities of teachers and their relationships, the views and experiences of colleagues are as important as my own. Working with the sector's professional body, the then Institute for Learning (IfL), exposed me to the views and perspectives of teachers working in a wide variety of settings across the post compulsory sector, and these consistently emphasised the need for and importance of professional

dialogue and interaction. In particular, at the various 'Networked Professional' research events I facilitated as part of the IfL's study (wired.gov.net, 2012), teachers often expressed a sense of isolation, and valued the opportunity to share practice and experiences. In some contexts, teachers worked alone as the sole educator within their setting, for example as the only teacher in an NHS unit. I found the sense of excitement and appreciation of being able to talk to others in similar roles at these events palpable, however this also this raised my awareness that for some teachers there was an apparent absence of such opportunities in their everyday working lives, in contrast to my own experience.

Accounts of teachers having more restricted opportunities increasingly resonated with my experience as a college manager, where I encountered tensions which I felt exerted pressure on the values I had developed and shared with other teachers. These tensions arose within an increasingly 'marketised' climate; a 'quasi-market' (Lucas and Crowther, 2016, p.588) where 'colleges acted as businesses and spent resources and time focusing on the demands of competition within a tight regulatory framework' (ibid, p.585). I found that increasingly success rates determined Ofsted grades, league table positions and future funding and that this reduced the range of provision available to students who would benefit from that 'second chance' discussed above, due a pressure 'to evaluate the viability of provision' (ibid, p. 585). I found that the deeper held and socially driven belief systems and values I had shared with my colleagues were being challenged by an increased institutional emphasis on the requirement to comply with these funding regulations and accountability measures. Thus, the reality of our environment was being shaped and dominated by adaptation to this marketised environment in which,

> social reality comes to be identified with an economic value system that reshapes all Reality in its own image. Thus, the triumph of managerialist ideology is found in concreteness, specifically in an economic empirical base. (Brancaleone & O'Brien, 2011, p.502)

This vision and ideology are far removed from that of the value-driven teacher communities I have outlined from my own experience. In those communities, success was not about audits and inspections but centred on the students themselves and wider concerns about redressing inequity, as discussed above.

The awareness of this shift in priorities in college only escalated my interest in understanding how teachers can work together so that there is a continued opportunity for their principles and values to be shared and nurtured, and how this might operate within the marketised environment discussed above. My experience and professional journey have therefore steered my research focus into how opportunities to share practice, learn and develop through interaction with others is critical to teachers' experiences and perceptions and therefore to their teaching.

It is recognised that this experience and journey may impact on the way I see and frame the research, from the research questions posed through to the analysis of findings. This will be explored within Chapter Four (methodology). I have a resolve to understand the value of professional interactions, how they operate and how they might be influenced by the context in which they take place. I will now consider this context in more detail below by looking at the PCE sector as it appears currently, including the type of settings which will feature in the research.

1.4.Research settings

As explained above within the rationale for the research, I intend to include participants working in a range of settings within PCE. I am aware of the limitations to the scope of the study in terms of time and resources, however I want to reflect as much of the diverse nature of the sector as practicable. Although the research does not seek to make generalisations across these different settings, this approach will enable any comparisons to be made which could deepen the understanding of collegial interactions.

The research therefore took place with participants either employed by, or engaged in initial teacher education (ITE) programmes with, three general colleges of FE and one adult and community learning college; two of the FE colleges were in the West Midlands and one was located in the North West of England. The adult and community learning college was located in the West Midlands. The FE college settings are part of the ITE partnership connected to the university in which I work as a teacher educator. Participants in FE college settings are all in-service teachers, some of whom were enrolled, at the time of the research, on an ITE programme within the partnership. A small number were in-service students

within the partnership college, but work in other PCE settings (including offender learning as below, plus NGO training providers). This was intended to provide opportunities to explore IPGs across a range of environments and settings.

Offender learning participants were also in-service teachers on the partnership course at one of the FE colleges mentioned above, and therefore students at the university where I work. These participants emerged as a 'sub-group' within one of the college settings. Although recruited through my link to the college, they worked at two respective offender learning institutions in the West Midlands, and clearly identified themselves as a distinct group within their teacher education cohort. Their experience would provide a further perspective, working within a challenging context, as discussed in Chapter Two.

The research also extended to a military setting, again connected to the ITE partnership in which I work. Extensive military protocols were involved in order to gain permission to conduct the research, and this process is discussed in Chapter Four. Participants were experienced RAF military personnel and instructors, involved in the vocational and technical education of recruits, including the teaching and assessing of accredited national qualifications. Participants were either in-service ITE students or alumni of the university partnership's programme, which is often a bridge to higher education programmes and the workplace mentoring of subsequent ITE students.

The research therefore aims to explore the phenomenon of IPGs in each of these contexts and identify any common characteristics. It recognises that each setting will have its own sub-context and be responding to specific changes in that strand of the sector, as will be explored in Chapter Two. With the research taking an exploratory approach amidst perpetual changes affecting the sector that are so significant, to explore this concept and its impact on practice across these different institutions will help illuminate its value as a mechanism for supporting both teachers' practice and identity and their engagement in consistent, socially situated teaching and learning.

1.5.Conceptual framework

In order to conceptualise and understand the kind of informal, social groups that are at the centre of this study, it will be necessary to accept that this will involve the exploration of an unknown entity; to grasp an essence of something special, a unique entity, and understand 'attitudes, behaviours and interactions' (Cohen et al, 2018, p.21). As will be discussed in Chapter Two, CoP theory does not fully explain how teachers become connected with one another within a contemporary, often pressurised and restrictive PCE setting (Fuller et al, 2005), or address the nature of their relationships in the context of 'powerful rationalising processes' (Cox, 2005). Such processes applied to PCE settings will need to be aligned to the managerialist approaches discussed above. Although helpful in identifying some of the characteristics of social groups in the workplace, such as 'mutual engagement' whereby 'being included in what matters… defines belonging' (Wenger, 2003, p.74), CoP theory does not therefore account sufficiently for contemporary PCE settings. Neither does it account for teacher emotions and human experience (Lortie, 1975; Löfgren and Karlsson, 2016).

It will therefore be necessary to identify a conceptual framework which can account for the managerialised context of PCE (see Chapter Two), whilst also deepening the understanding of human processes and interactions found within the research data. The literature review will identify how the informal social interactions which support teachers are often 'organic', connected to discourse and shared stories (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), and cannot be manufactured (Roberts, 2006). There is also a focus on authentic practice 'aiming at the good for persons and the good for humankind' (Kemmis, et al, 2014, p. 28) being a natural feature of social life (ibid, p. 25). With this emphasis on dynamic and authentic human processes, combined with the need to account for the quality of the environment, Lefebvre's work on space and rhythmanalysis will be utilised as a conceptual framework for the research, applied to Fuller and Unwin's concept of restrictive versus expansive environments (2004), which will be explained below. There has been recent interest in applying Lefebvre's work to the field of education 'as part of a broader 'spatial turn' in education scholarship' (Middleton, 2014, p.2), and it was felt that his focus on space, rhythm and everyday life, with its 'social richness' (Lefebvre, 2020 p. 63) could help illuminate the way that IPGs operate. The threat that 'communal forms of social life' (ibid p.64) could become 'dominated by …

the time and space of markets' (ibid p.16) could present a conceptualisation of teacher relationships and interactions within the context of managerialism through the lens of spatial dynamics. Lefebvre's ideas will enable teacher interactions to be analysed in terms of their human experiences, and the rhythms and energies in their everyday lives. Lefebvre's interest in the fullness of human experience (see Chapter Three), and his belief that everyday 'should become a work of art', (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 219) has a resonance with the research enquiry into the quality of the environment in which teachers in the study worked and lived and engaged with one another in informal social interactions. That 'the art of living implies the end of alienation' (ibid) seems to encompass the tensions between the collegial relationships I describe below related to my own experience, and the pressures of teaching, supporting students and developing one's practice within a managerialist environment where,

> performativity invites and incites us to make ourselves more effective, to work on ourselves, to improve ourselves … within a framework of judgement within which what 'improvement' and effectiveness are, is determined for us, and 'indicated' of us by measures of quality and productivity (Ball, 2012, p.31)

Lefebvre's holistic and non-linear perceptions of space, time and energy, to be explored in Chapter Three, will therefore be deployed as the main conceptual vehicle in understanding the 'spaces' where teachers engage in IPGs, perhaps co-creating such spaces, and the value and connections to practice which result from this form of engagement. The concept of 'restrictive' and 'expansive' learning environments (Fuller et al, 2005) will also be used to interpret the environments within PCE institutions where IPGs operate, with the research aiming to apply a spatial lens to these contexts. As discussed in Chapter Two, Fuller (Fuller et al, 2005; Fuller, 2007b) recognised the limitations of community of practice theory in terms of power relations and the development of a member's identity and proposed a model for evaluating the quality of the environment within an institution. This was used to support the use of spatial concepts by providing a reference point (a continuum) against which features arising in the data about the professional learning context could be compared.

The conceptual framework to the study will therefore be used as a tool to illuminate and unlock dynamic interactions, otherwise difficult to see or grasp, and operating within a complex and challenging landscape. The aim is to reveal the energies, as well as the

underlying principles and parameters, operating within otherwise concealed spaces, hidden from public view but having an impact on teachers' practice and human experience, and that of their students. The more overt and tangible practices within their environments will also be identified as the conditions in which IPGs exist and operate, and the extent to which these influence practice and professional identity can then be evaluated.

1.6.Chapter structure

This chapter has introduced the research and its context. Chapter Two will explore literature around the wider landscape of the research settings outlined above. A turbulent climate impacts all of these settings to some extent, although with some different specific pressures. Ideas about collective groups and how these might operate within PCE institutions, given this broader environment, will be reviewed and then connected to literature about how individual teachers experience these through informal interactions and socially connected relationships, and the consequent benefits to learning and to practice.

Chapter Three will then explore in detail the conceptual framework though which the research is interpreted. Key concepts and principles drawn from spatial theory, the work of Lefebvre in particular, will be considered to look inside the spaces and rhythms of teachers' everyday lives, relationships and interactions; rhythmanalyis, including the concept of 'moments' and hidden elements within the everyday will be explored as tools to understand the essence of collegial spaces. The quality of the environment in which IPGs might operate will be considered with reference to a 'restrictive' and 'expansive' continuum (Fuller and Unwin, 2004), and connected to a spatial perspective.

Chapter Four will outline the design and methodology of the study, together with a discussion of issues pertaining to the settings in which the research takes place, for example the obtaining of military permissions to conduct the research. The chapter will explore the philosophy and orientation underpinning the research, the identity and role of the researcher and provide a rationale for the key approaches adopted, such as multi-modal data collection methods and use of a pre-research narrative. There will be reflections made following an initial pilot study, and how this shaped the research. The challenges

experienced in undertaking the research will be discussed throughout the chapter, with ongoing reflection on how these were overcome.

The research findings will be presented and discussed in detail in Chapters Five and Six, following a systematic thematic analysis. Patterns identified within the accounts provided by participants will be explored in relation to the literature and the key theories identified within the conceptual framework. Chapter Five will first consider the nature and functions of the bonds, rhythms and spaces of participant relationships and interactions. This will be followed in Chapter Six by an account of the conditions and factors which were required by these relational spaces in order for them to be mobilised.

Chapter Seven will draw the strands of the research together and consider the implications and consequences of the research for policy and practice. I will evaluate the contribution of the research in terms of new knowledge, its contribution to theory and its limitations. In this final chapter I will also provide a reflection on my journey and development as a researcher.

Chapter Two - Collaboration and community: exploring the research

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter has introduced the context and nature of a diverse post compulsory education sector. This has set the scene for the research and identified some of the challenges that form the backdrop to teachers' informal communities and collegial relationships.

This chapter will now examine the ideas and research which will inform my exploration of informal collective groups and the interactions of teachers embedded within them. As stated in the introductory chapter, I have termed these groups IPGs, and this is explained further below. Because the aim of my investigation is to define and illuminate 'unseen' aspects of social interaction and discourse within teacher relationships, this means that the literature search is, by its nature, exploratory in approach. I will be searching for literature which helps to explain these informal, social interactions, however, I am aware that this may remain an elusive or incompletely described phenomenon. In order to undertake this search, both hard copy texts and online sources were accessed. Online research included books, articles and government reports and documentation. Searches were carried out via the respective libraries of Birmingham City University and the University of Wolverhampton using the following databases and search engines: Education Research Complete, British Education Index, ERIC, SocINDEX, Google and Google Scholar. The key words and terms used in the searches were: communities of practice; collegiality; collective groups; teacher interactions, FE, ACE, OL and military education policy.

The chapter will therefore be presented in four main sections as I seek to inform the elements which will be useful to develop in the theory chapter.

First, I will consider in detail the wider policy and landscape in which PCE institutions and IPGs operate and identify how literature can help to contextualise the research. This will begin by considering the broader global and national policy context, and that of the PCE sector. Most of the literature has focused on colleges as they constitute the largest element of the sector. Therefore, the initial focus on the sector will cover the college context, and then the other strands appropriate to the research will be considered for any further, specific factors. These strands were identified in Chapter One. This will set the stage for the research,

identifying the factors which might specifically shape and potentially thwart informal teacher discourse, interactions and relationships.

The second section will consider literature related to notions of groups within this context; collaboration and 'communities' in the workplace, notions and definitions around collegiality and collaboration, and how these inform my exploration of informal, social teacher interactions and relationships. This will include an examination of the literature around CoPs theory as a significant starting point and provide a critical review of its origin and development and relevance to the research. The specific features and issues which arise when applying such concepts to post compulsory education will be identified, within the search for ways to explain the social relationships that are important to teachers, including affective elements. These will be identified and evaluated through the literature, within the context of the external influences which might sustain or impede them as above, including the quality of the workplace environment.

The third section will consider literature which informs how individual teachers might experience IPGs within their settings. This will involve a review of the existing research and ideas around the impact of person-to-person interaction on their practice and identity. The way teachers perceive their work and find a sense of belonging and meaning with colleagues will be considered.

Finally, the chapter will take stock and assess the extent to which the literature around IPGs is helpful to the research, when applied to a wider and more contemporary view of professional practice and social processes. A critical overview of the existing research and its limitations will consider how adequately it explains the social processes I described in Chapter One. The exploration of concepts within the literature will assist the development of a theoretical framework as the study moves towards its ultimate aim of illuminating an as yet intangible human process.

2.2 Policy landscape

This section will draw on existing research and writing in order to consider contextual factors. A range of literature (Ainscow, 2012; Avis, 2009; Ball 2012; Hall 2011) has presented

views about the global impact of neoliberalism. This is important to this research into teachers' lives and practice, underpinning the policies which are shaping the political arena within which teachers across all sectors of education operate. In defining the term, Hall writes:

> neoliberalism is grounded in the 'free, possessive individual', with the state cast as tyrannical and oppressive. The welfare state, in particular, is the arch enemy of freedom. The state must never govern society, dictate to free individuals how to dispose of their private property, regulate a free-market economy or interfere with the God-given right to make profits and amass personal wealth. (Hall, 2011, p.10)

The restructuring of society associated with neoliberal reforms therefore has significant implications for education, and the teachers working within PCE. This is often presented as a fait accompli, with no effective method of opposition to a dismantling of the state. As Giroux states:

> Lacking a theoretical paradigm for linking learning to social change, existing political vocabularies appear increasingly powerless about how to theorize the crisis of political agency and political pessimism in the face of neoliberal assaults on all democratic public spheres. (Giroux 2005, p7).

The socially justiced 'orientation of teachers' practice' illustrated in Chapter One (Biesta, 2010; Hytten and Bettez 2011) clearly links their practice to social change. How such an orientation aligns itself within a neoliberal climate, where 'state-led 'social engineering 'must never prevail over corporate and private interests' (Hall 2011, p.10), is crucial to consider in the wider context of the research. The concept of social justice propounded by writers such as Kozol (2005 – writing in the US context) is challenged by the view that it 'must not intervene in the 'natural' mechanisms of the free market, or take as its objective the amelioration of free market capitalism's propensity to create inequality' (Hall 2011, p.11). Consequently, the concept of 'mission', shared and living at the heart of teachers' work (Bathmaker, 2001) is uncertain in this wider policy framework. The 'powerlessness' to which Giroux refers above may be ameliorated by such practice or could impede it.

What Giroux (2005) terms 'the reign of neoliberalism with its growing commercialization of everyday life' (Giroux 2005, p7) has specific implications for policy. Lawy and Tedder (2010) define a world where accountability is now a key driver within the public sector:

> competition and marketization have become a mantra within the public sector, with internal market systems and structures to ensure private sector accountability within a public domain. (Lawy and Tedder, 2012, p.305)

Ball (2012) provides a critique of the policy framework arising from globalised neoliberal reform. This has as its focus measurement and the concept of performativity, contingent on the marketisation of education, replacing 'public education with the logic of the market place' (Säftström and Månsson, 2021).

How this impacts upon the 'everyday life' referred to by Giroux above will be central to discover within the research into PCE teachers' day to day experiences of working in the PCE sector. Through the development of a marketised system, 'colleges [act] as businesses and [spend] resources and time focusing on the demands of competition within a tight regulatory framework' (Lucas and Crowther, 2016, p.588). This echoes Plowright and Barr's (2012) view that PCE institutions have become more alike, applying common managerialist practice, and that leadership in the sector is being directed by reports and ministerial statements; a process which decentralises yet at the same time keeps a tight rein on policy (ibid, p.3). The contrast with a focus on students and their learning is clear and resonates with Coffield's work in challenge to this prioritisation (Coffield, 2008).

As Lawy & Tedder (2012) state, in the public sector over the last two (now three) decades, there has been a 'dramatic shift away from professional discourses and practices of the old public sector towards the rhetorics of modernisation, competition, innovation and enterprise' (p.313). Within this climate, the very term 'public sector' may well have less resonance. As newer teachers enter the workforce, there may be more acceptance of the performative culture that now prevails. Wilkins (2011) discusses this, albeit with reference to the schools' sector, describing the emergence of a 'post performative' generation of teachers who have experienced performative systems and 'market led management approaches' (p.395) throughout their lives, both as pupils and as teachers. In an emphasis on 'what works', rather than what is right, he sees teachers being asked to comply with subjectively framed criteria for evidencing their practice, linked to a set of prescribed 'professional standards'. Wilkins presents this as an erosion of autonomy and meaning. This

implies that teacher self-definition is a feature of being part of a (here termed) 'community of practice', or as applied in the research purpose an informal professional group:

> This narrow definition of professional development. . . . conflicts with the notion of teachers as autonomous agents operating within communities of practice to self-define and construct professionalism. (Wilkins 2011, p.395).

Despite being discussed with reference to the school sector, this seems no less relatable to PCE and suggests that an important function of IPGs might be to foster a sense of agency within teachers' own spaces, somehow within this challenging climate. However, the managerialist model has resulted in, and continues to exert, financial pressures which may challenge finding space for such autonomy; funding is dependent on student outcomes (Hoyle and Wallace, 2007) and as a result of 'new progression performance metrics' (Camden, 2021, section 4, paras. 2-3) initiatives are likely to be funded under strict conditions of compliance with accountability measures, with the DfE having new powers to intervene (ibid). A consequence of this for the research is its impact on the 'subjectivities of practitioners' (Ball, 2012, p.31); if teachers accept that improvements to their practice centre around specific measures of productivity, then Ball argues that they will become 'malleable rather than committed, flexible rather than principled – essentially depthless' (p31). This depiction was supported by a small-scale case study of teachers working on vocational FE courses, which revealed an 'inherent tension between professional integrity and funding requirements' (Illsley and Waller, 2017, p. 477). Although small in scope, this illustrated clearly through teachers' and managers' accounts how,

> Pressures to secure finances not only encourage colleges and their staff to "game" the system but this simultaneously places staff in unnecessarily high levels of stress relating to the inherent daily conflict and pressures they face. (ibid, p.490).

It has been argued that this tension increases the likelihood of teachers in the sector feeling that they are passive recipients of policy in a conflicted scenario, in which they need to find ways to 'mediate the confrontational forces of managerialism which could threaten professionalism' (Plowright and Barr 2012 p. 1) and impede their freedom to support student progression. An FE policy environment aligned to 'competition, centrally devised

standards and institutional survival' (Donovan, 2019, p.185) has also been linked to creating distrust.

Ainscow (2012) criticises government statements which cite test and examination scores as evidence of improvement in schools, in an analysis which seems equally applicable to colleges. Doubt is cast on the real impact on learners from disadvantaged backgrounds of policies which have reduced teachers' abilities to respond to the needs of their learners:

> it can be argued that those very policies that have generally led to increased standards, have also increased, rather than decreased, disparities in education quality and opportunity between advantaged and less privileged groups. (Ainscow, 2012, p.293)

Ainscow perceives a marketised 'quasi-selective' system of increased social division where the poorest children attend the lowest performing schools. Again, parallels with the post-compulsory sector can be drawn, with government policy encouraging competition between FE colleges post-incorporation (Lucas and Crowther, 2016); practices such as the use of national averages in an ever-escalating 'benchmarking' system, has determined which courses are viable and can continue to be provided. Ofsted use this data to make judgements, making colleges reluctant to provide opportunities unless there is high probability of success. Arguably the people who experience disadvantage have increasingly less access to education post-16 because they are deemed less likely to succeed. This key issue in post compulsory education, whereby equality is being undermined by performativity, has a relevance to the research and how teachers working within PCE settings are able to promote equitable opportunities for students, as discussed with reference to teachers' notions of social justice in Chapter One.

If marketization can 'shape individuals' value positions' (Brancaleone and O'Brien, 2011, p.501) through a commodification of education, the research will need to appraise how IPGs can exist and exert meaning, and whether they offer a form of 'resistance' to this process in an attempt to 'deconstruct the mythic qualities of the neoliberal faux consensus' (Bennett and Smith, 2018b, p.3). This further highlights the need to better understand the role of IPGs and collegial relationships within a PCE environment characterised by competition, marketisation and current associated models of 'accountability'. Understanding how the

sharing and enacting of teachers' deeply held belief systems, such as social justice for their students, discussed in Chapter One, exists within a context where funding, inspection and performance issues dominate decisions and might compromise values and autonomy.

This perspective is far removed from the notions of value driven practice described in Chapter One. In those 'communities' of teachers, success is arguably not about audits and inspections but instead centres on students and wider concerns about redressing inequity in society (Fletcher et al, 2015). It might be possible that teachers, through working informally and collegially with their colleagues, find a less formal space in which to construct their own meaning and develop a shared mission, quite distinct from Ball's vision of individuals working alone to improve their efficiency in a situation where:

> The self-managing individual and the autonomous organisation are produced within the interstices of performativity through audits, inspections, appraisals, self-reviews, quality assurance, research assessments, output indicators and so on. (Ball, 2012, p.31)

A further connected contextual element pertaining to the PCE sector is the perpetual state of change in which it exists and the pace at which institutions are required to implement policy changes and initiatives. As Bailey and Unwin point out, colleges in particular have had to 'carry out their work in the absence of a national plan for 'further' education' (Bailey and Unwin, 2014, p.451). Hill (2017) discusses some of the terminology associated with policy affecting PCE over the last two to three decades: 're-disorganisation' and 'policy churn', or more optimistically, 'innovation' and 'transformation'. Outlining some of the consequences of the many changes, he settles with the 'churn.. felt throughout the system' (p. 109), and identifies the implications of this, including declining funding for learning, pay restraints for teachers, the consequences of Ofsted inspection outcomes and initiative overload, all of which provide threats to financial viability and incur additional workloads, in order to meet compliance requirements. Local Area Reviews and their consequences such as mergers and job losses illustrate the impact of such a climate (neu.org.uk, 2020; Hanley and Thompson, 2021). The scale and challenge of recent changes for colleges is described by Hanley and Thompson (2021, p.1) as 'seismic':

> austerity-driven reductions in funding preceded a series of 'area reviews' conducted during 2015–17, following which 94 colleges were replaced by 43 merged institutions.

Such change has itself been seen as a consistent feature of the sector over many decades. Bailey and Unwin detail the various shifts and responses which have been seen, and continue to occur, with educational provision in the sector expanding and contracting 'as the demand for courses fluctuates, reflecting changes in society, the labour market and the economy' (Baily and Unwin, 2014, p. 451). They argue that this reflects policy neglect through a failure of successive governments:

> Each wave of change rests on a bedrock of continuity forged by the failure of successive governments to take FE seriously (ibid, p.451).

The influence of this policy neglect and the undervaluing and underfunding of the sector has permeated to its teachers, for example through the removal of the statutory requirement to have a teaching qualification in 2012 (Lingfield, 2012). This being left to employers has presented a further gap in the perceived esteem and value between PCE teachers and other sectors, which therefore has implications for their professional identities.
Whilst the impact of neoliberal policies has been shown to have a socio-economic impact across society as a whole, the literature discussed above has focused on schools and colleges, and with colleges being the largest part of the PCE sector (AOC, 2021), this is unsurprising. However, it is also relevant to consider literature specific to the context of the other settings within PCE included in the research. The following section will therefore explore the strand-specific contextual factors appropriate to the research settings outlined in Chapter One.

2.2.1 Adult and Community Education (ACE)

In addition to the factors affecting PCE and the colleges operating within this sector, as discussed above, it is important to identify where adult and community provision sits within this landscape, and the specific conditions affecting this strand within the research.

This strand of the sector is delivered through 'a diverse network of providers, including local authority adult education services, colleges, and charities' (parliament.uk, 2020). The remit of adult and community education is described by the Local Government Association (LGA) as:

> delivering a range of informal and formal learning from entry-level courses to professional qualifications, as well as interview support and confidence-boosting programmes in a range of community settings, ACE [adult and community education] gives residents a first, second, third or even fourth chance to access learning. It works with the grain of other place-based services including employment, regeneration, education, health and culture, and adds value to each, as well as connecting with agencies like Jobcentre Plus and local colleges. (local.gov.uk, 2020, para.3)

ACE 'fills a vital role in targeting the hardest to reach adults, including learners in deprived communities, and those furthest from the job market' (parliament.uk, 2020, para. 2, point 57). A vital area within the sector, it provides economic benefits but also 'reduces loneliness and makes people happier, healthier, more confident, capable and resilient' (local.gov.uk, 2020, para. 1). The LGA estimates that this means 600,000 adults accessing adult and community education every year (local.gov.uk, 2020). Yet this is an area where policy has posed significant challenges, and the provision has suffered a decline. National funding for adult learning has halved over the last decade (ibid; BBC, 2015) as part of the 'radical reductions of publicly funded learning opportunities for adults that successive governments have implemented in the last decade' (Tuckett, 2017, p.240). There has been a shift in focus in the already pressured Adult Skills Budget in favour of apprenticeships, which has contributed to this decline in funding (UCU, 2016). This illustrates the 'narrowing of public investment to an increasingly utilitarian focus on qualifications for labour market participation' (Tuckett, 2017, p.230), and is exacerbated by the complex and bureaucratic process providers must undertake to obtain funding. In a 'dizzying array of funding streams' (centreforsocialjustice.org.uk, 2020, p.33), it has been reported that 'an average community learning provider may have 10 different funding streams, with different funding rules and outcomes' (parliament.uk, 2020, para.20, point 75). The parliamentary committee on adult skills and lifelong learning found the government's strategy lacking and to undervalue adult learning for broader purposes. Instead, it favours courses 'badged solely as skill development' (ibid, para, 22, point 22), thereby alienating those who could most derive benefit from it (ibid). In a highly critical summary, the committee reported that:

> Community learning appears to have been largely overlooked by the Department. The Department does not have sufficient oversight of what data is available on community learning. Nor are we confident that the Department has a good understanding of what provision exists nationally. The Department's lack of strategic vision for community learning is concerning and suggests an underlying lack of insight into the benefits and value

> of community learning. An ambitious, long-term strategy for community learning provision and funding is needed. (ibid, para. 25, point 80)

This shortcoming in policy is a significant element for the research in contextualising the experiences of participants teaching in this part of the sector. It again presents an unsettled and bureaucratic environment, where courses and centres are vulnerable to closure. UCU (2016) cite the example of changes in eligibility for funding for English for Speakers of Other languages (ESOL) students; as numbers of students fall within an area of provision, courses close, thereby presenting a threat to jobs and the viability of provider centres.

2.2.2 Offender learning

Offender learning has also been described as an overlooked area of education (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2021), and yet it is a vital and important part of the education sector. The Prison Reform Trust has reported that engagement with education in prison significantly reduces reoffending, with the proven one-year re-offending rate being 34% for prisoner learners, compared to 43% for people who do not engage in any form of learning activity (Prisonreformtrust.org.uk, 2019, p.15). In an echo of the marketization of the sector discussed above, new education contracts were introduced in offender learning in 2019, however the new Prison Education Framework (PEF) contracts have resulted in complex regional structures (FETL, 2020) which are out of step with prison management structures and seem to have done little to meet escalating educational needs. As with the sector as a whole, such measures indicate policy neglect which prioritises markets structures ahead of learning:

> Prison education is a neglected area, in society generally and within post-secondary education. Yet we have a large – and growing – prison population, whose educational needs are as great as any. For individuals and for wider society, education can play a crucial part in enabling their rehabilitation and subsequent reintegration. Teachers in prison have a crucial role in strengthening this, yet their voice is rarely heard in discussions about policy, rehabilitation or prison reform. (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2021, p.2)

The point made above that prison educators are 'rarely heard' raises concerns, especially given that they were found to be 'unhappy with the current commissioning process for education in prison, believing that it was too focused on funding and that this was detrimental to the education that learners received' (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2021, p.15). Yet the educational challenges which teachers in offender learning are striving to address

are serious and clear, for example an estimated 54 per cent of people entering prison having the literacy skills usually expected of an average 11-year-old (Atkins, 2021). Atkins describes the context of offender learning from his own experience in prison:

> Aside from plummeting officer numbers, the budgets for prison education departments have been cut to the bone. There is a very clear link between illiteracy and repeat offending, and I met countless prisoners who committed minor crimes as they simply couldn't function in the modern world, but they had no hope of addressing this problem while in jail. (ibid, para.7)

This account is supported in detail in the findings of a report by FETL (2020). This conveys a call for change and improvement, in particular noting 'undeveloped' leadership and poor resourcing:

> Funding for prison education has not increased since 2013. The PEF [prison education framework] appears to have led to decreased resource in many areas. Arrangements for managing finances under the PEF contract are creating some challenges. (ibid, p. 5)

It could be argued that this demonstrates the failure of the marketised environment to provide the funding and resources required to deliver the level of education needed, further evidenced in the 2018-19 Ofsted inspection report that found that 'purposeful activity, which includes the provision of education, work and training' was found in only a third of the adult male prisons that they inspected (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. 2019, p.11). This situation deteriorated further following the pandemic, with prisoners being left without education opportunities for an extended period (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2021, p. 55). Despite these challenges, prison educators took additional measures to support their students, as seen in the following extract from the above HMI report:

> Teachers at Huntercombe wrote to learners who had not completed [learning] packs to keep them engaged and at Hindley they visited them on the wings. In prisons with in-cell telephones, teachers could make telephone contact with prisoners and at Leicester prisoners could call the education department directly from their cell…However, support was less evident at Birmingham and Long Lartin, where prisoners told us that the lack of tutor contact was challenging, especially when they needed additional support. (ibid, p.55)

This serves to illustrate the same socially justiced orientation of teachers towards their students and practice as was discussed above in the context of the sector as a whole, and in Chapter One. This was summarised in the Prisoner Learning Alliance report where survey

respondents 'demonstrated high levels of motivation about face-to-face teaching and working with prisoner learners' and frequently referred to 'the opportunity to 'change lives' as the reason they were drawn to work in prison education' (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2021, p.12)

We also see the distinct nature of teaching within the offender learning context, with offender learning teachers needing to adjust to a 'strange land' with a unique environment, as the following reflection of a prison educator shows:

> Going inside the prison to teach is similar to traveling to a foreign country and encountering a new culture. When educators enter the prison, they experience a physical and social distance from other groups such as teachers on the outside, prison system employees, community members, and even family. (Spalding, 2011, p.73)

The potential stress of working in such a context is clear and confirmed by the results of the 2013 UCU survey which found that staff working in prison education had lower well-being than those working in further, higher or adult education (Kinman and Wray, 2013, p.7). The survey found that:

> UCU members employed in prison education reported lower well-being than the average for those working in the HSE target group industries, including education. The biggest 'well-being gaps' related to change management, relationships and management support. (ibid, p.29)

Understanding this context is important for the research, raising questions about the impact of such working practices on teachers in offender learning institutions, and how these exert influence over opportunities to engage with other practitioners. The above account projects an isolated experience which is reflected in the Prisoner Learning Alliance Survey finding that 58.6% of offender learning teacher respondents believed that new prison teachers were not adequately supported in their role (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2021, p.7). The survey also found that teachers felt they needed more professional development and opportunities to meet, collaborate and network with teachers in other prisons and in the wider further educator sector to 'help [educators] to not feel isolated in the subject area' (ibid, p.8).

In understanding the context of offender learning, the emotional aspect of supporting prisoners' needs is significant, as seen in the extract from the aforementioned Prisoner Learning Alliance report:

> Working with people who have experienced high levels of trauma, and who often have many difficult life experiences and complex needs, can be very distressing. Prison educators often take on a role of pastoral support for learners because of the nature of their relationship, and because learners sometimes find it easier to speak to someone who is not in a discipline role. (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2021, p.10)

Consequently, there is also a need for teachers' well-being to be supported much more effectively (ibid, p.22). This need for support and for collaboration with others is pertinent to the research in its attempt to establish whether IPGs exist for teachers working in prisons, and if so, how they operate. They could have a highly beneficial role in supporting these gaps in development and well-being support within this challenging context.
Although the offender learning context is clearly distinct, there appears to be a tension in perspectives between the leadership in this strand of the sector and those who teach in it, which has parallels with the experience of teachers in colleges, as discussed above in the context of marketization. There has been a very clear call for a 'shift in thinking' from leaders in offender learning to a perspective more resonant of those teachers whose views have been reported in the series of reports discussed above:

> We need to see prisons not solely as places of punishment, but also as places of rehabilitation and second chances, with politicians doing more to make this view compelling to the public. And we need to think of education as a right that transcends the prison walls, and to recognise prisoners as a population of people who have in very many cases been failed by the initial education system and whose possibilities for re-engagement have been slight. (FETL, 2020 p.6).

2.2.3 Military education and training

In ascertaining the specific contextual factors influencing the experience of teachers within the military strand of the PCE sector, this is clearly connected to the wider remit and nature of defence, and government defence policy:

> Policy defines what needs to be done by, or within, MOD, now and in the future. It articulates the ultimate aim of defence and security in the UK and provides the overarching framework for all the outputs MOD delivers. (MOD, 2020a, para.1.1.2)

The nature of defence within the global arena presents a turbulent environment for military education and training. Financial pressures are a key contextual feature within the armed services as a whole, and therefore likely to filter through to influence education and training (parliament.uk, 2021). In a review of the current government's 2021 Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, Cornish (2021, p.12) criticises the underpinning 'politics of inspiration, whereby an ambitious policy is declared, without apparently having thought through its implementation to any great extent'. Cornish sets out the uncertain backdrop to this plan, considering the post-Brexit global position of Britain in an era of increased international threat, the potential break-up of the United Kingdom and the ongoing pandemic. Funding is therefore an uncertain prospect. Although the government's Defence Equipment Plan (gov.uk, 2021) has set out its intended budget for equipment and support projects for the next decade, a Public Accounts Committee report has criticised it as unrealistic, stating that the MOD (referred to as the Department) 'remains stuck in a cycle of focusing on short term financial pressures' (parliament.uk, 2021, para.2). The committee claims that it has already used contingency funds for 2020-21 to offset previous funding shortfalls, which 'will increase the financial pressures and make the Plan even more unaffordable' (ibid, para.2). This must create challenges in delivering the 'pivotal' education and training which is 'agile to the rapidly changing context and demands' of defence missions (MOD, 2021, p. 132). The Royal Air Force, of which participants in the research are members, had previously set out a more optimistic picture:

> The changes in the way Defence is managed over recent years mean that we now have much greater control over our budget and our future plans. So, although financial pressures will continue to bear on us, we now have greater freedom to reinvest savings we make back into the Royal Air Force. (data.parliament.uk, 2017, p.4)

This is justified in part by the specific nature of the RAF, with 'air power [being] in constantly high operational demand' (ibid). Given the pressures indicated by the Public Accounts Committee above, there does seem to be more general evidence of a discrepancy between what is planned and what materialises. Of the three armed services, it is not conclusive whether this affects the RAF as severely, but financial pressures arising in the unpredictable global defence environment are likely to be key, with the 'cost and importance of producing a well-trained and educated military' under pressure from efficiency gains

(Bell and Reigeluth, 2014, p.53), in an era of continued, now pandemic-fuelled austerity. It would seem that pressure therefore might arise in this strand, less from marketisation, but from centralised budgetary decision making combined with the demands of an unstable and expensive resource.

However, for military teachers there is still a climate of rapid and continuous curriculum change to negotiate, as within the wider PCE system discussed above. The vocational and skills-based education within the military strand is often aligned to accredited national programmes (MOD, 2021) and therefore, the changes and demands of wider PCE policy and curriculum change are also experienced by military teachers. Stanton et al (2015, p.83) argue that the quality of vocational qualifications in PCE has been 'hindered by ongoing turbulence', continuing that:

> Government has repeatedly favoured a 'clean-slate' approach to the design of new vocational provision and has ignored, or been ignorant of, tried and tested programmes that would have provided a sounder and more economical foundation. (ibid, p.84)

Such changes may arise from wider policy agendas (Illsley and Waller, 2017; Camden, 2021) but will also affect education and training delivery within the military.

Accountability measures also appear rigorous in this strand, including quality processes and audits, as part of the as the Defence Systems Approach to Training (DSAT), as well as six-monthly performance reviews and Ofsted inspections (MOD, 2021). These factors will be relevant to consider as the backdrop to the experiences and accounts of military teachers.

In drawing these strands of the sector together, we therefore see a picture which contains elements and features specific to those types of settings, but also some commonalities, such as vulnerability to funding pressures, instability and the need for teachers to work within changeable contexts which are often misunderstood or neglected by policy makers. It will be necessary to research the impact of these influences on how teachers collaborate and interact, and the spaces they find in which to do so. It may be that the type of environment influences nature of the relationships and interactions which operate. The next section will consider how IPGs are interpreted and understood, so that their operation within these contexts can be examined in the research.

2.3 Group concepts underpinning community, collaboration and collegiality

In the following section I will review the ideas and literature which help explain the existence and function of IPGs within the workplace. Concepts which underpin ideas such as community, collaboration and collegiality will be explored and applied to PCE institutions operating within the contextual climate discussed above. As stated in Chapter One, there has been inconsistency in interpreting the meaning and use of key terms such as community, collaboration and community (Hargreaves, 2002), and that 'teacher collaboration, some writers argue, includes almost any kind of working together, however self-interested or inconsequential' (ibid, p. 504). Such a loosely framed and generalised concept of collaborative working is not the subject of this research. Furthermore, the reference here to 'inconsequential' collaboration also carries with it problematic implications, suggesting perhaps that to be of 'consequence' a collaborative relationship must produce tangible outcomes. We might also consider that this implies a subjective judgement and that small, less informal interactions could indeed have meaning to those involved. Therefore, I will seek to find a way to express deeper connections operating between teachers. These terms will be explored throughout this chapter, starting with 'community' and the widely applied and discussed concept of CoPs.

CoPs (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger; 1998) have been seen as highly influential, not just within the study of education but more widely as 'one of the most influential concepts to have emerged within the social sciences during recent years' (Hughes et al, 2007, p.1). In this section of the chapter, I will seek to explore how relevant they remain today in understanding working relationships between teachers in the sector: how they might help illuminate and define teacher interactions, discourse and relationships, and the limitations to this concept for the research. I therefore aim here to assess the value of this (arguably now) over-used but seminal concept as a starting point. I will focus on this particular concept first, not only because of its dominance in the discourse of social learning but because, as described in Chapter One, this was the idea which ignited my enquiry; the reading which inspired me to explore the teacher relationships which have been so important to my experience as a teacher. Returning to the earlier discussion about 'consequence' at the

beginning of this chapter, I now look back and recognise these relationships, even particular moments that we experienced together, as significant and precious. In terms of my ontological perspective, I recognise that this is a concept which resonates with me on an affective level, seeming to explain my own experience of what I considered teacher 'communities' early on in my research proposal. It is therefore important that I hold this up to the light and am prepared to potentially leave aspects of it behind as I move forward with my enquiry.

It will be important to consider if and how research indicates that 'CoPs' remain meaningful today, within an ever more diverse and changing environment. How adequate is this concept to understanding teachers' experiences now? In identifying any elements of the original concept which remain relevant, and might guide the research, I may need to relinquish others as I prepare my theoretical framework later on.

I will start by outlining the origins of the concept, and then look at how it has been interpreted, applied and critiqued since its original inception. Research which demonstrates the limitations of this concept will be identified and explored so that this can inform the focus of the study applied to real and current situations. If the nuances of modern and complex settings challenge the concept as it has been conceived (Fuller, 2007b), then it will be necessary to identify how, so that this study can extend this, and perhaps therefore re-shape this conceptualisation of CoPs.

2.3.1 The origin and journey of community of practice theory

The works of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) and subsequently Etienne Wenger (1998; 2004) are often associated as being a key influence in illuminating our understanding of CoPs as a concept. The following section will present a critical overview of how this key concept has developed over time. In order to construct this, I have drawn on Wenger's original works and other key studies such as Brown and Duguid (1991) and Orr (1996). I have also drawn on two reviews of community of practice theory, in particular those of Cox (2005) and Li et al (2009). These have both offered helpfully linear and comprehensive narratives of how the theory has developed over time. These sources, together with a range of other critical studies, have provided the basis for further critique and application to the current study.

In interpreting the term 'community of practice', it is first important to note that Etienne Wenger did not actually provide a definition in his early work (Cox, 2005), and that definitions around both 'community' and 'practice' are both complex and have been called elusive (Rock, 2005). For the purposes of this chapter, I will therefore adopt Wenger's later definition as this encompasses the concept holistically. This fuses the two words of 'community' and 'practice' together within the context of learning as a social phenomenon in everyday working life:

> Communities of practice are groups of people who share a passion for something that they know how to do, and who interact regularly in order to learn how to do it better. (Wenger, 2004, p.2).

Lave and Wenger's original work (1991) represents the beginnings of this conceptual journey. This research drew on the work of tailors, midwives and meat cutters and focused on the interactions between new members of work groups, termed *novices* and their more experienced *expert* colleagues. This introduced the concept of *situated learning;* the idea that learning could take place outside of a formal setting, in workplaces for example, and constitute a social process involving interaction with others. It is through this process, they argued, that entrants to a community of practitioners developed their professional identity. This was portrayed as an informal process through which skills, 'shared stories' and expertise grew through social interaction. Limitations within this conceptualisation have been linked to a lack of dynamism in explaining members' relationships. For example, Cox (2005) has discussed how the idea of community portrayed is somewhat static and lacks a comprehensive treatment of conflict in particular. It is he argues, 'not adequate to explain all the power forces within a community, let alone those that structure it from outside' (2005, p.5) because it focuses only on one possibility for conflict, and that is between novices and experts. This is a particular concern applied to the context of communities in post compulsory education because, as explored in the previous section of this chapter, there is significant turmoil and a culture of continual change. This has implications for power dynamics and these are explored in more detail later on in this chapter, when this aspect is contrasted with a more Foucauldian view of power and conflict. How conflict arises between novices and more established PCE teachers will be important to consider, raising

questions regarding the culture and values new teachers are being informally inducted into by their peers, given the nature of performative practice discussed above.
Further significant work around CoPs was completed by Brown and Duguid (1991). This research focused on how workers in IPGs overcame problems by creating their own localised solutions. The work was developed from Orr's (1996) studies of photocopier repair workers, where there is an emphasis on shared narratives and histories emerging between colleagues over time. Notably in their work, Brown and Duguid identify prescribed management solutions as inadequate, or 'canonical' and portray informal group solutions as creative and more effective. This presents a polarised view of work between organisations and those engaged in the work themselves, who know 'what and who it takes to get a job done' (Brown and Duguid, 1991, p.41). Applied to PCE, this helps explain how elements of teachers' work can go unrecognised; perhaps custom and practice are unquestioned on both sides in a situation where:

> Reliance on espoused practice (which we refer to as canonical practice) can blind an organization's core to the actual, and usually valuable practices of its members (including noncanonical practices, such as "work arounds"). It is the actual practices, however, that determine the success or failure of organizations. (ibid, p.41)

As Li et al (2009, p.4) relay, these managerial 'accounts' of work were 'inflexible, impractical, and flawed', and that 'local understanding' of a problem was required to solve a problem and complete a task'. This work also placed a new focus on how participants in a community can create knowledge together around their practice. Despite the participants in Orr's narratives undertaking a quite different job role to teachers in post compulsory education, this depiction seems more resonant of a context where teachers create 'work around' solutions together despite, as opposed to in response to, organisational directives.

In Wenger's 1998 work, the concept of CoPs was developed further, and an emphasis was placed on the development of identity through the learning and the experiences of their shared relationships. There are further social elements to these communities, for which Wenger develops three specific terms; the *mutual engagement* of participants with each other around their work and shared aims, *joint enterprise*, which occurs through a negotiated jointly owned response to a situation, and a *shared repertoire* where participants create resources for the purpose of negotiating meaning around their joint enterprise. This last

concept seems especially pertinent to the research, relating to the value teachers might derive from a collective understanding about the meaning of their work. Li et al (2009) note that in this work, Wenger has created a more nuanced concept, for example through considering that participants may experience tension through belonging to multiple groups. They also provide an analysis of Wenger's 14 indicators of 'detecting' the presence of a CoP. This is particularly interesting as the indicators have been 'mapped' against the three dimensions of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Table 1). It is notable that Li et al have used the term 'domain' as opposed to Wenger's 'dimension' (Wenger, 1994, p. 73). This change in terminology is not explained, but the mapping was intended to show to which of the three dimensions these indicators 'belonged', which aligns with that change. The mapping reveals that just two of the indicators relate to joint enterprise, the process of people working toward a common goal as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Li et al (2009) Wenger's indicators for the presence of community of practice and the proposed domains. From Wenger (1998, p.125)

Wenger's indicators	CoP domains
1. Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual	Mutual engagement
2. Shared ways of engaging in doing things together	Mutual engagement Joint enterprise
3. The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation	Mutual engagement
4. Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process	Mutual engagement Shared repertoire
5. Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed	Mutual engagement Shared repertoire
6. Substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs	Mutual engagement
7. Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise	Mutual engagement Joint enterprise Shared repertoire
8. Mutually defining identities	Mutual engagement
9. The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products	Shared repertoire
10. Specific tools, representations, and other artefacts	Shared repertoire
11. Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter	Shared repertoire
12. Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones	Shared repertoire Mutual engagement
13. Certain styles recognized as displaying membership	Mutual engagement
14. A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world	Mutual engagement

The indicators above were intended to identify the existence of a community of practice, and in the context of PCE, the 'perspective on the world' (indicator 14) there may be tension

between the teacher perspectives and the culture of organisations within the marketised environment discussed within the context section of this chapter. The 'conflictual' relationships in indicator 1 may be connected to this tension; how a sense of harmony might exist or be sustained will be relevant to the function of the IPGs in the research.

Li et al (2009) do not discuss their own interpretation of the reasons for the pattern arising between the dimensions in their mapping, other than to emphasise that not all communities are developed with a common goal or purpose (Contu and Willmott, 2003). They suggest that the indicators are unhelpfully abstract, which contrasts with Cox's view that rather than being intangible, 'the tight knit nature of relations created by sustained mutual engagement is clear from Wenger's indicators' since they 'clarify the nature of Wenger's concept substantially (Cox, 2005, p.9). Cox also expresses surprise that these indicators have not been referenced very widely in further research. In order to reconcile this discrepancy in interpretation, it is perhaps best to look back at Wenger's original rationale. Wenger clearly states that he has developed this as an analytical tool which is neither 'a specific, narrowly defined activity or interaction nor a broadly defined aggregate that is abstractly historical and social' (Wenger, 1998, p.125), so there are indeed elements which are less precise and this seems intentional. To decide whether an interaction is 'rapid', 'very quick' or 'substantial' is somewhat subjective and deciding whether identities are 'mutually defining' is open to a range of interpretations. However, the indicators could potentially provide a starting point for examining a community of practice if considered in a holistic manner which sees the indicators as more general prompts to help construct a wider picture. Certainly, this would be more in keeping with a qualitative, exploratory enquiry than a rigid, 'tickbox' style framework for what are so fundamentally complex human processes.

A significant change in Wenger's perspective occurred in his collaborative work with McDermott and Snyder in 2002 and in subsequent writing. For the first time, Wenger proposed here that CoPs could be created and manipulated by organisations for the benefit of the organisation. Wenger's original description of CoPs resonates with the experience which inspired this study, where teachers share common interests and concerns through social relationships. How this shift of the original focus, where CoPs are portrayed in managerial terms, presents a very different picture which and perhaps represents a

repositioning from a more sociological perspective to one which is more instrumental and psychological. Cox (2005, p.10) describes this difference quite starkly as a 'commodification of the idea of community of practice' which:

> now both focuses on its value as a management tool, and abandons the early example of routine office work to refocus on "innovation" and problem solving potential in large, blue chip, multinational corporations.

This can be seen as the vanguard of a new approach to the appropriation of CoPs. The treatment of the original theory was helpful in its application to broader concepts, and in the case of this research, teacher values such as social justice through education. From this point on however, the concept has narrowed and has been re-focused on the benefits to organisations as opposed to community members themselves, linked to financial gain. It would seem that it has been reframed to produce a 'false image' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.63), from a Lefebvrian perspective it has prioritised 'capital', which 'kills social richness' (ibid, p.63) over human needs. This later interpretation has been applied across a wide variety of professional sectors and settings. For example, Probst and Borzillo (2008, p.335) call CoPs 'a specific form of intra-organisational networks' and claim that a CoP is 'measured by the quality of practices developed and exchanged . . . enabling the organisation to improve its performance'. This aligns the work of CoPs overtly to management processes with an assertion that CoPs are amenable to 'manipulation', rather than organically evolving and self-organising. The authors propose a CoP governance model, making close links to management theory around the process of change (ibid, p.344). This view has emerged from a study of fifty-seven CoPs from major European and US companies, rather than educational organisations; however, as discussed below, this may become increasingly relevant to management practices within a marketised education sector. Lesser and Storck (2001) also found that CoPs can have a positive influence on business performance. This counters the view that CoPs can distract members from the organisation's main task, with the claim that the CoP becomes over-interested in serving the needs of its members (James et al (2007; Brouwer et al 2012). This highlights a tension between the application of CoPs for business-focused purposes and the concept being at the centre of a collective experience for its members. The concept has crossed over from a collective to an individualistic and capital-orientated phenomenon, producing 'private riches' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.63).

In contrast, there are still examples more reflective of Lave and Wenger's original concept of CoPs, where members share a passion for their work and negotiate meaning around and about this. Within the original concept there is a focus for understanding how dialogue and informal communication can be effective in many diverse situations. For example, Mortimer et al (2010) report how teachers and parents worked together to design the support needs of students with cognitive disabilities. Similarly, Wenger's concept of shared repertoire discussed earlier in the chapter involves the generation of resources which in turn negotiate meaning, and in time these 'carry the accumulated knowledge of the community' (Wenger, 1998, p.6). Roberts (2006) also reminds us of the notion that CoP members produce over time a 'shared repertoire' of communal resources such as language, artefacts and stories. We have seen in Chapter One how teachers share their students' stories with each other, and how this professional discussion feeds their ideas and values about education. Belying the new focus on using CoPs for organisational advantage, Wenger's (1998) 'lived experience' is pertinent to these teacher conversations about their students. Hytten & Bettez (2011) discuss 'social justice' in education, invoking a sense of mission, through 'passionate and evocative' narratives where teacher interactions about students are described as, 'portraits of injustice related to schools and education, reflections by educators committed to social justice, and narratives about personal experiences of lived injustice' (Hytten and Bettez 2011, p.14). This is an element of CoP theory which would be helpful to retain and it may be the case that where there is both a socially justiced orientation shared between teachers, combined with these kinds of social interactions, this shared 'repertoire' has the potential to intensify and provide a sense of cohesion.

The awareness of this dichotomy between the old and the new applications of CoP theory will be helpful to the research, given the focus on managerial outcomes in education, discussed earlier in this chapter, and applied to CoPs below. A further implication of Wenger's paradigm shift in the later work is that it raises the question about whether CoPs can be artificially created or emerge naturally, and this issue is dealt with in the wider context of organisations seeking to harness the energies of IPGs for their own purposes in a later section of the chapter below.

My search for answers about socially situated professional learning and discourse within teacher relationships raises further questions such as: how might specific elements of CoP theory relate to the contexts of the groups of teachers participating in the study? There are several key areas arising from the above introduction to Wenger's notion of CoPs which may warrant further exploration in the light of the data from the research. The following sections of this chapter therefore identify some of the specific aspects of CoP theory which could have a bearing on how collective groups and interactions might occur.

2.3.2 The concept of socially situated professional learning

A key focus of CoP theory is its focus on professional learning. My research considers the value of socially situated informal, collegial groups to teachers' practice and identity and therefore professional learning is a key element within this. As stated in Chapter One, other dimensions to teachers' experiences also need to be considered and are explored later on in the chapter. Within CoP theory, learning is seen as a social phenomenon which takes place through and within CoPs. Wenger (1996, p.21) proposed a question which supports a new social understanding of learning, asking,

> So what if we adopted a different perspective, one that places learning in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world? What if we assumed that learning is as much part of our human nature as eating or sleeping, that it is both life-sustaining and inevitable, and that given a chance, we are quite good at it? And what if, in addition, we assumed that learning is, in its essence, a fundamentally social phenomenon, reflecting our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing?

This approach was the start of seeing learning as being socially situated. The focus on the social element is important for my research around informal, collegial relationships because here learning is characterised as an integral and inseparable aspect of the social interactions taking place. This will therefore be explored further within this chapter, including a consideration about the quality of the environment where such processes take place (Fuller and Unwin, 2004; Fuller et al, 2005). Within these interactions, learning may not be consciously recognised as such, rather there may be aspects of learning embedded within teacher exchanges through which practices and thinking are shared. Rather than learning being tied to psychological processes and a specific educational setting such as school, the concept of socially situated learning recognised that learning could take place at any time in

a person's life in different situations. From this an important paradigm shift emerged, as described by Brown and Duguid (1991, p.40):

> To see that working, learning, and innovating are interrelated and compatible and thus potentially complementary, not conflicting forces requires a distinct conceptual shift.

The role of relationships with others in building, sustaining and sharing ideas is key to the research and the discovery of how a shared body of knowledge is therefore produced and sustained as a key aspect of a collective experience. This possibility is supported by Cheng and Lee (2013) who state that learning, in this case for teachers, will emerge within the context of social relationships between members who share a common interest and concern; shared social practice carrying learning embedded within it:

> The learning acquired in the process of knowledge construction is an inseparable aspect of social practice. In a CoP, there is a close relationship between the people and the context of their activities. The learners also may become more involved with and engaged in social activities and this contributes to the evolution and the form of membership in the community. (Cheng and Lee, 2013, p.752)

Cheng and Lee (2013) suggest that CoPs could be a pre-requisite to an organisation designing a social learning infrastructure that supports professional development. Whilst I will argue elsewhere that teacher relationships cannot be 'designed', the way that Cheng and Lee see knowledge construction as 'relational' and 'dynamic' (ibid, p.752) is important for this study, since they advocate that teacher learning emerges 'within the context of social relationships' (ibid, p.752). In exploring how this might be achieved, it is necessary to consider the nature and the value of the knowledge involved. This has relevance to the study because of the potential shaping of the knowledge generation process by organisational influences, such as compliance with strategic objectives and pressures within the CoP's environment. Both Green (2004) and Duguid (2005) discuss the difference between tacit and explicit knowledge in the context of CoPs. Duguid makes a clear distinction between learning 'to be' as opposed to 'learning about', the former involving learning 'how' within the art of practice. Green states that the epistemology of managerialism is 'making the implicit explicit' (Green, 2004, p.549) and that economic rationality works against tacit knowledge and the value of the implicit. As managerialism

seeks to quantify and reduce complex processes into evidence collection operations with 'outputs measured in terms of performance indicators and rankings' (opendemocracy.net, 2022, para. 5) we can see this extends further than forms of knowledge, rather it transforms and ritualises practice. Duguid (2005, p.111) discusses the 'economic demystification of knowledge' and how 'championing the explicit to the exclusion of the tacit may threaten to take us back, not forward'. My research therefore aims to uncover teacher interactions as an element which is unaccounted for, and which is less visible within the formal structures of managerialism.

It is possible to make a link between tacit knowledge and the process of informal sharing and discourse amongst teachers. The IfL's Review of CPD (IfL, 2011) was clear about the value teachers in the sector place on the sharing of practice, and the strength of this compulsion can even be linked to deeply held, historic cultural tradition (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Yet this process is challenged in a climate where a managerialist approach demands compliance with rapid and successive changes (Scales, 2011; Hill, 2017). In considering how the building of a collective identity is important to learning and development (Wenger 2000), and how practitioners engage in this process, there is a need to investigate the practical mechanisms through which this can operate within the challenges of the FE environment discussed in section 2.2. This therefore presents an area for investigation within my research.

2.3.3 Taking stock of CoP theory

Literature has identified several key aspects which can be taken forward into a new understanding of CoP theory and practice. There has been a significant shift in the perception of CoPs from informal, naturally occurring social structures to networks which may be used by the management of an organisation as a form of control or means to achieve specific strategic advantage, even from the originator of the concept, Etienne Wenger. Consequently, there is a need to be cautious about the term 'community of practice' because of its more recent usage as a management tool (this also applies to the wider question about whether IPGs can be artificially created which is discussed below). This later interpretation of CoPs is inconsistent with the purpose and values of this study, and it also illustrates the more general lack of consistency in interpreting what actually constitutes a community of

practice (Li et al, 2009). Amin and Roberts (2008, p.353) are also critical of the 'increasingly homogenous and instrumentalist use of the term CoP'.

Another limitation is how the concept might operate in reality within the complexity of organisations now, as opposed to when CoPs were first envisaged. We have already discussed the limitations on how CoP theory accounts for power dynamics, and Alison Fuller (2007b) has also called for a more sophisticated 'multi-level conception' of the contexts of learning' (ibid, p.27). Fuller claims that the concept of CoP fails to recognise the implications of multiple settings and networks of relationships. Physically disparate groups of practitioners working across teams and sites may communicate knowledge but the nature and understanding evident in a network may be limited. My research will explore this in terms of the different PCE settings identified, within the political context of PCE in which they sit, with its significant contextual challenges, as well as the particular influences on the cultures of the different institutions where participants work.

In addition, Cox (2005) draws on the work of (Owen-Pugh 2002) regarding situated learning and questions its application within the modern workplace:

> The implication is that conditions of much, perhaps most C21st work inhibit sustained collective sense making, leading to fragmented, rather individualised appropriation of tasks. Wenger's account underestimates the powerful rationalising processes in capitalism and the ability to rapidly appropriate and systematise understanding; also the influence of wider discourses to construct local sense making. This may limit the occurrence or strength of communities of practice. (Cox, 2005, p.8)

This view is supported by the case study research carried out by Fuller et al (2005), which highlights the influence on CoPs of outside forces and demands within a contemporary organisation:

> many of the forces responsible for the on-going evolution of the communities we studied came from external pressures, in the wider organisations where they were located and from national and even global sources. (Fuller et al, 2005, p.64)

Engeström (2001) also identified shortfalls in CoP theory, describing new patterns of social relationships at work. These are not static but dispersed, fluctuating and responding to rapidly changing markets and technologies. His view of a new conceptualisation of work

groups highlights negotiation, flexibility, innovation and development in multiple directions.

There is a further issue regarding the pedagogical context and understanding in which the original theory was written having changed significantly since Lave and Wenger first developed the idea of situated learning. As Fuller et al (2005) point out, part of the motivation for Lave and Wenger's research was dissatisfaction with the prevailing view of learning at that time. They wished to move away from the then traditional concept of learning as 'a discrete cognitive process' of 'asocial character' (Fuller et al, 2005, p.50) towards seeing learning as part of an active social process. Pedagogic practice has developed significantly since then, and learners are no longer seen as passive recipients in a one-way process. However, we may also wish to consider how teachers are constructing knowledge together in their communities. If local knowledge is being socially co-constructed, then there may be underlying assumptions at play which could have a bearing on that knowledge, for example re-enforcing taken for granted views of practice and the wider world.

The idea of the CoP itself may therefore require further refinement specifically for the purpose of understanding workplace learning within PCE. Amin and Roberts (2008) argue that there is a need for differentiation between varieties of 'knowing in action' and that these differences can be experienced around aspects of the organisation such as spatial dynamics, innovation outcomes and knowledge processes. For example, the 'geographies of situated space' (ibid, p.365) are considered in relation to different groupings, identified according to a typology of profession. They challenge the view that all communities or groups generate shared knowledge in a specific location, expanding this to include virtual and temporary spaces. They advocate 'a more heterogeneous lexicon for different types of situated practice' (ibid, p.365). This view is in keeping with the criticisms made earlier around the over generalisation of CoPs and is helpful for the study because it raises an important awareness of different contexts and spaces. Whilst the typologies Amin and Roberts create are not well aligned for applying to post compulsory teacher groups (task/craft based, professional, epistemic/highly creative and virtual), they do illustrate a need not to generalise CoPs

occurring in different settings. The research will take place in different types of post compulsory education institutions and therefore an appreciation of how they each might operate in terms of time, space and location will be important. Interactions may be temporary, or in forms other than face to face in set locations.

Amidst this picture of a diverse, varied and re-shaped idea about CoPs in the modern PCE workplace, Fuller et al (2005) have called for research which acknowledges and understands a new context and contemporary organisational environment:

> As the concept of 'communities of practice' is being embraced by a range of occupational fields (e.g. education, health and social care, management), it provides another useful vehicle by which the new capitalism can further its aims. There is a need, therefore, for case studies that explore more dynamic settings, where power relations and inequalities are more explicitly addressed. (Fuller et al 2005, p.53)

Although Probst and Borzillo's (2008) research was focused on business organisations, the reasons why CoPs were seen to have failed are also relevant to understanding social practice in post compulsory education: for example, participation not being regular, possibly linked to reduced funding for meeting times, 'competing' departments which limited open cross-sectional participation, the CoPs not being seen as legitimate and 'meaningful' to the daily work of the organisation. This has some alignment with Cox's (2005) limitations on the 'appropriation of the enterprise' discussed earlier (Table 3) but it could be argued that these relate more to impediments in the CoP's environment than the theory of CoPs itself.
Li et al (2009) identified some further limitations. For example, they discuss a risk of 'group thinking' (ibid, p.3) whereby members' individuality and creativity could be constrained. They also consider that a community could become a 'clique' if relationships amongst members 'are so strong that they overshadow all other concerns' (ibid). This is important in moderating a potential view that CoPs are always positive experiences and this can inform the research and interpretation of the data collected. As Fuller et al (2005, p.53) point out, the benign nature of CoPs cannot always be assumed, despite the attractiveness of the concept.

In summary, CoP theory has value to the study in terms of explaining the importance of mutuality for informal relationships and their role in professional learning, and a sense of

belonging through shared identity. It provides a focus on shared stories and narratives that contribute to a shared history and the creation of artefacts and resources and also illuminates the value of unseen, informal social processes, trust and social bonds between colleagues.

However, the research indicates that it may have gaps, or weaknesses, where it comes to explaining the nature of informal collective groups and their interactions. These include perpetuating a frequently mis-used and mis-appropriated view of the concept through the term itself and changes to the paradigm of the original theory and an insufficient accounting for complex organisations and their external influences, particularly for application within PCE. Furthermore, there appears insufficient complexity in terms of the patterns of social relationships and spatial dynamics, both inside and beyond the institution where a CoP resides and an undeveloped representation of power dynamics for application to fluid, ever changing situations and conflicts. Of particular interest to my research, there is also a lack of emphasis on the wider notion of 'space' for the teacher, whether this be a physical or virtual location or a mental 'space' around support and identity.

This commentary has therefore painted a portrait of CoP theory. It has found a good degree of support within the literature for the concept as a whole, as well as some specific elements in particular. However, there are areas still to be included in order to produce a full canvas. Even then, the picture may still be opaque, as I search to explain the teacher relationships and collegiality that originally inspired me.
I will now expand the search to consider some alternative interpretations of 'community' as a way to understand the actual processes involved within the operation of IPGs, to see whether they assist in developing this canvas further, by filling some of the gaps left by Wenger's CoP theory.

2.3.4 Collaboration and collegiality: relational-emotional perspectives

In distinguishing between notions of community, collaboration and collegiality, Little (1990) has highlighted how these terms have been used indiscriminately and with little precision. I have considered the over-use, and the connotations, of the term community of practice

above, and so can examine now how other group-orientated processes have been framed. This, it will be shown, moves the phenomenon of IPGs into more relational and emotional territory.

Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhahmadi (2016, p.199) espouse the benefit of teacher collaboration, stating that it improves 'teachers' professional knowledge and experience' and 'significantly improves student learning and achievement'. However, collaboration could be seen in quite superficial terms, referring to any joint task or activity, and does not reflect the group dynamics involved. A strand of literature has considered the concept of teacher collegiality, which appears to move closer to the idea that both social and emotional elements are involved in a process which bonds teachers together. This has the potential to bring communities of practice ideas into a more relationship-focused domain, which aligns with Löfgren and Karlsson's distinction below:

> While collaboration refers to teachers' cooperative actions, collegiality is a concept with normative and relational dimensions. (Löfgren and Karlsson, 2016, p.271)

Little (1990) distinguishes between four forms of collegial relations, on a continuum between independence to interdependence and 'collective conceptions': storytelling, scanning for ideas, aid and assistance and the sharing of joint work. Similarly, De Lima (2001) identifies 'four forms of closeness' within teacher collegiality: self-disclosure, provision of help and support, shared interests and characteristics and expressions of feelings of closeness. This is helpful in highlighting the elements within the dynamics operating within teacher groups, although it is perhaps relevant to question whether these compartmentalised, separate elements can ever fully reflect a sense of an entity operating uniquely within its context.

In their research, taking place in schools, Löfgren and Karlsson's view of collegiality centres on the quality of relationships (Löfgren and Karlsson, 2016). They point out that there has been a 'polarised understanding' of collegiality, with it being seen as either a good or a bad phenomenon, and advocate that this needs to become more nuanced. In contrast Hargreaves (1994, p.192-195) addresses context with a more complex approach which also resonates

more with the PCE sector, identifying two forms of collegial teacher cultures, as set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994)

Collaborative cultures	**Contrived collegiality**
Spontaneous, unpredictable, voluntary relationships	Relationships which are administratively regulated, predictable and compulsory
Development orientation	Implementation orientated
Pervasive over time and space	Fixed in time and space

Datnow (2011) has re-visited this idea within the context of the accountability culture discussed at the start of the chapter, and names contrived collegiality the 'ugly twin' of collaboration. Datnow considers data-driven decision-making systems and how these shape and systemise teachers' work (ibid, p.148). This has resonance for teachers in PCE in terms of the autonomy and opportunities they have to form and sustain authentic relationships. It also helps to identify within the research, the kind of collegiality operating in the research settings. There is the possibility that IPGs operate in addition to those which are controlled and compulsory. For example, Hoyle and Wallace (2007) discuss the concept of 'principled infidelity', whereby teachers seek ways to subvert the policies and structures around them:

> They recognise the disjunctions between policy and practice. They are also principled. They neither rebel nor opt out but seek to 'work around' policies and structures. They are characterised by what we would term 'principled infidelity': infidelity because they do not slavishly adhere to expectations, and principled because they seek to sustain their professional values. (Hoyle and Wallace, 2007, p. 18)

This presents a contribution to the more nuanced view of collegiality mentioned above. This has also been the aim of literature which connects collegiality to teachers' emotions, and the impact that collegial relationships can have in this respect. Lortie (1975) looks at isolation within the teacher's role, and sees collegiality as an antidote to this, recognising the isolation of teaching in the closed spaces of separate classrooms, likened to egg crates. The nature of teaching can similarly create barriers to collegial interrelations in PCE, exacerbated by timetables and organisational structures, which will need to be considered in the research. Yet Löfgren and Karlsson (2016) explain how teachers' experiences are laden with emotional tensions, and that discussing their histories and experiences helps them to make sense and

find meaning around these, aligned to their shared values. Löfgren and Karlsson warn against a simplistic acceptance that collegiality has only positive emotional consequences and impacts on practice. They cite some of the negative aspects of emotions in the context of collegial relations, such as power struggles, dependence, betrayals of trust and failure to challenge colleagues. Hargreaves (2001) has also discussed how, as well as feelings of appreciation, there can also be feelings at stake when relationships are seen to fail. However, there is also evidence that close collegial relationships promote teachers' professional growth and development through collaborative discussion and that this also supports their mental and physical health (Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhamadi, 2016, p. 199):

> While professional isolation leads to a state of burnout and a feeling of extreme helplessness, a collaborative atmosphere is conducive to professional growth and job satisfaction.

The outline of the offender learning strand of the sector provided earlier in the chapter, with reports of teachers experiencing stress and a lack of support (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2021) seems a pertinent example of the need for support felt by PCE teachers.
Aligning Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhamadi's perspective with the research therefore raises issues about the impact and value of collegial groups within PCE settings; if and how they support individuals to remain in a challenging environment, but also whether there are negative consequences arising from collegial groups.

This discussion has also charted the different 'labels' and interpretations related to these groups. I have rejected the use of the term communities of practice (CoPs) as inadequate for the purpose of the research, having fixed connotations and a history of misappropriation which might distort the research. I have also considered how the term collaboration is also too generalised and shallow to reflect a complex relational process. Notions of collegiality have been explored with some ideas having resonance with PCE, such as contrived collegiality, and the account for teacher emotions within collegial groups. The socio-emotional, relational element is one which resonates with the research and my quest to understand the value of informal socially situated groups to teachers' practice. I am therefore terming the phenomenon I am investigating *Informal Professional Groups* (*IPGs)* as a way to encapsulate these elements. Introduced in Chapter One, section 1.1., this now

supports the more detailed rationale for continuing to use this interim working term within the thesis.

2.3.5 Organic or synthetic? Can IPGs be created?

One of the missing elements in CoP theory originates in its inability to account for complex influences within organisations, which leads to an important question about contemporary institutions: is it possible that there is an emergence of 'synthetic' or 'fake' IPGs? Earlier in this chapter, the view that CoPs could be 'cultivated and leveraged for strategic advantage' (Roberts, 2006) by the management of an institution was seen to have developed over time and been adopted by consultancies and business organisations for management purposes (Hughes et al, 2007). Although discussion about this often relates specifically to the term and concept of 'communities of practice', this has the same application to IPGs, as defined above; critiques of the corporate reinterpretation of CoPs apply equally to the other group concepts discussed above, because all are informal, social and collegial and originate organically in social relationships. Also, the term has been found to have been overused and misappropriated, as previously discussed. There is a need to consider how a more manufactured approach conflicts with these notions of collegiality and IPGs, and with Wenger's specific original view that such communities can only be cultivated and facilitated, rather than created for a specific purpose. Wenger's own description of CoPs emphasises their informality and social elements (Wenger, 1998). They may be difficult to see and define, but occur naturally, fuelled by the motivation and the common purpose of their members:

> Communities of practice are part of our daily lives. They are so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons they are also quite familiar. (Wenger, 1998, p.7)

However, in their study of business organisations, Probst and Borzillo (2008, p. 336) explain how institutions have recognised the potential of such groups for strategic advantage, claiming that they 'have shifted their attention to the role that institutional mechanisms can play in steering these information structures'. This illustrates an emphasis on 'information structures' as opposed to, for example, human (or teacher) development. The idea that CoPs can be 'steered' by institutional systems is refuted by Roberts (2006) who discusses how such

groups cannot be consciously formed. Whilst a business can set up a project team, this may only later become functional as it evolves over time and members develop trust (Hargreaves, 2002; Löfgren and Karlsson, 2016), and produce a 'shared repertoire' of communal resources, such as language, routines, artefacts and stories (Roberts, 2006, p.625). This supports Wenger's original perspective whereby:

> One can attempt to institutionalise a community of practice, but the community of practice itself will slip through the cracks and remain distinct from institutionalisation. (Wenger, 1998, p.229)

The portrayal of an entity which will 'slip through the cracks' (as above) connotes an elusiveness and a hard to grasp quality, with its organic and fluid nature conflicting with the attempted creation of purposed groups. Identifying a perceived link to 'cognate management philosophies, such as organizational learning and, later, knowledge management', Hughes (2007, p.5) points out the irony that 'a perspective on learning that seeks to advance the autonomous and self-directed activities of reflexive participants should evolve into a tool through which organizational elites seek ultimately to exercise control and regulation over their work forces'. This is part of a shift in management practice which can only recreate its own rules in a system which, although intending to harness collegial energies, can only ever re-create itself. Cox perceives this as a specific process whereby informal processes become captured and then altered into the image of their creators:

> "informalisation" has become a trend in management practice where formality is apparently relaxed, individuals are allowed to be more spontaneous and greater commitment to organisation is achieved. However, this informality could itself simply constitute a new set of rules, which can be "coercive and alienating," imposing an obligation on the individual to be cheerful and spontaneous. (Cox, 2005, p.13)

This can be placed with the wider context discussed at the start of the chapter, and it seems to reflect the shift in the nature of management from being more administrative to more directive (Green, 2004). In thinking about whether IPGs can resist such assault, it is worth returning to Ball. Within a neoliberal political arena, productivity is the prime concern and therefore management, potentially within educational organisations, could aspire to use IPGs in order to achieve economically motivated productivity gains. Such a process could be

seen as undermining the self-directed nature of teacher communities by displacing teachers' 'situated decision-making' (Ball, 2016, p.29) with imposed agendas.

Such top-down approaches are not seen as successful in harnessing human interactions and relationships. Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhahmadi (2015, p.199) discuss teacher collaboration supporting growth and development 'if it is democratic rather than dictated'. The effect on teachers of externally imposed structures 'disturbs their right as professionals' (ibid) and results in contrived congeniality (Hargreaves, 1991), contrary to what was intended.

Therefore, there appears to be a view that IPGs and their activities can be controlled, as opposed to institutions supporting working practices and systems which might be conducive to the emergence and flourishing of such groups. There is a tension here to consider in the research between the rigid power dynamic of a formalised system and the informality of a collective informal group of colleagues who work within that system yet may also exist alongside or even outside of this system. In terms of growth and development, it is interesting to set this approach against Wenger's view that 'learning cannot be designed: it can only be designed for' (1998, p.229).

As the PCE sector continues to undergo change, and with it the organisations that constitute it, management decisions and initiatives are therefore likely to present challenges to authentic, organically emerging IPGs. Amidst the turmoil, genuine relationships which take time to develop could become compromised. However, it seems that the synthetic versions are no replacement.

2.4. The quality of the environment: a world without depth?

Earlier in the chapter, it was shown how CoPs, and now by definition for the research IPGs, will involve an engagement between teachers as part of what Wenger termed a 'shared purpose' (Wenger, 1998). I considered Wenger's indicators of the existence of a community of practice, however these did not fully account for the complex and changeable environments in which IPGs in PCE might operate. It is helpful therefore to consider how

the contextual issues identified at the start of the chapter, and in the above discussion of 'synthetic' IPGs, might impede such engagement. Cox (2005) developed earlier suggestions by Eraut (2002) into a list of conditions which might limit the 'appropriation of the enterprise' by a group of practitioners in order to operate in the sustained mutual engagement espoused by Wenger (1998). An abridged version is summarised in Table 3 and these 'conditions' can be seen to relate well to organisations within the post compulsory setting:

Table 3: Conditions limiting the appropriation of the enterprise (Cox, 2005, p.6)

1	Frequent reorganisation, so that engagement between individuals is not sustained.
2	Employment of temporary or part time staff, so that people come and go, no relationships build up and the individual does not commit to the task
3	Tight management, where the organisation wishes itself to "own" the task . . . there is less room (or need) for individuals to create their own account of it. As well as management, other groups such as professions or the state may attempt to define how to do work, so limiting the scope for the task to become appropriated and defined locally.
4	Individualised work, so there is no collective engagement, only relations between an individual and their supervisor.
5	Very competitive environments, inhibiting collaboration.
6	Time pressurised environments, so there is a lack of time to develop collective understanding.
7	Spatially fragmented work, so that there may be no available common, unsupervised space (like the café used by Orr's photocopier repairmen) in which to assemble.
8	Heavily mediated activities, e.g. by computers, so that interaction is (arguably) less immediate and intense.

These conditions are a helpful start in considering how informal group dynamics could be affected by the quality of the environment in which they operate, and certainly resonate with the context described earlier. For example, reorganisations (condition 1) are common within the changing context of PCE institutions as they seek to adapt, as outlined earlier in section 2.2. Changes to employment contracts have also been discussed (Lucas and Crowther, 2016) and, although perhaps less pertinent to the military setting, may influence opportunities for group relationships to grow and be sustained (condition 2). Condition 7 seems particularly pertinent since if time and space is pressured or unavailable, group interactions will be thwarted. However, this summary does not provide guidance on how to determine the nature of these conditions, for example why spaces might be unavailable and

what kind of spaces are needed to support and sustain IPGs. Fuller and Unwin (2004) recognised that there is an uneven quality within the institutional environments in which teachers work, and developed a model to account for this, which moves these ideas forward in relation to the research.

Also drawing on Wenger's original concept, Fuller and Unwin (2004) developed ideas about situated learning to create a model around the structural constraints and inequalities within institutions where people work and learn and work. Categorising approaches to workforce development, a continuum was developed between expansive and restrictive features. These features contained pedagogical, organisational and cultural elements and, important for this research, acknowledge the role of informal learning which might take place amidst and because of social interactions. This continuum is reproduced in Figure 1:

EXPANSIVE	RESTRICTIVE
Participation in multiple communities of practice inside and outside the workplace	Restricted participation in multiple communities of practice
Primary community of practice has shared 'participative memory': cultural inheritance of workforce development	Primary community of practice has little or no 'participative memory': no or little tradition of apprenticeship
Breadth: access to learning fostered by cross company experiences	Narrow: access to learning restricted in terms of tasks/knowledge/location
Access to range of qualifications including knowledge-based VQ	Little or no access to qualifications
Planned time off-the-job including for knowledge-based courses, and for reflection	Virtually all-on-job: limited opportunities for reflection
Gradual transition to full, rounded participation	Fast – transition as quick as possible
Vision of workplace learning: progression for career	Vision of workplace learning: static for job
Organisational recognition of, and support for employees as learners	Lack of organisational recognition of, and support for employees as learners
Workforce development is used as a vehicle for aligning the goals of developing the individual and organisational capability	Workforce development is used to tailor individual capability to organisational need
Workforce development fosters opportunities to extend identity through boundary crossing	Workforce development limits opportunities to extend identity: little boundary crossing experienced
Reification of 'workplace curriculum' highly developed (e.g. through documents, symbols, language, tools) and accessible to apprentices	Limited reification of 'workplace curriculum' patchy access to reificatory aspects of practice
Widely distributed skills	Polarised distribution of skills
Technical skills valued	Technical skills taken for granted
Knowledge and skills of whole workforce developed and valued	Knowledge and skills of key workers/groups developed and valued
Team work valued	Rigid specialist roles
Cross-boundary communication encouraged	Bounded communication
Managers as facilitators of workforce and individual development	Managers as controllers of workforce and individual development
Chances to learn new skills/jobs	Barriers to learning new skills/jobs
Innovation important	Innovation not important
Multi-dimensional view of expertise	Uni-dimensional top-down view of expertise

Figure 1: Expansive – restrictive continuum. Fuller and Unwin, 2004, p. 130

Many of the features contained in the above continuum can be related to informal group processes in PCE and the extent to which the quality of the environment can provide them with the space and freedom to operate. Sharing reflections, building a 'participative memory' of events and stories have particular resonance with teachers working together in the interests of their students. This aligns with the shared narratives about students discussed in Chapter One (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Hytten & Bettez, 2011; Biesta et al, 2017). Understanding how this might be enacted within a marketised and challenging environment, where, as discussed above, management might set up tightly controlled 'fake' collegial structures on their behalf, is key. Having the freedom to cross organisational boundaries and belong to multiple 'CoPs' or IPGs is also important to communication and identity for PCE teachers. How the availability of time and space provides or limits opportunities for teachers to gain new and wider perspectives will be important to examine. This also reflects the trust placed in teachers and the autonomy they perceive they have to do this. If they are tightly timetabled, for example, there may be no opportunity to move outside of their everyday routine. Arguably, these environmental features do not just apply to learning, but to the wider experience of working within an educational institution, how work is organised, how jobs are designed and the esteem in which teachers' work is held are also important for identity and for undertaking the role itself.

This ability to move more freely between boundaries resonates with Engström's ideas that there exist 'activity systems'; interacting systems, or constellations of practice (Engström, 2001). Such a freedom would enable a wider sharing of narratives and perspectives, including outside of the organisation. Engström's principle of 'multi-voicedness' within this process speaks to the potential diversity within groups of teachers themselves, and the narrative elements of teachers' work discussed in Chapter One. How opportunities exist within the environment for teachers to share different perspectives, views and interests is important to consider in the research, and also the extent to which these can cross boundaries and extend outside of their immediate surroundings. It is also important to consider how they might 'carry multiple layers and strands of history engraved in its artefacts, rules and conventions' with them if so (ibid, p. 136). Engström's idea also leads me

to consider how these histories might represent a 'source of trouble and a source of innovation' to the teachers concerned. This may have the potential to develop Wenger's concept of joint enterprise further through helping to explain how a collective response to a situation or problem might actually occur and within what boundaries. Additionally, the 'central role of contradictions as sources of change and development' (ibid, p.136) will be an interesting idea to apply to the environments of post compulsory settings. Here, we might find 'historical structural tensions' which pervade the group in the form of external policy and political forces, as discussed in Chapter One. This concept also alerts me to consider the principle of 'historicity' and the time it might take for an informal group to become established. This principle acknowledges that issues with an activity system can only be understood within the context of its local history, and Engström states that this takes 'lengthy periods of time'. Similarly, with the principle of expansive transformations, he suggests that activity systems 'move through long cycles of qualitative transformations' (ibid, p.137). Both of these lengthy processes relate to the quality and stability of the environment; there might be too long a duration needed for groups within post compulsory settings to mature, due to the constant changes and instability within the sector.

When considering the environment and its conditions, there seems to be a common thread of tension between the collective and the individual and between the systemised and the human. I discussed earlier the importance of teachers' emotions within the concept of collegiality, and Gull and Doh (2004) consider the extent to which people can satisfy their higher needs through a desire for more meaningful work. When they find meaning in their activities, they 'become more engaged, responsible, collaborative, creative' (Gull and Doh, 2004, p.129). However, they argue that for organisations to change and move away from a systemised and over-rational 'world without depth' (ibid, p.130) will require a transformation, or transmutation in their thinking. It seems relevant to ask, if an environment fits the conditions on the expansive side of Fuller and Unwin's continuum, does this necessarily mean that such a transmutation has occurred? The meaningful experience portrayed by Gull and Doh, seems to add another dimension because it focuses on a deeper human process, what Gull and Doh describe as the need to know that the work we do means something to somebody (ibid, p.131). This leads to a different way of seeing space. Rather than just a physical dimension, it is also a matter of consciousness and

perception, a place where we can, as termed by Gull and Doh, 'unfold', feel safe and know that we matter:

> We are not here as objective observers of a cosmic play, nor are we here to control and exploit our environment and each other for material gain. We are here to become more of what we potentially are – this is our real work, to become fully human. (ibid, p.137)

Gull and Doh relate this to management practice and the perception that personal and interpersonal matters are 'soft, mushy issues that get in the way of real business' (ibid, p.132). Yet, as we discussed regarding synthetic 'fake' collegial groups set up by organisations, there are also attempts to exploit the more spiritual dimension of human interactions in the quest for increased productivity and competitive advantage. Such a process has even been argued as representing the commercialisation of human feeling (Hochschild, 2012).

Looking at the expansive-restrictive continuum alongside the concept of a more 'transmutated' environment, which supports a more meaningful experience of work, is helpful for the research because it shows a more nuanced view of the environment in which IPGs might operate. There may be dynamic elements at play which involve wider perceptions of space, work and its meaning, and potentially a tension with perceptions and culture of the institution. Illeris (2004) considered the nature of this interplay between professional learning and the environment at an institutional and societal level. Although including the social interaction situation within the workplace, Illeris is critical of community of practice theory's focus on this aspect and the limited attention paid to psychological and societal levels of interaction. Therefore, whilst there is an acknowledgement of the value of informal learning, Illeris felt that there was a risk of such learning being narrow and without theoretical foundation, the 'accidental flavour' having an 'inadequate structure and systematics' (Illeris, 2004, p.226). Whilst this may be a valid critique of professional learning alone, it does not recognise the wider implications of collegiality as discussed above. To consider the interaction of social and collegial processes is a valuable concept for the research, but seeing these processes as only related to learning, and with the potential for systemisation, is out of step with the 'unfolding' described by Gull and Doh. It also seems to have a limited application to the informal nature of tacit knowledge, as opposed to the more explicit.

In considering these ideas together, the environment and its quality and its boundaries and the extent to which it can support a wider meaning and dimension to work, this raises a further question about the extent to which IPGs extend to spaces outside of the work environment, perhaps crossing boundaries into more social spaces. It may be the case that teachers interact outside of the immediate work context, extending more formal spaces into informal contexts for their interactions. In this scenario, they could be said to be forming a type of 'social capital', and it is interesting that Robert Putnam (1995, p.644) provides a definition of this type of capital which is not out of step with the treatment in the research of IPGs. Putnam defines social capital as:

> Features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives.

So perhaps elements of trust, and the shared values and histories mentioned, will have some resonance with our teacher participants, and that continued interactions outside of work might strengthen their relationship bonds. Furthermore, Haralambos and Holborn (2004, p.66) state that social capital is created with people who can 'provide you with help or favours'. Considering the context of teaching in often challenging situations, this relates well to how teachers might look to each other for support. This support must, however, be seen within the context of external factors influencing conditions within the workplace, or else there is a danger of perpetuating a concept of teacher 'resilience' to the environmental factors in PCE, which Traynor (2018, p.5) sees as an 'empty signifier', which 'can leave staff who might be traumatised by organisational failures feeling personally responsible for those failures'. The relevance of IPGs to individuals, their needs and identities, is discussed further below.

2.5 Individual needs and identities

Returning to Wenger (1998) and the formation of identity, it is possible that teachers talking within the context of IPGs and relationships in a way that is linked to a shared experience contributes to shaping their identity:

> Identity in practice is defined socially not merely because it is reified in a social discourse of the self and of social categories, but it is also because it is produced as a lived experience of participation in specific communities. (Wenger, 1998, p.151)

Professional identity, and the value of forming this and developing it as part of a collective, is also therefore an important factor to consider when considering IPGs. Duguid (2005) reminds us how members of an informal group (in this case termed a community of practice) form their identity as a member of a collective group. Wenger's work supports this, making a link between concepts such as *mutuality* (recognising in each other something of ourselves, 1998, p.56) and *engagement* (in actions whose meanings are negotiated together, ibid, p.73). From such processes comes the creation of a sense of belonging and our social interactions with others can shape our identity. However, it is important to consider the extent to which the current political and policy environment might affect this process, as discussed earlier in the chapter.

An example of the link between external factors and how these can affect teachers' identities can be seen in response to an article in FE Week (Mansell, 2012). In his reaction to the article about the role of a professional body, practitioner Lee Davies commented on-line on how:

> I have learned that it is impractical to try and forge a sense of professional identity when that identity can be derailed on a whim by a Minister or, more likely, a civil servant with absolutely no cognisance of the FE sector and the consequences of his or her actions on the everyday lives of teachers and trainers. (Mansell, 2012, comment 6).

Therefore, we can see how a collegial group might support the thin ice on which it is perceived professional identities have to exist. Positive teacher perceptions about the 'community' in which they work can perhaps help negotiate the conflictual climate in which the sector is operating. This may then influence their development and behaviour and the consequent processes involved, as exemplified by a trainee who, on qualifying, writes about how he sees the sector:

> I came out of the PGCE feeling well-prepared for life as a teacher, but unsure about the future state of the sector I wish to work in. I felt a strongly developing self-concept as a teacher and as a member of the FE community of practice; however the feelings in my placement college towards the end of the PGCE year are that the community of practice is unstable, partly due to uncertainties about funding. Teachers in the sector are often despondent about the future; concerns are often financially motivated - the removal of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) coupled with the increase in university fees could potentially have devastating effects on FE. (Cushing 2012, p.7)

Practitioners' perceptions of the climate in which the sector operates can therefore influence professional identity and esteem and the extent to which they feel they are professionals

who have the space to exercise judgement and make decisions, as opposed to being passive recipients of policy and procedures. The sense of being part of a collective, perhaps through engaging with others in an IPG, could therefore be seen as supportive because it can provide the opportunity to develop a sense of professional identity which is shared. For example, the way that IPGs might contribute to positive identities through informal, social relationship bonds might help teachers manage workplace challenges (Gu and Day, 2007). Similarly, the extent to which teachers might need an antidote to, what some literature suggests is, an experience of being passive recipients in a complex scenario, against which they need to find ways to 'mediate the confrontational forces of managerialism which could threaten professionalism' (Plowright and Barr 2012, p1).

Performative culture therefore can be seen to have an impact on professional development and identity, and it can be argued that teachers working together collegially form and develop their professional identities through socially situated interactions (Lave and Wenger 1991). Gewirtz (1998) connects the way we treat and interact with one another with social justice and the mediation of our place within society. This resonates with the shared stories and interactions taking place between teachers where communication is part of a socially constructed world, where 'learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world' (Lave and Wenger, 1991 p.51). Teachers may well create their own such worlds through the interactions they have with colleagues, contributing to the way they position and think of themselves within their wider context. Kemmis et al (2014) conceptualise how this might occur within individual discourse, where people encounter one another and mediate their understandings of one another 'in terms acquired in a lifetime of inhabiting the social world' (ibid, p. 4). These understandings are 'the meat and drink of our lives as human beings' (ibid). This emphasises the importance of both dialogue and personal history and experience, both of which come into play when teachers come together. Again, this evokes those discussions about students and social justice which run through this research. Kemmis et al (2014) also introduce the concept of the 'intersubjective spaces' where practices are formed and contain *semantic*, *physical space-time* and *social-political elements*. The 'invisible players' within these spaces are of particular interest to the research; 'the social media of language, work or activity, and power and solidarity' (ibid, p.5). Seeing the spaces where

people interact in a wider sense, rather than merely in the time-space dimension broadens the potential to see teacher discourse, and why it is important to teachers, within its wider context.

In addition to supporting a sense of belonging and mutual understanding, the need for individuals to engage in collegial relationships also seems driven by a need for support; survival within the challenging context outlined earlier. Lortie (1975) describes how teachers need to talk to one another as an antidote to isolation, and what can be an overwhelming state of mind when working to meet excessive demands. Yet there are often 'imperfect chances' for them to do this (Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhahmadi, 2016, p. 198) through a combination of lone working, 'very little time to engage in dialogue with colleagues' and being the only subject specialist within their organisation. However, Lortie also cautions that teachers working alone have often been seen as problematic, whereas collaboration has been seen as a means of professionalization. Such a polarisation is therefore unhelpful, and in contrast from a Lefebvrian perspective (2014, p.449) 'human reality makes itself known tridimensionally'. The research should consider that individual differences exist, and some teachers may prefer to work alone because that is the nature of their character.

However, informal support from colleagues can also be seen as a vital source of professional learning. Fuller and Unwin (2004) discuss how the opportunities for learning within organisations emanates from economic drivers and commercial decisions. This may leave gaps in subject specific and pedagogic knowledge in areas not considered a priority by PCE managers, whereas informal, socially situated spaces can provide reassurance. For example, Green (2004) discusses how economic rationality mitigates against the value of the 'tacit' understanding which is 'indispensable to practical knowledge'; the 'informed guesses, hunches and imaginings that are part of exploring' (Smith, 2014, para. 3). She highlights how managers can control and exploit explicit knowledge more readily and seek to do this in response to the pressure to meet targets. IPGs could have a role in the sharing of more tacit forms of knowledge through shared reflection and informal conversations and discourse. Gordon (2002) summarises the concept of discourse and this can be applied to IPGs, where teachers share and develop their approaches. Through this process, 'the knowledge that enables us to answer questions pertaining to a particular field . . . is informed by the

discursive practice constituting and demarcating that field' (Gordon 2002, p.127). This resonates with Kemmis's view that:

> Practice is always culturally and discursively formed and structured—it realises and is realised in language, words, ideas, specialist discourses and theories. (Kemmis, 2009, p. 23)

This highlights the inseparability between discourse, context and knowledge, and affirms the intention of the research to explore the value of IPGs to teacher practice and identity within their unique context. Some individuals may elect not to engage in IPGs, as above, however there are more general needs and values, associated with collective support and identity, which might drive others closer together. The sense of what the concept of 'space' means in the context of teacher interactions has also expanded, with a view that includes a more fully rounded vision than the mere physical (Kemmis, 2014).

2.6 Chapter conclusion

The literature reviewed has provided a focus on key research and concepts pertaining to the study, including the impact of issues such as performativity and the marketization of post-compulsory education. These influences have been considered in relation to each setting in which the research takes place. Specific variations in context have been identified, but also some common features were seen, particularly around funding, accountability and performance pressures.

The literature examined group processes and concepts around community and collegiality. For example, a richer more nuanced understanding of collegiality and environmental factors was developed which moved the understanding of these concepts beyond community of practice theory. This can now be considered in relation to each of the research settings as I seek to gain a deeper insight within contemporary institutions and the political context which affects them. It is notable that there has been little research into the formation and operation of collegial groups specifically within the PCE sector.

The quality of institutional environments and the impact on both groups and individuals within different kinds of workplace cultures has been explored. Looking at organisational environments within the context of managerialism and with an additional awareness of the wider impact on people's search for meaning and fulfilment within their work and identities has been shown to be important. These aspects are interconnected and could help explain the phenomenon or essence of the collegiality being sought through the research.

The next chapter will explore relevant theory in order to develop a framework through which the forthcoming research will be constructed and analysed. Key theoretical principles will be considered. Some will be developed based on the analytical commentary in this chapter, primarily around the spaces and opportunities in which IPGs form and operate. Theoretical works and ideas around the concept of 'space' will therefore be developed in the context of teacher interactions and IPGs.

Chapter Three - Theoretical concepts

> **Daily life, like language, contains manifest forms and deep structures that are implicit in its operations, yet concealed in and through them.** (Lefebvre, 2014, p.678)

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two has attempted to identify an elusive ingredient; we have started to conceptualise and 'name' characteristics that we might attach to the kind of collaboration and sense of community that I believe can exist within informal teacher relationships and is so critical to sustaining teachers and surviving the challenges of their contexts. We have established from the literature that no one concept adequately explains the essence of the exchanges, interactions and relationships in which teachers engage informally in their day to day lives; rather this is a complex process which can involve shared stories and history (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Orr, 1996); a shared experience underpinned by commonly held beliefs and values. The importance of discourse and language has been seen to weave its way through what seems to be a social, narrative-rich sharing process which is orientated around mutual support and the enactment of social justice (Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2017). Literature has suggested that it is an organic, spontaneous and social phenomenon; something that seems desirable, and at the same time can take on a spurious quality for managers and leaders to try to 'manufacture' or control (Roberts, 2006). But it is our more organic ingredient that has the potential to add value to teachers' everyday lives through supporting the evolution of practice (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000) and critical thought (Brookfield, 1998), making sense of practice and mitigating isolation (Löfgren and Karlsson, 2016). In this way, it can constitute a form of 'collegial', informal sustenance and a means of resistance within the cultural ethos of an increasingly marketized educational setting. The sharing of knowledge and understanding can also take place by being 'situated' within these social exchanges and relationships. There will be pressures within the environments in which these relationships operate, depending on their quality within organisations, as exemplified by Fuller and Unwin's 'restrictive' versus 'expansive' framework (Fuller and Unwin, 2004). We have therefore seen that economic and political contexts clearly influence

the space and tensions within the institutions where teachers interact, share and shape practice.

This is the platform from which to now identify key concepts, and to look more deeply at the theoretical ideas that might illuminate as well as inform the framework through which the research data can be analysed; a series of lenses through which to process the experiences of teacher participants, as they share thoughts, examples and artefacts illustrative of their own relationships and interactions.

This chapter will now consider the deployment of spatial and rhythmic concepts in order to inform the research methodology and analysis. Specifically, Lefebvre's emphasis on the 'real' as opposed to abstraction will be utilised to uncover the real lived experience of the teachers participating in the research, when the context of this lived experience, as discussed in Chapter Two, can be seen as 'under fire from forces intent on business and market expansion' (Merryfield, 2006, p.45). A key aspect to consider in seeking to understand the value of IPGs (as part of the second research question) will therefore be if, and how, informal, collegial relationships and interactions mitigate the 'alienation' to which Lefebvre refers throughout his work (as defined in table 4). In the context of the research then, there is a focus on discovering the authenticity of collegiality, potentially as an antidote within a context where some of the performative forces and ideologies discussed in Chapter Two might 'colonise' and usurp teachers' own ideologies and human consciousness and leave less room for teachers to express, share and enact their own their ideas and working lives with their colleagues and students. The quality of teachers' lives is rooted in the significance of what might be termed agency, however the experiential origins of my research suggest that a deeper collective entity may be found, although the focus on the individual, through the pervasion of neo-liberal ideology, may challenge attempts to define this. My own experience, relayed at the beginning of this thesis, conveyed a contrary sense of collective mission which had the means to counter the 'estrangement' of alienation (Lefebvre, 2014, p.81).

The chapter will therefore develop several theoretical concepts which help illuminate this and support my interpretation of the research data. It will begin by examining the concept of space as a way to contextualise teacher interactions, before looking more deeply at

Lefebvre's ideas to consider the time and rhythms of the everyday. We need to discover how and where teachers experience their relationships and interactions; to identify the pressures and opportunities within their lived spaces which might influence these rich processes. How can ideas, for example around everyday life, help us to understand in practice how teachers feel about the physical and social spaces they inhabit? The chapter therefore begins with an exploration into the nature of space; how different kinds of spaces have been modelled, and how these might apply to teachers' lives and contexts. Lefebvre's (1991) work on the different elements and very nature of space, and later his analysis of the rhythms of everyday life, will progress this discussion as we seek to identify the 'spaces' and 'moments' where teacher interactions and relationships can flourish and offer opportunities for survival and resistance amidst the neoliberal demands which characterise the institutions in which they work.

As I have stated above, and discussed in Chapter Two, the sharing of knowledge and thinking that teachers do to make sense of their practice is a complex process. I have argued that informal social interaction can contribute to teaching work because it creates a shared sense of understanding, embedded within informal teacher interactions. This must therefore be an important element to build into the theoretical framework and I will therefore discuss why and how Lefebvre's ideas will provide the main theoretical scaffolding for the research. The chapter will conclude by synergising elements of these ideas into a theoretical and analytical framework for the research.

3.2. Theorisations of space and the selection of Lefebvre's work

What can theoretical perspectives tell us about the spaces where teachers, their narratives, their shared histories and relationships develop and reside, and how can they contribute to a framework for understanding teachers' perspectives and experiences? 'Space' is a term so commonly used in many different contexts, but it is generally perceived as something we inhabit and experience, both physically and mentally. In my quest to find a theoretical perspective that could do justice to my research, I reflected on the threads of ideas about space discussed in Chapter Two and, although captivated by several potential perspectives and interpretations of space, I moved through a process of elimination towards Lefebvre's work. For example, Kemmis et al (2014, p.4) related spatial concepts to education and

described how people 'encounter one another in *intersubjective spaces'* which, where they support teachers (Kemmis and Mutton, 2012), enable them to do more than 'live out the roles of *operatives* of the systems in which they work' (Kemmis et al, 2014, p.8). The focus on shared social worlds resonates with the collegiality I have discussed, however the classification of spaces into different categories, even though they may 'hang together' (Kemmis et al, 2014, p.4) seems out of step with the purpose of this study, which attempts to capture an unseen relational essence in its own right, where boundaries around space and time are less well defined and potentially constraining. I am therefore seeking to mobilise theoretical concepts which can offer a broader vision and illuminate space and time without constriction or preconception in interpreting the day to day lives of teachers.

In seeking this wider conceptualisation of space, I also considered how the work of Soja (1996) might extend the dimensions of space, to consider a third kind of space, raising the possibility of a unique space where collegial interactions might take place, a prompt to explore the potential for more hybrid spaces, perhaps occurring as 'counterspaces' (Soja, 1996, p.68) within institutional environments. However, this concept has been criticised, for example for making an all too neat connection with Lefebvre's triadic spaces, which will be discussed later on in this chapter, yet without providing meaning and connection to everyday real experience. Soja's concept of Thirdspace, is seen by Merrifield (1999, p.345) as a 'blurry terrain' - an abstract depiction of a 'hyper-reality' which means little to inhabitants of real lived space.

I therefore need to draw on a theoretical perspective which retains this broader view and yet is capable of capturing the essence of the real life experiences of my participants. Furthermore, I am seeking concepts which align closely with the social justice orientation of the study, through which I can consider the wider social and neoliberal context in which teachers work. If the study is to consider relational spaces as means of teachers resisting managerialist ideologies, the interpretation of space and related concepts needs also to convey a combination of a breadth of view, relatability to real life and have a socially-justiced orientation. Johnson (2020) discusses the 'worlds within worlds' of Foucauldian heterotopia, an elusive kind of other or different space, and Dressman (2008, p.45) suggests that such heterotopic spaces are spaces to which people escape in times of crisis to

'reconstruct themselves'. However, this was a concept little developed by Foucault (Johnson, 2016). Gaston Bachelard (1994, p. 4) asked us 'to say how we inhabit our vital space, in accord with all the dialectics of life, how we take root, day after day, in a 'corner of the world' and this provides direction for my theorisation. Bachelard's poetic concept of dwelling also resonated with French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, who asked what it meant to dwell (Middleton, 2014, p.23). It is Lefebvre's work which also supports the critical orientation of my study because it recognises a landscape where daily life has 'entered into the circuits of the market and managerial practice (the opposite of self-management' (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 707). In the marketised environment in which the study is situated, a Lefebvrian lens offers the scope to interpret 'the ways in which space is socially appropriated by those who ostensibly lack ownership of it or dominion over it in spontaneous acts of resistance' (Bennett, 2018, p.103). Clearly then, Lefebvre's work offers a political orientation which aligns with my aims and research context, as well providing a focus on everyday life within a broad and unique interpretation of space. These elements will now be discussed further in the chapter sections which follow, as I develop the selection and justification of Lefebvre's work as my key theoretical platform.

3.3 Contextualising Lefebvre's work and its application

Lefebvre's work had its roots in a Marxist Humanist philosophical orientation, and this has a particular significance to my research, with its focus on the very human, relational aspect of teachers' experiences. Rejecting structuralist Marxism with its 'economic base-ideological superstructure' model of the state (Middleton, 2014, p.17), Lefebvre saw this as 'reductionist and inadequate' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.795). This was consistent with claims that Marx abandoned humanism in his later works (Roche, 2005). In contrast, Lefebvre questioned why 'the Hegelianism in Marx's early writings [was] rejected' and asked where 'the tendency to separate Marx from his roots, and his mature scientific works from his early writings, [came] from?' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.75). Such questions represent the return to a more humanist Hegelian perspective whereby 'the human essence is the capacity for self-creation, or, in other words, positive freedom' (Noonon, 1993, p. iii). This philosophy aligns with the orientation of my research with its focus on human resistance within a culture of economic and marketised priorities. Lefebvre's lifelong concern was the tension existing between the

capitalist system and the daily life of individuals (Elden, 2020 p.9), and the liberty of the individual as an 'all rounded, all conscious being that would be seen as a 'total man' [sic] (Merrifield, 2021, 23:08). This standpoint has the potential to illuminate features within the research settings in my study which, I have argued, is dominated by marketisation and performativity which can obscure the agency of teachers, their agendas and their opportunities to focus on students and their learning. Lefebvre advocates that it is the 'human world' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.389) which produces history and therefore ultimately creates human nature, and this connects to my research as I seek to examine human relationships and interactions within their political context. Grant (2005, p.59) argues that Marxian humanism is both 'radically socially constructivist yet … allied with an active political "subject"' and this conveys a close affinity with my exploration of socially situated teacher interactions within the context of their specific political landscape.

Furthermore, Lefebvre took both Marx's and Hegel's ideas forward in a way that is helpful for framing the theoretical orientation of my research. His concept of a trialectic developed the dialectical triad proposed by Marx by prioritising human experience and ideas over systemic economic conflict and contradictions as the dynamic for social change (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004, p.945). Seeing Marx's view of capital as over-focused on the relations of production, as Middleton describes, Lefebvre saw the study of space as a way to interrogate how 'the social relations of production have a social existence in that they have a spatial existence' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.129). This focus can provide an invaluable spatial lens for my research, with its aim to examine the conditions of the environments in which teachers, though their relationships, find space to function and perhaps find ways to resist the more hostile political elements we have discussed in Chapter Two's analysis of PCE settings.

3.4 The deployment of Lefebvrian concepts within the research

As introduced above, the conceptual work of Henri Lefebvre has been selected as the key theoretical focus due to its spatial and political resonance with my research and the breadth of its application to everyday life and its rhythms for teachers working in contemporary PCE institutions. In the following sections I will discuss the conceptual elements to be deployed before providing a summary of working definitions for the concepts to be deployed (table 4).

3.4.1 The Lefebvrian concept of space within everyday life

Lefebvre (1991, p.3) asserts that in modern epistemology space is a 'mental thing' or a 'mental place' but discusses how the concept has remained vague and under-developed, with a particular weakness around the connection between the space theorised by philosophers such as Foucault (1974), and the space experienced by people in reality. In the introduction to Lefebvre's later work, Stuart Elden discusses Lefebvre's 'non-linear conception of… time and history' (Elden, 2020, p.1), which calls into question how we perceive time and space. These two concepts are inseparable to Lefebvre, which highlights the need to consider stepping away from any deeply embedded assumptions about time and space in order to illuminate the data in the research. The potential to conceive of a 'social space' is indicative of this broader view:

> There exist social time or social time scales which are distinct from biological, physiological and physical time scales. There is a social space which is distinct from geometric, biological, geographic and economic space. (Lefebvre, 2014. p.525)

This focus on a dynamic, socially created space and its rhythms within the everyday is a philosophy on which I can draw. Lefebvre's work on everyday life and how ideas around time, rhythms and 'moments' in time are important because they relate to teachers' real lives and the extent to which they feel they have control over their day-to-day experiences and find the space to be themselves amidst the challenges of their environments. It is here where 'genuine changes take place … in the unmysterious depths of everyday life' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.157) For the research, this will be about, as Lefebvre puts it, understanding life as it is actually lived, a 'scraping away of the mud to reveal the gems within' (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 11).

Lefebvre's idea that tension exists between different elements or forces within space illustrates the way that ideologies can dominate and preside over everyday, lived experiences. Examples permeate society within and outside of educational contexts, as encapsulated in Lefebvre's disdain for the urban design of public spaces where 'experts' create artificial representations of space which, through their plans and policies, destroy the important historically and emotionally connected spaces of the people that live their lives within this space. This resonates with the political backdrop to FE discussed in Chapter Two, and how the ever-changing environment that teachers work in contains pressures on

time and space (Green, 2004) and on data-focused performance outcomes (Ball, 2003). So are certain ideologies imposed on teachers in the sector, for example, through marketized 'language value shifts' (Husband, 2017, p.102)? Such terms enter into discourse and can be seen to supersede each other in regular succession. The latterly pervasive use of the word 'innovation', Husband argues became 'the ubiquitous measure of everything in FE' and became 'almost come to mean something entirely different' (ibid). If so, where are the different kinds of 'spaces' for teachers to think, to share, to learn and to maintain beneficial social relationships? These spaces, I will argue, cannot be neatly demarcated as physical and mental 'areas' which, like containers, can be filled. Rather there is a more dynamic and less visible process at work, which can exist in tension with other agendas, as we see in Unwin's observation that many workplaces are not organised in a way which supports teachers to learn and share across boundaries, likening this to working in siloes (Unwin, 2012). Furthermore, the pace of change and pressure to adjust and react to this may present further barriers to the kind of spaces discussed above: in an ever-extending present (Nowortny, 1994), it may be that the increased focus on the challenges of 'now' dominate everyday life and restrict reflection on past experience and time to envision the future.

By drawing on Lefebvre's work, space can therefore be viewed as a dynamic, fluid and social phenomenon, within which there may be conflict, which is, to Lefebvre, reflective of the operation of capital. Lefebvre, himself a teacher (Middleton, 2017), challenged previously held views about space, and how it has been perceived and espoused as 'an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within the next' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.8). This perception has been reinforced over many years and originates, according to Lefebvre, from mathematicians appropriating space and time, and using the 'language of mathematics set out to discriminate between and classify' (ibid, p. 2). Empty, geometrically framed representations of space have created an epistemology dominated by division, and a way of thinking that compartmentalises elements within society; 'even illness and madness have their special space' (ibid p.8). This is seen as problematic, serving only ideological purposes and causing misunderstanding (Merrifield, 2006, p. 104). This research includes teachers working within different institutional, and vocational and academic spaces in order to reflect the diversity of the sector, and it is therefore important that there is a nuanced view of the data, rather than a perpetuation of any pre-conceived divisions or

conditions within their settings. In keeping with this, instead of specialised spaces clearly demarcated to different areas of life, Lefebvre's 'unitary theory' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.11) brings together 'logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias' (ibid, p.12):

This strikes a significant resonance with my research purpose and will be developed further when Lefebvre's concept of triadic space is discussed below. However, at this early point, it alerts me to avoid the potentially limiting way that space could be perceived within the study. There is a recognition that spaces within education are highly compartmentalised at various levels, whether this is between education sectors, institution types, or buildings and departments themselves, and that perhaps these divisions and resulting structures reflect the compartmentalisation of society's treatment and perception of space. I must not be diverted away from more complex ways to see the spaces participants within the research discuss; drawing on Lefebvre will help me to see through pre-ordained and pre-imposed 'spaces'. Merrifield (2006) interprets Lefebvre's intentions in a way that supports this aim; by seeing space as a unified concept, I can delve more deeply beneath its surface:

> By bringing these different "modalities" of space together, within a single theory, Lefebvre wants to expose and decode space, …. to leave the noisy sphere where everything takes place on the surface, in full view of everyone, and enter into the hidden abode. (Merrifield, 2006, p. 104)

If the research is to illuminate a 'hidden abode' where teacher interactions take place, and look inside private, collective spaces, then understanding this unified concept will be of great importance. Connecting to Lefebvre's concept of *dwelling*, these might come to represent the relationship between different spatial and temporal elements. Drawing on the writings of Bachelard and the Japanese notion of *shin-gho-sho*, Lefebvre discusses the private house as having both public and mixed areas where social activity and private contemplation take place respectively and hold memory (Lefebvre, 1991, p.153): this may be a useful metaphor for understanding the hidden and more public spaces in the research. In addition, other space-creators within organisations interacting within this dynamic might be identified by looking through Lefebvre's lens, and this is discussed further below with reference to his triadic model. From Lefebvre's perspective space is seen as a process of

production, a social construction, and this aligns well with an investigation into teachers' socially situated interactions and discussions; these may be as small as a moment but could have the significance to create meaning within their specific context. Lefebvre asks questions which can help guide the analysis around the spaces where teacher relationships reside, and these imply a transitory and precarious, circumstantial process:

> Where does a relationship reside when it is not being actualized in a highly determined situation? How does it await its moment? In what state does it exist until an action of some kind makes it effective? (Lefebvre, 1991, p.401)

Lefebvrian space is therefore a process which we construct through our interactions with others and our environment; our attitudes, actions, interventions and policies (Briercliffe, 2015). Merrifield (2006) describes the dynamic nature of this process. Noting how Lefebvre uses words such as 'great movements, vast rhythms, immense waves' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 87), Merryfield explains how, for Lefebvre:

> Space becomes reinterpreted not as a dead, inert thing or object but as organic and alive: space has a pulse, and it palpitates, flows and collides with other spaces. (Merryfield, 2006, p. 140)

Such a description is pertinent to understanding the essence of the spaces teachers talk about in the research and has informed the working definition of space for this research, illustrated in table 4. It will be necessary to identify the 'waves' and rhythms of their interactions and the flows and collisions from other sources, perhaps for example from policy implementation, from leadership initiatives, from institutional demands, practices and changes. These are the themes that will be scrutinised in the data, and the concepts discussed below provide a framework for this analysis.

3.4.2 Triadic space and the trialectics of spatiality: energies and tensions

In order to identify and understand the energies and tensions within participants' experiences and environments, the analysis will be mindful to notice how participants live amongst the elements of their organisational spaces. Lefebvre's triad of spaces (Figure 2) explores the competition between different forces within our contexts, providing a model for the way in which three organic and dynamic forces interact to produce social space. The three different elements of space are discussed below and illustrated in Figure 2 (working definitions are also provided in table 4). It is noted that Lefebvre's key text on space, *The*

Production of Space (1991) does not present a visual representation of this process, and there is a danger that doing so could over-simplify a complex and nuanced concept. Therefore, this is presented visually with the understanding that it is to supplement rather than replace Lefebvre's discourse and provide the practical function of further integration with other theoretical concepts later on in this chapter. The image I have created in Figure 2 has drawn on a plethora of simplistic visual representations of this model used by writers and researchers (for example, Briercliffe, 2015) but with elements combined and the sequence of sections adapted.

Figure 2 consequently shows how the interactions of three spatial elements with one another produce a socially constructed space. This illustrates Lefebvre's rejection of an 'absolute' space; the deeply embedded physical, divisive representations of space discussed in section 3.4.1. This, he argues, is where 'nature is being murdered by anti-nature – by abstraction, by signs and images, by discourse' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.71). This anti-nature, or un-human force is capital which, Lefebvre likens to 'a chain of bacteria that grabs passing matter' (2020, p.62). Instead, 'humanity, which is to say social practice, creates works and produces things' (p.71). Lefebvre's spatial triad therefore explains how social space is created, and this will now be considered further in relation to the study.

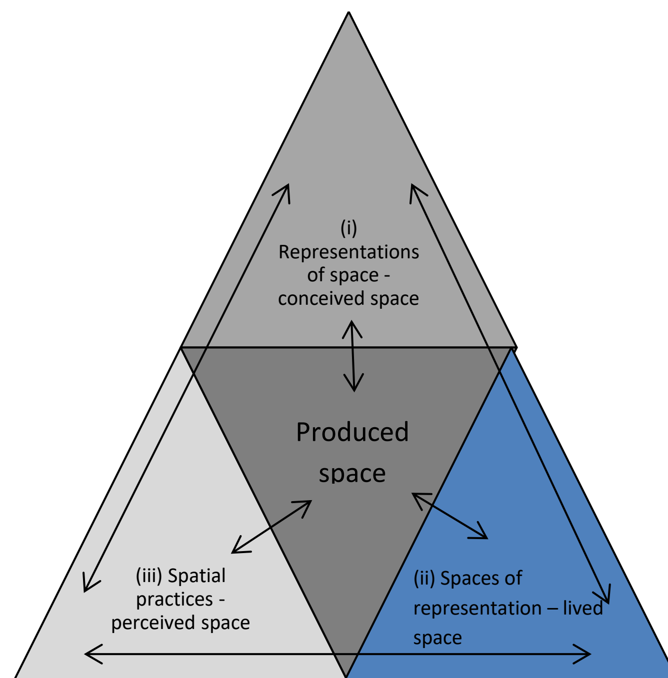


Figure 2: Lefebvre's spatial triad

The interactions between representations of space (Lefebvre's conceived space), spaces of representation (lived space) and spatial practices (perceived space) are what creates 'social space'. Within these fields there are many resonances with the forces and environmental factors in which teachers operate and interact, and it will be important to consider if and how these spaces exist and their state of interaction. It is worth noting Lefebvre's deliberate inclusion of three, not two, dimensions, since he believed that 'relations with two elements boil down to oppositions, contrasts or antagonisms' and that 'philosophy has found it very difficult to get beyond such dualisms as subject and object' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.39). The presentation of a third element therefore counters and destabilises the adversarialism of a more binary model. This again resonates with a more complex reality as depicted in Chapter Two where in a tightly managed, performative environment 'social reality comes to be identified with an economic value system that reshapes all Reality in its own image' (Brancaleone & O'Brien, 2011, p.502). This more rounded approach also addresses Engström's (2001) point those analyses of social groups, specifically CoPs, may not account for new and complex patterns of social relationships at work. To consider three elements and how they interact together will support a more robust analysis of the interactions and forces within dynamic and complex settings. This again highlights Lefebvre's focus on capital as the prime yet unseen force that shapes space and time. I will now consider each of these elements in turn in relation to how they will impact on my interpretation of the data emerging from the study.

(i) Representations of space – 'conceived space'

The most dominant of the three spatial fields within any society, Lefebvre argues that *conceived space* is the space of 'scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.38). Their ideas, language and discourses, emanating from wealth and power, are translated into a representation of space which 'endeavours to mould the spaces it dominates' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 49). I believe this has significant parallels with the 'spaces' within post compulsory settings; award winning building designs where oddly shaped classrooms do not have space for group work, timetables designed around room utilisation rather than class size or lunch breaks, or removal of staff canteen areas are

some common examples. New-build college buildings initiated during the Building Colleges for the Future policy initiative have been seen as functionally flawed and out of step with the needs of students and teachers due to 'a privileging of the views of architects, developers and others about how teaching and learning should be taking place in FE' (Smith, 2017, p.867) This could be seen as a process of ideologies becoming 'abstract' spaces, detached from their 'inhabitants'. This leads to many questions about the imposition of ideologies both at a macro-level and within educational institutions themselves. Chapter Two has considered how policy has imposed structural changes on post-compulsory education, for example. How will the research recognise in the data the discourses, ideologies and abstractions of policy makers and leaders, and other institutions which influence the sector? There are also many questions around the design of buildings, the structure of organisations and departments; there may be symbols, or as Lefebvre put it, 'signs' and 'codes' which serve to repress other forms of space through administrative procedures, timetables and schedules. It seems relevant within this element of a theoretical framework to incorporate reference to Fuller and Unwin's (2004) notion of 'expansive' learning environments. The structures which support this participative environment seem representative of the signs and codes of conceived space, as illustrated in the assertion that:

> Management decisions about competitiveness and product market strategies provide a framework within which choices about how work is organised and people are managed are taken' (Fuller and Unwin, 2004, p.126).

From a Lefebvrian perspective, using such specific terms can potentially reduce any concept to a more generalised representation, or an abstraction; it is unlikely that the research settings will present themselves as simplistic representations of the model at either end of the continuum. Furthermore, although the model is a continuum, our focus seems drawn towards the respective descriptions of the two types of environment, one at each end; its representation could itself be seen as a form of abstraction in spatial terms. With the two extreme 'types' of environment represented in seeming opposition, the research will need to explore the realities of a complex and messy state of affairs 'in-between'. In drawing on two extremes of a scale, this differs from Lefebvre's tendency to conceptualise using three elements, as discussed above.

(ii) Spaces of representation – 'lived space'

Spaces of representation, or representational spaces, relate to everyday life and how its 'inhabitants' experience it, in this case, the lived experience of my research participant teachers. Lefebvre writes passionately about this field of space as one which is 'redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.41). It is 'alive' and 'speaks'; it has 'an affective kernel or centre' (p.42) Resonant with the experiences which inspired my research, relayed in Chapter One, this day-to-day space 'embraces the loci of passion, of actions and of lived situations' (ibid). Furthermore, it is consistent with Orr's (1996) photocopier repair worker narratives and stories discussed in Chapter Two, and the interest of this research in participants' own narratives, since Lefebvre describes how the elements in this spatial field 'have their source in history – in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.41). Lefebvre provides justification for looking at the research data from a perspective of work and relationship history and the knowledge teachers share, as part of their lived space. This is further supported by theory because of its resonance with Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Bathmaker, 2015, p. 64), whereby an innate social and cultural history impedes the view that 'everything is possible and that individuals have complete freedom to choose futures of their own making'. This is resonant with the concept of mutual engagement above, recognising the role of unseen and deeply entrenched social and cultural factors. However, here it applies on a more personal than societal level and we might question how teacher spaces might be influenced by such factors, for example in teachers' developing identities.

A further element to the lived space which is helpful for the theoretical framework of the research is Lefebvre's belief that this field of space has a hidden element. It has 'more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs (Lefebvre, 1991, p.39). As Merryfield (2006) explains,

> Lived space is elusive, so elusive that thought and conception want to master it, need to appropriate and dominate it. (Merryfield, 2006, p.110)

Perhaps this elusive characteristic is connected to the affective, imaginative element of peoples' experiences. This returns us to the aim of the research, which is to illuminate and

explain teacher interactions, and Lefebvre highlights that these may be fluid and transitory, and in the data around lived space there will be signs, symbols and layers of meaning (Briercliffe, 2015).

(iii) Spatial practices – perceived space

Watkins (2005) sees this element of Lefebvre's space as the element which 'comes together with other triadic elements to ensure the levels of cohesion and competence required for the everyday functions of society (Watkins, 2005, p.213). Lefebvre links this to everyday routines; it is how society 'masters and presupposes' its space and connects together the 'particular locations' of daily reality (Lefebvre, 1991, p.33). In relation to the wider discourses in and about PCE, this might be seen to relate to the way that the sector has been re-framed and presented. For example, the perceived space of the sector has arguably been conveyed through the recent policy focus on 'skills' and the 'narrowing of public investment to an increasingly utilitarian focus on qualifications for labour market participation' (Tuckett, 2017, p.230). This again connects to habitus and provides a frame for the research into participants' interaction patterns, the networks of their relationships and their perceptions of their working lives; what Middleton (2017, p.414) refers to as 'the common sense, taken-for-granted physical/embodied world of social practice'. Applying her analogy of schools' habitual spaces, the 'well-trodden paths' might relate to routine journeys within a college campus, to classrooms, within staffrooms, lunchtime routines. These will help to categorise the experiences relayed by participants within Lefebvre's theoretical context.

(iv) The produced space

Lefebvre does not seem certain that the fields discussed above combine to constitute a whole, although this is occasionally possible in 'favourable circumstances' or 'auspicious circumstances' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.40). However, he is clear about the way in which an individual or social group moves freely between them as a 'logical necessity' (ibid). The interaction between the spheres, and this movement between them, is an important aspect for the research. Certainly, it will be important to assess instances where one spatial field appears to dominate over others, potentially forces representing the conceived space

pressurising teachers' opportunities for and experiences of more privately lived spaces. Lefebvre does not seem to discuss the detail about how the movements between the fields take place, but this may be explained by considering other elements of his work, specifically the emphasis on key moments and perceptions of time in everyday life, which will be discussed below in section 3.4.5, including the specific meaning that Lefebvre attached to the concept of 'moments'. These further concepts can be woven through the different elements of the triad, to help explain the context, nature and meaning of how informal teacher interactions take place.

3.4.3 Rhythms in the everyday

In the three volumes of his *Critique of Everyday Life*, each written over a timescale which spanned the 1930s to the 1980s, Lefebvre goes beyond the concept of triadic space discussed above to consider space and time together with their different rhythms (see table 4), as both a method of analysis and an object for research. In order to understand everyday life, Lefebvre explored the rhythms associated with the respective triadic spaces through a process he termed *rhythmanalysis*:

> In the analysis of rhythms – biological, psychological and social – Lefebvre shows the interrelation of understandings of space and time in the comprehension of everyday life. (Elden, 2020, p.1)

Lefebvre saw these rhythms as affective and embodied through the natural rhythms of life and therefore believed that to analyse them was to look at time and space differently and highlight the contrariety between the capitalist system and the day to day lives of individuals (ibid, p.9). Lefebvre declared that there is 'a magical dimension to daily life (rites, formulae, proverbs, traditions), that was also its complexity and its richness' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.693). My research will attempt to draw on this idea and discover whether, within the everyday teaching lives of my participants, there is an undiscovered richness within their collegial experiences; whether IPGs could be part of this magic, beyond the reach of managerialism. Lefebvre's criticism of the partial, the fragmentation of activities (Lefebvre, 1991, p.355) supports the idea that there may be a 'residue' or cracks within the everyday (Middleton, 2014, p.61) where a deeper collective entity can exist between and beyond the metrified elements of a managerialised environment. In addition, Lefebvre emphasises the importance of listening to and perceiving rhythmic elements together as part

of a whole and to 'avoid the trap of the present' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.32). There is a distinction made between the present and the notion of a unified 'presence': to gain a full understanding of everyday life it is necessary to become aware of multiple, unified rhythms occurring as 'facts of both nature and culture at the same time' (ibid, p.30). This opens up the analysis to a much wider perspective regarding how I interpret the data from my teacher participants; their experiences and perceptions of daily life and its events are the context to the conversations and relationships being examined. I will need to listen to these as a whole, the rhythms and the sometimes slower 'murmurs' beneath the surface of everyday life occurring amidst its 'noise' (Lefebvre, 2020, p. 29) and thereby distinguish presence from the present through the accounts, examples and artefacts which are of significance to participants.

The analysis and recognition of the different 'rhythms' which affect teachers' everyday lives, are deeply connected to the balance and tension between cyclical and linear rhythms and whether these are in harmony (eurhythmia) or in disharmony (arrhythmia). Linear rhythms are 'regular, measurable and relentless' (Middleton, 2014, p.13). In tune with the production and workings of capital, they 'infuse education's regulatory bureaucracies: clock time, the school day, the academic year, the packaging of time and knowledge' (ibid). Contrasting this with cyclical rhythms, Lefebvre (2020, p. 19) describes how 'the bundle of natural rhythms wraps itself in rhythms of social or mental function'. Applying this to our educational settings, as Middleton explains in relation to Lefebvre's triadic spaces, arrhythmia can occur where 'imperatives of the conceived – deadlines, appraisals, national 'standards' – colonise cyclic pulses of the lived' (ibid, p.13). This must then be connected to Lefebvre's interpretation of *alienation* (see table 4). For example, as working hours and homeworking encroach into personal lives, perhaps enabled by technology, then human potential is said to be de-limited, and our lives are less meaningful. Repetitive, unfulfilling administrative tasks could, for example, be seen to 'alienate' teachers from the meaning and worth of their work. In this sense, teachers may feel constraints upon their agency and creativity, and have a less authentic experience in their roles. This links to our discussions around context in Chapter Two, as Merrifield summarises: 'in our ever-expanding post-war capitalism, all boundaries between economic, political and private life are duly dissolving' (2006, p.47). It will therefore be important to notice this rhythmic balance, any tensions and interruptions to everyday

rhythms, and perhaps the ways in which participants' examples and experiences should be interpreted as secret spaces within the context of these rhythms. It is interesting that in *Rhythmanalysis* (p.27) Lefebvre also distinguishes between 'secret' and 'public' rhythms, making the point that just because a recollection or memory is not spoken about, this does not mean that it does not exist. This leads me to again to question the elements which remain unseen within teachers' everyday lives.

3.4.4 The rhythms of dressage

Another element to consider within the rhythms of everyday life in education is Lefebvre's concept of 'dressage' (see table 4), which has the potential to constrain human freedom through repetitious 'perhaps mechanical' and 'ritualised' training (Lefebvre, 2020, p. 48). Instead of there being room 'for humans, for education and initiative' (ibid, p.49), through the rhythms of dressage, humans 'break themselves in' and 'bend' to the ways of a society or group (ibid, p.49). Applying this concept to PCE settings, as discussed in Chapter Two, a performative culture and pressure to comply with specific measures of productivity and criteria around practice (Wilkins, 2011; Ball, 2012) could 'fill [sic] the place of the unforeseen, of the initiative of living beings' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.49) and undermine the potential for liberty to which Lefebvre refers. It will therefore be relevant to question if and how dressage impacts on the everyday spaces of my participants. For example, if 'liberty' is 'born in a reserved space and time, sometimes wide, sometimes narrow' (Lefebvre, 2020, p. 51-52) how broad is the space for this within the environments in which participants work? Lefebvre also saw possibilities for the rhythms of dressage to be disrupted, producing 'a lacuna, a hole in time' (ibid p. 53) and it will be necessary to look for such breaks and whether indeed they occur through 'passing through a crisis' (ibid, p.53). For example, how might participant interactions and relationships reported in the data be seen to interrupt ritualised and imposed rhythmic flows and enact a 'resistance to hegemonic rhythms', an interruption which is 'composed of, and produces, counter-rhythms'? (Dakka and Wade, 2019, p.195). Such an interruption might also occur specifically through Lefebvre's conceptualisation of 'moments', as discussed below.

3.4.5 Lefebvre's theory of 'moments'

Integral to the analysis of rhythm is Lefebvre's theory of 'moments' (see table 4), which offers a specific lens through which participant interactions can be interpreted. Lefebvre defines a 'moment' as 'the attempt to achieve the total realisation of a possibility' (2014, p.642). Moments are transitory, spontaneous and temporal and, as Middleton notes, these might be simple moments, yet at the same time, 'the highest moments of life' (2014, p.8). This 'uniting of the moment and the everyday' Lefebvre says is on a 'higher plane than anything that has hitherto been accomplished' (2014, p.643.) In a Lefebvrian moment, an exchange might encompass a confluence of past narratives and experiences and Middleton (2014, p.11) reminds us that Lefebvrian space is always now, and formerly a present space. Therefore, the kind of personal experiences I relayed at the start of my study, my experiences with colleagues from the past, might be conjured up in a transitory moment or exchange with others, and then might influence the future because of that transaction. This sense of histories coming together and colliding within a fleeting moment could represent significant elements within teacher exchanges and relationships, but also reveal where there are ''moments' of revelation or rebellion' (Middleton, 2014, p.22). This raises the potential to recognise how even seemingly minor exchanges relayed in the data might represent a challenge to the ethos and conditions within teachers' environments since, as Elden explains, 'for Lefebvre, moments are significant times when existing orthodoxies are open to challenge, when things have the potential to be overturned or radically altered, moments of crisis' (2020, p.4). This connects to Lefebvre's belief that if conditions of 'arrhythmia' exist in the tension between natural human rhythms and linear rhythms, for example imposed by managerial practices, this can be disrupted through chance moments, or 'eruptions', of subversion and rebellion; there are always opportunities, 'cracks, holes in the net, shafts of light, pockets of air' (Merrifield, 2006, p.61). The idea that there may be 'other' spaces, all at play within chance 'moments', is a concept which goes far beyond the visible, obvious notions of physical and mental space and supports my aim to understand the existence function of informal relationships and interactions within the context of FE. Given its climate of constant change and uncertainty, the theory of moments offers the optimism of temporal yet important pockets of stability:

> The Moment wants to be freely total; it exhausts itself in the act of being lived. Simultaneously, this act singles out a meaning, and creates that meaning. It sets up a structuring against the uncertain and transitory background of the everyday. (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 642).

The encapsulation of such possibility within any moment or occurrence which is temporal and can exist outside of the linear, chronological construct of time connects closely to the central tenet of my study. It informs my search for what lies hidden beneath the 'secret door' of these moments of interaction (Merrifield, 2006, p.62), what is 'unsaid' and therefore overlooked in everyday relationships and their impact on participants' day to day lives. The Lefebvrian moment connects to presence and the value and meaning in human experience because, as Merrifield states, it signifies 'a *presence*, a fullness, alive and connected' (ibid, p.29).

3.4.6 Teacher discourse and 'semiotic repertoire'

If the analysis is to consider the stories and experiences of teacher participants, it will be important to look at the language they use to describe their relationships and perceptions through a theoretical lens, within the concepts of time and space outlined above. It is through their dialogue and discourse that I will be able to find evidence of how the concepts of everyday life are manifested. In Chapter Two, we considered Wenger's (2003) focus on *shared repertoire*, and how teacher exchanges might include shared meanings and references; 'shortcuts' and jokes. This might be part of the sense of belonging within teachers' relationships and communities, an element within the relationship bonds referred to in Chapter Two. We also discussed how the demands of their everyday lives within 'restrictive' contexts might impose certain types of language and conversations (Fuller and Unwin, 2004). As discussed above, to consider these contexts and interactions through a Lefebvrian lens will provide a framework which challenges a more binary approach. Nevertheless, if restrictive environmental elements are present, it will be crucial to see how teachers navigate around such constraints, back to their own discourse. Both of these concepts can therefore illuminate informal teacher relationships and communication, however Lefebvre also sees distinctions between the styles of language used, in particular distinctions between everyday discourse and 'abstract terminologies'. The analysis will seek indications of such distinctions so that I can begin to understand what this means for my teacher participants. Lefebvre's concepts about a 'semiotic repertoire' (see table 4) can be

utilised to extend this analysis. Space, he asserts, 'may be marked abstractly, by the means of discourse, by means of signs. Space thus acquires symbolic value' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.141). Lefebvre's identification of signals, signs, symbols and image can support the analysis by connecting to the wider concepts of alienation, analysis of the competing forces within 'created' space and the interplay of rhythms in the everyday. To view not just discourse, but any imagery or artefacts provided by participants in the research data will therefore be of central importance (see Chapter Four).

3.5 Working definitions of the key terms and concepts to be deployed

Drawing together the key spatial and rhythmic aspects of the theorisations discussed above, the concepts below will be used to inform and analyse the research data. Working definitions are provided in table 4, and justified through close reference to theoretical work, as discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter, and through reference to the particular chapter sections where each concept has been discussed. The table also includes consideration of how these elements might be applied to, and be seen manifested in, the research data.

It is therefore through the series of conceptual lenses below that the data will be explored. They will also be utilised as tool through which to consider other elements arising in the data which pertain to concepts discussed within the literature review in Chapter Two. For example, we have discussed in section 3.4.2 of this chapter how the continuum of expansive and restrictive environmental conditions examined in section 2.2 (Figure 1) might be connected to 'conceived space' and in section 3.4.6 how the potential imposition of language in more restrictive settings could be seen through the lens of Lefebvre's semiotic repertoire. Examining these aspects through a spatial lens will contribute to developing a fuller understanding of these elements within PCE environments and processes. Where particular connections might be seen manifested in the data are therefore indicated in table 4 below.

Table 4: Theoretical concepts informing data analysis

Spatial or rhythmic concept	Working definition	Manifestations in the data
Space (Sections 3.2; 3.4.1)	Any space where teachers enact their relationships 'whether abstract or real, mental or social'	Participant narratives and artefacts which convey how and where

Spatial or rhythmic concept	Working definition	Manifestations in the data
	(Lefebvre, 1991, p.299). This may include, but is not limited to, physical place and incorporates 'social space which is distinct from geometric, biological, geographic and economic space' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.525).	socially situated relationships and interactions take place.
Triadic spaces and the trialectics of spatiality. (Section 3.4.2)	Lefebvre's model of competition between three dynamic, spatial forces which interact to produce social space through 'the dialectical relationship which exists within the triad of the perceived, the conceived and the lived' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.39)	Interactions and tensions within the data which reflect the interaction of conceived, perceived and lived spaces. Examples which represent the existence of marginal spaces and blurred boundaries between spatial elements.
Everyday rhythms (Section 3.4.3)	The energies of time and space occurring and repeating, albeit differently, within everyday life. These may include biological, psychological or social elements (Elden, 2020) and 'mediate' between nature and culture (Middleton, 2017, p.414). These exist dynamically within everyday within a state of 'antagonistic unity' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.85). Their relationship is to 'penetrate one another, but in an interminable struggle' (ibid).	The interplay between cyclic and linear rhythms. Narratives and examples in the data which convey 'the rhythmed organisation' of everyday time and the context in which they occur (Lefebvre, 2020, p.84).
Linear rhythms (Section 3.4.3)	A type of rhythm within everyday life, these are the rhythms of capital which are rationalised, mechanistic and procedural. 'Regular, measurable and relentless' (Middleton, 2014, p.13), they are in tune with the production and workings of capital and the 'daily grind, the routine' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.17).	Evidence in the data of imposed institutional practices and policies, for example connected to managerialism and accountability measures. Examples which are experienced as 'monotonous, tiring and even intolerable' (Lefebvre, 2020, p. 85). These instances may show alignment with 'restrictive' practices and environments
Cyclical rhythms (Section 3.4.3)	The organic rhythms in everyday life which originate in nature and biology. They are 'vital' (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 525) and diverse, 'from the microscopic to the astronomical, from molecules to galaxies' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.84).	Narratives pertaining to human experiences, for example, life events, friendships and support, agency and creativity.

Spatial or rhythmic concept	Working definition	Manifestations in the data
Eurhythmia (Section 3.4.3)	A state of balance between cyclical and linear rhythms where these are in harmony, thereby constituting a situation of 'good health' (Lefebvre, 2002, p.78).	Examples which convey a sense of synchronisation/harmony between cyclical, 'human' rhythms and more linear, institutional rhythms and demands within participants' everyday lives. Examples may align with 'expansive' practices and environments.
Arrhythmia (Section 3.4.3)	A state of tension between cyclical and linear rhythms where these are in disharmony, for example where the 'imperatives of the conceived – deadlines, appraisals, national 'standards' – colonise cyclic pulses of the lived' (Middleton, 2014, p.10) thereby producing a 'pathological state' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.30).	Disturbances and tensions within everyday rhythms, such as imposed structures and changes, invented/manufactured collectives. Examples of 'contrived collegiality' (see Chapter 2, table 2) Potential alignment with 'restrictive' practices and environments.
Alienation (Sections 3.1; 3.4.3; 3.4.6)	A process whereby human potential is de-limited, and everyday life becomes less meaningful through the imposition of reductive, repetitive, unfulfilling work tasks. This constrains agency and creativity and could be seen to 'alienate' teachers from their authentic selves and the meaning and worth of their work. Lefebvre identified that alienation may be not just economic, but philosophical and technological as well (Middleton, 2017, p.412).	Participant accounts and artefacts which relate to repetitive, mundane tasks; imposed ideologies; mechanised systems and processes which constrain creativity, agency and job roles. Potential alignment with 'restrictive' practices and environments.
Dressage (Section 3.4.4)	A spatial process of repetition whereby, through 'mechanical' and 'ritualised' training (Lefebvre, 2020, p. 48), humans 'break themselves in' and 'bend' to the ways of a society or group (ibid). Its nature is linear and yet repeated cyclically. It should be distinguished from education and learning since it overrides human freedoms and 'the place of the unforeseen, of the initiative of living beings' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.49).	The rhythms of dressage may be evident in accounts of any practices which perpetuate a performative culture and compliance with specific measures of productivity and criteria around practice (Wilkins, 2011; Ball, 2012). For example, this could include participant accounts of the CPD they experience, or imposed teaching and learning processes and tasks which are not found to be meaningful or to provide the

Spatial or rhythmic concept	Working definition	Manifestations in the data
		opportunity to exercise agency as educators.
Moments (Section 3.4.5)	Transitory, spontaneous and temporal occurrences in everyday life which encompass a confluence of past narratives and experiences and have the potential to 'achieve the total realisation of a possibility' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.642). These may represent a challenge to the prevailing ethos and conditions within their context, thereby producing ''moments' of revelation or rebellion' (Middleton, 2014, p.22).	Spontaneous instances of significance and/or transformation within participants' accounts. Unplanned 'eruptions' for example of creativity, emotion, connection. Transitory interactions, fleeting yet significant. Histories may be encapsulated in that moment and the opening up of new possibilities. Examples may align with 'expansive' environments.
Secret (and public) rhythms (Section 3.4.3)	Whilst some rhythms are social, externally expressed and therefore known (public rhythms), for example calendar events, others may be less freely 'publicised' or spoken about (secret rhythms). Secret rhythms might be physiological or psychological, for example recollection and memory (Lefebvre, 2020, p.27) and, although intimate, they exist as 'inaccessible movements and temporalities' (ibid p.26).	Participant accounts and recollections of interactions with colleagues that may not otherwise have been publicly seen or spoken about but have nonetheless existed for participants.
Semiotic repertoire (Section 3.4.6)	Lefebvre's identification of the *signals, signs, symbols* and *images* (see below) which mark space 'abstractly, by the means of discourse' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.141). These can never be completely separated (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 588) and may interplay within an institutional context (Middleton, 2014, p. 16).	The signals, signs, symbols and images (perhaps unconscious) within participant narratives, discourses, artefacts and images. Potential manifestations of each are below.
	Signals are commands which are understood as part of a 'codified system' and which 'demand a conditioned response' (ibid). They are associated with the 'conceived' spaces of modernity.	Examples of instructions and commands within work tasks and processes which are imposed within participants' settings and reflect the demands of conceived, linear space.
	Signs are words deployed without their context, reducing language	Data which illustrates how language in the setting and/or

Spatial or rhythmic concept	Working definition	Manifestations in the data
	to mere signs and devoid of meaning (Middleton, 2014, p.16). They therefore have the potential to cause alienation	institution may have been reduced to the terms, words and phrases of imposed managerial systems and ideologies, for example the language of accountability measures.
	Symbols are representations of deeply held, unconscious connections to ancient cultural archetypes which are brought to the surface of consciousness to convey 'collective (cultural) meaning' (Middleton, 2017, p.417).	Representations in the data of participants connecting to deeply held collective cultural meanings in their accounts, artefacts and images.
	Images are visual forms of communication which represent individual, unique expression (Middleton, 2017, p.417). Spatially they represent 'fragments of space' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.97) and can, on the one hand, present themselves as mere copies or 'parodies of presence' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.33) and on the other (for example in the case of a great artist) create an enigmatic and 'strong presence' (ibid).	Visual artefacts created or selected by participants and images which they feel represent their experiences.

3.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored the spatial and temporal lenses through which the findings will be analysed concluding with a summary of the theoretical concepts which will underpin this process, as represented in Table 4 above.

This emanates from my discussion of Lefebvre's treatment of space and rhythm in everyday life, and his rejection of an absolute space. I have provided a rationale for drawing on his concept of rhythmanalysis in order to understand the real lived experiences of my teacher participants, as they navigate a complex and sometimes hostile environment. This was found to be particularly pertinent to the study, with Lefebvre's Marxian Humanist

orientation having close affinity with my human relational focus on IPGs as shared relational spaces which provide a means of survival within, and an antidote to, the performative culture within their settings. The concepts to be deployed will facilitate a dynamic conception of these unseen, social spaces, one which has the potential to reveal the moments, energies, tensions and opportunities within participants' everyday experiences. The chapter has highlighted that institutional environments, their structures, systems and decisions, have an influence on everyday spaces and the extent to which teachers can find fulfilment and meaning collectively in their work, a state of being Lefebvre describes as 'the total man [sic]' who has 'power over things and over his own products' (Lefebvre, 214, p. 247). Building on the idea of restrictive and expansive environments (Fuller and Unwin, 2004) I have re-visited this model from a spatial perspective and found that Lefebvre's trialectical perspective highlights a potential additional dimension through which to explore the data.

The following chapter will provide an account and discussion of the methodology for the research and the methods designed in order to gain a detailed insight into teacher relationships and interactions, and the focus on their everyday lives. It will consider how the research might capture experiences and, perhaps spontaneous yet significant, moments of meaning and understand their nature and impact:

> Like time, the moment reorganises surrounding space: affective space – a space inhabited by symbols which have been retained and changed into adopted themes (by love, by play, by knowledge, etc.) … Anything which cannot be included is chased away.
> (Lefebvre, 2014, p.647)

If we are to see 'the transformation of life in its smallest, most everyday detail' (ibid, p.246) then it will be necessary to design a research process capable of realising this potential.

Chapter Four - Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter One I started my exploration of informal, collegial groups with a reference to the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus's garden idyll (Bergsma et al, 2007) and this continues to resonate with my experience as a teacher and as a researcher. In developing the methodology for my study, I aim to catch a glimpse of those gardens. Returning to Lefebvre, it is significant that he also looked out on the courtyards and gardens of Paris to determine the rhythms of the trees, lawns and groves before him. He urges the rhythmanalyst to 'go deeper' and attentively observe how:

> Each plant, each tree, has its rhythm, made up of several: the trees, the flowers, the seeds and fruits, each have their time. The plum tree? The flowers were born in the spring, before the leaves … but on this cherry tree … there are flowers which opened before the leaves. (Lefebvre, 2020, p.41)

Hence my research will seek to capture not only the sights but the rhythms in this metaphorical garden. My 'reasons for knowing' (Lapan et al, 2012, p.4) emanate from a professional life which has been shaped and enriched by the fellowship of colleagues. I have found that bonds made with other teachers outside of the classroom have provided a sense of security and helped me to become steadfast within a turbulent education sector (Keep, 2006). Feeling part of a community which shares a sense of social justice (Hytten and Bettez, 2011) has given me confidence in my own beliefs when the political and organisational culture has often seemed hostile; where collegiality and social discourse (Lave and Wenger, 1991) has been a counterbalance to performance focused neoliberal practices (Ball, 2003; Plowright and Barr, 2012) which I saw as a heavy hand, restricting my own practice, as I explained in Chapter One. My experience, and subsequent reading, first sparked my curiosity as a researcher around the role of collaboration and discourse within less formal, social contexts and the impact on teachers' practice, for example the potential to create and share knowledge. Foucault (1974) defined discourse as 'representation itself, represented by verbal signs' (Foucault, 1974, p.81), and he linked it to the nature of knowledge in different situations and considered how it can create history. The research methodology therefore reflects this meaning making process and the aim to understand how the world we inhabit

as teachers might be constructed socially with others (Lave and Wenger, 1991). As Rapley (2007, p.2) states, talking to others helps build our reality:

> Language is constructive; it is constitutive of social life. As you speak and write you produce a world.

It is from this perspective that the research questions grew. The belief that I have sometimes experienced my own professional space as a shared 'garden', where friendships and discourse have sustained, supported and engaged myself and my colleagues, has inspired me, but my interest now needs to be developed into a rigorous investigation of whether and how such experiences and spaces might exist for others in their own contexts. My methodology will therefore need to support a more objective enquiry regarding in what kind of conditions and environments they might exist and how the phenomenon of informal social groups can be conceptualised. The resulting research questions are outlined in the section below, before a more detailed exploration of my own philosophies and how these have informed the methodology for the study. The chapter will then progress to consider the design of the research methods used and the rationale for their selection.

4.2 Research Questions

The need to interrogate and understand teacher relationships led me to develop the following research questions. Emanating from the above experience, and informed by the literature examined in Chapter Two, they were therefore designed to find out:

1. **To what extent and why can socially situated IPGs be seen to exist within different strands of the PCE sector and how can these be understood using a spatial and rhythmanalytical framework?**

2. **What is the value of these groups to teachers' practice and their professional identity and how are they created and sustained?**

3. **How do macro and micro conditions affect the existence, growth and function of these groups within the context of PCE in England?**

The phrasing of these questions was intended to support exploration through methods which would engage participants and provide them with opportunities to reflect on and share their experiences. Interpretive research questions capable of investigating a specific phenomenon (Panke, 2018) would therefore be important if the research was to illuminate an area which has so far seemed to have been 'under-seen'. Alvesson and Sandberg (2013, p.13) discuss the importance of innovation and openness in the construction of research questions and how these can challenge existing perspectives. This was the spirit behind my research questions: they were phrased openly to enable the research to seek out the existence of a phenomenon, investigate its nature and effects and attempt to conceptualise it. Drawing on Clough and Nutbrown's (2008) approach for considering general-specific and breadth-depth elements, my questions would allow sufficient breadth to capture themes and make comparisons, yet also maintain depth so that the richness of interactions, relationships and reflections could be captured. To consider the influence of both macro and micro conditions as part of the research questions would align with Lefebvre's focus on connecting the miniscule with the cosmic and the idea that 'there can be no knowledge of the everyday without critical knowledge of society (as a whole)' and vice versa (Lefebvre, p.392): in this way the research questions seek to connect the experience of participants with the organisations and political context within which they work, as discussed in Chapter Two. My methodology will now be explored further in the following sections, where I will consider the underlying factors influencing the research philosophy, aims and design.

4.3 The foundations of the research: philosophy, orientation and the role of the researcher

Before discussing the selection of methods and tools which could be deployed to answer the research questions outlined above, it is necessary to explore the philosophies and premises which underpin my investigation. The following analysis seeks to reflect on this, so that my study has a clear context and orientation. Through this reflection I will make connections between my values and position as a researcher and the choices made regarding my approach to the research. This includes its design, execution and the analysis of the data collected and therefore the interpretation of its meaning.

The experience of sharing a social world with other teachers described above and in the preceding chapters (Kemmis, 2014), my own history and the way in which I perceive it, are important to who I am as a practitioner and therefore also as a researcher into teachers' practice. It is therefore important to make explicit my perspective as a researcher and to provide an insight into how this experience has shaped my ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological position. This will provide clarity around the priorities and approaches taken in the study and also help me to take a critical approach when making decisions about the research design. Cresswell's philosophical worldviews are a helpful frame for reflection on my own underlying philosophy; in setting the approach to be taken into a broader philosophical context, and therefore evaluating the methods and tools with which this philosophy might align. Cresswell (2014, p.6) concurs with Guba (1990, p.17) in defining a worldview as 'a basic set of beliefs that guide action'. After considering other definitions, Cresswell asserts that they are a 'general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to the study' (p.6.). The purpose of recognising this orientation is not to place this study into one specific category of worldviews but to expose my own assumptions and experiences because they will cast light on the approach and, later on, the interpretation of the findings. Through considering different worldviews as categorised by Cresswell (2014, p.6) I can identify which resonate with my personal philosophies and experience, and the implications of any connections made. In particular, the transformative worldview (Lapan et al, 2012, p.22) cannot be separated from my own experience and context as a researcher, because I believe that ethical issues exist within PCE settings. During my years of work in an institution of FE, I have seen teachers being placed under pressure to comply with processes that undermine their own values and reduce their autonomy, making it more challenging, for example, to enact their aspirations for students: a 'dissonance between their internal moral code and the actions … engaged in or witnessed' it is claimed can lead to moral injury within the education profession (Sugrue, 2020, p.44). Within this context, how teachers operate and use their peer relationships to overcome such challenges must involve an ethical element to the research. This is therefore about the research exploring any potential 'barriers to the furtherance of social justice and human rights' (Lapan et al, 2012, p.22). As outlined in the introductory chapter and developed in Chapter Two, it is claimed that the post-compulsory education

sector has been overly influenced by political initiatives and I have experienced these on a personal and professional basis. In acknowledgement of this, the research inquiry 'needs to be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression at whatever levels it occurs' (Cresswell, 2014, p.9). The research methods need therefore to provide the opportunity for any power relationships to be exposed and discussed. It also alerts me to the need to be aware of my own political bias, for example in interpreting data, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Exploring teacher experiences, relationships and interactions will require an interpretative approach, since there will be a need to appreciate that participants' accounts are unique and that these may present 'multiple versions of reality' (King et al, 2019, p.16). The research also focuses on the experience of individuals within the context of their organisations and their relationship with those organisations. This may also raise 'questions of identity' (Grbich, 2007 p.7) and potentially a 'documentation of clashes between those in power and those with limited power, be it economical or political' (ibid). In this sense, at first, the idea of the study taking a critical emancipatory position, is appealing because of my desire to discover how teachers express their experiences of relationships with other teachers: in particular how they see the conditions in the metaphorical 'gardens' where collaborative peer relationships can flourish. However, my ontology must acknowledge that these relationships, communities and contexts are likely to be more dynamic than a static view of power where there is a simplistic divide between the powerful and the powerless (Foucault, 1974). I want the work to illuminate these relationships from the perspectives of the participants within an interpretive approach, however it would seem over optimistic to claim that the study will 'emancipate' participants because my experience, particularly of the rate of change and complex work of teachers in PCE, is inconsistent with a simplistic view that they are being exploited and controlled, rather teachers often find their own ways to enact their values and support each other in doing so.

This brings me closer to an understanding of my own worldview. Rather than a rosy concept of emancipation driving my aims, the primary intention of the study is to explore and explain teachers' experiences from their own perspectives, for example around socially situated learning (Wenger, 1998). In doing so, I will seek to 'understand the subjective world

of human experience' (Cohen et al, 2005, p.22) which aligns more closely with a social constructivist view of the world. In such a world,

> individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences . . . These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas" (Cresswell, 2014, p.8)

Linked to this, I can see how my study reflects a constructionist epistemology because the knowledge emanating from the research will be 'constructed rather than discovered' (Potter, 2006, p.80). The research will explore how my participants recognise the concept of informal collegial relationships with others, how they have constructed this perception and how this resonates with my own. It will be important to recognise that both researcher and participants will have constructed our ideas through our various interactions with colleagues, rather than in isolation, over the history of our careers (Orr, 1996; Kemmis et al, 2014; Connolly and Clandinin (1990).

This leads me to consider the value of narrative within the philosophy of my enquiry. As a researcher I want to hear and explore the individual and shared stories of colleagues who work together through an interpretive approach. This has been a consistent thread in the preceding chapters of this study, from my own story in Chapter One, to reading about the narratives of other professionals, such as Orr's photocopy machine workers' shared histories in Chapter Two (Orr, 1996). The approach I intend to adopt will be discussed in more detail in the methods section later on in the chapter, but it is clear that the research strategy should seek to draw on practitioner experiences in a way that reflects their 'personal and social stories' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p.2). In order to address my research questions, it will aim to gain a deep insight into the experiences and day to day working lives of participant teachers and how they see their relationships. However, Clandinin et al (2007, p.21) discuss how researchers may find narrative enquiry an appealing approach because the 'comfort associated with narratives and stories carries into a sense of comfort with research'. They alert researchers to the complexities of conducting a narrative enquiry, which is defined as 'the study of experience as story' (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p.477). To frame the research in a narrative form would focus on 'retrospective telling' (Sonday et al. 2020, p. 3), however I also aim for participants to capture aspects of their everyday interactions as they occur, the 'moments' which hold the potential for a 'total realisation of a

possibility' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.642). A rhythm analytical perspective would not see such moments as linear reflection, but rather as all-encompassing ambiguities and antinomies, 'born of the everyday' (ibid, p.645), with a spontaneous and 'magnificent trajectory' through which the boundaries of impossibility are pushed back (ibid, p. 645). This inspires me to look for such moments, where I believe I will find a deeper understanding of the interactions participants experience. In this regard, drawing on a rhythm analytical perspective seems more closely aligned to my aims, with its focus on everyday experience and its 'hidden wealth' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.108). Furthermore, although participants may recount sharing stories with colleagues during the research, as in the example above (Orr, 1996), this does not mean that these should dictate the structure of the research or use the philosophy of narrative enquiry as the determination of its design, as this could overshadow this focus on day-to-day life and the influence of the immediate context in which it takes place. Although the research therefore has a deep interest in eliciting participants' stories, the orientation of the research is wider and also has resonance with the rhythms and energies of participants' everyday interactions and the moments of significance found within their accounts and examples of their interactions with colleagues.

In understanding these interactions from the perspective of my participants, I explored whether the research was also orientated towards an ethnographic philosophy. Pole & Morrison (2003, p.4) discuss 'the portrayal of an insider's perspective' within the context of an ethnographic approach and this at first seemed resonant with this aspiration. Koskinen-Koivisto et al's (2020, p.xx) description of an interpretive, ethnographic paradigm depicts it as one which the researcher can,

> Have access to hidden meanings nuances and affective realms that are not visible or understandable at first sight.

The depth and detail in my research of the dynamic and complex social processes participants encounter with colleagues has a clear resonance with my aims, however, ethnography is often associated and an approach which involves the observation of participants in their 'natural' settings with participants (Hammersley, 2020). This contrasts with my own research, where I wish to place an emphasis on participant accounts as part of a constructionist epistemology, as discussed above. How participants perceive and talk about their settings and experiences will constitute the data, as opposed to me observing

them. It is participants who will discuss and also capture and share incidents and examples from their practice, as opposed to the researcher, and I will have no direct participation within those settings myself. Furthermore, Russell and Barley (2019, p.5.) highlight the 'intimate, longitudinal and receptive nature' of ethnographic research and the challenges posed in terms of ethics and power relations. Hammersely (2020, p.445) also identifies problems arising from the 'flexible character' of ethnographic design, when 'only quite limited information can be provided at the start of data collection, when access is initially being negotiated, about exactly what the research will entail'. Such an approach could serve to undermine the ethics of my research. My role as a researcher is not to observe, or intrude, but to curate and interpret the narratives and experiences of participants, whilst being aware of my own perspective. Again, I believe that a rhythmanalytical orientation represents this research with greater authenticity. Whilst Denscombe (2014) recognises a key component of an ethnographic methodology as 'the significance it attaches to the role of the researcher's ''self' in the process of research' (p.89), rhythmanalysis also addresses this issue, but in a way which seems to better align with my research. Burton and Bartlett (2009) identify a paradox within ethnography whereby the researcher must develop a deep engagement with participants' situations and experiences, and yet 'step outside their situation at times' (p.230). This paradox has a resonance with Lefebvre's account of rhythmanalysis, and in particular the view he recounts from a Parisian window of the streets below, through which he concludes that an observer can be 'simultaneously centre and periphery' (Lefebvre, 2020, p. 46). As a researcher I will be at the periphery of participants' experiences: I will not be a part of the stories they will tell, their histories or the spaces where their experiences with colleagues take place, yet the energies, rhythms and experiences of participants' working lives as relayed to me through the discussions, data capture and events around the research will have the potential to engage me more closely with these experiences.

This engagement with participants and the nature of our own interactions during the research is an area to consider carefully in terms of my position as a researcher and the decisions I make in planning and undertaking the research, for example the extent to which I should share my personal values and experiences with participants and the nature of my contributions to group conversations during the research interviews. To be able to connect

authentically with the experiences of my participants, as discussed above, will require an atmosphere of trust to be established, however disclosing my own personal experience could also present the risk of 'reactivity' should my own narrative affect participants' responses (Cohen et al, 2018, p.318) and unintentionally influence or distort them. Therefore, this illustrates that I will need to achieve a balance in this respect, which is a key area on which I will reflect throughout the research process. Whilst it is unrealistic to put aside my own interest and experience entirely, I can consider ways to moderate its influence.

Such issues can be addressed through understanding my own axiology, the 'nature of value and … the value question of what is intrinsically worthwhile' (Sandouk, 2015, para. 11). As Etherington (2004, p.32) states, the researcher should have a 'transparency of personal involvement… and an acknowledgement of prejudices towards, or personal connections with, the topic of study' (ibid) in order to mitigate the effects of their own influence on the research. The values I bring to the study and my own subjective knowledge mean that I may see responses through my own lens, assumptions and interpretation of situations and vocabulary, and this will be important to acknowledge. I have experienced particularly positive peer relationships within a specific time and context, working within FE at a specific period and historical conjuncture. I must therefore consider the information participants provide critically and reflexively, and not assume they are experiencing similar situations or contexts.

This vulnerability could be further mitigated in the design of the research by drawing on one further paradigm in the positionality of the research study, which is that of pragmatism, originating from John Dewey's concern for how individuals 'make ethical judgements in response to specific circumstances, informed by their own values and those of their community' (King, et al, 2019, p.31). The study seeks to illuminate how socially situated interactions and relationships might be connected to teacher identity, development and practice: therefore an understanding of the conditions and barriers which can support, or conversely impede, such processes is not sought merely for its own sake, but to inform institutions in the PCE sector as to how this could have significance to policy and decision making, for example regarding pragmatic issues such as professional development and timetabling planning. Cresswell's statement resonates with this intention when he draws on

Patton (1990) to discuss how 'there is a concern with applications – what works – and solutions to problems' (Cresswell, 2014, p.10).

It is important therefore that the data is interpreted as the participants have intended to communicate it: within an interpretative paradigm where complex meanings need to be understood from the participants' perspective. This is exemplified by the use of methods such as multi-modal data collection, where participants will gather and analyse their own day to day interactions and experiences, as discussed in greater detail below in section 4.6.

This echoes the constructivist ontology I identified above; my aspiration being to formulate a new understanding and a re-definition of a phenomenon easily termed 'communities of practice' but hard to capture within such a phrase. I have developed this in Chapter Two and now seek to make any further refinements on the basis of how my participants see the reality of their relationships with others.

In summary, constructivism and interpretivism are therefore important elements in terms of the philosophical position of the research. However, the methodology is influenced by a combination of approaches. There is a narrative focus due to the importance placed on gathering data through the unique stories which participants share about their experiences. This finds resonance with 'the goal of producing rich descriptions and complex analyses of a single life or critical episodes within a person's life' (Winston, 2012, p.107), however, as discussed above, there are shortcomings for this research of adopting this strictly and exclusively as the primary approach. Additionally, the study draws on the ethnographic aim to gain an insider perspective, but this is inflected through a closer and perhaps more ethical fit with a rhythmanalytical approach. The latter will enhance the research by attempting to bring it closer to participants' current everyday experiences as they occur, thereby extending and complementing their reflections on past experiences. This will be discussed in more detail in the methods section below, following a review of the context and settings in which the research will take place.

4.4 Research design and development

Following consideration of the contexts in which the research will take place, and the different features influencing those settings, I will now discuss how the design of the research was developed with reference to those settings.

In order to align with the aims of the research the philosophy and orientation discussed in section 4.3 above, the research design and methods selected will need to help me to re-define the much used and to some extent clichéd term of communities of practice and gain a new understanding of how socially situated learning and discourse within the post-compulsory education sector can help teachers to develop their practice and support them with the pressures of their day to day working lives. In Chapter One I discussed how this term has become distorted as part of a managerialist agenda and can be seen as a mask for complying with quality requirements. I have argued that whilst this involves collaboration between teachers, for example through the development of manufactured, top-down collegial groups, it also controls and directs it towards a specific pre-determined agenda. In contrast, this research is concerned with elucidating informal, social learning and discourse; where and how it takes place, its perceived value to teachers and therefore its role in supporting practice. The methods employed will therefore need to align with my interpretive exploration of collaborative, social processes and the desire to understand the experience of others from their own perspective. They will need to encourage participants' self-expression and participation in the construction of meaning, being consistent with my qualitative and interpretive orientation. The methods selected will need to enable a depth of understanding of participants' situations and perspectives to be gained, an aim well summarised by Charmaz (2009, p.14):

> Through our methods, we first aim to see this world as our research participants do – from the inside. Although we cannot claim to replicate their views, we can try to enter their settings and situations to the extent possible

Although not adopting a strictly narrative methodology, as discussed in section 4.3, the research methods will need to provide opportunities for participants to tell their stories so that I can examine,

> How individuals talk about and story their experiences and perceptions of the social contexts they inhabit. (Goodson and Sykes, 2001, p.1)

It will therefore be necessary through the methods selected not to walk with participants in the Epicurean garden, but to engage with accounts of their own gardens, forests and perhaps less hospitable terrains, as they have experienced their peer relationships and workplaces during their teaching careers. I will need to use methods through which I can obtain a sense of their roles and day to day working patterns and view their narratives and the data they present through a more holistic lens. My aim is to,

> Solicit accounts of actions, moments, events and happenings and people whose analysis produces stories (e.g. biographies, work histories or case studies) as a form of knowledge (Zhao and Poulson, 2006, p.124)

Capturing these narratives could themselves help to create a new view of social relationships with peers and without them, the complexities of the relationships and their dynamics would otherwise remain unseen. Developing an approach using qualitative methods appeared most close to fulfilling this purpose. Two research methods would therefore be trialled within a pilot study: a semi-structured interview and a focus group. The rationale for using interviews as a research method seemed clear, with their potential to explore participants' perspectives and experiences. King et al (2019, p.11) describe how 'people participate in indeterminate lifeworlds, often attaching different interpretations and meanings to similar 'facts' and events'. Within this process, 'the researcher's task is to facilitate interviewees in telling their stories' (Dahlberg et al, 2008, p.184) and through these explore the social phenomenon of teacher interactions, relationships and their context, and how participants perceive this. By using in-depth qualitative interviews, I would therefore seek to:

> Explore in detail the experiences, motives, and opinions of others and learn to see the world from perspectives other than [my] own. (Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p.3)

I was also interested to incorporate scope for naturalistic conversation and interaction between participants to occur, because I felt that this could create opportunities for participants to explore themes and construct meanings collaboratively, which aligns with the research issue itself. Any interviews would therefore need to be semi-structured which would maintain a focus on the research questions but provide this scope for unpredicted contributions to be explored as they arose. Whilst one to one interviews would perhaps provide greater opportunities for in-depth personal responses and accounts, I was keen to

explore whether either group or dual interviews or focus groups would provide richer data. King et al (2019, p. 94) highlight how group interviews can ‘encourage recall and stimulate opinion elaboration’ and discuss how they can reveal ‘the social and cultural context of peoples’ understandings and beliefs’ (ibid). A focus group approach could potentially extend this element, although care would need to be taken to ensure that individual perspectives would not ‘get lost in the cut and thrust of dialogue between participants (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.113). Furthermore, there would involve less interaction with myself as the researcher. I am seeking to achieve a balance between the different opportunities these methods could provide and therefore decided to plan and trail both a semi-structured interview and a focus group, and to use this experience for reflection and development of a final research design.

I also decided to support the interview process with a pre-interview narrative account of my own experience (Appendix A). This would be developed with the aim of achieving two benefits. First, I wanted to stimulate participants’ initial thoughts through conveying my own experience. This was important due to the nature of the research, where I am aiming to define and develop an understanding of a concept which has no definitive ‘label’. Providing this initial narrative would give participants an example as an initial frame of reference but make it clear that this was derived from my own unique experience. Secondly, this was in keeping with my aim to create a sense of trust and take a reflexive approach to the research. As Etherington emphasises, reflexivity concerns,

> The capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experience and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of the inquiry. (Etherington, 2004, p. 31)

The pre-narrative would therefore convey this transparency and could be provided to participants to read ahead of the research interviews. Again, this would be trialled and evaluated in the pilot study before building into the final design.

The study which took place to pilot the research methods is discussed in further detail below, and in sections 4.5 to 4.7 the rationale for the final design and selection of methods which followed is discussed.

4.4.1 Piloting the research design

I have outlined above how the research ideas grew in line with my values and intentions. The following section will now explain how these ideas were developed, with the first step being a pilot study. Ismail et al (2017) have commented on the 'paucity in literature that focuses on using, reading and representing [pilot studies]', particularly with regards to qualitative research, perhaps due to its historic association with quantitative methods. However, in this study it was an important step in testing my methodology and methods, providing an opportunity to trial and refine my research design. This was also an opportunity to challenge my thinking about the focus of the research and the lines of enquiry being pursued. Data arising from the pilot was found to be rich and enlightening and is therefore included in this chapter in section 4.4.2: rather than being under-reported, its findings will be used as a basis for reflection on the specific lessons learned pertinent to the development of the research and conceptual framework.

Teijlingen and Hundleyput (2002, p.4) advocate that 'well-designed and well-conducted pilot studies can inform us about the best research process and occasionally about likely outcomes'. Because the research is exploratory in nature, the methods used in the pilot study sought to identify whether participants recognised the concept and experience of informal collective groups and explore into how teachers perceive and experience these relationships. The research intends to lead to a conceptualisation and explanation of a phenomenon which is as yet indistinct and has only been defined in two-dimensional and over-used language around 'communities of practice'. Therefore, the information obtained from the pilot study was used to further shape the theoretical content underpinning the research and ensure that any areas requiring further reading were built into the main research design. Furthermore, it was critical to test out the research methods themselves in order to identify improvements and changes to this design. As indicated by Crossman (2020, para.6) 'while a researcher will have a notion of what questions to ask and topics to raise, she may find that other topics and questions arise when the target group talks among themselves'. As mentioned above, the research is seeking to find out about experiences which are indistinct in nature. Although it started with the concept of CoPs, this has been found to be limited conceptually and terminologically to articulate and explain the focus of my research. As discussed in Chapter

Two, it fails to fully convey an as yet undefined process and experience. Further detail and the specific impact of the pilot research is provided below.

A small pilot study was therefore undertaken which included a focus group and a series of interviews. Some pilot interviews took place on a one-to-one basis, but there was also the opportunity to undertake a dual interview with two participants. The two types of interview approaches (one to one and dual) provided the means for me to reflect on how differently participants might respond to the research questions depending on the format and degree to which they could interact with others during the process; it therefore helped me to explore and evaluate these dynamics. Participants comprised teacher educators and practitioners working within FE, HE and military settings. This enabled a range of settings to be included, again for reflection about how my sample might be constructed.

Another specific area of trial was the development and use of the auto-ethnographic narrative introduced in section 4.4. In each case, participants were provided in advance with this narrative written by the researcher. Participants were asked to read this prior to the research so that it provided a stimulus into discussion about their own experiences. The intention was also to share a short, relatable example so that participants understood the intention of the research and gained a sense of trust in the researcher, without providing too much information so as to lead their responses. It was therefore made clear by the title that this was a 'personal narrative' and included an explanation that the research now aimed to investigate how other teachers experienced collaborative relationships with their colleagues at work.

The implications for the main study are reported below and will highlight the changes and developments which were later incorporated into the design of the main study. The analysis will address conceptual, procedural and product considerations and make links to the methods to be developed in the main study.

4.4.2 Factors arising from the pilot study

Several key conceptual areas were identified to follow-up within the main research.

Practitioners working in FE noticeably focussed on how they felt the pressures of a 'mechanised' environment which compromised a longer term and more holistic approach

with their students. Teacher educators said that the in-service teacher trainees they worked with were not getting sufficient 'space' to reflect and preferred 'doing' to reflecting. This was perceived to have a consequent influence on learning, for example where the reduction in available curriculum time impacts on the number of times students can be formatively assessed and deemed to be competent. This was felt to be part of a compliance culture and people often felt isolated, for example one stating that 'there isn't the opportunity to have those professional discussions with your team anymore for lots of reasons'. Some of these related to competitiveness and lack of trust. They felt a disempowerment with this reduced 'reflective time' and clearly this can be linked to professional identity, having an informal 'sounding block' of a group of people around you 'develops confidence and helps build that sense of identity'. If we return once again to the metaphor of Epicurus's garden, a contrast can be identified here between the fellowship of colleagues walking and talking together and the antithetical image of isolated individuals working independently of each other.

These responses illustrated that conceptual issues around the idea of 'space' would be important to explore, particularly around reflective practice. This has alerted me to the idea that fieldwork and analysis must take account of space as much more than a physical representation. Looking at teachers and their communities will mean thinking about this in terms of social relationships and also the mental and emotional impact of these relationships. Inspired by Lefebvre (1991), the research needs to consider this concept in its wider collective and social sense where:

> In reality, social space 'incorporates' social actions, the actions of subjects both individual and collective. (Lefebvre, 1991, p.33)

CPD and support within institutions was another key theme informing the main study. Participant responses emphasised general day-to-day support and this was linked to creativity, yet they felt that 'when it's formalised by managers it sometimes gets in the way'. They expressed a joy around the discussion of abstract ideas and concepts in education, and how informal 'banter' 'keeps you in line, moderates and checks'. There was a notable example of a teacher waiting for the formalised CPD day in college to finish so that she could show a colleague something 'more interesting'. It was felt that CPD was not differentiated and that management-directed CPD hampers learning. It was clear that people wanted to talk to each other about their subject and other people's subjects and a

significant comment was made about social and academic discussion being 'where I've grown the most'. The idea of natural, unimpeded 'growth' in people's practice again brings connotations of a shared and fertile environment, in this case sustained by social-professional discourse and support, as opposed to a more stifling discourse driven by institutional priorities. This will be another important concept to explore further.

Interviews with military practitioners also highlighted the importance of informal processes and professional learning was likened to osmosis. One participant described her practice with others when working in a military field hospital, explaining how, 'you're just watching and working with people and you think I never thought about that, I'll introduce that into my teaching or care'. She felt that this was about being alongside people whose knowledge 'is on display'. In contrast to college experiences, it was notable that in these military examples regulation does not obliterate opportunities for social learning and professional discussion, but instead it values the social dimension as people must integrate quickly and 'can't get away from each other'. A specific issue I interpreted from military participants' comments is the way that rank seemed to become less important than a colleague's experience and knowledge within collegial relationships. It will therefore be important to consider this as the study progresses, and to explore whether this phenomenon is specific to the military context or occurs across different types of settings. For example, a 'community of practice' was described whereby people would 'go and chat and see what they're doing'. Members were all of different ranks, 'rank didn't come into it'. They still talked 'on a level' with others'; there were no leaders but a mutual understanding 'that we were all on the same journey and we could all benefit from discussing it with each other'. In common with the data provided by FE teachers, the process where teachers 'bandy ideas off each other' was prominent. The sociology of the military was mentioned and will be important to consider, moving into the main fieldwork. The MOD research approval process, discussed later on in the chapter, will also support this process. This will therefore be a factor within the analysis of each setting, so that research findings can be placed into their wider context, which will differ between institutions and different strands within the sector. In this case, it was particularly interesting in terms of teachers being autonomous and highly reflective, with one participant explaining how military personnel are used to questioning things in

themselves and the validity of what is being taught: 'not just accepting but posing questions and challenging'.

4.4.3 A summary of actions arising from the pilot study

As a result of the pilot study a number of adaptations were made to the research. In terms of the research tools, the stimulus material/pre-narrative was made clearer and more concise. Although this had worked well as a mechanism for opening up discussion and participants mostly said that they could identify with the issues it raised, it had included reference to a literature source and a reflection about social justice, this was found to be a distraction for the participants. This may have also directed participants towards this theme specifically, rather than other communities and IPGs they may have experienced which had other characteristics and aspirations. On reflection, this might also have compromised the careful balance I was seeking to achieve between disclosure of my own experience and minimising any threats to participants speaking authentically from their own perspectives, as discussed in section 4.3. I would therefore need to amend the pre-narrative to reflect a more relatable focus on professional learning and identity in a group rather than straying toward potential wider implications. The phrase *community of practice* would also be removed so as not to lead participants towards a pre-conceived notion, particularly in view of the criticisms I have made throughout this study of this term being over and mis-used.

From the pilot study, I saw that the one-to-one interviews provided a good opportunity for participants to convey specific experiences, and it was possible to explore these further. However, similar to examples recounted by Barbour (2009, p.104), when participants were interviewed together, this created a richer discussion, as the participants involved were keen to share their views and seemed ignited by each other's contributions. They also said that they had enjoyed the experience and felt that it had been of value to them personally. This format enhanced the data because participants took control of the discussion and made connections and meanings together as they talked, in an open manner which was more naturalistic (King et al, 2019). For example, pilot participants who were interviewed as a pair, who worked in the same college of FE, compared their respective staff workrooms and the colleagues with whom they shared their office space. They discussed how the opportunities they had to discuss their practice and teaching subject developments impacted

on their practice. This approach also strengthened the ethical dimension of the study, given the benefit participants said arose from the experience.

However, there was one instance where some of the information provided by one of the participants was quite personal to her and would have been good to explore further, had this been in a one-to-one interview. Should this occur during the main study, it could be addressed through a follow-up discussion should the participant be willing.

Finally, the methods trialled within the pilot study were limited to interviews and, although these worked well in exploring participants' perspectives and reflections, there was limited scope for an analysis of the spatial aspects of their everyday lives and this was a conceptual theme arising from the pilot study as discussed above in section 4.4.2. Therefore, this was identified as an area for further development before undertaking the main study.

4.4.4 The research design: a collaborative and multi-modal approach

Following the trialling of methods during the pilot study, it was clear that the research methods deployed would need to be developed further in order to be capable of finding out if and how the supportive fellowship and collegiality I described in Chapter One occurs for others in the reality of contemporary PCE institutions, and how collaborative interactions connect with knowledge and practice. Recalling the primary aim of the research, I wanted to explore what these group relationships and activities looked like for teachers: how they are nurtured and sustained and how they might contribute to teachers' identity and wider wellbeing. The use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups had been seen to work well in the pilot study in eliciting reflection and exploring issues relevant to the research questions. They also provided opportunities for interaction between participants which I have highlighted in section 4.4 as beneficial (King et al, 2019). However, it was felt that these methods did not fully address my aspiration to illuminate the everyday lives of teachers, their interactions and experiences as they happened, as opposed to only through reflection. As discussed in section 4.3, I wanted to also explore more about those instantaneous spaces and moments and their meaning, and this would mean devising an additional research method which could more effectively reveal experience from a spatial and rhythmanalytical perspective.

I therefore decided to proceed with the interview and focus group methods but to devise a further method which would involve participants recording their interactions and experiences within their context over a specific period of time. This would also provide participants with choices about how they captured their own experiences through a multi-modal approach. The details of this approach are discussed below in section 4.6.

The addition of this third method would also strengthen the research by bringing together data through different means. This represents a triangulation of methods which is described by Torrance (2012, p.3) as providing 'a fuller and more informative picture …. More rounded, nuanced and valid than that produced by a single method'. I also needed to consider the sequence of research activities and formulated a three staged approach, the detail and rationale for which is detailed below.

4.5 Methods: Interviews and pre-narrative

The first stage of the research would involve carrying out in-depth interviews. These were intended to explore participants' roles and experience, with a focus on informal, social working relationships and interactions within various post-compulsory education settings. I retained the use of an improved pre-narrative, as mentioned above, which has been refined for use in the final study.

Undertaking these exploratory interviews would also allow me to identify those participants who, if they consented to continue, could appropriately proceed to the second stage of the research: if they were working in an appropriate teaching role and were able to identify peer relationships from which they derive benefit and meaning, then they would be in a position to record data.

Following the experience of the pilot study, the research interviews would seek to maximise the advantages of group interviews where possible. In some cases, it might be possible for interviews to take place in small groups of participants who knew each other, thereby drawing on any opportunities for shared reflection: perhaps if participants belonged to the same group of peers, they would be able to add an additional insight into that specific

group. I wanted to facilitate an environment conducive to an open exploration of ideas through a naturalistic approach where I would,

> Draw on a desire to tap directly into the perceptions of individuals …. To obtain rapport with respondents and to avoid manipulating them. (Silverman, 2014, p.178)

In order to support this approach, interviews would need to facilitate a conversational tone, and allow for participant groups to talk together in a collaborative manner. Therefore, although very broad question areas were identified to guide and prompt certain key areas, the interviews would reflect an adaptable semi-structured approach (Appendix B). This would be 'characterised by flexible questions … in combination with open answers' (Panke, 2018, p.216). It is acknowledged that this participative and naturalistic approach would make answers between interviews more difficult to compare in analysis, since questions could vary between groups, and different questions might be asked in response to, and to follow up, participants' own contributions. I reflected that this might influence the reliability of the research in terms of consistency (Silverman, 2014, p.83). However, this was considered critical to a process whereby participant groups in each setting would be able to tell a unique and different narrative about their relationships, collaboratively constructed within each group interview. This aspect of the design would therefore be mitigated by the depth of insight being gained from *inside* the contexts and specific relationships discussed and, as discussed in the later section on validity and reliability, the concept of reliability in qualitative research is not necessarily synonymous with uniformity (Cohen et al, 2018, p.270).

4.6 Methods: the multi-modal approach and 'KoBoToolbox'

In order to gain a detailed picture of participants' perceptions and facilitate their participation and expression as fully as possible, a multi modal approach was designed. Multimodality has been described as 'an inter-disciplinary approach that understands communication and representation to be more than about language' (IOE, 2012). I wanted participants to draw on a range of ways to express their experience, especially because I am seeking to understand a social phenomenon which has not, as yet, been defined. This aligns with my interest in drawing on a rhythmanalytical approach: through recording their day-

to-day experiences, it might be possible to see more about how interactions with colleagues are part of the rhythms of their everyday lives and what this might mean. By facilitating a range of approaches, including visual and artefact based, meaning might not depend merely on words and language but could include a range of images and other media, perhaps produced by participants themselves. Rather then, a multi-modal research approach was conceived which,

> focuses on analyzing and describing the full repertoire of meaning-making resources that people use (visual, spoken, gestural, written, three-dimensional, and others, depending on the domain of representation) in different contexts, and on developing means that show how these are organized to make meaning. (IOE, 2012)

KoBoToolbox would provide the opportunity for participants to collect data directly and share this with me on a secure platform. This is a 'a suite of tools for field data collection' (KoBoToolbox.org (a), undated, para. 1) which was originally developed in 2005 for use by humanitarian workers and researchers in challenging environments of crises and conflict. In the form of an app which can be used on a mobile device, it is a practical and accessible method of mobile data collection, both on and offline, through modes such as text and photographic entries, and video and audio recordings. It was developed by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (ibid) and launched as a platform for humanitarian data collection in 2014. Funded by a combination of UN organizations, international humanitarian NGOs (KoBoToolbox.org, undated), its use has since become widespread by researchers, as below:

> Publicly hosted KoBoToolbox servers are used by more than 500,000 users worldwide who submitted more than 100 million surveys in 2020 to inform humanitarian, human rights, development, research, and public health emergency (including COVID-19) projects. (KoBoToolbox.org (b), undated, para.4)

There would be several advantages of using this system for my research. It would provide an accessible and convenient way for participants to capture day to day events as they occurred and the means for participants to capture the data themselves in order to represent the experiences on which they placed significance. Using this platform would also align with my intention to look at the occurrences and experiences occurring within everyday life as close to when they occurred as possible, ideally as they occurred and for participants to

add as many data examples as they would like, since the software facilitates multiple, unlimited uploads of data in whichever format participants selected.
Although this would be the preferred method of data capture for this phase of the research, and I would be able to provide support for participants to learn how to use it, it was recognised that not all participants would be comfortable to engage with it. Where this was the case, they would also therefore be provided with the opportunity to keep a diary of their experiences as an alternative, as outlined below. Additionally, there would be limitations for offender learning and military participants due to security issues, for example regarding official documentation, screen shots etc. In these cases, the same questions would be asked of participants, whether using KoBoToolbox, or whether curating their examples and notes through diary entries.

The second stage of the research would therefore use this multi-modal approach and the KoBoToolbox platform described above where this was possible.
Participant volunteers were therefore recruited to continue following the interviewees in phase one above, were asked to complete a record of activities and interactions taking place in everyday life within their identified groups of peers over an agreed period of two weeks (Appendix C). They were asked where possible to use 'KoBoToolbox' to record their data as above. This sought to encourage participants to engage in a process of creating their own data in formats such as photos, videos, accounts of day to day working interactions. Pink (2013) discusses how images are such an entrenched part of how we process experiences and learn, linked to memory and experience (Pink, 2013):

> The visual is … inextricably interwoven with our personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, cultures and societies, as well as with definitions of history, time, space, reality and truth (Pink, 2013, p.1).

This concept aligns closely with my research position, which draws on the value of participant narratives, with the potential to open up more ways for participants to relay their feelings, day to day events and stories around their relationships and experiences. It also supported the aim, linked to the values and philosophy of the study, to include participants in the research process to create *their* meaning, rather than a meaning imposed from outside of their unique experience.

Using KoBoToolbox as an open-source tool for mobile data collection would facilitate the multi modal approach discussed above, allowing participants to record photos, artefacts, and videos or add text commentary which describe their interaction. For example, resources created with, or resulting from, collaboration with peers, emails of communications and decisions/ consequences of the interaction with peers in this context. It was anticipated that they might include photos of workspaces or resources, screenshots, organisation charts, timetables, reflections on a discussion in person or on twitter. Each participant was fully briefed about its use and a practice survey was set up to enable them to explore how it worked. It was recognised that the full range of modes may not be possible for participants to use in all cases, for example within offender learning or military settings, and in this case, participants could capture their data through another format, for example, a written log. Whether using KoBoToolbox or diary entries, there was no structure or prescribed time to complete entries with the two-week period identified so as to free participants to record what they felt were significant events and experiences in the way that they wished. To support this process, an initial meeting took place with each participant, either face to face or online, so that the process could be explained and discussed. It was important to provide clear guidance as it is recognised that 'the quality and quantity of data generated using diaries can vary hugely' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.151) and during this phase of the research participants are co-researchers, therefore emphasising the importance of capturing the personal experiences they felt to be significant and in the way they wished to represent them. As reflected in Pink, (2013, p.71), this process 'can be seen as a process of making methods as well as that of producing knowledge'. If participants intended to use photos and video capture in their data capture, they would be asked to issue an information sheet and consent form to anyone they wish to include in a photo or video, and these were provided. A guidance sheet was also provided to participants to ensure that this was clear, including an instruction to contact the researcher should they have any concerns, prior to submitting any item on KoBoToolbox.

4.7 Methods: focus groups

Interviews in the first stage of the research would explore participants' initial accounts of the groups of colleagues they interacted with and their perceived value. This would be followed with a multi-modal research activity where participants who had continued to stage 2 of the research captured examples of their interactions and experiences. The final method of the three stages would involve a focus group where participants who had taken part in stage two of the research could reflect and recall key experiences from the data they collected, sharing any artefacts and photos, and discussing any contextual barriers and enablers to collective social groups operating within their various settings.

In a study which has as its heart discourse within teacher communities, including an opportunity for participants to talk together about their experiences was important. Kitzinger (1995, p.299) defines focus groups as 'a form of group interview that capitalises on communication between research participants in order to generate data'. Here we can return to the idyllic image of Epicurus's students and fellow scholars, in their Athenian garden retreat, sharing and shaping their ideas. As stated previously, this is clearly an idealised image, quite removed from the day to day lives of most teachers, however, it does capture the aspirational ethos of the research. Encouraged by the benefit participants said they derived from the pilot focus group, I wanted to provide the opportunity for participants to talk together to exchange ideas about the collective group interactions they had recorded in stage two of the research. A further element to this dynamic was my intention that participants, within the focus group forum, would themselves be engaged in a collective dialogue as part of the research.

It was important to identify why this research activity would take the form of a focus group, rather than a group interview. This was key because being clear about this distinction would determine how the focus group activity would be designed and managed. Kitzinger (ibid, p.299) explains how,

> instead of the researcher asking each person to respond to a question in turn, people are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view.

In the case of this study, participants would be asked to comment on the artefacts, commentaries and visual data they had recorded during the digital data capture method. This was exploratory with the intention of facilitating a dynamic exchange based on dialogue about what these artefacts represented and meant to the participants. This aligns with Morgan's view that focus group participants:

> Share their experiences and thoughts, while also comparing their own contributions to what others have said. This process of sharing and comparing is especially useful for hearing and understanding a range of responses on a research topic. (Morgan, 2006, p.121)

By using this method for the final stage of the research, the data would be collected through a collaboration between participants as they analysed their stage two data together. My role would be facilitative, with the aim that participant interactions, as they made collective sense of their individual data, would create further data, this time based on these interactions and collective responses. The aim was to capture the essence of their shared thoughts and experiences in a dynamic situation, as opposed to one which was more tightly controlled by being over-directed by myself. As Cohen et al (2018, p.532) state, this is an active and collective process; focus groups 'share the attraction of synergy, with several people stimulating discussion and working together on the issue in hand'. This process aligns with the subject of the research, which is itself about the synergy and meaning-making that can take place between teachers.

4.8 The settings

As introduced in Chapter One, the research was undertaken in a PCE sector which is 'wide-ranging and remarkably diverse section of the education system' (Excellence Gateway, 2019) and, as explained above within the rationale for the research, I intended to reflect the multifarious settings in which learning takes place within the sector. Although aware of the limitations to the scope of the study in terms of time and resources, I wanted to reflect as much of the diverse nature of the sector as practicable, but without detriment to the depth and quality of the data obtained. With the research being of a qualitative and interpretive nature, as discussed above, I was less concerned about having a large sample size, rather a diverse one, since it was important to focus on the unique and distinct nature of IPGs through recruiting participants who would 'represent a variety of positions in relation to the

research topic, of a kind that might be expected to throw light on meaningful differences in experience' (King et al, 2019, p.57). I would therefore recruit participants from a range of sectoral strands where I would be able to gain access to appropriate settings. These, and their specific contexts, were discussed in Chapter Two and will now be considered below in terms of the application of the research and approaches. Although the research does not seek to make generalisations across these different settings, this approach will enable me to compare the experiences of participants working in different types of institutional environments in order to ascertain key themes emerging across the different strands, and for differences relating to the research questions between strands to be analysed. In addition, other parts of the sector are often overlooked, for example offender learning, it is claimed, receives little attention by policy makers (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2021): it is therefore my intention to avoid doing this myself.

Four different 'strands' were therefore identified for the research. These strands are identified below, before each being considered in turn regarding how the research was approached:

- FE colleges
- Adult and community education (ACE)
- Offender learning (OL)
- Military education and training

Lapan et al (2012, p.8) state that for qualitative researchers, 'truth is context'; it is recognised that context is an important element of this research, in which meanings and the interpretation of situations are 'culture and context bound' (Cohen et al, 2018, p.288). It is within this context that the following settings are discussed.

4.8.1 Settings: colleges of FE

General colleges of FE comprise the largest strand within the PCE sector, with 234 colleges educating 1.7 million students, and employing 50,000 (full time equivalent) teaching staff (AOC, 2021). The research took place with participants connected to three general colleges of FE; two of the FE colleges in the West Midlands and one located in the North-West of England. Access to these settings was enabled through the university initial teacher

education (ITE) partnership, in which I work as a teacher educator. Participants were all in-service teachers, some of whom were enrolled on an ITE programme within the partnership. Therefore, a small number were accessed via the partnership college, however they worked in other PCE settings (including offender learning as below, plus NGO training providers). The latter provided a small but additional perspective to the experiences captured in the group interviews in phase 1.

Although connected to some of the institutions through the university partnership, I did not expect to gain access 'as a matter of right' (Cohen et al, 2018, p.134), and neither would it have been ethical to do so. Sikes (2004, p.27) points out that there are questions of social power to be considered when accessing people in certain populations. For example, when access to participants has been granted by others with more power within their organisation, their responses might be influenced. Permission was obtained from the university where I work to undertake the research with partner institutions and students, and then also obtained from the colleges themselves. I also had to project a favourable image of myself and of the project: for participants who did not know me to feel comfortable and able to disclose what could be sensitive information about their experiences, I needed to build a sense of trust.

I therefore attended each college to meet potential participants within their teacher education group sessions. This provided the opportunity to explain the research and obtain informed consent from those who wished to take part. Arrangements were then made to undertake three respective group interviews on subsequent dates, on college premises, as agreed with the colleges.

4.8.2 Settings: the offender learning sub-group

All offender learning participants were accessed via the university partnership outlined above, as partnership university students on an in-service teacher education programme. On visiting one of the colleges to explain the research and recruit participants, it became apparent that in one of the groups, there was a distinct 'sub-group' of in-service students who worked within offender learning and wished to participate. It was clear that they shared a distinctness of experience and talked animatedly together about what they termed 'prison craft'. They felt that working in offender learning was very different to the

experience of their co-students working in other strands, and that they understood each other's distinct concerns. I decided therefore to interview this group together, building on what appeared to be an existing collegial sub-group within the teacher education group as a whole. These participants worked across two different offender learning institutions respectively, and taught a range of different subjects, as detailed in Table 6. This again provided the opportunity for capturing data about different contexts and environments. As explained in section 4.6, participants working on OL settings would use the alternative methods to KoBoToolbox for stage 2 of the research, due to security limitations.

4.8.3 Settings: adult and community education (ACE)

One adult and community education college in the West Midlands was included in the study. Although the institution was known to me, I had no direct link to a gatekeeper I could approach to gain access for the research. Instead, I approached a contact known to the university I work for and met her to explain the research. As above, it was important to demonstrate that both myself as an individual, and the nature of the research, were suitable and that participants had the opportunity to derive benefit from taking part (BERA, 2019). This contact was a manager within the institution who was in a position to secure the necessary institutional permissions and cascade information about my research to staff, with my invitation to participate. My attempt at gaining access was tempered with my awareness that the influence of my gatekeeper should not impact on the participants, as discussed with reference to Sikes (2004) in section 4.8.1., in this case potentially impinging on participants' perceptions of the research, if fearing that data would be provided to and used by managers for example. However, this individual did not seek any involvement herself, and participants were provided with an information sheet, reassuring them of the ethics of the research, as part of the invitation to participate. In terms of the character of this setting, this institution was smaller than the FE colleges above and more specialist in nature, with participants being employed staff who worked and taught both on and off the premises. Despite its specialist character, during the period of the research it became subsumed via a merger into a general college of FE.

4.8.4 Settings: military

As with the FE colleges in the research, access to a military setting was enabled again through the ITE partnership, which has a long-established relationship with a nearby military base. Permissions were obtained from the university with regards to research within one of its partnership members. Extensive military protocols were involved in order to gain permission to conduct the research, and this process is discussed below. The participants recruited were experienced RAF military personnel and instructors, involved in the vocational and technical education of recruits, including the teaching and assessing of accredited national qualifications. Information about the research and an invitation to participate was circulated, with the approval of the centre, to potential participants who were either in-service ITE students or alumni of the university partnership's programme, which is often a bridge to higher education programmes and the workplace mentoring of subsequent ITE students. As with OL participants, military participants would also use alternative methods to KoBoToolbox for stage 2 of the research, due to security limitations, as explained in section 4.6.

4.8.5 Military approval process

Prior to conducting any research involving military participants, is it necessary to gain approval from the Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee (MODREC) in addition to the University's ethical approval. After contacting the MODREC Secretariat, it was ascertained that the research would require approval under this system (MOD, 2021b). The fact that this expert validation was deemed necessary reflects knowledge production practices which are specific to the military context. As discussed in Chapter Two, this research context is quite distinct from others and the meaning-making process is influenced by specific factors such as rank, security considerations and highly systemised processes.

I therefore followed a detailed process of application which involved a rigorous application process and culminated in my appearance before a review panel. My professional contact at the military base provided guidance in complying with the procedures for ethical approval. This process is detailed below:

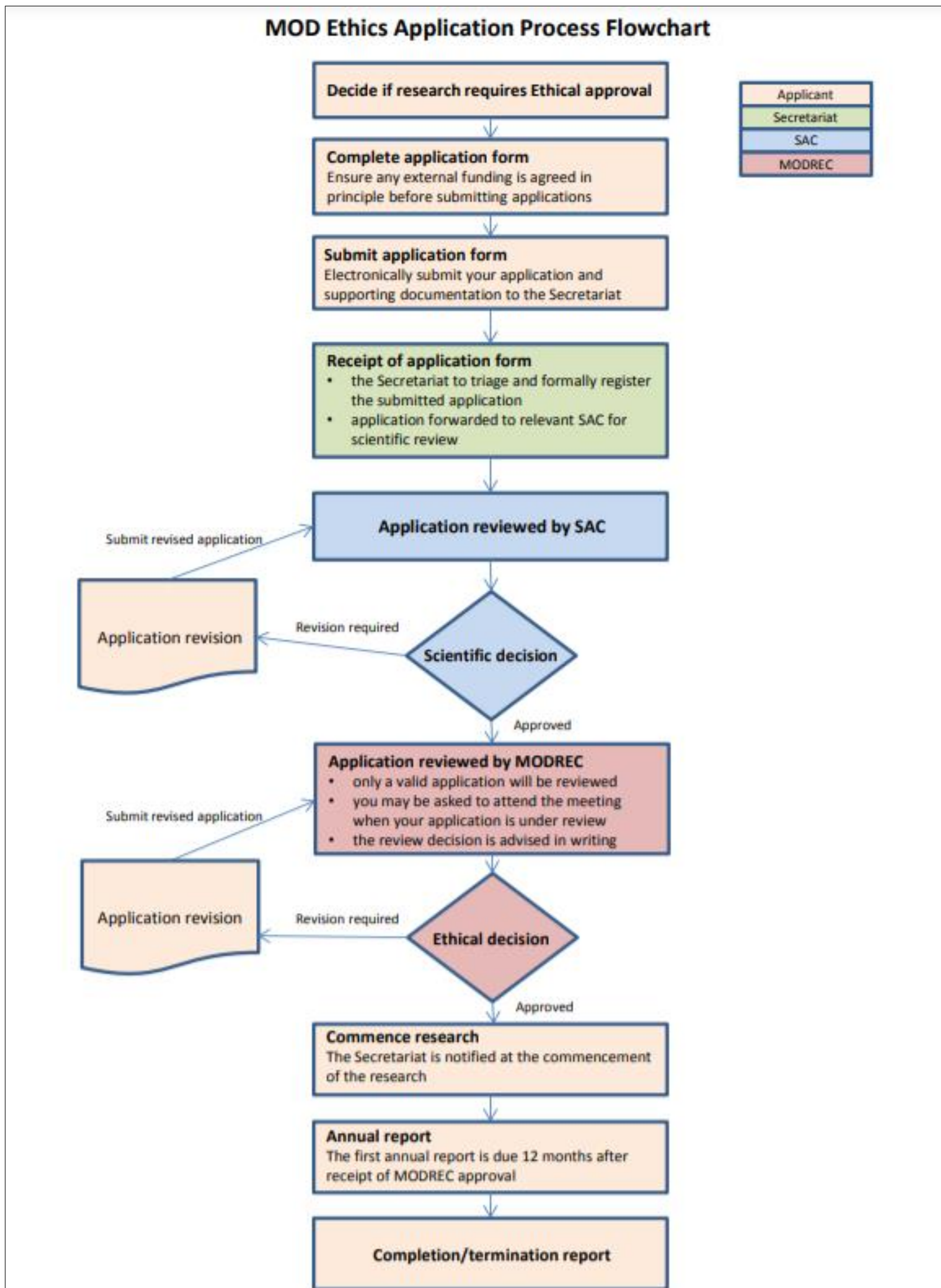


Figure 3: MODREC approval process (MOD, 2020b)

This process resulted in a 'favourable opinion' being provided. The experience of attending the MODREC committee meeting involved traveling to an unfamiliar MOD base in another area of the country to be questioned by a panel of twelve people, two joining over a telephone link, about the research, its origin and meaning and the rigor of my approaches. I was placed at the open end of a horseshoe of officials, where it seemed that my application

to undertake qualitative research was being met with some suspicion; perhaps reflective of Silverman's view that 'outside the social science community, there is little doubt that quantitative data rule the roost' (Silverman, 2014, p. 8). At the time I perceived that this might reflect a view that 'qualitative research has to abide by the rules of the game of quantitative approaches' (Cohen et al, 2018, p.288). Tracy (2010, p.838) specifically includes the decision makers in powerful institutional review board positions as being 'often unprepared and unable to appropriately evaluate qualitative analyses'. Nevertheless, the rigorous and challenging questions posed were helpful. Having to provide a convincing rationale to an external assessment panel helped to test my decisions and consider limitations in my approach, for example as a result I strengthened my plans regarding the validation of the data (see below). Such scrutiny can affirm the credibility of the research and I came to see it as an important part of the development process:

> If qualitative research is to be judged by whether it produces valid knowledge, then we should properly ask highly critical questions about any piece of research. And these questions should be no less probing and critical than we ask about any quantitative research study. (Silverman, 2014, p.79)

As I identified in section 4.8.1. there may be implications arising from the role of gatekeepers in undertaking research, however as Bound (2012) points out, it is the responsibility of the researcher to understand these implications. Gatekeepers may provide support as well as challenges to access (Spacey et al, 2020) and my work with MODREC secured me the access needed for the research, as well as-legitimised contacts within the military base who could support the process. I also learned much from the experience, as stated above. The necessity to engage with the MOD reporting structure, and the knowledge that findings would require additional reporting in a systemised way, as part of the structure illustrated below, were the aspects where I saw compromise; not to the research itself or its findings, but to part of the process. However, I remained committed to including a range of PCE strands, within a qualitative process which 'gives voices to participants and …probes issues that lie between the surface of presenting behaviours and actions (Cohen et al, 2018, p.288). This was particularly the case having worked with military instructors who had expressed feelings of disconnection from other areas in PCE. In line with Cohen et al's discussion (ibid, p.232), I decided that it was better to accept some compromise to the process through engagement in this system, than to abandon this element of my research.

4.9 Research participants – overview

Table 5 below shows the number of participants involved in the different stages of the research, including the pilot study. As discussed in section 4.4, the aim of the research was to gain an in-depth perspective into complex interactions, therefore the number of participants is not so high as to become unmanageable and, in this case, the qualitative and interpretive nature of the research was thought likely to generate a high volume of data. The interviews in phase one involved notably larger numbers of participants in comparison with the other phases. This perhaps reflects the invitation to participate being provided in an open manner, due to the exploratory nature of the research, particularly during this initial phase. Therefore, there was a high level of interest in participating and a challenge did arise regarding the number of volunteers in stage 1 in one setting, with one group interview containing a larger number of interviewees than anticipated. This perhaps reflects the drawback of asking for volunteers within an exploratory project, where experiences are not known until contributions are made and the emergent nature of the research; as highlighted by Cohen et al (2018, p.308), it may not be possible, or, indeed desirable to know in advance whom to sample or whom to include' because of the more naturalistic nature of qualitative research; in this case, participants needed to have identified that they felt part of a collegial peer group and could therefore capture data about it, as well as wishing and being able to continue with the research. Nevertheless, the advantage of this approach was to ensure that the participants who wished to continue to phase two would be in a position and current working context to undertake the research; they would need to perceive themselves to be in an appropriate day to day teaching and instructing context working with peers.

Participants in stage one had been given information sheets and consent forms in order to decide whether they wished to continue. I aimed for a minimum of six participants to continue from stage 1 to stage 2 of the research: it was envisaged that this would comprise two participants from each of the PCE strands on which the research focuses (FE colleges, military setting, offender learning, adult and community learning setting), dependent on which participants volunteered to take part and additionally which had identified that they were in an appropriate day to day teaching and instructing context with peers, which will have been established during the interviews undertaken in stage 1. Eight participants

volunteered to continue and this did fulfil the intended aim to include participants working across all four strands of the sector (full details of the participants are provided in the sections below).

For the final third phase of the research, my aim was again to include representation from each strand. All but one participant from phase two elected to continue, and this therefore included participants from each of the four strands.

Table 5: Participants by research stage

Research stage	Number of participants	Research activities
Pilot study	7	3 interviews and 1 focus group
Stage 1	20	Interviews
Stage 2	8	Data capture (multi-modal)
Stage 3	7	2 focus groups

4.9.1 Research participants: Stage 1 - interviews

As shown in Table 6, the experience and roles of the participants recruited for stage 1 of the research was varied. All were in-service teachers, but some had considerably more experience than others, for example teacher educators were included as participants alongside relatively new teachers. There was also a breadth in terms of subject specialism and curriculum area. This had the advantage of representing a good range of experience in PCE as a whole which was consistent with the intention to recruit a variety of participants, as discussed in section 4.8. With the nature of the research being qualitative and interpretive, it was not my intention to recruit a sample which was numerically large or representative of a specific proportionate sample, for example as discussed by Panke (2018). However, I did want to explore the views across a range of teachers working in the sector in depth. There may have been differences in perception, for example, between newer and more experienced teachers within the context of the changing sector, described in Chapter Two. The number of participants was not large, however I have sought to uncover depth. As Silverman (2014, p.72) states,

> If cases are appropriately chosen with regard to theoretical factors and compared, they can yield unique insights by revealing regularities between categories of cases that may escape large sample studies.

As detailed earlier in the chapter, my intention was to engage participants in discussion through group interviews. This occurred in most cases (as below). However, due to logistical reasons, two were pair interviews and there was one sole interview. The same interview structure and process was followed, with participants being issued with the pre-interview narrative ahead, as outlined previously.

The interview settings and participants who took part in the interviews for stage 1 are detailed in Table 6.

Table 6: Data collection stage one interview participants

Data Collection Stage One: Interviews	
Interview One: 18th December 2018 Location: General College of FE (A) in the West Midlands with in-service teacher trainees (year 2)	
Participants (research pseudonyms)	Details
Martin	Teaches Motor Vehicle students in college (A), a large college of FE in the West Midlands. Has worked in FE since 2014. Former military experience.
Will	Motor Vehicle teacher working in a West Midlands vocational training centre, specialising in students with SEND. Has over three years in the FE sector plus previous school experience.
Rose	Training officer at a West Midlands women's refuge with over 13 years of experience in this area. Teaches staff and other professionals about issues affecting women and girls, e.g. domestic abuse and homelessness.
Ray	Community employability working with [what he termed] 'NEET' students. Has taught for ten years after leaving the armed services.
Nathan	Works as a science technician in a school but is transitioning into post-16 education as a teacher. Specialist subject is biotechnology.
Interview Two: 18th December 2018 Location: General College of FE (B) in the West Midlands with teacher educator and in-service teacher trainees	
Donna	Teacher educator working within College B, Twenty years of experience in FE and an English and maths specialist.
Carol	In her sixth year of teaching Musical Theatre and Performing Arts in a large general FE college in the West Midlands. Teacher education student in College B.
Shelley	Special needs and inclusion teacher in her second year of teaching in College B.
Interview Three: 28th March 2019 Location: General College of FE (A) in the West Midlands with in-service teacher trainees (year 1). All work within offender learning.	
Fay	Functional skills tutor working in offender learning with adult males 21- plus at a prison within the West Midlands region. Two years teaching experience.

Dean	Teaches sports and exercise in offender learning at a prison within the West Midlands. Dean has four years of experience within offender education.
Elaine	Has taught hospitality in offender learning for two years. Teaches males aged 21-plus at a prison within the West Midlands region.
Interview Four: 15th July 2019 Location: Adult Education College (C) in the West Midlands	
Alison	Has taught for 13 years in adult and community education, teaching maths, English and IT.
Michelle	Teaches IT within adult and community learning, with 20 years of experience.
Karen	Ten years of experience as a teacher of English and maths in adult and community learning, with English being her main subject. Karen also has responsibilities as a pathway leader.
Val	Came into teaching 15 years ago and now undertakes teacher education and support for tutors. Teaches some IT, both in college and out in the community at the more elderly end of the age group.
Interview Five: 3rd April 2020 Telephone interview with participant (due to covid 19). Participant is based in a General College of FE (D) in the north-west of England	
Linda	Teacher of Business Studies with ten years' experience. Works within a large general college of FE (D). The college had recently undergone a merger with another college.
Interview Six: 23rd July 2020 Undertaken via MS Teams with participants at a West Midlands RAF base	
Colin	Experienced RAF defence trainer and supervisor. Has taught avionics in the military for over seven years. Achieved the Cert Ed several years ago and now mentors other trainers undertaking this programme.
Stuart	Civilian instructor teaching weapons related subjects within the RAF. Former serviceman with ten years teaching experience. Has a Cert Ed and now mentors other trainers.
Interview Seven: 24th July 2020 Undertaken via MS Teams with participants at a West Midlands RAF base	
Tony	Military teacher and trainer in the RAF with substantial career and teaching experience. Has recently achieved his Cert Ed.
Jason	Military teacher and trainer in the RAF who achieved his Cert Ed three years ago. Jason's trade is armoury and he has significant experience in this area.

4.9.2 Stage 2 Participants: recording of interactions

Following the stage 1 interviews, participants who wished to continue with the research, and provided consent as above, completed a record of activities and interactions taking place with peers within their identified ICG over an agreed period of two weeks. The

participants who continued to stage 2 are detailed in Table 7, which shows that each type of setting/institution was represented.

Data collection in this stage took place through text commentaries/diaries and the use of the KoBoToolbox digital data collection tool. The purpose was to capture instances of collegiality. For example, they may have chosen to record an activity such as the co-creation of a teaching resource, reflect on a discussion, or provide an account of support from a colleague. Participants in colleges where permission had been granted may have chosen to include photo and video evidence of their experiences, however this was not asked of military or offender learning participants due to sensitivity/ security reasons.

Additional local military setting permissions and approvals were sought at the military base setting as required. Ministry of Defence directive JSP536 criteria was followed (MOD, 2021b). Military participants were advised that they were to comply with JSP536 (ibid) in any data included in their records of activities. If in any doubt they were advised to respond only using text, rather than recording any other kind of material.

As can be seen below, a change had to be made mid-way through the data collection period due to Covid-19. During lockdown, it was not possible for participants to record their interactions within the workplace since they were working from home in isolation. Three participants had completed phase 2 prior to this, one using KoBoToolbox. The remainder undertook this part of the research via a Teams interview instead. My application for ethical approval was revised and approved by Birmingham City University Ethics committee on this basis, so that the research could continue.

Table 7: Data collection stage two participants

Stage 2 data collection				
Participant	**Institution/setting type**	**Data collection tool**	**Date(s)**	**Notes**
Jo	FE college	KoBoToolbox	6.1.20 – 19.1.20	Participant interviewed for pilot of stage 1
Will	FE college	MS Teams interview	29.5.20	Covid 19 – change of data collection method to Teams interview
Linda	FE college	MS Teams interview	5.6.20	As above
Karen	Adult & Community Education college	MS Teams interview	5.6.20	As above
Dean	Offender learning	Diary entries (Word document). Follow up interview requested for clarification – no response	24.6.19 – 11.7.19	Data collection method reflected security restrictions
Elaine	Offender learning	Diary entries (Word document) plus follow up interview for clarification	14.6.19 – 28.6.19	Data collection method reflected security restrictions
Tony	Military	MS Teams interview	18.9.20	As above
Stuart	Military	MS Teams interview	28.9.20	As above

4.9.3 Stage 3 Participants: Focus groups

The final research method was a focus group where the case study participants (Table 8) reflected and recalled key experiences from the data they had collected, sharing examples, and discussing any barriers and enablers to their interactions with peers and collegial relations operating within their various settings.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this took place using Microsoft Teams. As above, this amendment was approved by Birmingham City University Ethics committee.

Table 8: Data collection stage three participants

Stage 3 data collection		
Focus group 1		
Participants	Method	Date
Jo, Elaine, Will, Karen (FE/Adult Ed/ offender learning mix)	MS Teams – collaborative evaluation of experiences	23.7.20
Focus group 2		
Linda, Tony, Stuart (FE/military mix)	MS Teams – collaborative evaluation of experiences	19.12.20

The focus groups were organised to fit in around participants' availability. Whilst I had originally anticipated just one focus group, this was not possible because of timetabling and commitment issues. The first focus group took place during the initial national lockdown, and participants were working from home. At the time of the second focus group, participants had returned to campus, although this was in a limited way, in accordance with covid-19 restrictions. Given that, as discussed above, the nature of a focus group is to facilitate participant-led discussion, it was the case that these extreme methods of working were a focus of discussion. However, they also provided a rich context for the discussions about peer relationships. Being deprived of such interactions informed the discussions, with participants comparing pre- and post-pandemic working life.

There was a mix of participants from different settings taking part, with each strand being represented overall. This provided the opportunity for participants to compare different perspectives, which they reflected was a valuable experience. For example, there was a specific dialogue between a military and FE participant about how she developed approaches with colleagues regarding working with challenging behaviour. This gave him an insight he would not otherwise have been aware of. Similarly, participants working in FE and offender learning shared challenges around sharing assessment practices and the issues they were finding around the standardisation of student work. The examples shared were discussed openly and without reticence. This could be connected to the trust which had developed between myself and the participants throughout the previous two phases, and also the time taken at the beginning of each focus group for introductions and to set up an informal tone. Notably also, some participants already knew each other.

Etherington (2004, p.226) discusses how 'reflexive relationships' between the researcher and participants can support the building of trust and be conducive to revealing personal stories which can provide new insights. In this situation it was key that we were all teachers with some degree of commonality of experience. This itself is perhaps reflective of the focus of the research itself; both focus group conversations were energetic and reflective, as participants made sense of their experiences together, as will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six (data analysis). Commentaries from diary entries, images and examples of interactions from the data were shared by participants within the focus groups, 'harnessing their insights and commentaries as they engage[d] in generating data' (Barbour, 2009, p.36) and this facilitated a process of collective interpretation. Each participant was contacted beforehand to clarify the intended approach and recheck consent regarding any specific reference to the data they had collected. The responses this generated from participants was recorded using Microsoft Teams and so this could later be transcribed and analysed for themes and patterns.

4.10. Validity and reliability

As mentioned in the context of the military approval process above, these concepts are central to the credibility of the research, and particular issues were considered with regards to the qualitative nature of the research. King et al (2019, p.182) see validity as 'generally understood to be a positivist criterion, used for assessing the extent to which our research describes and measures what it claims'. Silverman (2014) also makes the point that the concept of validity originated in quantitative research, and therefore that we need to consider how applicable it is within a qualitative context. There are many interpretations of what this might mean (Cohen et al, 2018, p.248; King et al, 2019, p.182), however the elements which are consistent are transparency of the research process and how taking a reflexive approach can show accountability for the decisions and interpretations made (King et al, 2019), whilst also helping to ensure that the accuracy of the research is captured (Panke, 2018). Tracey (2010) cites self-reflexivity, along with transparency and honesty around the research process, as the key method by which sincerity in research is achieved as one of eight universal hallmarks of quality in qualitative research. Throughout the process I

have sought to acknowledge my 'biases, goals and foibles' (ibid, p.841), for example in approaching disclosure to participants of my own experience and in my reflection on the military review panel in section 4.8.5. King et al (2019, p.181) also discuss how reflexivity can be used to 'monitor and audit the research process', given that qualitative researchers 'often operate with data and theory that are more fluid and shifting' (ibid, p.182). I was aware for example, when undertaking interviews with participants, that my own assumptions and experiences could not be separated from the experience, and that participants would also bring into play their own histories and narratives; there would be a process of co-construction which King et al (2019, p.183) discuss as inevitable:

> We are all 'situated actors' and as such we bring to each interview our own histories, political affiliations and a myriad of other aspects that constitute who we are'.

I reflected that it would be very difficult therefore to put aside certain of my own experiences and pre-conceptions in a Husserlian approach (Dörfler and Stierand, 2020), and separate them from the research. In addition, this would not seem authentic and, as stated earlier in this chapter, such an approach would not align with my identity and the phenomenon of the collective experience that I am researching. I therefore decided to take approaches which would make my decisions and reflections transparent.

Reflexivity was therefore key, and I found critical conversations with colleagues were particularly beneficial in helping me to question my own assumptions and decisions, a process which is supported by Foulger as a means to address bias (2012). I was fortunate to find rich opportunities for discussion within the PCE teacher education team within which I work. For example, I was able to share examples of anonymised data and my interpretations with the team at a scholarly event, during which and afterwards I was able to reflect on how my own interpretations sat within a wider context of other perceptions and experiences. The military approval process discussed above, and several events where I presented and discussed my emerging research, also supported a process which I believe opened up my ideas to others and to myself. As King et al (2019, p.183) state:

> Reflexivity invites people in, opening up the research process for examination and enabling others to scrutinise and judge the quality of the work.

In addition, I have sought to disclose my own values and perspectives throughout the research, for example in the pre-interview narrative I sent out to participants. This was in

itself a reflective summary which provided transparency regarding my perspective. As detailed in Chapter One, I have also made my professional history and experience of the research issue clear, so that the reader can make clear decisions about the research.

In terms of reliability, Silverman (2014, p.83) refers to this as the 'stability of findings' and 'the degree to which the findings of a study are independent of accidental circumstance'. In terms of research design, I have already discussed the pilot study, which helped ensure that questions were clear so that 'each respondent understands the questions in the same way' (ibid, p.87). I have also discussed the tension between providing the freedom for participants to provide unpredicted information and the need for sufficient consistency so that results were dependable (Cohen et al, p. 270). The research data was also collected from participants working in different settings, which added another aspect to the challenge. I therefore needed to ensure that the methods I used to interpret and analyse these data were transparent and rigorous, and the ways in which I approached this are detailed below.

4.11 Data management and analysis

Winston (2012, p.125) describes interpreting data 'within the context of the historical, cultural, and relational context of the lived experience'. It was important to capture the experiences of my participants through an 'interrogative, theorised, *interpretative* analysis' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.173) in order to fully understand their accounts, as opposed to merely describing my findings. Due to this, and as most of the data gathered was in the form of audio and video recorded interviews and group discussions, transcription was an important part of this process. I decided to transcribe all the audio and video call recordings myself and to transcribe them verbatim. This can be seen as the first step in the analysis process (King et al, 2019), and it enabled me to gain a good familiarity with the participants' accounts. As highlighted by Etherington, the transcribing process can help connect the researcher with the participants' true meaning:

> When we listen to tapes and transcribe them personally we have an opportunity to pick up on nuances, hesitations, pauses, emphasis and the many other ways that people add meaning to their words . . . Not only does it help us to listen and hear more of what we might have missed in the moment but it also gives us a chance to check that we have been ethical. (Etherington, 2004, p.78).

This investment of time therefore seemed to provide an advantage over the use of a word processing software programme, which might distance me from the data. I included a level of detail within the transcription that would enable me to ascertain any responses and reactions to comments within the discussion, for example recording any agreements, or laughter so as to be clear about the intended meaning. Responses and focus group discussions were therefore transcribed, anonymised and prepared for analysis. KoBoToolbox text entries and images, and the word-processed diary data was similarly collated ready for analysis as part of the data set. The data was put into a consistent layout, so that notes could be made as the analysis proceeded.

The approach of analysis adopted was thematic and analysis took place using a 'systematic approach for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns – themes – across [the] dataset' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.178). My decision to undertake this approach was taken for several reasons. Firstly, I recognised that I needed to navigate a large amount of qualitative data, but using a reflexive yet rigorous approach, as above. To achieve those elements together seemed challenging, but this provided me with a process which I could embrace. Winston (2012, p.129) states that what she terms 'thematic content analysis' involves engagement in 'an iterative process of critical thinking, questioning, and categorizing'. This would not just mean identifying and labelling segments of data but would involve critical conclusions being drawn as I proceeded. The approach also seemed to align well with my qualitative approach. Braun and Clark (2018) define their approach to thematic analysis as 'fully qualitative', being underpinned by a qualitative philosophy. My research questions are exploratory in nature, looking for patterns in relationships and interactions. I therefore felt that my research had an experiential orientation (Braun and Clarke, 2018); I wanted to take an interrogative approach to understanding the accounts of participants' experiences and perceptions. The theoretical framework for the research discussed in Chapter Three (theory chapter) would also inform the questions posed as I proceeded with the analysis. The specific analytical methodology I adopted drew, to an extent, on Braun and Clarke's (2019) 'reflexive thematic analysis' approach whereby 'patterns are identified through a rigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding and theme development and revision'. I was inspired by their focus on searching for themes and defining those ideas in a systematic

way that could help me navigate the data, and I wanted to reflect on my 'assumptions underpinning [my] reading of the data' (Braun and Clarke, 2018); to find the 'rhythms perceived from the invisible window… [using] 'attentive eyes and ears, a head and a memory and a heart' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.45). I did not therefore want to be constrained by a strictly set out phase by phase approach. Although Braun and Clarke acknowledge that data analysis is not a linear, procedural approach, and that it is in fact a 'messy, complex, creative process', there is a clear six phase process advocated in their approach and I preferred to explore the data without those numeric steps. This would resonate with my aim, inspired by rhythmanalysis, to 'look harder and longer' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.41), to 'restore [the present] in its moments, in the movement of diverse rhythms' (ibid, p.45). I therefore needed to follow a systematic and transparent process to manage the data, yet not lose a sense that each element in the data was part of a whole, to attempt to see things 'polyrhythmically' (ibid, p.41).

Faced with, as described above, a large volume of data, I found it helpful to allocate some initial codes to each segment of data, drawing on the conceptual framework I had developed (Table 9) after first discounting any data segments which were not relevant to the research questions. These provided a summary of relevant segments within the data, such as a section of a transcript where data was coded as 'isolation when no 'space' to communicate' and 'unseen talking spaces felt safe'. These codes were then grouped together across the data using a spreadsheet to create themes, aligned with the theoretical concepts identified in Chapter Three. For example, where a participant said during an interview about impromptu conversations breaking out with 'little asides and stuff, and that's where some of the valuable conversation takes place', this was coded as 'little conversations break out'. The conceptual framework guided me to relate this to the area of 'representations of space' within the environment, where meaningful dialogue occurred within the everyday. This example was therefore grouped together with other similar codes to constitute the theme: 'small moments and conversations make a difference'. Examples of the data themes created are mapped to the theorical concepts which underpin the research, as detailed in Chapter Three, below:

Table 9: Theoretical concepts informing data analysis: examples of data themes

Spatial concept	Manifestations in the data	Example data theme
Representations of space: • Triadic spaces and the trialectics of spatiality.	Interactions and tensions between conceived, perceived and lived space. The existence of marginal spaces and blurred boundaries. Expansive and restrictive conditions	• Different identity in different spaces • Importance of physical space • Conflict of values between teachers and the institution • Control vs. freedom in space and time • Extension into private spaces, fluid, resilient • Fluidity and self-direction in accessing others • Growth and development through transformational moments • Hierarchy impedes communication • How informal learning is valued • Institution instigated CoPs a forced environment • Lack of support within the organisation • Lack of understanding from senior management • Openness of attitudes, special nature of the atmosphere with colleagues • Safe space to talk • Shared values and beliefs act as a glue • Small moments and conversations make a difference
Everyday rhythms (Cyclical and linear)	The interplay between cyclic and linear rhythms. Narratives and examples which convey the organisation of time and context.	• Constant rhythms - organic, fluid, responsive • Fluidity and self-direction in accessing others • Hierarchy impedes communication • Human moments get you through the day • Safe space to let off steam/response to pressure • Scattering and coming together - negotiation of fragments of communities • Students' and teachers' everyday lives connect • Subject support is important • Time and chance work together to facilitate
Eurhythmia and arrhythmia	Harmony or disturbances and tensions between everyday rhythms. Imposed structures and changes, invented/manufactured	• Conflict of values between teachers and the institution • Control or freedom in space and time • Covid 19 interruption to rhythms • Hierarchy impedes communication

Spatial concept	Manifestations in the data	Example data theme
	collectives. Examples of 'contrived collegiality'.	
Alienation and dressage	Repetitive, mundane tasks, imposed ideologies, mechanised systems and processes. Potential alignment with 'restrictive' practices Accounts of CPD/tasks which are not found to be meaningful.	• Affective human elements support • Collective responsibility supports • Impact of absence of mutuality and sharing • Nature of teaching can be isolating • Structured CPD does not meet 'human' needs
Lefebvrian 'moments'	Spontaneous instances of significance and/or transformation. Unplanned 'eruptions' for example of creativity, emotion, connection. Transitory interactions, fleeting yet significant. Histories may be encapsulated in that moment and the opening up of new possibilities.	• Growth and development through transformational moments • Human moments get you through the day • Safe space to let off steam/response to pressure • Small moments and conversations make a difference • Spontaneity/chance encounters for learning and meaning
Secret and public rhythms	Relationships and interactions that may not be publicly seen or spoken but still exist for participants.	• Control or freedom in space and time • Different identity in different spaces • Extension into private spaces, fluid, resilient • Shared values and beliefs act as a glue
Semiotic repertoire	Signals, signs, symbols and images (perhaps unconscious), discourses, artefacts and images.	• Tea bars mirror military working culture • Structured CPD does not meet 'human' needs

This was a complex process however and, as can be seen in Table 9, themes could cross conceptual boundaries, being relevant to more than one conceptual area. Viewed in rhythmanalytical terms, involved meanderings as I negotiated some sort of order. Where Lefebvre speaks of seeing a multiplicity of meanings (Lefebvre, 2020, p.41), I was also looking at a polyrhythmia of different features in the data. In order to 'grasp a rhythm' Lefebvre states that 'it is necessary to have been grasped by it: one must let oneself go, give oneself over, abandon oneself to its duration' (ibid, p.37) and simultaneously situate yourself inside and outside of it. In this sense, I was 'grasped' by the connections between different participants' voices which, when combined through my analysis into a theme, painted a collective perspective. For example, chatting about how to put an individual 'spin' on a motor vehicle lesson in one instance and asking a colleague the 'little things' about how to

deal with a student, how they would have marked an assignment: these, combined with other examples in the data, came together within the wider theme of 'small moments and conversations make a difference'.

Even though I developed a system I could work with, the process still generated a large number of coded items, which needed to be clustered together, as above, in order to help me identify themes. I therefore decided to map these onto a large 'data wall' (Figure 4). This gave me the opportunity to physically move these around, add notes and comments, see the way they might relate to each other and reflect on their meaning, in relation to the research questions.

Figure 4: Data wall

This data wall was the beginning of a more detailed process, whereby I created themes and sub themes using a detailed spreadsheet which I was able to sort, and which proved invaluable in cross referencing, for example, in looking at themes between and relating to specific settings.

The spreadsheet then enabled me to construct the 'story' of the data; to navigate its pattern in a way that I could narrate it. Again, this involved a physical process of refinement. I grouped together the themes identified in the spreadsheet and transposed them onto a large poster of annotated notes, creating the key stages in the narrative. This is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Constructing the narrative

The image above is not intended to be a perfect representation of the procedure I undertook; it was indeed messy and yet it illustrates how I constructed the analysis of the research findings through an active and reflective process. Cohen et al (2018, p.649) claim that a reflexive approach is important to the validity and reliability of research in the analysis and writing up of findings; 'qualitative data analysis itself becomes a text, i.e. a 'constructed interpretation'.

In a criticism of qualitative research, Torrance (2012, p.3) discredits 'iterative, self-reflective research practices', stating that analytical bias can occur:

> Specific methods….including the use of focus groups and/or more traditional forms of qualitative research such as interviewing, still leave the research agenda and the validity of data analysis largely in the hands of the researcher' (ibid).

I was therefore aware of the need to mitigate this in my analysis and did so through a combination of methods. I used respondent validation as an approach to minimise bias, as

discussed above, and improve the validity and credibility of the qualitative data. This approach drew on literature which supports respondent validation as a way of minimising threats to validity at the data analysis stage of research (Cohen et al, 2018; Torrance, 2012). Transcripts and first drafts of emerging themes were circulated to participants for checking and responding regarding any 'interpretive claims that are being made' (Torrance, 2012, p.5) Furthermore, in order to increase both the rigour of qualitative coding and analysis and 'increase transparency of qualitative research process' I kept 'clear audit trails' as I worked through the codes and themes of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.219). I kept versions of my spreadsheet so that I could see the development of my decision making regarding the key themes

Additionally, Foulger (2012) has suggested that an external conversation with a 'critical friend' can provide 'alternative perspectives, support, and protection from bias and self-delusion' (p.140) within data analysis. Working within a university team of academic colleagues, I was well placed to undertake this activity during the analysis process and did so, as described above.

4.12 A commentary on research ethics

The research has undergone a rigorous ethical approval process both through the University's ethics approval system and under the military MODREC system detailed above. However, ethical practice involving human participants is a 'complex and demanding responsibility' (King et al, 2019) and taking an ethical stance within the research is also about a continual enactment of my own values and decisions. Wiles (2003, p.2-3) highlights the critiques which have been made with regard to ethical approval processes and asserts that 'ethical literacy' involves more than completing such a process; rather this requires an engagement with ethical issues,

> as they emerge throughout the process of research and not merely to view research ethics as something that is completed once a favourable opinion on a proposed research project has been granted by a research ethics committee. While it may be the case that some ethical issues can be anticipated prior to a study commencing, often ethical issues emerge as research proceeds, sometimes in unexpected and surprising ways.

As I proceeded with this research, there was a particular responsibility to consider issues around multi-media data capture. Participants made their own decisions regarding the

examples and artefacts they captured directly themselves during stage two of the research. As Whiting et al (2018) have discussed, such methods create new ethical issues to consider. For example, participant data such as photographs and screenshots could involve identifying their colleagues, students or institutions, and it was therefore necessary to consider how any consents and permissions could be sought from a distance, when not in-situ with those colleagues myself. Guidance and consent forms were provided to participants in order to support this process and avoid potential problems.

The pandemic occurring during the fieldwork resulted in the research methods 'pivoting to virtual methods—online interviews and focus groups' (Newman et al, 2021, p.1). Whilst they argue that this in itself does not necessarily pose ethical concerns, Newman et al (ibid) highlight the need for 'thoughtful, reflexive, and deliberative approaches in order to identify and mitigate potential and dynamically evolving risks'. In responding to the pandemic, I needed to be sensitive to participants' potentially changed situations. For example, online interviews taking place during lockdown would involve participants working at home, perhaps with families around them; they may not wish to be visible on video calls and could be feeling under strain. It was important therefore to re-affirm their agreement to participate and make it clear that being off camera was an acceptable option.

Balancing the publishing of findings with the sensitivities of the participants and stakeholders involved (Cohen et al, 2018, p.149) was another ethical issue arising during the writing of this thesis. Trust had been placed by participants in the researcher, and they had at times disclosed feelings about sensitive issues concerning their colleagues and employers. The transcripts and extracts generated from the data, whilst anonymous, are unique and could potentially be identifiable to those individual participants who contributed. As highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2013, p.64), 'as we display the actual words of real-life individuals, identification becomes more of a possibility'. Furthermore, the research data includes images and artefacts in addition to words, therefore increasing this potential. Sensitivity was therefore exercised in balancing the final reporting of data accurately with the choice of quotations and verbatim extracts included in the final report: the authenticity of the data presented was carefully considered so as to 'balance maximising the benefits and minimising any risk or harm to participants' (BERA, Responsibilities to participants, para.6).

Although adopting an ethical stance can therefore be a complex process (Burton and Bartlett, 2009) at any point within the research, the decisions I made in response to matters arising were guided by the principle that researchers must act only ‘in a way that they can morally justify’ (ibid, p.38).

4.13 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has outlined the approaches taken in the design and undertaking of the research. The epistemological and methodological issues underpinning the research were identified and discussed as being interpretive and qualitative. The implications of this have been explored, together with the measures adopted to maintain the dependability of the research (Mertens, 2012, p.29). In particular, I have discussed the ways in which I have addressed the need for transparency and rigour within the interpretive and qualitative paradigm of my research, using reflexivity as a key tool, and other approaches to validate the research approach and findings. Although I have drawn on a narrative approach within the research methodology, I have also sought to infuse the research with a sense of its rhythms, and an attempt to capture the essence of participants’ experiences and moments of significance with authenticity as they occur.

The next chapter will be the first of two chapters in which I will present and consider the nature of my findings and chart a narrative to explain the data.

Chapter Five – The bonds and rhythms of collegial relationships

5.1 Introduction

Following discussion in Chapter Four of the data analysis approach I adopted, this chapter is the first of two chapters which will present the findings from my analysis. This first data analysis chapter will expose the bonds and the rhythms of these relationships and discuss findings which explore their special nature, origins and purpose. I will consider the elements and functions of the support which participant responses showed were key ingredients within their collegiality and how this support was manifested and mobilised. I will discuss the nature of their 'shared values' (Wenger, 2003) and how critical informal support mechanisms were manifested as a means of countering challenge through the rhythms, moments and functions of their relationships. The second data analysis chapter which follows (Chapter Six) will then explore the factors and conditions necessary for them to operate and thrive as a means of participant teachers sustaining and enacting their more humanist values.

Through both of the two chapters the data will be reported in a holistic narrative organised by the findings and identified data themes. This was selected as a more flexible approach, as opposed to reporting the findings by each phase in the research, or alternatively by each type of research setting, both of which could have become repetitive. My intention is to provide a narrative which builds upon the discussion previously introduced in the literature review and conceptual chapters, but also to avoid in my presentation of the findings what Lefebvre referred to as a 'mechanical overtone, brushing aside the organic aspect' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.15). To this end I aim to provide an account of the data which draws particularly on Lefebvre's spatial and rhythmanalytical perspective and illuminate the space, time and energies at play in the accounts of participants' lived experiences.

This study started by looking at 'communities of practice' where 'interrelations arise out of engagement in practice' Wenger, 1998, p.76). However, as discussed in Chapter Two, I intend to reach beyond 'the increasingly homogeneous and instrumentalist use of the term communities of practice' (Amin and Roberts, 2007, p.353), and therefore the data presented

from PCE teacher participants will show how the bonds between teachers within PCE are more complex; relationships are more than 'knowing in action' (ibid, p.354), having a unique and special nature. The different ways in which teacher participants are bonded, and the potential for there to exist affective as well as knowledge dimensions are aspects arising from the literature, and these will be explored. I will discuss how the data illuminates a combination of factors which appear to interplay and combine to connect people together and both create and sustain significant relationships, thereby countering the 'templates of the conceived' (Middleton, 2014, p. 158) within their settings through 'the minutiae of social practice' (ibid, p. 159). We will therefore examine the factors which, combined together, fuelled participants' needs to develop relationship bonds in sometimes hostile and unsupportive environments. This might therefore move our interpretations into a more complex terrain and will involve a detailed analysis of the everyday experiences that teachers relayed, the rhythms, moments, purpose, shapes and dynamics of their interactions and relationships.

In keeping with the spatial and rhythmanalytical theoretical orientation of the study, throughout this and the following chapter, I will extend the discussion to examine what the data conveyed about the spaces where teachers enacted their relationships; how these sat against the tensions of other organisational spaces, activities, values and perceptions within their institutions and working lives. The analysis will explore whether teachers were able to create their own 'spaces', capable of breaking through restrictive environments (Fuller and Unwin, 2004), and the type of managerialist working practices that do not always meet 'human' needs for growth, support, learning and agency of identity.

5.2 Informal support mechanisms

I will now consider what insight the data provides into the nature and function of the collegiality experienced by participants, when perceived through spatial and rhythmic lenses: *how* it exists, how the data explains *why* teachers develop close collective bonds together and how, as a consequence, the groups and spaces in which they take place support an enactment of 'human' values which align with social justice.

Common to all settings was a culture of interaction between colleagues, within which relationships provided valuable informal support for pedagogic and subject specialist knowledge as well as affective support. This was particularly acute at vulnerable times for participants and in relation to processes and factors which made the job feel challenging, such as difficult teaching situations and the constant need to adapt to change. In the sections below, we will consider how everyday collegial interactions helped participants to process their feelings and experiences.

5.2.1 Countering solitude and alienation in the job role.

A significant element contributing to the special nature of informal relationship bonds was the need to counter an isolation perceived by participants as inherent in the job role and the way in which work was organised. Great store was therefore placed on being able to talk to like-minded colleagues, even briefly, and doing so drew them closer together. Whilst we should avoid seeing collaboration as a simplistic opposite to isolation (Hargreaves, 2002), data supported previous research which found that working in a teaching role can feel isolating for teachers (Lortie, 1975). Teaching was described as 'a really lonely profession' (Karen, (Stage 1, Int.4) and participants' interactions with each other were seen to provide crucial 'pockets' of support and collegiality within their everyday lives, and their accounts showed that these ameliorated feelings of isolation. This was supported by the data across a range of settings, although less overtly in the military context, which will be discussed at the end of this section of the chapter. Participants saw themselves as having a distinct, social role centred around people, the antithesis of 'office workers doing nine to five at a desk' (Alison, Stage 1, Int.4). The following extract from an interview with participants who work in ACE introduces this finding:

> **Val:** It builds those friendships… working in an office on my own … and having no interaction was quite difficult … it's nice just to have some sort of social interaction. You miss it when it's not there. (Stage 1, Int.4)

The social interaction introduced here was much more than participants exchanging pleasantries and engaging in phatic talk (Essen and Jansen, 2013); rather this has implications for wellbeing, for practice, and as shown in further examples below, also supports the link between a collaborative atmosphere and professional growth (Ostovar-

Nameghi and Sheikhahmadi, 2015; Lofgren and Kalsson, 2016). Karen's perception of teaching as a 'lonely profession' seems a manifestation of Shulman's 'pedagogical solitude' (1993, p.6) where teaching is not visible; not 'community property' (ibid, p. 6), and it is consistent with the view that teacher communication is important as an antidote to the 'egg crated' physical separation of classrooms where teachers' work takes place behind closed doors, yet where the role is demanding (Lortie, 1975; Flinders, 1988). However, this is difficult within 'siloed' workplaces (Unwin, 2012), where the organisation of work patterns and contracts can keep people apart. In post compulsory settings the data showed that this has specific challenges, and therefore extends the resonance of Lortie's research, for example, when working out in the community, or on different sites. Participants saw this as a unique aspect to the teaching role, and one which contributed to an acutely felt need for human, social interaction. The data showed that this was particularly pertinent to teachers working on sessional contracts, in community locations and in prison settings, where there was felt to be a disconnection from others which was a source of discomfort and strain. In stage 1 of the research (Int.4) ACE participants discussed the 'solitary experience' of such working patterns, with participant Alison describing how recently being allocated a desk 'changed everything' because she could talk in passing to colleagues within an atmosphere she described as 'inspiring'. A 'foothold in the building' was important for building relationships, 'bouncing ideas', sharing resources and not missing key information and, as a consequence, this reduced stress levels.

In offender learning, physical isolation had a specific resonance because of the obvious requirement to be locked in and the potential perceived, and real, risks to safety at work, for example where, as participant Elaine recounted, 'somebody's kicking off or somebody's threatened you, or you've had to hit your buzzer…. you open the door and it's like, I just need somebody' (Stage 1, Int.3). The specific nature of these conditions led to a need to share with others who could fully understand. Elaine's further comments, recorded as part of stage 2 of the research, therefore showed how, due to the specific demands and nature of her role as a prison educator (Boyce, 2017), she felt she could only share a reciprocal understanding with other teachers working in this particular part of the sector, i.e. a secure environment. This created a cluster of offender learning teachers who formed a bond within their initial teacher education cohort at college because 'the rest of the group would have no

idea about the challenges that we are facing on a day-to-day basis'. The images Elaine produced (Figure 6 and Figure 7) to symbolise her feelings about the importance of colleagues who understood the job role and specific context and could therefore support her, are included along with her comments

> Much as my husband wanted to support me, he had no knowledge or understanding of the security or procedural issues that I was facing…sometimes we have been faced with aggression, violence and abusive language or behaviour that is not 'normal' in a working day. … being able to read the situation … you can feel when there's an unease, and there's something going to happen … no amount of training can prepare you for how you're going to feel… I could talk to my husband and he'd just look at me like, what was the problem, but your colleague would understand the situation. (Stage 2 reflection)

Figure 6: Offender learning artefact – image 1 representing collegial support

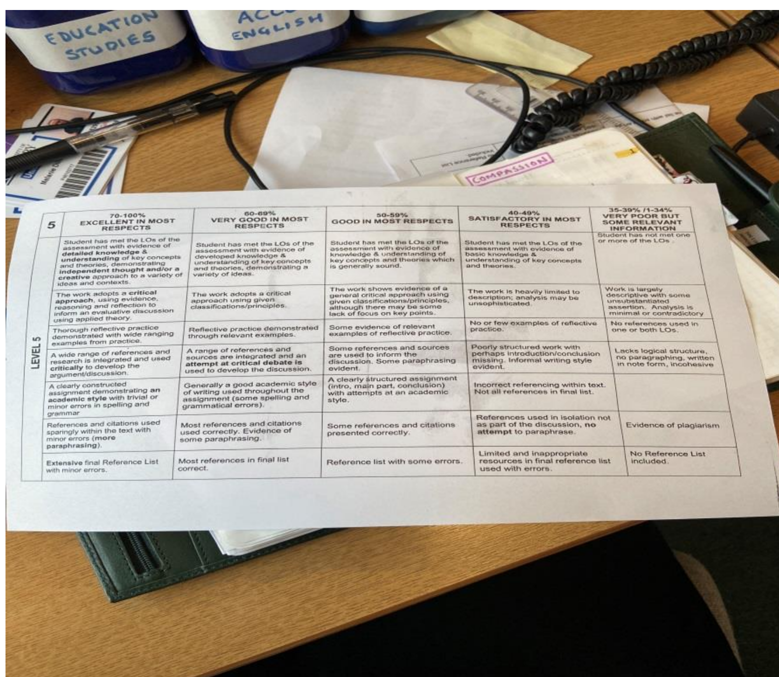
Figure 7: Offender learning artefact – image 2 representing collegial support

The sense of 'unease' in the work environment because 'there's something going to happen' conveys a sense of imminent eruption; the anticipation of a 'rupture in normalized rhythmic flows of power' (Lefebvre, 2002, p.504). This example provides an insight into the affective impact of a change in rhythm, in this case causing apprehension. Sharing this understanding was felt to ameliorate the sense of trepidation: 'that is very much when you need the

supportive basis of your colleagues'. How it feels to work and live within a confined space is also necessary to consider, and this highlights how the specific and unique nature of working within an offender education institution is important in these accounts. Lefebvre's (1991, p.52) belief that 'a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences' seems to resonate with an environment whereby an oppressive or abstracted space dominates, through the imposition of an all-encompassing regime. The privatisation and contracting out of prison education services and narrowed curriculum (UCU,2021) extends the resonance of Lefebvrian space through its link to capital and the 'relations of exchange' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.56) which control time and 'delocalise[s] humans' (ibid, p.63).

Data across FE settings also shows that key elements of the work itself were intrinsically isolating. Completed as part of her KoBoToolbox diary, FE participant Jo recorded how an 'overload' of marking in the staff room felt 'lonely'. Her account is provided below, followed by the two photographic images she took to accompany this:

> Unsure of whether a particular assignment is pass/fail. Colleague reads for me and we discuss… It can be 'lonely' with an overload of marking and a discussion 'cleanses the palate'! …. It also helps me to regain some objectivity. It's easy to get 'lost' after 20 or so essays. Feel like when I standardise on the hoof when I need to that this is often more useful than more formal meetings. (Stage 2, KoBoToolbox entry)



5	70-100% EXCELLENT IN MOST RESPECTS	60-69% VERY GOOD IN MOST RESPECTS	50-59% GOOD IN MOST RESPECTS	40-49% SATISFACTORY IN MOST RESPECTS	35-39% /1-34% VERY POOR BUT SOME RELEVANT INFORMATION
LEVEL 5	Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of **detailed knowledge & understanding** of key concepts and theories, demonstrating **independent thought and/or a creative** approach to a variety of ideas and contexts.	Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of developed knowledge & understanding of key concepts and theories, demonstrating a variety of ideas.	Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of knowledge & understanding of key concepts and theories which is generally sound.	Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of basic knowledge & understanding of key concepts and theories.	Student has not met one or more of the LOs.
	The work adopts a **critical approach**, using evidence, reasoning and reflection to inform an evaluative discussion using applied theory.	The work adopts a critical approach using given classifications/principles.	The work shows evidence of a general critical approach using given classifications/principles, although there may be some lack of focus on key points.	The work is heavily limited to description; analysis may be unsophisticated.	Work is largely descriptive with some unsubstantiated assertion. Analysis is minimal or contradictory
	Thorough reflective practice demonstrated with wide ranging examples from practice.	Reflective practice demonstrated through relevant examples.	Some evidence of relevant examples of reflective practice.	No or few examples of reflective practice.	No references used in one or both LOs.
	A wide range of references and research is integrated and used **critically** to develop the argument/discussion.	A range of references and sources are integrated and an **attempt at critical debate is** used to develop the discussion.	Some references and sources are used to inform the discussion. Some paraphrasing evident.	Poorly structured work with perhaps introduction/conclusion missing. Informal writing style evident.	Lacks logical structure, no paragraphing, written in note form, incohesive
	A clearly constructed assignment demonstrating **an academic style** with trivial or minor errors in spelling and grammar	Generally a good academic style of writing used throughout the assignment (some spelling and grammatical errors).	A clearly structured assignment (intro, main part, conclusion) with attempts at an academic style.	Incorrect referencing within text. Not all references in final list.	
	References and citations used sparingly within the text with minor errors (**more paraphrasing**).	Most references and citations used correctly. Evidence of some paraphrasing.	Some references and citations presented correctly.	References used in isolation not as part of the discussion, **no attempt** to paraphrase.	Evidence of plagiarism
	Extensive final Reference List with minor errors.	Most references in final list correct.	Reference list with some errors.	Limited and inappropriate resources in final reference list used with errors.	No Reference List included.

Figure 8: KoBoToolbox image: marking in isolation

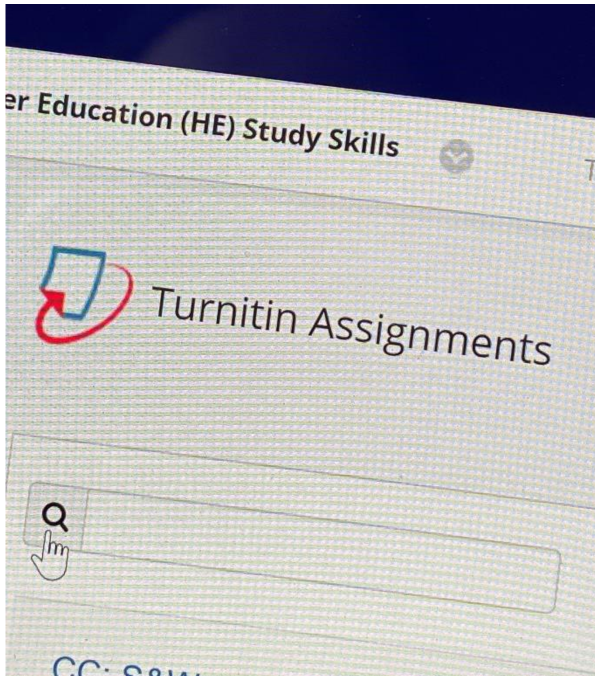


Figure 9: KoBoToolbox image: marking online

The heavy workload apparent here is not uncommon in teaching (DfE, 2015; Reich, 2020), and no different in the PCE sector, and here it is seen to degrade the quality of the role, contradictory to the innovative, up-skilling characteristics of an 'expansive' environment (Fuller and Unwin, 2004). Being able to share her thoughts with a colleague during the process offered a critical 'human' dimension and eased the pressure.

I will specifically consider spontaneity as a characteristic of informal exchanges, as seen in this extract, later on in the chapter but here, to continue the theme of isolation within the job role as a linear pressure, the images (Figure 8 and Figure 9) provided two 'snapshots' of the participant's everyday work which warrant further comment. In the first of two related images, we see the 'layers' of work on a desk, beneath the marking criteria to be applied. It is interesting that in the photo, the notebook underneath contains the word 'compassion', buried along with a student ID card beneath the formalities of assessment. Perhaps a visual metaphor is being presented here, as the more pressing and mechanical aspects of the role appear to overwhelm the human student-centred and emotional elements. Again, from a Lefebvrian perspective, this could be seen to represent the colonisation of the 'vital rhythms and processes that cannot be reduced to economic production/reproduction' (Wozniac, 2017, p.499) by, in this case, the performative elements of a workload-heavy teaching context (Ball, 2012; DfE, 2015; Reich, 2020). In terms of the nature of collegiality, we therefore see how a

discursive 'moment' with a colleague provided an appropriation of space (Lefebvre, 1991, p.165) for this participant which changed her experience from feeling 'lonely' and 'lost' to having a more 'cleansed' state of mind; a metaphorical washing away of those elements which might impede the human processes which sustain everyday working life.

This sense of 'escape' from, and resistance to, imposed linear rhythms was intensified in the second image, where Jo this time presented a screenshot of the assessment process itself. Online assessment is now a familiar process to most teachers, however the fact that the participant has chosen to include this as an accompaniment to her comments about lone working serves to emphasise the insular nature of online marking. Instead of digital systems reducing assessment workload and facilitating innovative feedback opportunities (Chohan, 2019), here it was presented as a somewhat alienating task. 'Humanising' a potentially mechanistic and lonely process, this could be seen as a commodification of intellectual work (Middleton, 2014, p.27) which, is in this case, was enabled by technology via a computer screen. The screenshot Jo took showed the hand icon of her mouse juxtaposed against the search magnifying glass of the automated assessment system, which provided a pertinent visual illustration of the mechanisation of a core teaching function. Here the teacher became detached from the assessment function and again, it was the interaction with a colleague which overrode a devaluation of her human judgement, providing an antidote to a process that could otherwise feel 'alienated' when seen through a Lefebvrian perspective.

It was mentioned earlier in the chapter that there was less of an expression of isolation in the job in responses from military participants. This can perhaps be attributed to the unique culture of the military whereby dependence on family is shifted for service personnel from family to the team (Houpurt, 2005). Hall (2011, p.5) has discussed the 'unique worldview and culture of the military', not only in terms of its rigid, authoritarian structure but in terms of the isolation that occurs outside of the work environment, from civilian counterparts and extended families. The absence of comment relating to isolation from military as opposed to other sector strand participants can therefore be understood, since in this sense, military teachers are working with their 'second family' (ibid, p.12) and perhaps less likely to feel alienated.   In terms of spatiality, a connection might also be made to the unique emphasis in the military of building and sustaining a collective identity, and we might consider that the

absence of isolation at work might be counteracted by there being less room for 'differential space' (Lefebvre, 1990, p.20) to develop and thrive.

5.2.2 Redressing deficits of support

The need to counter isolation through forming close collective bonds was found to be further compounded by a perceived shortfall in support for undertaking the teaching role from the formal and organisational systems within the workplace. Participants recounted how they had been expected to 'just get on with it' amidst ever-changing circumstances. Across all settings participants made the distinction between the lack of support 'from above' and that 'on the ground' where 'people have got your back' (Stage 1, int. 2). It was felt that it was colleagues who provided the sole source of support, as opposed to managers and institutional systems. For example, FE participant Linda described how she 'didn't get any support as a brand new teacher', rather it was 'you're qualified, get on with it'. Military participant Tony recounted that, despite experience as an instructor, he was not provided with any training or support before being asked to teach international students, rather it was colleagues who filled in this gap informally and voluntarily.

It was the informal support of colleagues which was seen to be critical, not only in making the job less challenging, but in providing the essential information necessary to undertake the role. The informal support from colleagues 'on the ground' as described above highlights the freely given, reciprocal nature of these collegial relationships. Receiving such support, especially at a vulnerable time such as starting a new job or taking on a challenging group, clearly made an impact on teachers in the study. Participant Linda's example of FE colleagues providing informal induction activities emphasises how institutions left her, as a new employee, to fend for herself. This therefore constituted a further 'ingredient' in the bonding process between teacher participants; the feeling that someone had 'got your back' whilst navigating a challenging role and environment. Consistent with Fuller and Unwin's (2004, p.126) perspective that it is marketised strategies within organisational environments which determine how people are managed, it seems that there was a lack of attention towards the more human processes in these examples, and a polarisation between the interests of management and the interests of teachers. Institutional systems, such as management support and training, were presented, as Linda stated above, as not being

'interested', perhaps due to them being unconnected to 'economic drivers' (ibid). To consider this from a theoretical perspective, there seems to be an absence of responsibility by the management of institutions with regards to more human, yet critical, processes; whilst it would not be expected that 'management' would be involved in detail, without such mechanisms being planned, resourced or monitored, which are management functions, this arguably creates more work for staff. Here the imposition of programmed linear rhythms was evident in participants' descriptions of the everyday processes and paperwork they needed to know, but without support or concern from the organisation as to how they should undertake them. We might therefore conclude that this abdication or disinterest acted as a 'constraining influence' for teachers in the everyday environment (Lefebvre, 2014, p.678), however this was ameliorated by the unrecognised, informal support of colleagues who provided a safety net. This support was 'concealed' and 'implicit' because it was embedded within the informal interactions of the everyday (ibid, p. 678; p.679) and it yet supported key institutional functions.

Participants also provided examples relating to support for teaching situations, for example dealing with behavioural issues, as well as the need to cope with nebulous administrative demands. Again, it was the goodwill of colleagues which provided 'off the cuff' support, as illustrated in the following interview extract from military participant, Tony, in relation to teaching international students:

> The stuff that we had wasn't really any reflection on HOW to teach, how to interact with them…..It didn't really allow us to understand what we were doing wrong. (Stage 3, focus group 2)

Similar comments were made by other participants in accounts that illustrated how it was team members, as opposed to managers, who supported them when faced with a complexity of administrative requirements. Connecting back to CoP literature, we again see that the relationships being discussed had affective dimensions for participants which seem deeper and more distinct than those involved in being members of a CoP (Wenger, 2003). Although there is a sound social and relational platform evident between participants, this is about much more than knowledge sharing and generation; Tony's expression of the need to understand practice more deeply seems to align more closely with notions of shared critical reflection (Brookfield, 1998) than engagement in joint 'actions' or 'enterprise' (Wenger,

2003). These examples are instead about teachers supporting one another amidst significant workplace challenges (Gu and Day, 2007) and where there was seen to be little support for teachers as learners (Fuller and Unwin, 2004). This also represents more than a 'restrictive' environment. As above, it is one characterised rather by the absence and omission of some features of support. It is significant that teachers were counteracting that climate and linear culture to provide their own professional support and learning, albeit informally, and consequentially creating relationship bonds between each other.

There were also deeper, emotional conditions on which teachers reflected, and they expressed the need to process such feelings and experiences. This was an area felt to be unseen or recognised by participants' institutions and yet the KoBoToolbox diary extract below illustrates the weight of this emotional aspect for FE participant Jo:

> I'm reading a reflective journal from a PGCE student about grief and its impact on teaching and learning. This has made me reflect on the emotional aspect of teaching….. How can I extend the compassion needed to support and still protect myself from burnout? How can I give and not be drained? (Stage 2, KoBoToolbox entry)

It seems pertinent to question, in considering this example, where teachers can take such questions and reflections, particularly given that the data has also shown that family and other close contacts do not often understand sufficiently, as discussed in section 5.2.1; this again supports the need for relationships which can effectively support such reflection. Jo's diary extract also raises issues around loss of energy and burnout arising from isolation (Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhahmadi, 2016, p. 197) which resonates with the framing of this participant's thoughts. Looking through a Lefebvrian lens, we might see such a consequence as a pathology; an arrhythmia occurring through an imbalance where there is a deficit in human care. Lefebvre's belief that, in the past, the 'community (the village)' regulated our work-life balance could be seen as relevant here (Lefebvre, 2014, p.53). There was no neat divide between work and emotional life in this example, and yet work provides no recognised regulation and support. Clearly 'work is not separate from everyday life' (ibid, p.53), and providing emotional support has an emotional 'cost' (Hochschild, 2012). The tensions of this situation created an imbalance and a question about finding support; perhaps it is collegial support that can provide a bridge; a sense of the 'village' which Lefebvre believed restores balance.

This was not an isolated incident; across all settings, the need for and importance of affective support from colleagues was clear, and was provided on a regular, if not daily basis. This was an 'antidote' to the pressures of the job and of the environment, particularly where support was perceived as lacking within the systems of the institution, as discussed above. Findings show how affective and practical support from colleagues had an impact on participants on a very personal and human dimension, for example during periods of illness and grief. FE college participant Donna recounted how, after losing her father, without the support of colleagues, 'I wouldn't still be here and the support from above was poor' (Stage 1, Int. 2).

The seasonal, cyclical nature of work was also seen to impact upon mental wellbeing, but this was mitigated by colleagues, as FE participant Linda reflected:

> I do find this time of year very hard with the dark nights and it's getting colder and the workload is always a lot more immense at this time of year … without getting guidance and sharing ideas you don't even have anybody that understands that you can offload with either. (Stage 3, FG2)

These examples echo the research by Hargreaves (2001, p.515) which recognised how such support emerges, and is most notable for teachers during times of personal crisis and emotional change. However, the extracts above illustrate that there was a systemic deficit of support in place. Again, participants said that it was colleagues who helped them to carry on, when at times they had found it very difficult to do so. These accounts illustrate a sense of spirit and genuine care through which teachers felt that they connected with each other 'core to core' (Gull and Doh, 2004, p. 130). In contrast to a 'spiritually oriented' workplace (ibid) participants in these cases found that they were expected to carry on, despite emotional challenges. This juxtaposition of the authenticity of human connection and the emotional void of the organisation seems resonant of Lefebvre's notions of *absence* and *presence*: between what Merrifield respectively encapsulates as 'a dead moment empty of critical content.. and a fullness, alive and connected' (Merrifield, 2006, p.29). In the data it is these accounts which convey a Lefebvrian sense of presence through participants' 'personal closeness and bonds' (Hargreaves, 2001, p. 518). These were not hard to find; unlike in Hargreaves' research they seemed far from 'the exception' (ibid). From a Lefebvrian perspective we see the natural, organic rhythms of life struggling to take their course amidst

the more 'linear' environmental conditions which neither acknowledge them nor allow them space. These natural rhythms of changes in life and of the seasons, and the rhythm of cold rationality in which they sometimes occur, can be said to 'interfere with one another constantly' in these accounts (Lefebvre, 2020, p.18). It is colleagues again who gave that space and time, providing care and support during lunchtimes, personal time and through the day to day sharing of ideas. This contributes further to an understanding of how close bonds occurred, with relationships operating at a deeper social level than a sharing of practice and this sustained them through social contact and close care.

A further element regarding the importance of emotional and practical support was the backdrop of constant change which led to an arrhythmic existence for many participants. Military participant Tony felt that 'they keep changing and moving the goal posts, we keep bending and flexing, and bending and flexing'. The impact of an unsettled environment is exemplified in the extract below, where Karen, a teacher in ACE describes her feelings following the recent merger between her institution and a larger college:

> [It] has been an unsettling time … you don't often know what's expected of you …. It has been an unsettling time and since I started teaching ten years ago, I've had ten different managers, so it has been a learning curve for me as well to adapt and to change. It's been unsettling and there has been a feeling sometimes that I don't really know what I'm doing or where to go to get information, or who can help me. (Stage 2 interview)

Continual change is a well-documented characteristic of the sector (Avis, 2009; Scales, 2011; Plowright and Barr, 2012) and this contextual feature was a further facet in participants' need for informal, collegial support. The above accounts demonstrate that this is not unique to FE college settings. In the extract from Karen above, it is significant that she describes the changes as 'unsettling' three times. The disorientating impact of changes occurring to the people around her, and who provide the support discussed above, are clear. Changes to social relations at work can also contribute to teacher isolation (Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhahmadi, 2016), as discussed above, Tony's words when describing his changing context were also repetitious, and in this case the 'bending and flexing' that teachers do in response to change has a rhythmic quality. The 'changing and moving' of requirements, and the consequent need to adapt, reflects an arrhythmia, a disruption which, in Lefebvrian terms, can become 'tiring and intolerable' (Lefebvre, 1985, p.76). This can be compounded with research about isolation and consequent 'burnout' potentially 'disturbing the

psychological, mental and physical health of the person' (Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhahmadi, 2016, p. 198). Again, this highlights the importance of collegial interaction as a way to redress such arrhythmias, where there is a 'powerful unsettling factor in … the practico-social dominance of linear over cyclical' rhythms (Lefebvre, 1991, p.206).

5.2.3 Creating space for subject specialist support

A specific area of deficit in support related to participants' teaching subjects. Support for both subject specific pedagogy and subject knowledge was found to be important to participants and drove the development of relationship bonds through conversations about teaching their subject, yet more formalised subject development support was felt to be inadequate. Having good institutional support for the subject specific elements of teaching was mentioned by only one participant who taught functional skills within offender learning and she explained how she felt fortunate that her programme manager specialised in her subject, as did some of her immediate colleagues (Fay, Stage 1, Int 3). However, this was inconsistent with other participants' experiences which indicate that access to subject specialist support was less readily available. This was a key theme, particularly for participants working in offender education where there was both poor formalised subject support and little access to others teaching the same subject. For example, neither managers nor non-subject specialist colleagues were able to support a hospitality tutor with technical questions about puff pastry and would 'look blankly' in response (Elaine, Stage 1, int.3). It was often necessary to 'phone somebody or look it up' (ibid).

It is therefore significant that line managers were often not subject specialists themselves and unable to support or fully understand subject specific issues. FE college participant Martin expressed a disconnection with his manager in terms of subject teaching issues, stating that 'our manager isn't motor vehicle based anyway so, not that he's not any help, but he doesn't know that much about it'. The impact of this misalignment in subject knowledge between teachers and managers was exemplified in OL participant Elaine's account below:

> You don't buy into it … because you're thinking this will not fit. It's like somebody coming into my group and saying 'well they all need to weigh everything at exactly the same time, and they need to make exactly the same things' and it just won't work. Just practicality, no

> matter how much you tell me that's how you want me to do it, it just won't work.
> (Stage 1, Int 3)

These accounts seem resonant of the 'imperfect chances' outlined by Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhahmadi (2016, p. 198) where a combination of isolating factors impede opportunities to discuss subject pedagogy and teaching practice. In terms of spatial dynamics, the rhythms and flows of information and support are being blocked or interrupted: for example, when a technical question arises and there is no-one with whom to confer and this de-limits the opportunities for collaboration and potential. The situation of the physical and structural space of sites and human resourcing 'emphasizes the product' and 'effects a brutal condensation of social relationships' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.227). Yet participants found ways to 'work around' these constraints in order to collaborate by, for example, visiting other sites on their own initiative.

Given that we have seen from the data that there can be challenges in accessing other teachers of the same subject to share problems and ideas, if managers are unable to support, or actually impede subject content issues and developments in teaching, then this presents a challenging combination of factors for lone subject teachers. Elaine's instruction to have all her hospitality students simultaneously weigh their ingredients at the same time and cook the same items was, she felt, impractical. Instead of supporting her practice this introduced a constraint, which seems resonant of Green's critique of 'managerial accountability' whereby 'learning processes, if they become more explicit to a learner, will be more 'easily integrable' with 'managerial disciplines': strategy, economics, accounting and information systems (Green, 2004, p.552). Furthermore, in contrast to facilitating her subject development as part of an expansive environment (Fuller and Unwin, 2004), there was management 'interference' into her subject teaching in order to meet 'compliance' requirements. As well as reflecting a managerialist focus on measurement and restrictions (Ball, 2012): in this extract from Elaine, the intrusion into her teaching is resonant with the paternalism with which Butterby et al (2020) align the shape of prison education. However, there seems to be a paradox in the lack of support on one hand and yet 'knowing what is best' on the other.

Viewed through a Lefebvrian lens, this imposition of managerially driven classroom activities could be seen as a 'subjection of rhythm to exchange-value production and to processes of accumulation' (Wozniac, 2017, p.500) which 'threatens to delimit the

possibilities of human creativity and freedom' (ibid). Here we see an enactment of dressage: with students mechanically repeating the same elements of the task at the same time. Lefebvre's description of being ritualised (Lefebvre, 2020, p.48) seems apt as they are being 'broken-in through repetition' into the institutional environment.

Despite the challenges identified above, data across settings consistently illustrates that subject specific conversations with colleagues were valued and found to be enriching, contributing to the relationship-building between teachers. FE college participant Jo reflected on the value she placed on discussing her subject specialism with colleagues, and how this had been missed during the pandemic:

> I sit near people who do the same subjects as [me], when you read something, or you want to swap ideas… I've really missed that [during the pandemic] and noticed how much I do enjoy talking about my subject with somebody else that's interested in it as well. (Stage 3, focus group 1)

The immediacy of subject specialist conversations at the point when they were needed also solved practical problems. Elaine, OL participant, recounted a specific and critical example related to her catering class, where 'technical' support from a colleague had made a significant difference in solving a resource problem and therefore, when he left the institution, 'that made quite a difference to me because that immediate support had gone (Stage 1, Int. 3).

Participants in ACE also expressed the value of discussing subject specific ideas with colleagues informally as ideas and questions arose, 'bouncing off each other' and, as a result, growing 'a much closer relationship' (Stage 1, Int.4).

The above examples illustrate a contrast between constraints within the environment and the 'human', responsive elements of collegial support. However, Jo's clear enjoyment of talking about her subject was restricted by covid 19 measures; in Elaine's account, recording how security procedures in the prison curtailed an essential element of her planned lesson, a collegial conversation overcame an organisational constraint to her practice. Michelle's comment about 'bouncing off' each other in contrast conveys a sense of rhythm, in this case a 'cyclic', 'vital' rhythm within the 'linear time scales' of lessons and daily activity (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 525). Jo's need to talk about her subject with other teachers represents a desire to be in perpetual dialogue with them, which also has a vital, rhythmic quality; naturally

occurring and unseen. Val's dialogue with Michelle about 'growing' a close relationship because of the mutual support within these organic and human rhythms illustrates how engaging in everyday subject based interactions helped to bond participants.

These conversations around subject teaching were clearly informal and unmanaged and, as can be seen above, also provided the opportunity for creativity. Again, this supports the idea that interactions provided opportunities for developing both human potential, in terms of personal and professional development, and affective bonds. The sense of having 'something in common' was clear and begins to cast light on the role and nature of 'shared values' amongst participants, perhaps in living with, and having to negotiate, resources, lack of support and other constraints. Interactions about subject specialism were part of this, however we see from the findings that there were other dimensions to the shared values participants talked about; we have discussed the feeling that colleagues were a critical source of support and understanding within a challenging role which can feel isolating. We have also considered how receiving such support made an impact on teacher participants, especially during vulnerable times. Through these themes, we see a resonance with the Lefebvrian critique of capital, with the linear rhythms of marketisation permeating the environment through 'the reign of the commodity' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.17). There appears a tension whereby 'the cyclical is social organisation manifesting itself. The linear is the daily grind, the routine' (ibid, p.40), as participants manage this together. Later, as the chapter continues, I will discuss further data which conveys more about *how* this occurred and examine additional dimensions to the values that teachers shared, and therefore which contributed to the quality and unique nature of their relationships.

5.3 How support was mobilised through IPGs

Throughout the data there were rhythms of collective work, shared responsibilities and values and resistance to everyday challenges and uncertainties. There were also pivotal 'moments' of significance which could be brief, and might seem inconsequential to an outsider, and yet which provided meaning for participants. How these rhythms and moments occurred are discussed in the sections below. In Lefebvrian terms we will see how 'human' moments punctuated the more linear rhythms within the marketized system in which PCE, as has been discussed, and take place amidst a 'commodification of intellectual

work' (Middleton, 2014, p.27). These rhythms and 'moments' were dynamic energies within collegial relationships which operated at a deeper social level than, for example, CoP theory was able to acknowledge (Wenger, 2003), having a more personal resonance and impact on participants', for example during moments of challenge and regarding their self-confidence and identity.

5.3.1 'Moments' as a response to challenge and crisis

Consistent, trusted collegial support, as discussed above, therefore itself appeared as a shared 'norm' or value in participants' accounts and it was ready to be enacted in spontaneous moments of support, in which participants drew collectively on their past experiences. The interview extract below from FE participant Carol encapsulates how past experiences were shared between colleagues in the data. Recounting how she was upset after a fight between students had broken out in her classroom, she explained how:

> I questioned if it was my fault and if I'd dealt with it the right way …. everyone was really supportive and said, *do you remember when this happened to me? And I've done that.* It was an informal thing, everyone shared their experience and you didn't feel the worst teacher in the world…. That's something that sticks out. ….. Having that sort of trust as a team and that relationship I think matters so much. (Stage 1, Int. 2)

This account of the 'informal thing' occurring between colleagues presents a combination of elements which expose more about the nature of their 'shared values' and illustrates how the trust between them provided a foundation for highly empathetic relationships. Carol's colleagues drew on their own histories in order to provide emotional support and phrases such as 'do you remember when…' are indicative of a 'history of mutual engagement' (Wenger, 2003, p.83). However, this 'shared repertoire' was being drawn on to provide a deeper more personalised and emotional level of support than CoP literature infers and was being built on concerns for students. This appeared to run more deeply than the shared stories of co-workers in Orr's (1996) accounts for example, on which Wenger drew (Wenger, 2003 pp. 282 and 284). Whilst these focused on a narrative process around work event history, the examples participants recounted could be described as a shared, and very human, coping history. The description of how such incidents 'stuck out' [sic] shows the lasting significance of this support. More resonant of Lofgren and Karlsson's (2016) acknowledgement that there are multiple emotional aspects involved in collegial narratives

of past events, participants offered repeated examples of how colleagues offered their own experiences in a way which provided emotional support. The responses of colleagues were immediate and authentic; there was no deference to organisational approval, rather these reactions were instantaneous and freely given on the basis of human response. In Lefebvrian terms, we might see such occurrences as 'moments', where participants brought their own emotions and experiences together in an intangible instant where 'possibility offers itself' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.642) and 'the moment reorganises surrounding space: affective space' (ibid, p. 647). In this way, whilst the present experience may be a negative one, within the collective moment, a positive way forward might emerge. The references to recalling past experiences raise the idea that the significance felt can be brought back in instances or construct a way forward in the future, perpetuating and sustaining this culture of support; 'every human unit has a memory and a fund of information – good or bad – which are mixed together in the everyday' (ibid, p. 432). The moment may be brief, but it has ways to recur: 'it wants to endure. It cannot endure (at least not for very long)' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.639). This provided a further human and emotional dimension to shared stories and experiences in the findings, conveying a shared sense of responsibility, and adding a further element to the strong bonds experienced by participants with their colleagues.

The account discussed above was far from an isolated incident in the findings. Moments of challenge and crisis where there was a collective sharing of responsibility, particularly in FE, was also seen to provide a sense of protection, relieve stress and help sustain motivation in a series of accounts. There was a sense that colleagues 'lift each other up' and 'push each other to do better' (Shelley, Stage 1, Int.2). FE participant Will talked about how 'conversations and that network of people' to 'lean on' helped him reflect on his practice when teaching challenging student groups (stage 1, int. 1). Fellow FE participant Linda's account below typifies how participants experienced this reciprocal value:

> When you come out of the class and you're completely fed up and had enough. You come into the staffroom, maybe ranting sometimes, or *I've had enough of that group.* It might not even generally be to one [person], it gets the conversation going. (Stage 3, FG 2)

Phrases such as 'we'll sort it' and having a network of people to 'lean on' when teaching challenging groups or when 'something bad happens' there is someone 'you can sound at' (Carol, Stage 1, Int. 2) or 'you're completely fed up', provide insight into the way that

participants felt a sense of protection and relief which was collective, and which eased the personal stress and pressure of those situations. Interactions were characterised by language around trust and friendship, and there was a positivity which provided a psychological 'lift', as Shelley's words above illustrate. Again, this relates to emotional support which provided an affective 'push' to do and feel better. It seems relevant that it is within the unseen realm and rhythm of informal collegial interactions that such motivational and supportive processes reside, and it is pertinent to question what it is about the climate and working environment which makes this support so critical. Gull and Doh (2004) have advocated the case for management practice which is in alignment with the 'spiritual essence of humankind' (ibid, p.136), one through which 'people find meaning in their activities' and therefore 'become more engaged, more responsible, more ethical, more collaborative, and correspondingly, more creative' (ibid, p.129). However, without a climate conducive to this, we see that participants created space for this themselves; it was their emotion which 'got the conversation started [sic]'. This continues the connection to Lefebvre's idea of organic 'human' moments being created against the backdrop of more linear rhythms.

A sense of sharing and constructing a collective meaning therefore seemed to create a micro-climate at various points within the working day which sustained participants through these everyday challenges, thereby affirming their relationships. Participants accounts appear to also show a deep synergy and understanding of each other's situations within an instant. This is encapsulated within the following exchange from an interview between two teachers who worked together in adult and community learning. The empathetic pattern of their conversation in the interview conveys the sense of their connection:

> **Val:** When something's just happened, you just need to air it. When you think of the difficult classes that you and [named colleague] have had it's always been good to come out on Wednesdays.
> **Michelle:** Yes.
> **Val:** And you're teaching the same people as well.
> **Michelle:** Yes, all day and it's a long day and it has been difficult. And sometimes it's just knowing it's nearly break time and Val's going to have a cup of tea waiting outside for me down the corridor and that just does it sometimes.
> **Val:** Some classes are more challenging than others aren't they?
> **Michelle:** Yes. (Stage 1, Int. 4)

The dialogue between these participants provides a close insight into and understanding of each other's work contexts. They knew and understood their colleagues' classes and their respective challenges and thought about each other's situations empathetically; the continual validation of each other's feelings can be seen within the responses. Reflecting together on these challenges, and on what helped sustain them through the day, Michelle expressed openly how pivotal she felt her interactions with Val were in getting through the day, in the kind of personal disclosure that Hargreaves (2001, p. 514) describes as 'rare and special', because it goes beyond shared interests and values. In telling Val how she felt about her support, Michelle showed her appreciation in a way which supported this closeness. This is resonant of Hargreaves' assertion that relationships are strengthened when 'supplemented with important ingredients of personal disclosure and support' (ibid). Although a short extract, these 'voices' seemed melded together and in close synchronisation; their common experience and feelings providing a harmony; an equilibrium (Lefebvre, 2004, p.30) and the foundation from which responses and reactions could be mobilised.

Furthermore, a regularity of routine can be seen in Michelle and Val's references to their working week; coming out of class on Wednesdays; having a joyfully anticipated cup of tea in a specific place at a specific time. These human moments serve to punctuate the week, providing their own shared rhythm amidst the clamour of challenges.

In considering these shared moments of significance and what participants might bring to such interactions, the data shows that participants' personal histories were connected to the way teachers shared and enacted values around social justice within these instances. Previous pressures, ways of working in past careers and a sense of 'championing' students' progression were evident as constituent elements within the values participants shared. For example, FE participant Shelley recalled her previous work with children with special educational needs in a primary school, finding it 'very target led' and 'unfair' on both teachers and students (Stage 1, Int. 2). Other participants made comparisons between their work relationships and environments in the past and those they experienced currently, where the lack of collaboration was felt to be 'quite tragic'. In one such example, 'it was: get your tea and toast in the staffroom and sit and eat it, drink your tea and leave again' (Will,

Stage 1, Int. 1). This contrast with a collegial teaching environment is summarised in FE participant Donna's reflection below:

> I wouldn't still be here after 20 years if it wasn't for the people that I've worked with. I think about the staffrooms that I've worked in and do you know what, most of them have been such fun places. I've been in organisations and I've felt really isolated and it's just the worst thing. (Stage 1, Int. 2)

There was a resulting appreciation in feeling a sense of belonging, arising from contrasting experiences even before working life began, for example one participant compared social acceptance at work amongst her teaching colleagues with feeling isolated at school (Stage 1, Int 2). These examples in the data show a clear appreciation of being with others within a social and collegial environment. Shelley, Donna and Will all looked back on isolating and 'tragic' experiences in the past and therefore were able to place a high value on the interactions and sense of collective working they experienced in the present day. Shelley's previous experience highlighted her values as a teacher now in addressing inequity for students. We therefore see how past experience influenced participants in their attitude and motivation both towards the job itself and towards collegial working.

The consequence of this was seen in the highlighting of participants' priorities around seeking social justice for students and the perspectives embedded within their interactions. This therefore provides insight into the actualisation of Lefebvre's idea that in any moment, in any interaction or instance of collaboration, past narratives will come into play to influence the situation, and therefore manifest these shared values. 'Similar mindsets' were described as being shared in the findings and seem connected to these histories: challenging negative opinions about 'lower ability' students (Will, Stage 1, Int.1); 'wanting the best for people' (Linda, Stage 1, Int.5); and having your 'sole purpose as helping people teach and learn' (Jo, Stage 3, FG.1). With these examples participants expressed a common theme: 'you know you're thinking at the same level when you're having these discussions' (Stage 1, Int 5).

It is clear from these examples that participants felt a sense of identity which was powerfully connected to a shared passion for what Hytten and Bettez (2011) termed 'social justice': it was 'who you are as a person' and 'not just a job' in these accounts. Participants felt 'on the same wavelength' or 'mindset' with colleagues with whom they shared common goals,

notably around 'championing' students who had experienced a more challenging set of circumstances in life and needed to recover their educational opportunities. This was enacted through their collaborative work, such as an ACL participant's informally developed collaboration with a colleague to create a 'strong link' between functional skills and GCSE which would help retain students and give them a 'confidence boost', assuring them that 'they are on the right path' (Karen, Stage 2, interview and discussed further in section 6.4). Where these values sat in relation to institutional values showed a contrast, as seen in FE participant Carol's comment that, 'the people who are doing it now [practicing teachers] …. they're part of it and are not just saying this statistic, or that money because they're involved in it that's where the difference is' (Stage 1, Int.2). There was then a tension between collegially held values and organisational values, consistent with the lack of support identified in participants' perceptions earlier in the chapter. Participants' like-mindedness was perhaps reinforced by this misalignment. It seems pertinent to question whether a manipulation of 'space' has occurred here; by focusing on enterprise, compliance and financial survival (for example, BBC, 2021), it is possible that the value base has been appropriated; a 'political use of space' has, at least in public, eclipsed the values depicted through participants' accounts of what matters to them (Lefebvre, 1991, p.356).

The discussion about values and the link to past histories above has centred around data from participants working in FE, where this was particularly strong and rooted in a shared sense of 'social justice'. However, this was also evident in data from participants working in other sectors, albeit presenting itself with a slightly different emphasis. For offender learning participants there was also a sense of wanting to make a difference, as well as deep concern for the care and progression of students. One participant explained how she came into teaching offenders: 'I've been a chef, run a pub and I decided I wanted to do something more useful' (Stage 1, Int.3). Another explained that the appeal of teaching in his current location was due to its 'forward thinking and innovation and then rehabilitation', in contrast to teaching at a previous OL institution which had been 'the worst place in the world' (ibid). This connection to values around equity and opportunity for students, in this case offenders, is illustrated in the interview dialogue below, where OL participants Elaine and Fay reflect on their aspirations for their students and the sense of loss when there is a setback:

> **Elaine:** I lost my mentor last week, he was sacked and I was angry. I was disappointed. I was upset about it because … every single day there's only me and him and the learners…. It's all the little bits they do to help your course run easier, and your day, and you do talk… … you wouldn't say they're your friends, but want them to be okay
>
> **Fay:** You want to make their life a little bit easier. The amount of times I'll get in a day, 'you're alright you are, I'm glad that you like have a laugh with us 'cause it makes my day a bit different'. And you have to remember we have to build that rapport, we have to have a relationship with them

There is a clear sense of mission and desire to make a difference within these accounts, and also a visible element of trust, which builds with some of the offenders that OL participants worked with. This illustrates a challenge to the perhaps more expected power dynamic within such a structured and secure context. Elaine expressed a sense of loss when her mentor was removed and she was not permitted to see him. This highlights the unique culture and environment within this setting where the space dictated restriction. Being so tightly controlled, there is perhaps less scope for teachers to enact social justice. Perhaps this is a consequence of a highly 'determinate and hence demarcated space' which 'necessarily embraces some things and excludes others; what it rejects may be relegated to nostalgia or it may be simply forbidden' (Lefebvre, 1990, p.99).

In the case of military participants, along with the strong connection to their students, but there is more of an emphasis on shared commitment to prepare them adequately for their roles than on what has been specifically termed in this thesis as 'social justice'. There is still a sense that participants want to make a difference, with one recounting how he wanted to teach following his own positive education and training experience in the military, wanting to 'replicate that and make it good for people because a lot of people don't like it' (Stage 1, Int.6). Personal history shaped current practice, with military participants sharing stories with each other which showed a mutual passion for supporting students, vocationally and pastorally. However, based on evidence in the data, it appears that they felt that the military was different to the 'civilian education world' because of the need to accept, work and learn with a diverse range of people not 'fitting into a certain kind of personality or class bracket':

> One will be from a council estate in Durham; another will have just failed to get into Oxford university and wants to become an officer ….. all these people are just chucked together and that's what makes it such a diverse environment, and you have to learn very early on to get on with each other, respect each other's views, and respect each other's idiosyncrasies, that's what makes it so great. (Stage 1, Int.7)

This is perhaps distinct from the focus in FE, for example, in supporting students to overcome the barriers discussed in Chapter One. There is nonetheless a strong value base amongst military participants regarding their students' achievements as they navigate their practice together. This also has military history and experience within its mix to take forward into collegial interactions and interplay within the moments that arise. Lefebvre has questioned 'the role of history in the forms of memory, recollections, narratives' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.61). If there are 'periods when the past returns' (ibid) then this and other histories which participants discussed above must be important ingredients within the complexity of shared values.

5.3.2 Rhythmed together: collective strategies and responsibilities

We therefore see that a sense of collective responsibility was enacted sometimes in response to crisis. However, there was also a steady and continuous sharing of the considerable pastoral, emotional work, which was at the heart of participants' everyday lives, as they dealt with unplanned challenging incidents arising on a day-to-day basis. Sharing this responsibility relieved pressure through a shift of responsibility from an individual to a collective role and therefore this reciprocal process was critically important. Findings show how a shared concern for students was a critical element in the values participants held, and therefore a key component in the rhythms of their interactions. Informal collective interactions supported participants to create shared strategies for approaching student issues in their everyday practice. This was valued by participants who showed a need to talk about their students, adding a further rhythmic element and gravitational pull towards collegial interactions, again with students at their heart. Examples include the identification of specific learning difficulties (SPLDs) for a student which 'came about just from tea bar talk and the instructors talking together' (military participant Stuart, Stage 1, Int.6). The critical function of collectively putting student scenarios together and how this occurs through such informal conversations about students is illustrated in ACL participant Karen's account of the kind of dialogue which builds a collaborative 'picture', weaving these threads together provides the students with a 'better experience' (Stage 1, Int. 4).

In such examples, participants' individual informal observations about students, once threaded together, were able to provide a more complete picture of a student's situation and needs, enabling any concerns to be escalated and addressed. The connection between

informal interaction and this 'better experience' for students is significant; collegiality had a clear implication for practice in these examples. Where Hargreaves (2001, p.505) felt that informally based collaboration *on its own* could not 'bring and keep teachers together in ways that benefit students', findings here illustrate that by talking about their students in an informal space, such as the tea bar or staff room, participants developed a collective understanding and approach which supported them. But perhaps it was the bonds already in existence between teachers in these examples which provided the additional emotional dimension to which Hargreaves alludes. The social space has set 'a very specific dialectic in motion' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.85) through low-level casually framed conversations and observations, - for example *yeah this has happened* – if a small thing is 'noticed' participants expressed the need to talk about and share this within informal spaces, resulting in collectively held responsibility and actions. Whilst such an informal physical space is not being advocated as a panacea, as there must surely be a range of contributions made which are not always positive, it is important to question how, or where, the converations presented above would take place without them.

It is notable that the issues arising with students were unpredictable and yet a constant feature of everyday collaboration, occurring spontaneously but with regularity as students themselves navigated their lives and relationships, amidst the 'overall unpredictability about our social world' (Hochschild, 2012, p.21). This was unseen yet significant collaborative 'emotional' work. Participants recounted ebbs and flows related to student issues and events such as disputes, and there was a clear sense that 'if it's impacting on them in their daily lives 'they would want to discuss a resolution with colleagues (Stage 1, Int. 2). Occurring as these issues arose, these interactions were an integral part of the working day, exemplified in Will's comment that,

> I realised just how many one to ones we have during the day with the learners, those coincidental things, they knock the door, so we haven't had that [during covid 19], they can't just knock the staffroom door. (Stage 2, interview)

Resolving student conflicts and providing support was clearly an everyday occurrence for participants, and unplanned issues were dealt with instantaneously. Both the trials and the rewards of what has been termed 'emotional labour' (Hochschild, 2012; Price, 2001; Avis and Bathmaker, 2004) occupied space in participants' accounts of their routine work outside of

the more 'concrete modalities' of the day's formal structure (Lefebvre, 2020, p.82). The idea of emotional labour was originated by Hochschild (2012) in recognition of the costs to an individual of emotional as opposed to physical work, when their feelings are exploited as a commodity, which she said led to authenticity and alienation. In the application of this term to teaching work, Price (2001) and Avis and Bathmaker (2004) have also highlighted how teachers find reward through their emotional work with students. What seems distinct about this kind of labour in the data, is that participants needed to talk about such situations on an ongoing basis, and there is a depiction, once again, that this was an unseen and unacknowledged practice. This could be viewed as an underacknowledged, unpublicised and 'secret rhythm' within the teaching role (Lefebvre, 2020, p.27) '[woven] into the fabric of the everyday' (ibid, 2002, p.346). The knocking of the door in Will's extract could be seen to represent this connectivity between the public and private spaces, as one enters into the other's domain. Again, there was that 'need to have chat about it' as Carol described, as participants undertook the pastoral elements of their role.

The clear interconnection between the rhythms of teachers' and student lives was evident from a sense in the data that these less recognised pastoral aspects of the teaching role were critical to what participants felt was important in their work, and their reasons for teaching, which provides insight into the shared values and beliefs which we see being enacted and part of bonding teachers with their colleagues. Teaching was seen as being about repairing damage and 'building [students] back up' (Will, (Stage 3, FG1). This was a sustained and constant feature within participants' accounts of the everyday and Will's concerns about losing students who had gone 'off the radar' during the pandemic show the importance placed on this. He and colleagues will 'pick that up' and deal with it together, again re-enforcing the sense of collective mission.

It was also evident that the close bonds between teachers were also said to be seen by students, which in turn was believed to influence their own sense of collegiality and behaviour. For example, participants working in FE described the benefits to students of seeing good working relationships being modelled, particularly 'if they've never been in the world of work, or they've been somewhere where it's quite negative (Shelley, Stage 1, Int.2). This included seeing teachers with different characters and approaches working together 'on

the same page' (Carol, ibid). In terms of values, this affirms how participants' relationships with both students and each other were inter-connected. They were conscious of the impact of their own relationships on their students and their expectations for their own future relationships at work. There was a sense that individual differences in style and approach were accepted and positive, and that these did not impede good working relationships. This illustrates how the shared values we see emerge in the findings cascaded to students. The values and bonds were not boundaried and, although we have seen these were under-recognised within the institutional context, they were felt to be noticed by students and influential to their futures. Collegial relationships could therefore be seen to contribute to the lived experiences of students as well; teacher relationships supported their lived experiences because of the sharing taking place, and a collective response was enacted to overcome challenges. This also set out a pattern for students' own collegial relationships by being presented to them by their teachers as a model. The waves and rhythms of teacher interactions were therefore felt to permeate to students, and this can be seen throughout the findings, for example in the previous discussions about participants constructing shared pictures of student issues. Here again we see how relationships seem ready and conductive to creating future moments. Lefebvre asked in what state a relationship exists until an action of some kind makes it effective (Lefebvre, 1991, p.401): applied to the findings here, we can see a recurrence of relationships existing in readiness for such moments, within a web of support and acceptance, seen through trusted conversations and shared responsibility. Future moments may occur, during which these elements will come into play in the memories and histories of both teachers and students.

5.3.3 Everyday conversation and its connection to practice

Far from what Lefebvre might call the abstraction of institutional discourse and a restrictive semiotic repertoire, participants reported that being able to talk to colleagues in an informal manner within everyday conversations nurtured their self-esteem and confidence, with a resulting impact on their professional development and practice. This process further bonded participants together, as data from a range of participants across settings illustrates, and this led to expansions in their practice. Conversation provided reassurance and clarity and encouraged participants to 'make that adaptation' in their teaching (Stage 1, int. 1). In the extract below, Martin, who teaches on motor vehicle courses in FE, illustrates the value

placed on the reassurance of colleagues within everyday working life. Although he had motor vehicle experience, he had not been a mechanic himself, and therefore he felt a lack of confidence in 'teaching kids to be mechanics'. Informal conversations helped him to see the value of other experience on which he could draw:

> It's that self-doubt that I don't know enough, but actually speaking with the more senior guys, you're just putting that little bit of a spin on it, your own individual spin … it's like just chatting about the little … It's just speaking to people and learning how they do little things… it's just sit down, have a coffee, just talk about it, couple of minutes and yeah, why haven't I done that, let's try that. (Stage 1, Int.1)

Martin's example shows how talking to others encouraged him to overcome a barrier with self-confidence; through 'chatting about the little bits', and this is something reflected across all settings. Military participant Colin described informal reflective conversations, taking place 'at least weekly' through which 'even experienced people' received encouragement which supported their confidence (Stage 1, Int. 6). This process is consistent with Biesta et al's (2017) findings that there is a relationship between shared 'teachers' talk' and teacher agency. This is important within a sector where research has reported teachers describing a 'restrictive autonomy' in their work (Tully, 2021). This seems to be the case whatever the stage of the participants' teaching careers; it was about reassurance and acceptance and illustrates that calling on others for reassurance was a key feature of participants' collegiality, representing expansive principles, such as teamwork and time for reflection, yet *within* what we have seen in other findings above as a more restrictive environment (Fuller and Unwin, 2004). It could therefore be the case that there was a *creation* of space through these interactions, within the dynamism of social relationships (Lefebvre, 2014). Significantly, participant Martin stated that he felt he had always had a supportive, collective space consistent with a pattern in the data of regular conversation, as participants sought and gave reassurances to colleagues. It appears that this existed quietly in the background, an invisible and unnamed, yet enabling energy.

Data showed how many 'small scale', 'little bits of conversations' embedded themselves 'randomly', 'organically' and 'without thinking about it'. Participants referred to an almost casual sharing of thoughts and observations about each other's practice, for example 'in passing', through informal visits to each other's workshop sessions, when passing on the corridor or 'continuous catching up' in the staffroom. These 'fleeting but decisive

sensations' (Middleton, 2014, p.112) were contrasted with more formal 'meetings' as participants described their interactions as a continual *process*, a 'mentality'.

Phrases such as 'I need help' and 'I'm really struggling' show how the support sought from colleagues really mattered and was needed. A mere 'couple of minutes' was a sufficient to make a significant difference to Martin's confidence, implying that collegial 'moments' are a constituent part of this energy.

The connections in the findings between collegial support, self-esteem and agency were therefore manifested through reciprocal trust in non-judgemental relationships and this led to expansions in practice, with participants' accounts illustrating a trusted safety net for developing and trying out new approaches, conveying the sense that it was 'okay' if things went wrong. For example, military participants discussed how they actively encouraged other instructors to 'jump in and do it', some of whom might otherwise be 'wary about standing in front of a class until they've got it exactly right'. They recounted phrases they used such as 'if you mess anything up, I'll cover it off, don't worry' (Stage 1, Int.6). It was significant that even when opinions about an approach differed, participants still encouraged others to try it: discovery and learning from the outcome was paramount. The lack of judgement for mistakes and the sense that colleagues will not perceive you as any less of a teacher should they occur is exemplified in FE participant Donna's words below:

> You can say that was a really terrible lesson and nobody's judging you for it… that non-judgemental stuff is one of the most important things …it's okay to be [rubbish] sometimes, to not think that with all these years of experience it should be better.. people don't look at you like that (Stage 1, Int. 2).

The impact of this supportive collegial climate is exemplified in an extract from a 'diary' entry for stage two of the research where Elaine (OL), recorded an example which swiftly resulted in a beneficial change through her practice with a specific group of students, where she had found a 'mix of challenging behaviour varying from mental health issues, dyslexia and ADHD'. An informal lunchtime encounter with a colleague resulted in guidance, support and as a consequence a 'noticeable' change in the behaviours occurring during her class.

Therefore, contrary to the view that collegiality can result in dependence and paternalism (Löfgren and Karlsson, 2016), these accounts demonstrate how, across all settings,

participants' practice developed *because of* the reciprocal support provided by informal relationships with colleagues; they did not always agree with each other's approaches, contrary to literature which suggests that collegial relationships can avoid challenge (Hargreaves, 2001); and yet no judgement arose if the approach did not succeed. The sense that any mistakes would be 'covered off' reduced risk and promoted professional growth because the support created a safe space to try new approaches with no fear of recrimination.

This non-judgemental atmosphere of mutual trust was seen to underpin these expansions in practice and in the findings were a key element in participants' accounts of their informal relationships across all settings. These accounts resonate with Wenger's ideas about mutual engagement and the negotiation of a joint enterprise, where people 'very directly influence each other's understanding as a matter of routine (Wenger, 2003, p.75). Wenger does see mutual relationships as 'complex mixtures' of different elements, including success and failure (ibid p.77). These examples also seem to reflect Wenger's notion of joint enterprise, in the sense that the shared experience is 'part of practice in the same way that rhythm is part of music' (p. 82). This rhythm can be seen above in the specific examples of how discourse arose, and the words and phrases which characterised it. Repeated examples where a participant used phrases such as 'oh can I just ask…' or 'oh I really messed up' illustrate an organic rhythm which fitted seamlessly into the everyday. These were important topics, having a 'terrible lesson' for example, but addressing them was woven into a low-key support structure which operated 'in passing', and which helped 'build a better relationship' between colleagues as well as confidence and a sense of security. Where this seems to extend from Wenger's idea of enterprise is in the greater emphasis on support; there is a more personal resonance within the dialogue which seems more deeply socially facilitated and outside of the public domain. The social relations which support these conversations seem to 'project themselves into a space' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 129). Their value to participants shows that they are far from abstract 'empty words' (ibid); rather participants could be seen to have created space for the support they needed and, in the process, strengthened their bonds.

A further factor in the findings show that the discursive element of collegial conversations, wherever they occurred, had great fluidity between the social and work elements. We see below an example of how conversation could switch easily between the two:

> **Stuart**, military: It's not always just about the teaching environment, people talk about anything, politics, sport, it just comes in, it's natural. It can be entertaining. When we are actually talking about the work environment you get some gems of knowledge that come from it, it makes the day more entertaining. It's not forced, it's natural, very open. (Stage 1, Int.6)

This capacity to move seamlessly from private to more public modes of interaction, and 'flip back' from personal to work related (Shelley, Stage 1, Int.2) shows how work related ideas and knowledge were very naturally embedded within a social context. The 'gems of knowledge' mentioned above were to be found amidst social elements such as entertainment and personal support. Thus, these open, trusted relationships were effective conduits of knowledge; when participants felt at ease and relaxed, impromptu ideas and information were sparked and readily received. This evokes Lave's view of learning as a 'facet of social practice' (Lave, 1996, p. 150), however in this case there seems a stronger fusion between that learning and the emotional and supportive factors involved; humour, sharing significant life events, political debate; all are blended or rhythmed together within these interactions. Clearly 'being human is a relational matter, generated in social living' (ibid, p. 149) but this is also connected more deeply to the energies of life itself, which Merrifield describes in Lefebvrian terms as the capacity to 'live it to the full, inhabit it as fully sensual beings, as total men and women' (Merrifield, 2006, p. 37).

5.3.4 Disrupted engagement: outliers and 'cliques'

We have considered a range of factors and energies which drew participants together to act on shared values and beliefs, however findings also show that not everyone had a collegial mind set or propensity to collaborate. Therefore, there must be questions about potentially selective engagement in collective collegial groups, since this analysis does not assume perfect relationships and a utopian view of collegial relations. Although not widespread, there were accounts of instances where there was a misalignment of attitudes to collegial work, and participants expressed disappointment and frustration when this was identified. FE participant Rose described how she had looked forward to a colleague joining her organisation after working alone for a considerable time. She had assumed that her newly

appointed colleague would have 'the same vision and passion' as herself, however this was not the case and instead the dynamics 'had been hard' (Stage 1, Int.1). Linda (FE) also reflected on a new colleague who 'worked very differently' to the rest of the team (Stage 1, Int.5). ACE participant Val felt that 'you can get the cliques or maybe one person is enough to disjoint that group (Stage 1, Int. 4). Sometimes this was linked to subject identity, as in military participant Stuart's account that working in a 'cliquey trade' people 'don't tend to travel around too much' outside of their immediate colleagues. (Stage 1, Int. 6)

These accounts show that there is not always a perfect experience of collegial relations. Lofgren and Karlsson (2016) referred to, for example, obstructionist behaviours in teams and how members could be let down, even unintentionally, and that this breaks trust. As felt by Val above, it may be a misalignment of approach or values in one group member which disrupts the process. In terms of the findings here, it is however, important to distinguish between team working and collegial relations which have occurred organically. We have seen how participants value collegial relationships and can be drawn together by a complex variety of factors. Organisational structures and recruitment decisions may put people together, however this does not mean that they will naturally bond with each other. Where some participants were drawn together it cannot be overlooked that, as with Stuart's trade identity above, this created a closer group.

Findings show that there were two further but connected elements which could help explain how 'outliers' occur; the influence of the social context, and also the time it takes for such bonds to form. For example, in FE participant Linda's account (Stage 2, interview), we see a link being made to 'friendship' and the 'massive importance' of having a social element. She relays a situation where a colleague did not listen or share and there 'just isn't the same exchange' that would normally characterise a social relationship. This could be indicative of the time it takes to form collegial bonds, and across participant accounts it was suggested that this could take 'a few years to build those relationships' (Val, (Stage 1, Int.2). As Karen, ACE participant, reflects related to a recent re-structure, 'it's going to take a little while before we're all used to each other and we all know how each other work …it's just all still a little bit messy at the moment (Stage 1, Int. 4). This is compounded by the point made by FE

participant Linda that 'it is harder when you add newer people to the group who've got maybe a different way of working' (Stage 1, Int. 5).

Perhaps then, collegial relationships are moderated by the kind of social norms seen in friendship bonds, such as listening and having a mutual respect. De Lima's (2001) connections between friendship literature and teacher collegiality identified various elements of closeness in both, and so we see this reflected here, as a 'strong merging of professional and personal ties' (De Lima, 2001, p. 108). However, it was seen in the above examples, that the 'natural fit' took time and effort to develop, and we see a 'messy' process of 'newer people', perhaps with different approaches and mind-sets, entering into group relationships. Wenger (1991, p.13) sees a process of social learning as the vehicle for the 'inclusion of newcomers' and the associated 'transformation of identities'. This he terms the 'social formation of the person' (ibid). Whilst there does seem a parallel with newer people getting to know each other and 'all the processes' (Stage 1, Int. 4), this does not perhaps reflect the challenges of dealing with different existing mindsets and working practices. Linda's description of 'newer people' perhaps makes a small but important distinction which is more indicative of the situation than Wenger's concept of 'newcomers'; teachers coming into collegial groups, as we see above, may already have formed an identity and set of values. Whether this became changed over time, or whether some such individuals remained outliers would take more time to establish.
In spatial and rhythmic terms, this process again reflects a dynamic pattern, whereby newcomers with a different attitude presented a disruption to relationships previously in balance; rhythms can 'break apart, alter and bypass synchronisation' if eurhythmia to the prevailing values and communication results (Lefebvre, 2020, p.77), which would help to explain participants' discomfort. With them newer people brought different histories and experiences, and therefore by not wishing or feeling able to collaborate closely with others, this has the implication of these perspectives, whatever they might be, being excluded from everyday 'moments' and events.

5.4 Chapter conclusion

We have seen in this chapter how, common to all settings, there was a culture of interaction between colleagues which presented a rhythm of invaluable, often critical, informal support.

There were numerous expressions within the data of how teaching was felt to be a unique and sometimes isolating role, however collegial interactions and relationships helped to ameliorate this within what were often challenging conditions. Issues about practice were discussed in a non-judgemental atmosphere which was conductive to critical reflection and personal and professional development. This raised questions regarding the extent to which teachers were understood, supported and trusted within the system in which they work. Aligning with Middleton's analysis of educational settings, it would seem from the data that whilst the formal processes and management approaches within our settings appeared to downgrade pedagogic practice, our informal, collegial processes could 'break through this conformism' (Middleton, 2014, p.158). A disconnect was expressed between the (often emotional) work participants undertook with students and the managerial priorities enacted within their institutions. In this we saw cyclical and linear rhythms vying for space, particularly where there were more 'restrictive' elements within the environment, such as the hierarchical structures in some offender learning institutions. Collegial interactions recounted in the data were characterised by language around trust and friendship and examples of developments in practice were found in the data to result from this support and the informal sharing and collaboration which characterised it. There was also a connection between collegial support, self-esteem and professional agency and practice, often manifested through significant 'moments', taking place with colleagues who drew on common values and histories within these encounters.

There was found to be little institutional support in the data for teachers as learners, with formalised CPD failing to provide opportunities to address the issues which mattered to participants, which seems consistent with a scenario described by Middleton (2014, p. 156) whereby 'the pedagogical strategies of management effect a dressage of affect'. This was again resonant of a more 'restrictive' misalignment between teacher and institutional values, for example with participants needing to initiate subject support themselves.

The climates in which participants worked were portrayed as unsettling and out of step with their key values. However, this contributed to the bonding and mutual, sometimes emotional, support between teachers: where values were shared and there was the opportunity for meaningful interaction this presented itself as a powerful energy. There was

also a spontaneity found to these interactions as they responded to issues and problems as they occurred, especially in terms of developing strategies for working with students, conversations providing the spark to ignite ideas and solutions, as well as support at the time it was needed.

Chapter Six will now build on these findings and examine the conditions and factors which either supported the IPG interactions and relationships we have discussed so far, or conversely made it more challenging for them to bloom and prosper. The chapter will therefore highlight the ways in which managerial decisions impacted on collegial relationships and practice.

Chapter Six - The factors and conditions which sustained collegial relationships

6.1 Introduction

We have seen so far a picture forming through the data of the nature of teacher participants' relationships and the shared values that emerged as part of their close bonds and the patterns of rhythms of their interactions as they navigated and survived the challenges of their settings. Participants provided accounts of a shared responsibility within a challenging environment where there was a unique, collective understanding of the role and its demands. But what were the conditions which impeded or sustained the special nature of these bonds and collegial interactions within the everyday and countered institutional challenges? This chapter will consider the factors and conditions within participant's institutional environments which influenced their informal collegial group processes, where and how they took place and the elements they needed to flourish. We will see how these are a consequence of and have implications for management decisions and therefore professional practice, teacher well-being and student learning. Findings will be presented which demonstrate that a number of factors influenced their functioning and impact, centred around space, place and time.

6.2 Unobserved safe spaces to talk

For the spontaneous conversations, ideas and shared reflections which we have seen so far in the data are to take place, the ability to talk to colleagues without surveillance was a significant enabler of collegial interactions. Participants made sustained references within the data to finding a safe space to talk. The informal relationships we have seen so far have been characterised by a mutual understanding of the job and its challenges, reciprocal and sometimes critical support and a sharing of responsibility and values through talking about day-to-day issues and problems. However, it is clear from the data that such interactions needed to operate unobserved, outside of the public domain, or at least around its shadows. ACE participants discussed how colleagues needed to feel that they were not being 'scrutinised' or 'watched' in order 'to be honest', otherwise people would be 'frightened to say things' (Stage 1, Int. 4). Phrases such as the 'chance to talk off the record' and 'a safe pair of ears if you need to unwind at any point' signal how participants felt the need to protect

their interactions from any repercussions. They either knew that a space was free from unwelcome ears, such as a staffroom with trusted colleagues, or they made judgements about where they spoke, for example depending on 'how thin your walls are and what you want to talk about'.

Without privacy within the workplace, these closed realms moved into other social spaces, both real, such as pubs and restaurants, and virtual, such as social media, and allowed participants to speak freely about sensitive issues, such as forthcoming contractual changes. For example, in a diary entry for stage two of the research, Elaine (OL) recorded an evening meal with work colleagues where they discussed workplace issues arising after a change of employer. Privacy was attained through meeting outside work in a social context where 'we as a group could speak openly away from our senior management team… without drawing attention to ourselves in the working environment (Elaine, Stage 2, diary). This aspect within the data raises questions around trust between teacher participants and management within their institutions (Avis, 2003) and affirms a perceived need to keep collegial conversations hidden from public view if they are to be authentic.

The need for a safe space to 'let off steam' and relieve pressure on a regular basis, was shown across all settings with the staff room, or the (military) tea bar or prep room being important, more private physical spaces. FE participant Donna described her own staffroom space as somewhere 'you could laugh …you could offload and that just made it' (Stage 1, Int.2). Military participant Colin described how, in the tea bar, 'you'll unload, you'll gripe, you'll whinge, you'll mention things that were good that you've done, it's all sorts of stuff and it just becomes that little melting pot to unload, it's cathartic … it's got that use, it's not just sharing ideas' (Stage 1, Int.6). Again, it can be seen that even brief opportunities for private, trusted conversation could have a significant impact and support participants to carry on, as expressed by participant Michelle (ACE):

> within ten minutes of making me a cup of tea and us discussing things and me getting a bit emotional it's finished with. And then I'm in a work zone if you like and that really helps. It hasn't gone on all day, it's just forgotten really. (Stage 1, Int.4)

The staff room in Carol's case was also a place to relieve day to day pressures where, 'you can offload and sometimes have a laugh about situations because otherwise you just wouldn't deal with [the] constant pressure' (Stage 1, Int.2).

The freedom to talk expressed throughout the data seems to have several strands to its purpose: 'letting off steam' and 'unloading' or 'offloading' are seen interspersed across the different accounts, as part of a process which was seen as 'cathartic'. Talking within what was judged to be a safe environment was helpful to participants in dealing with 'constant issues' every day, and in Michelle's example, this enabled her to 'forget' and 'finish' a problem so that she could resume her day. Having authentic and unmonitored conversations, as Colin confirmed, shows that the talk between colleagues was 'not just sharing ideas' but had multiple facets; his analogy of 'that little melting pot' reaches further than a shared repertoire because it represents an amalgam of constant, freely shared issues and thoughts as they occur. These were unseen, unplanned exchanges; unmonitored or overheard by anyone other than those who were trusted. It is clear that, in terms of informal conversations, these needed to be secret as opposed to public in order to allow them their freedom. It could be argued from a Lefebvrian perspective that it is participants themselves who created guarded spaces for both this work and the conversations about it through their close social relationships; through their interactions with others and their environment and collectively negotiated interventions (Briercliffe, 2015). These spaces seem, like Lefebvrian cyclic spaces, organic and alive (Merryfield, 2006); they enabled participants not only to escape the pressures of the environment but acted as an antidote to these. Unlike the claims processors in Wenger's examples of shared repertoire, who had tangible tasks and resources, participants were 'dealing with people rather than things' (Hochschild, 2012, p.9); they were responding to complex human situations as they arose. Colin's melting pot could therefore be seen 'polyrhythmically, or if you prefer symphonically' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.41). There was a constant rhythm of talk, but within this existed multiple elements; the telling of student issues and 'stories', the sharing of successes and laughter, the grievances. We are reminded of Lefebvre's peasant festival, 'a "safety valve", a catharsis for everyday passions and dreams, something both liberating and antithetical' (Merrifield, 2006, p. 53). The symphony may have had unpredictable notes within it but it needed to feel safe to thrive and provide a release from everyday pressures. In this we are also reminded of Lefebvre's connection between private and public spaces. Whilst 'the outside space of the community is dominated' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 166), the private spaces so valued by participants, became appropriated spaces, free from outside control and therefore vital to their interactions.

6.3 The impact of place: shouting over the fence

It was evident in the preceding chapter that certain physical spaces were important for collegial interaction; strategic decisions about sites, curriculum organisation around these has been seen to have a significant impact, with structural and organisational decisions influencing access to colleagues, for example for subject support. However, there were further elements in the data which specifically connect the availability and quality of the physical environment with the propensity for natural and chance encounters to flourish. The issues and situations raised by participants did have some variation between different types of setting, and therefore these will be considered, but it is clear that this was important in some way across all settings. During the second focus group in stage three of the research, participants from military and FE settings reflected together on the loss of their shared physical spaces during the pandemic lockdown, which raised consciousness about their importance. Virtual means of communication were not considered adequate to sustain collegial discussion and conversation as opposed to 'natural interactions'. The pandemic was seen as 'massive barrier to communication and social interaction' for participants and this made life harder since conversations needed to be planned:

> **Tony**: You can't just stroll into the tea bar with a big sigh and just start venting and that then leads onto solutions and things like that. The spontaneity's completely gone. That's a big hindrance.

These accounts show how participants valued 'shouting over the fence' (Will (FE) FG1) to each other in unplanned and spontaneous moments. It was about listening to others and being listened to, finding solutions and appreciating each other's different approaches and skills. Participant narratives of pre-pandemic interactions were conveyed with a sense of enjoyment and show how combining skills 'which complement each other' (Stage 1, Int.5) and ideas occurred naturally because the physical environment facilitated an impromptu and socially rewarding way of working. Interactions outside of a physical space could occur, however they were harder to initiate, having to 'seek people out'. Without a shared space they were curtailed and Linda's comment (Stage 3, FG2) that 'if someone came along it would be like what are you doing?' indicates that to be effective, participant interactions needed to take place within their own space and time, out of view, as discussed in section 6.2. Being in a shared space allowed conversations to develop into different areas naturally,

unconstrained; if they had to be planned, the spontaneity and value to participants would be lost. Within CoP literature, Wenger states that 'geographies of practice' cannot be reduced to physical proximity or frequency of interaction (Wenger, 2003, p.130) and acknowledges that 'learning constantly creates localities' in practice (ibid, p.131) so that, for example, people doing the same job in different locations are 'closer' to those doing the same job in a different location or organisation than others in the same building who have a different role. Yet there is some dependence 'on specific places and times' here and elsewhere in the data (see section 6.2) in order to provide opportunities for interactions to take place. However, when considered in conceptual terms from a spatial perspective a further dimension emerges. Rather, what Wenger might consider 'community' appears more as a process whereby energy, space and time 'can be neither conflated nor separated from one another'; space 'considered in isolation is an empty abstraction' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.12). The accounts provided by participants demonstrate a vibrant, human energy; the 'big sigh' before 'venting' feelings, ideas 'whizzing everywhere'. Those energies are connected to space and time; they require space and time, but they also exist in the moment as energies facilitated by close staffroom relationships.

Within the military setting, as with FE staffrooms, we see the importance of geographical space in relation to the position of managers and the hierarchy. It was felt that a physical separation impacted positively on collegiality. Participant Jason felt that proximity to his teams' school management supported their collaborative environment:

> We're in a separate building, only separated by a road, but what a difference geographical location makes… we don't have people interfering … upper management … we probably have the best student feedback and student results within the school and it's due to us, our attitude, the way we teach, and I don't think it quite aligns with how the management would like us to teach sometimes but we definitely get the right results and the right attitudes from our students. (Stage 1, Int.7)

Here this seems more than a freedom to talk as discussed in the previous section, rather there was a collective agency over how teaching and learning should take place, and this did not 'quite align' with the managerial perspective, which is conveyed as an interference which undermined the work being undertaken, as opposed to supporting it. The interruptions referred to above were seen as presenting a barrier to collegially negotiated practice. The road which separated Jason and his colleagues from such interruptions is

symbolic as a means of avoiding the impact of this misalignment of goals, characteristic of more restrictive approaches (Fuller and Unwin, 2004). In spatial terms, these represent interruptions to the rhythm of collective values and practices, operating in their own space and underpinned by a shared 'attitude' and 'the way we teach'.

How this occurred in practice within this specific setting is demonstrated in the data extract from Tony below and in Figure 10, where we see the 'prep room', where military instructors discussed their practice as it occurred. This was instrumental in supporting spontaneous and open discussion about practice:

> In the prep room [it'll] just sort of flow and it'll spin off one way and another way and someone else'll pop in with their opinions and somebody who has nothing to do with that phase might have a really important thing that you didn't think about which that prep room allows…. Although this is a semi- formal area, this is where most of the informal sort of things happen. (Stage 3, FG2)

Figure 10: Instructor prep room, shared during focus group 2.

The open plan prep room was a space where 'that level of trust is already there when you walk in' (participant Tony). Populated by up to twenty people, the 'flow' and 'spin' of conversation depicted was vibrant and organic. Conversations were overheard by others who would 'chip in off the cuff' and this resulted in a significant and spontaneous informal learning 'moment', in this example around teaching international students:

> It was a constant uphill struggle all the time to try and understand where they were coming from. It was only because one of the instructors who was here as a contractor … was sat four or five seats away that he overheard what we were talking about ... and he then gave us loads of pointers… So that helped a lot and I think the informality of it all, where people felt they

> could stand up, chip in, and not get ridiculed, not get singled out, or it wouldn't be a detrimental thing to chip in with the conversation. (Stage 3, FG2)

This learning moment could clearly not have occurred within a planned, formal context. Echoing the 'shouting over the fence' referred to by an earlier FE participant, the importance of an open environment, in terms of a trusted atmosphere and a conducive physicality, is seen here, facilitating a chance opportunity for sharing an experience from which others could reflect, learn and change. In this example a situation which presented a blockage in practice, the conflictual 'butting' of heads, was dispersed very quickly through the chance encounter of someone overhearing a conversation. A clear 'moment' in Lefebvrian terms, this brought the experience and history of one teacher into play with the current challenges and experiences of others. This transformed Tony's understanding and practice, and we see the 'originality of the moment' coming from 'its circumstantial content. .it weaves itself into the fabric of the everyday… it uses …something contingent and accidental' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.640).

Findings therefore showed the value of being able to communicate in the moment and how spontaneity and physical space were connected. This was reinforced by ACE participants' descriptions of their hopes and 'good feelings about' the creation of two new staffrooms, following which teachers will have 'migrated' into one place for the first time, where there are more people to 'bounce ideas off' and 'people can ask a quick question, so when it's come into their mind rather than think of having to pop upstairs so I think that'll be much more of a rapport. (Stage 1, Int. 4)

In these accounts, there was a sense of excitement in anticipating being able to work in the same physical space where questions could be asked as they arose, and ideas could be spontaneously 'bounced' around. The change arose due to wider organisational decisions, in this case favourable to collegial working, and it saw teachers, as a participant termed it, 'migrating' into a shared space. There is the connotation of the collective move to a distant, warmer climate here, but also the extent to which such decisions influence teachers is a key implication to draw from this data. There was an element of external control which determined participants' collegial fate. Re-organisations are a feature of life in FE institutions and cause concern for staff (NEU, 2020) and yet, as Val said, it takes 'a long time to build up people feeling comfortable', as we saw previously (section 5.3.4). Changes in

departments and curriculum areas due to mergers, reductions in staffing and other external influences, affect where teachers work, with whom, and for how long, and therefore such changes have the power to either promote or thwart collegial relationships on a whim. It would seem that the production of a social space by political power was unintended, yet 'generated out of a rationalized and theorized form' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.152.). In this case the consequence for collegiality was benign, however in other cases, such as the loss of a staffroom, this may serve as an 'instrument for the violation of an existing space' and is 'in the service of economic goals' (ibid). It should be noted that following the interview from which this extract came, a merger took place and the situation became again unsettled.

In offender learning we also see in the findings the influence of physical space over the potential for collaboration. Participants discussed how in a large prison 'you are very divided because you are in different locations' (Elaine, Stage 1, Int.3) which presents barriers. Working in the gym of a large institution, Dean described himself as 'quite distant from the education department (ibid). Therefore, he mixed with other gym staff and not other educators. Some of the barriers presented by location challenges included the need to travel between prisons in order to find a colleague with whom to undertake key processes such as standardisation. Where there was a colleague in close proximity this was still 'across the car park', yet meetings became regular, despite these barriers, and this interaction was found to be 'invaluable', social and informal (Stage 3, FG1).

This presents a varied picture, depending on the size of the organisation, the purpose of the collaboration with colleagues and the subject specific area concerned (see section 5.2.3). There was seen to be an element of being 'lucky' in Elaine's account because she had colleagues available in one location, however these colleagues did not teach the same subject, and so this made collaboration less accessible for certain purposes, and there was then the need to actively seek it out. In these cases, the social element was important; being 'almost friends' provided more opportunities for informal collaboration which might otherwise have been difficult. In Dean's example, we see a detachment from fellow educators due to the physical isolation of his place of teaching, i.e. the gym. The consequence here was the absence of any opportunity to mix with other teachers, and perhaps then a resulting disconnection with pedagogical issues arising in everyday

conversation. It seems that participants negotiated a range of opportunities to collaborate. Unlike Wenger's distinct CoPs containing the sense of a centre, these accounts seem more fragmented and fragile, and in some cases needed to be pursued or were accepted as missing. This presents an unevenness in the rhythms found; there are pockets of richness, but also some gaps and barriers to overcome. Lefebvre said that rhythm possesses a 'quantitative character' in terms of 'frequency, intensity, energy expended' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.801) and perhaps this is helpful here. Energy was expended in seeking out others for example, and the intensity of collegial rhythms fluctuated between participants and within the experience of individual participants.

Across the settings, the findings have therefore shown how physical place had a part to play as a facilitating and a limiting factor, resulting in a range in the intensities and rhythms of the collegial relations we have illustrated in the preceding chapter.

6.4 The need for unstructured time in everyday routines

We have so far identified in the data some of the conditions which influenced collegial spaces: finding 'safe' spaces to talk and the role of physical space in supporting this, with a variability producing more fragile and uneven rhythms of access to collegial interactions. In the light of these factors, we can now uncover more from the data about the time and affordance of opportunity for collegial interactions within these challenged conditions. Findings showed a variation in the way participants found time for collegial conversations and interactions. Some participants had quite clearly defined times of opportunity within their working day, such as set breaks and lunchtimes, and these supported informal discussion and collaboration. For example, military participants Stuart and Colin discussed the importance of the 'massive tea bar culture' in the military, explaining how its routine facilitated an 'organic' sharing of information 'all the time without thinking about it'. This constituted an embedded, regular process within their everyday routine:

> **Stuart:** The tea bar is where people go between ten and half ten and between three and half three…everyone will be in the tea bar, they'll all be open about ideas, there's no real holding back. We'll be talking about the students, what's worked with the students, what hasn't worked, any problem students, and that's very active in the military really, that sort of environment. (Stage 1, Int.6)

Elaine and Fay, working in offender learning, also reflected on how lunchtimes provided the opportunity for colleagues to sit around a table and converse 'every day' (Stage 1, Int.3) and Elaine's diary entry for stage 2 included the example of a 'discussion about the morning's events and dealing with challenging classroom behaviour'. Where break times occurred at the same time, this clearly supported opportunities for collaboration: 'you're talking about work …. having a five-minute conversation when you're having a coffee (Martin, Stage 1, Int.1). However, this was frequently not the case, with participants relying on conversation in passing or 'on the run', for example between classes. Timetables were therefore critical in supporting these opportunities, for example when free periods linked up (Linda, FE , Stage 3, FG 2), or where there are unfilled gaps between a lesson ending and a lunchbreak staring, as noted by OL participant Fay (Stage 1 Int.1). Fay and her colleagues valued this half hour as an undisturbed time with colleagues, but this contrasted with another prison where she knew that 'as soon as your lunch is finished you must go back and you should be at your desk writing'. The lack of time and frenetic pace in FE colleges was relayed in various examples, for instance in Linda's comment that 'when you do find you get a break, you're just grabbing a sandwich at your desk and then running back out to do the next bit' (Stage 3, FG 2). Shelley's perspective that 'sometimes you've only got five minutes and then you're rushing to deal with something or you're rushing to deal with students and student issues' (Stage 1, Int.2) captures this tempo. There was a sense that college participants would value more time to support each other, as Karen commented, she wished 'we had a bit more space and time for these more I suppose organic experiences of supporting each other and learning from each other as colleagues' (Stage 3, FG1).

Nevertheless, the sometimes fleeting nature of the interactions which worked around these constraints had value and provided a consistent presence, even when 'in passing'. Many took the form of quite brief exchanges 'whenever they could fit around classes… it's continuous' (Alison, ACE, Stage 1, Int. 4). Although this sense of constant continuous conversation was aided by being in the same the location (for example the same staffroom), if not then colleagues would make a point of proactively catching up (Alison, ibid). Linda (ACE) similarly explained how 'colleagues will just come and find me and have off the cuff discussions and we'll solve things'. Such exchanges occurred as a constant feature of working life across all settings, typified by the example below:

> **Shelley** (FE): Feedback after lessons and tasks in passing we'll talk about… if student issues are arising … So it would be in the morning before lessons, in break times, dinner time, so it's constant for me, it's informal, it's not meetings and reviews… so I gain more from informal conversations rather than meetings. (Stage 1, Int.2)

In the above examples discussions occurred with regularity 'as things came up' and were significantly helped by there being time for them to take place within scheduled gaps in the working day.

The findings therefore continue to illustrate how participants pursued and created their own spaces for informal interactions, with a sense from some that restrictions could be overcome; it would seem that 'the rhythmical is overwhelmed, suppressed by the linear. But the rhythmical cannot disappear' (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 687-9). This was captured specifically in the extract below, where military participants discussed how collegial conversations were such a natural part of their working lives, they would occur despite physical and practical restrictions:

> **Colin:** Nothing can get in the way of it 'cause it's natural and you're so used to doing it that even if you didn't do it at tea break you'd do it at lunchtime, or as you're walking down the corridor to your lesson, or you'd move to a different location. (Stage 1, Int. 6)

However, as had been the case for physical location, overcoming time challenges meant that that this natural process sometimes required personal energy and effort to sustain where timetables and time limitations did not easily facilitate opportunities for interaction. This implies a sense of fragility, with a dependence on the environment and culture in which it is situated. We see this vulnerability across all settings, but typified by Will's response to being asked what he thought would support collegial interactions within his setting:

> Almost by not being timetabled. It's those passing conversations at the end of the day. I took a piece of internal verification work back to a colleague but then in that twenty-minute conversation that followed it was actually about another topic, another issue altogether (Stage 1, Int.1)

We have seen in the above examples how important gaps and breaks in the daily schedule were in providing opportunities for collegial interactions. Linda's account illustrated the frenetic pace of college life, 'grabbing' time, 'running' and working with others is carried out 'on the run' is reflective of pressures from workloads and accountability demands, as breaks and gaps in time which are considered unproductive are minimised (Ball, 2012; Bennett and Smith, 2018; Kell, 2019). Such 'spaces' are arguably now rare and diminishing amidst the

pressures of an increasingly marketised sector, 'making every cohort the equivalent of a Year 11 cohort in school' (Bennett and Smith, 2018a, p.189). The focus on room utilisation calculations and systems in colleges is an example of such processes, since in seeking to minimise the number of empty classrooms at any point during the timetable, there is a loss of any common break or lunchtimes for staff to take at the same time (LSC, 2007). It is notable therefore that interactions had to be fitted in around the more 'linear' rhythms of timetables and teaching commitments. Despite this, these were described as happening 'all the time', with successive small conversations seeming able to travel around the fixed events of the day, thereby providing a subtle backdrop, working away behind and around those events. Here we see in the daily lives of participants 'conjunctions between cyclical processes and times and linear processes and times' Lefebvre, 2014, p.687).

This is combined with a lack of suitable physical spaces for teachers to talk, other than in the staffroom, as detailed in the previous section on physical space and spontaneity. Given that we have already seen in the data how collegial conversations are often about students, this space away from students was therefore important. As a consequence, it was sometimes left more to chance, as to whether people found themselves in the same time and place to be able to engage with each other; the 'life of a moment' becoming 'a roll of the dice, a stack of chips at the casino of modern life' (Merrifield, p.63). In her account, Fay contrasted her own experience with a highly regimented environment in another prison and, whereas Fay was able to interact with others during a regular and valued, un-timetabled half hour, this was in stark contrast to the managerial checking and control over time in the alternative offender learning setting she knew about. As Lefebvre put it, the cyclical and the linear 'penetrate one another, but in an interminable struggle: sometimes compromise, sometimes destruction' (Lefebvre, 1985, p.76). Will's account above emphasises the value of 'passing conversations' which could develop more freely onto other topics; being tightly 'timetabled' hindered this process.

This 'struggle' had a positive outcome in Karen's account, in stage 2 of the research, of being temporarily freed from timetabled constraints during lockdown, and how this facilitated the 'luxury' of being able to collaborate on an innovative project with a colleague, albeit not face-to-face. The result of having this time-space was seen in a significant, collaborative

development, about which Karen provided details in the research. Her artefact took the form of an email trail which is provided in Figure 11. This details an informal, impromptu collaboration with a colleague which resulted in a significant development for her students. Karen's commentary below illustrates the benefit to her practice of such collaboration. In her example she seized a chance during the pandemic lockdown to work collaboratively with a GCSE tutor as a way to support her students into their next steps. This would not normally not have happened and 'was a real luxury':

> I had a look at the students' work, I got them to write a story…. functional skills is very much *not* very creative whereas the GCSE is very creative, so we wouldn't normally have done work like that…. I've marked it in terms of spelling, grammar and punctuation, then sent it to my colleague to get a bit of feedback on the story writing, the language used, so they've had double feedback, giving them a taste of the GCSE work which they wouldn't normally have had, we wouldn't normally have had time to double mark something. (Stage 2, artefact)

Hi XXX
As discussed, here is a short story from XXX, one of my L2 students who is heading for GCSE.
I would welcome your comments please!
Best wishes

Good morning
What a lovely story! This student will do well at GCSE. I have highlighted what I consider errors in yellow and what I like (in terms of vocab) in pink. XXX uses direct speech well, but needs to start a new paragraph for each new speaker. Some lovely vocabulary/imagery.
Hope this helps.

Hi XXX
Thank you for that- much appreciated I will forward your comments to XXX. She will be thrilled!
Thanks

Figure 11: Artefact email trail submitted for stage 2 of the research

Karen's example of collaborative working shows how a self-generated idea was able to flourish when there was a space in her and her colleague's usual schedules. This was mutually rewarding, expanded her practice and had a positive impact on her students. The situation could be seen to represent an appropriation of linear space by more human,

cyclical elements; these being creative and representing the more human potential that Lefebvre saw in everyday moments. There is a resonance with his view that no system of control is ever total, rather there is always a possibility for a space and time to occur when shafts of light can creep into the rhythmed day to day life (Merrifield, p. 61); the 'modality of presence' (ibid p. 63). In this case it took an extreme circumstance to provide a moment of opportunity which, in more usual circumstances would be harder to find. Karen had previously been 'conscious of taking up someone's time' in an environment where time and the distractions of everyday work might normally present a barrier:

> You've got students phoning you or a colleague needs something, fire alarm drills, all sorts of just general day to day stuff that takes you away from that. We are all working from home, and trying to manage that, but actually sometimes that gives us a couple of hours uninterrupted, which you wouldn't get unless you go and hide somewhere. And then to find a colleague who's also got that amount of time spare, and you can just devote that spare time to looking at resources or working collaboratively, or researching or whatever it is you want to do, it's really difficult to create those pockets of time. (Stage 2, interview)

This links to specific issues participants relayed in the findings regarding the degree of freedom they felt they had over their time, versus control over their time within the environment. The following extracts from FE participant Jo's KoBoToolbox diary demonstrates the value of being able to connect with communities of colleagues more widely, external to the organisation. Jo's diary entry is provided below, together with the accompanying photographic image in Figure 12:

> Reintroduction of being able to count time spent in industry as CPD. I think this is to enable links to employability. We used to do this and were able to do up to three days. I think this is useful. (Stage 2, KoBoToolbox entry)

Figure 12: KoBoToolbox: industry day

In this account, we see that the institution was sanctioning an activity which Jo had always felt important and would have continued to undertake had it been permitted. Given the previous findings about lack of subject specialist support, spending days in industry for dual-professional lecturers could present a positive development opportunity. However, we see in Jo's image, taken from a staff development event, that this was last on the list; it is placed into brackets. The one day, as opposed to the three days experienced in the past limits the potential to create connections and, as Jo states, it is linked to the institution demonstrating its accountability measures for employability. This appears highly controlled, as opposed to an individual teacher having the freedom to decide that such an activity would be beneficial. It is notable that the time allocated for this, and the 'digital hour' mentioned, is tightly prescribed. The focus on 'innovation' raises questions about how this was being facilitated and for whom; it is not clear whether this involved freeing teachers' time to follow their own ideas.

Control over time seems to be the facilitator for building and engaging in such relationships, and a freedom from being overconsumed with other work. Yet despite the challenges, we have seen above how collegial interactions again found their spaces, fitting around environmental constraints. Where this occurred, there were moments of richness and professional pleasure resonant of the way in which Lefebvre describes appropriated time:

> It is a time that forgets time, during which time no longer counts (and is no longer counted). It arrives or emerges when an activity brings plenitude'. (Lefebvre, 2014, p.85)

6.5. Room to move: scattering and coming together

Another condition influencing collegial relations was the freedom and opportunities participants had to move around, both within and outside of their immediate environments to collaborate.

This was seen as beneficial through a process whereby information and knowledge were acquired, and then disseminated within collegial groups. This is exemplified by military participant Tony's description of his 'prep room', where instructors who taught different

training phases were mixed together. This is a place of 'mixed collaborations' and 'cross-pollination' between around thirty instructors 'where it all comes together' (Stage 2, interview). Going on to provide an artefact which symbolised this experience, Tony explained this in the text below and the image is provided in Figure 13:

> I found this picture of the 'waggle dance', it's when a new bee has found a good source of nectar and returns to the hive and tells all the other bees where to locate it. This is a great metaphor for how the information is distributed amongst the teaching staff within the [named] school. If any other instructor is having an issue, or reached a point where they are stuck and one of the other instructors will chime in and 'do their dance' passing on information to the others that wouldn't have otherwise been available. The prep room conversations, or 'dances', are invaluable within the school due to the informality of the dance. Anyone can observe it due to the geography of the prep room and gain the information without fear of exposing their lack of knowledge within the view of their peers. (Stage 2, artefact).

Figure 13: 'Waggle dance' metaphor

The above metaphor encapsulates a natural pattern whereby people who found themselves 'stuck' were released through the sharing and 'chiming in' of others. This image conveys energy and purpose and it seems relevant that a routinized dance was identified to represent this process. We see an organic rhythm in spatial terms, and a known routine. Participants instinctively contributed and knew its moves. Unlike Kemmis's assertion that CoP members 'learn to dance the interactional dances already available in organisations' (Kemmis, 2014, p.4), here participants owned the dance themselves, and used more 'sophisticated processes of interpretation' (ibid) because they contained an informally

collegial element; a mutually conferred understanding which, in this case, disregarded military rank and hierarchy.

Opportunities for such mixing and 'cross-pollination' were not always available for participants, and there was a sense that this would be beneficial. ACE participants in stage 1 of the research discussed how they had little opportunity to mix due to a lack of appropriate spaces. There had previously been a large general staffroom 'where you would all sit around a table and have your lunch, and also computers round the outside and you did mix better then with different departments'. However, following its removal only a small kitchen area remained available and therefore wider conversation 'tends to be little areas dotted about'. In section 6.3 we saw the importance of the availability of suitable physical space and here we see the impact on the movement and spread of ideas and knowledge.

Whilst findings have shown the value of close collegial groups, exemplified by the 'little bubble' that FE participant Shelley so 'loved being part of', there is a sense here that the opportunity to mix more widely and extend these was important. Michelle's account of sitting around a table over lunch, with a wider mix of people, offers a glimpse into a past moment where there was more of a chance to mix. Instead of those 'little areas dotted around' there was an opportunity to move into a more diverse, communal area. Participants valued connecting more widely both inside and outside of the organisation. External events provided the opportunity to exchange ideas and ask questions of others about 'the things that you have to think about and what have they done about it' (Stage 1, Int.4). This expanded collegiality from 'the small circle of people' in the immediate environment to a wider support mechanism (ibid) and allowed ideas to be brought back to that main circle.

Expanding outside of the exchanges and relationships with close colleagues therefore created a more dynamic picture of participants' interactions. In the account below, participant Elaine described how a monthly 'shut down' routine helped facilitate interactions much more widely within the prison:

> We have a whole day where we have no learners, they're all locked up…. the governor will do a meeting which we're expected to attend, but also on those days I'll do a breakfast, or we'll do a buffet, or we'll do some kind of a gathering so that we can draw together all the different departments within education…. it's a good way of trying to bring us all together as a united team rather than all these little pockets that we get. (Stage 3, FG 1)

These accounts show how participants reached out from their 'little pockets' of collegial groups into wider circles. Karen (ACE, Stage 1, Int.4) referred to 'networks' she had developed following external events and this is an interesting distinction from the closer relationships predominantly evident across the findings. This does indicate that there was still a value in more casually occurring, loosely connected interactions, sometimes momentarily, for example during an event, or over a meal. These moments were still social and useful but lacked the emotional connection we have seen in more closely-knit groups. However, such networking did have value in allowing information to be brought back into the closer team, as seen in participant Linda's account of liaising with another team on behaviour strategies:

> I had a horrendous level 2 class … you've tried everything and they're not responding. I went and observed a class down in the construction area where behaviour was an issue and I worked with a construction tutor to develop strategies.... the way I personally spoke to them, handled certain situations, addressed the work that they were doing …. it was definitely something that stands out, it was a case where everyone in [my team] was at a bit of a loss with this group and so I ended up reaching out to an area where I knew they dealt with level 1 and level 2 learners and they understood more about the strategies. (Stage 2, interview)

Here Linda had the capacity to move away from her immediate environment and 'collect' information which was then shared with her team in practice. Without having that freedom to 'reach out' the team may have continued to struggle. This represents a less managed space where collegial communities have been able to move outside of departmental structures. We see the crossing of boundaries of a more expansive environment (Fuller, 2004) and a view of expertise from other teachers, as opposed to a 'top down' imposition. However, when connected to the previous findings around lack of support, it is relevant that this was resolved independently; the responsibility lay with the teachers, whose priorities were to support their students. A localised production of knowledge resulted from Linda's stand-out 'moment' which was then 're-seeded' within her collegial group and into practice. This 'moment' both was and became 'the history of the individual in [her] everyday life' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.638) and Lefebvre's point that 'this cannot not be separated from the social sphere' is pertinent since it was embedded within collegiality. It seems that the experience has been re-shared with colleagues as a 'higher form of repetition, renewal and reappearance' (ibid).

6.6 Freedom from association with imposed collegial structures

We have seen across the data how collegial relationships worked as natural, spontaneous entities. Operating on a foundation of close bonds, they were characterised by human moments of interaction which constituted a continual process within the everyday lives of participants. This contrasted with accounts in both FE and military settings of institutional attempts to create 'communities of practice'. In Linda's experience (FE, Stage 2, interview), there were regular, planned meetings for designated 'hubs' of people from different subjects and areas, designed for the sharing of practice. The data shows how very different these were to the concept of IPGs and it is argued below that these became an *abstraction* in spatial terms. Linda described how they 'did a learning hour' every half term, which they were 'expected to attend' and therefore they 'do communities of practice'. She felt that this had a limited impact:

> Some of it … gets a bit lost… Some people participate, some people don't, some people don't see it as worthwhile, they want to be doing their marking and other things. But there were a few good things that I got from there… we would have maybe our own focus of things we were going to discuss within that hub but then we would all feedback, like a class. (Stage 2, interview)

Military participants described a similar initiative, which was found to have limited momentum. In a similar way, these events brought people from different sections together for an hour every month. All participants felt that this 'just wasn't natural' with a 'forced agenda' and little follow up. This contrasted with the more organic communication in the tea bar where 'you might have nothing to say that day, or you might be talking about a hundred things'. (Stage 1, Int. 6)

From the descriptions of the college learning hour, it is evident that there was a formalised and highly managed process in place. Participants were assigned to groups and topics were decided ahead. The scheduling of the 'learning hour' was prescribed to fit in with timetables, and attendance was 'expected'. There was some scope for 'our own focus on things' in the discussions, however the structure appeared rigid, with feedback time allocated 'like a class'. The benefit derived appeared limited, with some of the focus felt to 'get lost'. Linda subsequently described how this organised CoP led her to initiate a helpful

contact with a previously unknown colleague outside of her own department, but there were no other benefits relayed.

Similarly, the agenda for the military meetings was out of step with participants' needs and interests. The process itself seemed artificial; people were 'sent off' to these events and participants felt they had 'to come up with something' (Colin, Stage 1, Int.6). This contrasted with the more organic and ad hoc interactions taking place in the tea bar, where topics of conversation were unplanned. The tea bar was referred to as 'our' tea bar, reflecting a sense of ownership of these informal process (Colin, Stage 1, Int.6); participants showed here a connection to this natural, collegial process, as opposed to one where, even though intended to be informal, was felt by participants to be 'ticking a box'. A contrast can be made between the way participants also described 'no-one really want[ing] to be there' and 'a lot of looking out of the window' (Stuart, Stage 1, Int.6) and earlier comments in the findings such as 'work is about relationships of one sort or another and that is what gives it meaning ' (Jo, FE, Stage 2) and that working together 'just sort of flourished,' (Linda, FE, Stage 2). We see that 'those coincidental discussions that have come from somebody saying something else' (Will, FE, Stage 2) are meaningful and vibrant in contrast. In the latter examples, as shown throughout the findings, a bond and connection had been formed that ran more deeply; it was neither forced nor scheduled.

Both the FE and military accounts show a process whereby institutions were seeking to harness informal collegial relationships in order to improve the sharing of practice and knowledge and provide a strategic benefit (Hughes, 2007; Probst and Brazillo, 2008). This reflects Wenger's later and more commercialised application of CoP theory, which sees knowledge as a commodity which needs to be tightly managed 'just as systematically as companies manage other critical assets' (Wenger et al, 2002, p. xiii). Here there is an attempt to equate a complex human process with any other resource or commodity, and thereby manufacture collegiality; the 'cultivating' of CoPs (Wenger et al, 2002). However, as the accounts above illustrate, this was not possible (Roberts, 2006). There may have been small aspects which were 'quite fruitful', such as identifying others with whom it might be useful to network, however this did not resemble or create the self-created, organic energies seen in naturally occurring collegial relationships. In spatial terms, organic processes have

seemingly been 'paved over by abstract templates of the conceived (Middleton, 2014, p. 43). Participants were disconnected from a process which was imposed, thereby presenting a *conceived space* or an *abstraction*, designed by others not residing in that space themselves. The term 'community of practice' therefore seems here to have become an abstraction, appropriated through a practice which exerts dominance over its meaning.

In contrast, findings highlight how 'real' CoPs were unrecognised by the institutions in which they operated and were therefore not seen as being of value. In the first focus group for Stage 3 of the research, Jo (FE) valued opportunities to develop a community with work colleagues, however she felt that it was seen as a 'non-thing' and not valued within the institution. Elaine (OL) felt in response that talking to colleagues was seen as 'just chatting', for example over lunch, when in fact problems were being shared and resolved, such as how to support more challenging students. The focus group extract below provides an example of the real work being undertaken behind the veil of a seemingly informal CPD event:

> **Jo:** It's about trust… In our team we did just an afternoon tea and we bought some nice crockery and made the tables really nice and within 10 minutes of people actually relaxing with a cup of tea and a piece of cake everybody talked about work, everybody swapped ideas. People were not just talking about random things, they talked about work and everybody laughed … I had a problem with a learner and I've got some ideas now, so it just created a really nice relaxed, supportive environment and that is missing from the kind of CPD we do now. (Stage 3, FG 1)

The feeling that collegial relationships were seen as a 'non-thing' contrasts with the descriptions of both Elaine, regarding working and solving problems over lunch, and Jo in her example of a CPD event planned with colleagues around the collegial, social process of an afternoon tea. The gulf in perception and understanding between participants and their managers is significant and sharply contrasting. Participants distinguished their examples very clearly as work, integrated into, and benefitting from, their social context. However, managers seemed unable to see this connection, instead viewing interactions as idle chat. This raises a question about the extent to which teachers were trusted, participant Jo (above) herself linking her example to trust. The failure to recognise such processes highlights a wider difference in perception around identity and development, and beliefs about how fully teachers' work accounts for, and allows them the space to be who they are as people. This is perhaps connected to the managerial influence within organisations whereby, if a process cannot be measured and captured, it is of little value; there is a principle of 'making

the implicit explicit' (Green, 2004, p.549) in attempting to creating artificial collegial groups which misses the depth and value of those which form naturally. Illeris identified that pressures within a marketised society 'downgrade' the priority of professional learning and development (Illeris, 2007, p.222), and therefore advocated ways to systematise *accidental* learning. However, as we saw in the artificially created CoPs discussed above, this is problematic.

6.7 Chapter conclusion

In considering the conditions which both support and impede collegial interactions, this chapter has highlighted consistent tensions between institutional control over different elements of time and space, and the freedom of teachers to connect meaningfully with each other in an organic and natural process. The perpetual dialogue occurring between colleagues was informal and unmanaged, finding its space more easily when routines brought people together, for example in breaks at the same time in work rooms, or in chance encounters. When challenged by time and space, participants 'grabbed time' and sought out these interactions.

Physical communal space was found to play an important role in the exchange of ideas and experiences and the learning which arose from such interactions. The freedom to move around to collect and re-seed new thoughts and ideas was seen to be important. How departments were physically organised made a difference, for example some were seen as being organised in a way which made interaction with colleagues very difficult. Staff workrooms in colleges, lunch tables/areas in offender learning, and tea bars and prep rooms in military settings all provided safe spaces where discussions could occur organically, away from surveillance. However, the advent of covid-19 presented a major disruption to the rhythms of these spaces, and the data collected during the pandemic highlighted their importance to participants. There was also a recognition that such spaces are under pressure from systems such as room utilisation 'accounting', with the consequential removal of spaces such as staff canteen areas and a reduction in common break and lunch times. This can be seen in Lefebvrian terms as capital killing 'creative capacity' and 'immediacy' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.63). There is a resonance between this tight control of physical space and Lefebvre's account of the effects of capitalism whereby,

> The wills, the wishes of the property owners are not there for nothing: they execute. Through them, the death-dealing character of capital is accomplished' (ibid)

Furthermore, they have 'cut up time; they have broken it up into hourly slots' (ibid, p.57).

The contexts of military and offender learning were found to have some specific implications in the data around space, time and place. Unique to military participants was the proliferation of routinised spaces and time slots which provided good opportunities for collegial interaction, for example with 'tea bars everywhere' being embedded into day-to-day life, mirroring the wider military working culture.

Institutional attempts at 'manufacturing' learning communities were often not able to gain momentum or help participants to develop solutions to day-to-day issues or facilitate development in the areas they would themselves have found useful, although in some cases they were helpful for networking. These could be seen as 'spaces' of abstraction, designed by management but functioning poorly in terms of teachers' needs. In contrast, unplanned informal dialogue provided a consistent, low-key support structure, a Lefebvrian 'murmur', which occurred organically in response to issues as they arose. A private and sometimes secret space, this was found to be unacknowledged and under-recognised and yet it was central to the functioning of the educational work taking place.

This chapter has concluded the presentation the data arising from my analysis whereby, time and again, data showed that participants themselves created time and space around the pressures of the linear day, despite being unseen and unacknowledged by their institutions. We saw that these spaces lived in a state of tension, but could flourish more easily when break times coincided, and often when a physical space could be shared, which provides implications for management decisions.

In summary, from the outset of the research, I have been attempting to illuminate a concept which is difficult to articulate, to grasp its essence. Through the two data analysis chapters presented, participants did affirm the existence of IPGs in their accounts across the four PCE strands examined, and the data revealed a range of complex processes and benefits deriving from these relationships. The data illustrated that these were not always perfect panaceas, however in the 'moments' where significant interactions occurred there was indeed a 'magical dimension to daily life' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.693) and, in the ongoing support they

provided, they could help mitigate and override some of the systematic and contextual challenges experienced by teachers in the sector. Particularly where conditions allowed such possibilities to flourish, these provided a means of countering the kind of working climate pressures which Middleton (2014, p.154) refers to as the 'bureaucratic rhythms [which] pound through historic cyclic pulses and linear beats of academic life'.

The next chapter will contemplate these findings in order to provide conclusions in specific response to the research questions identified. I will also reflect on the implications of the research and the process of my research journey.

Chapter Seven - Conclusions and recommendations

The concluding chapter will now consider the highlights from the research findings, how they relate to the research questions and the implications and consequences for policy and practice, and specifically what they might mean for policy makers and managers within the current English post-compulsory education system. The research set out to discover whether and how IPGs might give teachers a 'voice' within the sector through the spaces of their discourse, collaboration and collegial relationships. It sought to understand the influence on these processes of the managerialism explored in Chapter Two across a range of different settings in PCE. My aim was to illuminate the nature of IPGs in PCE institutions, how they functioned and were sustained within the wider context of neoliberalism and the marketization of FE (Ball, 2012; Illsley and Waller, 2017; Lucas and Crowther, 2015). Returning to the idyll of social, collegial discourse and the metaphorical garden of professional fellowship, it is poignant that 'Epicureans ignored politics and valued friendship above all other human relations', but also that they 'relied heavily on donations to survive' (Classical Wisdom, 2022, para.3). How far has the socio-political climate and organisational culture in which IPGs are located either impeded or supported the spaces where they can thrive?

7.1 Key themes in response to the research questions

The following sections present and discuss the conclusions of the research in response to each research question in turn, before a reflection on the research process itself and its implications for future practice are considered later on in the chapter.

7.1.1. To what extent and why can socially situated IPGs be seen to exist within different strands of the PCE sector and how can these be understood using a spatial and rhythmanalytical framework?

The research findings demonstrated that the presence of what I referred to as IPGs as a working term was pervasive and embedded across all strands of the sector, albeit with some variation in the conditions in which they operated, as discussed below in my response to the third research question. Clearly between sector strands in the research, the commonalties

were stronger than the differences in terms of the phenomenon itself. They were often unseen, unacknowledged and under-valued by the organisations in which participants worked, residing within the everyday interactions of teachers and the bonded relationships they shared. Despite this, they were critical in enabling the key activities of the institutions in which they were operated, providing an invisible structure which held these activities together, including the emotional work taking place with students. They originated from a complex blend of contextual, social and emotional factors which drove teachers together to form close bonds and were intensified by collaboration in values-driven work and challenging contexts.

The research was first inspired by the concept of CoP (Wenger, 1998), and a desire to look inside such groups in order to understand their constitution and operation more fully. However, the deployment of spatial and rhythmanalytical concepts to understand the research findings has illustrated a more complex phenomenon which is less visible, blended into social interactions and which involves close personal ties in a manner unlike the depiction in CoP theory, and the subsequent views of collegiality discussed in Chapter Two. Unlike Hargreaves' view that close bonds are rare (Hargreaves, 2001), this was not the case within the research and examples were richly described in the accounts narrated by participants across all the strands examined. This experience was nonetheless perceived as something precious, and it seemed at times to evoke a sense of Lefebvre's festival, where 'time was punctuated by festivals – which were celebrated in space' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.267). In this case the space was a consciousness, a 'human' and naturally occurring process which could not be captured for strategic gain. In conceptualising this phenomenon, it appeared as a process, the antithesis of the structure and tangibility of a fixed, or boundaried, group of members. This process resided within participant interactions and relationships and was dynamic, spontaneous and sometimes fleeting, reflecting Lefebvre's focus on presence as opposed to the present and being fully human (Middleton, 2014), with the potential to exchange, even in short moments, their histories and values. The concept was characterised by a rhythmic pattern of many small yet sustaining conversations and interactions: Lefebvrian 'moments' of possibility and enrichment which had the ability to interrupt the hegemonic rhythms of conceived space. These were spontaneous, a 'shouting over the fence' as one participant termed it. However, they were not contained to specific settings, but

could move beyond immediate team structures, to conversations external to the institution and into the private, social domains and time of the teacher participants. The freedom they exercised to do this differed under different conditions within the sector strands in the research, and this is discussed below (see research question three). The 'work arounds' that participants employed to sustain their interactions illustrated how they 'bended and flexed' (research participant) to navigate barriers and find unsupervised 'spaces', away from intrusion or interference, as discussed further below (research question 3).

7.1.2. What is the value of these groups to teachers' practice and identity and how are they created and sustained?

The accounts and examples provided across the different settings showed that participants derived significant value from their interactions and relationships in IPGs. Their functions included providing emotional support as an antidote to isolation (Lortie, 1975). This was a significant finding in the research and included powerful accounts of teachers finding that the kind of sustenance they derived from each other helped them to survive everyday challenges, negotiate complex emotional issues related to students, and ultimately stay in the job, given the unique nature of the role and its pressures. This was the case across all strands, although military participants did not express feelings of isolation, which may well reflect the nature of their work; their histories within a culture of working and living closely with others who might represent a 'second family' (Hall, 2011, p.12).

Interactions within these spaces also supported developments in practice. The spaces identified were safe and trusted 'places', where new approaches could be trialled with the support and reassurance of someone 'having your back' if those innovations did not work. This privacy expanded teachers' practice and helped them to build esteem. Participants made sense of situations together and shared a collective responsibility for decisions. A criticism of such close collegial work was that it might foster relations of dependence (Löfgren and Karlsson, 2016); however, this was not found to be the case, with participants recounting how their shared work increased their confidence and contributed to the development of their professional practice. These spaces and moments also supported participants in their professional learning and knowledge development on both pedagogic and subject specific dimensions. Unplanned, spontaneous conversations enacted knowledge

sharing instantaneously at the time and place it was needed and in context to the situation. This contrasted with accounts of institutional CPD sessions which were generic and had a top-down agenda. Participants showed a resigned acceptance of many such sessions, instead waiting for them to conclude so that they could talk about quite different issues around their subject, their practice and their students. Where participants instigated their own shared learning, this was informal, social and driven by the immediate requirements of their work in context, and the situations with their students. Criticisms identified in the literature review around such informal learning processes, were that they are not structured, evaluated or based on theoretical principles (Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhamadi, 2016; Illeris, 2007). However, my research illustrates that such arguments must be viewed within the context of the failure of institutions to provide the kind of learning and support that meets teachers' needs and values; teachers are learning and finding solutions to the problems *they* see as important, and in a manner that provides meaning. Furthermore, to measure and attempt to capture informal processes of this nature, even if this were possible, would destroy what makes them precious and distinct to the teachers who benefit from them. Imposed hierarchical structures and CPD events in the research were shown to be not truly collaborative but instead represented a 'contrived collegiality' which is said to threaten professional autonomy (Hargreaves, 1991). There was a contrast exposed between the explicit forms of knowledge promoted by such top-down professional learning practices and the more implicit knowledge valued by participants (Green, 2004), as teachers navigated their own way through important processes such as induction, similarly unsupported by the institution. There was also a high value placed by participants on subject specific support, again coming from colleagues as opposed to their institutions, who provided this inconsistently. For some participants, this represented a lifeline, but also a richness in their working lives, for example though talking to others about their subject and sharing ideas, practice and resources.

Another important element for participants was connected to the way they formed and developed their identity as teachers. The formation of identity as a part of a collective was a feature which arose within the research. The nature of the values participants shared and enacted with one another, the reflection on student stories and issues, helped bond teachers together and was a key element in forming professional identity, embedded into social and

everyday conversation. Participant accounts, particularly in FE and ACE, illustrated a strong sense of identity around this commitment to students and a shared concept of 'social justice' (Hytten and Bettez (2011). This was again a dynamic process, and it also involved disagreements and subsequent resolution on the issues being discussed. This counters the view that there is an absence of challenge within collegial relationships which impedes opportunities for development (Hargreaves, 2002); rather it highlighted their authenticity and the openness with which teachers could express their views.

The research also cast light on how teachers sustained collegial spaces themselves within their day to day lives. Throughout the findings there were frequent references to terms such as 'grabbing time', and 'bouncing ideas', and it seemed that relationships and interactions had an opportunistic element, taking advantage of chance moments. These were 'imperfect chances' (Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhahmadi, 2016, p.198) and therefore this indicated that they were being limited. However, it was also the case that teachers used their own time and more private spaces for their interactions and this encouraged their relationships to thrive. Teachers actively pursued interactions with colleagues, for example working in different locations, in order to collaborate and share practice and IPGs were self-regulating and driven by teachers themselves. There was a sense that individuals were more drawn to work and collaborate with certain colleagues over others, but this was not over-riding; most were open to, and derived benefit from, meaningful relationships with others; that there were 'outliers' who did not share that desire was a source of disappointment to participants. However, it also seemed to be the case that trust and shared values may take time to develop, and further research could be undertaken in the future to consider whether newcomers might change their disposition to collegiality in time, through a more longitudinal study. In the meantime, the research indicated that there was a duality whereby IPGs were enacted or 'created' instantaneously 'in a moment' of exchange, however the complex and trusted process of bonds being formed between teachers was the foundation for these interactions and could initially take time to establish.

7.1.3. How do macro and micro contextual issues affect the existence, growth and function of IPGs within the context of PCE in England?

In Chapter Two, I considered the contextual issues influencing PCE settings, and therefore the teachers and IPG spaces within them. Neoliberalism, marketised policies, and the resulting impact on funding at a macro level have been discussed, as well as working conditions and managerialised practices influencing the micro level. There were also particular factors influencing the specific strands in the research. Across the strands, the research showed that these factors presented challenges and tensions for teachers and the growth and function of IPGs.

The contrast in values and priorities between teachers and the institutions they worked for was one such factor. Resonant with Fuller and Unwin's (2004) model of more restrictive environments, different priorities in terms of resourcing, organisational structure, support, professional identity and professional learning were all evidenced within the research. Decisions about site locations, timetabling and workloads all impacted on the opportunities teachers had to collaborate. Given, as stated above, that these opportunities were often opportunistic, the impact of such decisions was to present barriers to these opportunities, which varied between the institutions where participants worked. Accounts of set break and lunchtimes in some settings (military and offender learning) highlighted how micro contextual factors can facilitate or thwart these opportunities. In colleges it was a particular challenge to find regular patterns for informal conversations to support the consistency of opportunity for 'gems of knowledge' to embed themselves naturally in the dialogue between colleagues. There was a unique tea bar and prep room culture within the military setting which supported this well. However, the decimation of set breaks and communal areas for staff in colleges blocked the flow of these conversations and teachers then relied more on chance encounters.

Despite such restrictions, participants found their own spaces for meaning, learning and collaboration. Their interactions contained meaning outside of linear temporality: they therefore constituted presence as opposed to merely occurring as events in the present, an appropriation of space which resisted the recognised structures and conceived space of the everyday. This could be seen as a trialectical dimension to Fuller and Unwin's restrictive-

expansive continuum. In looking at teacher relationships through a spatial lens, it has been possible to see how pockets of 'expansiveness' can exist within the shadows of even harsh, poor quality environments. Fuller and Unwin's characteristics of expansive and restrictive environments (2004) are produced again here in Table 10, together with observations from the research regarding how participants' spaces and interactions provided the potential to counter these, albeit with varying success; this has illustrated the ways in which 'the moment reorganises surrounding space' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.647).

Table 10: Expansive, restrictive and spatial characteristics within contextual conditions

EXPANSIVE	RESTRICTIVE	SPATIAL DIMENSION
Participation in multiple communities of practice inside and outside the workplace	Restricted participation in multiple communities of practice	Social spaces were created within the process of interaction. Spaces could be unseen and private.
Primary community of practice has shared 'participative memory': cultural inheritance of workforce development	Primary community of practice has little or no 'participative memory': no or little tradition of apprenticeship	There was a sense of participative memory enacted in spontaneous 'moments' of interaction.
Breadth: access to learning fostered by cross company experiences	Narrow: access to learning restricted in terms of tasks/knowledge/location	Knowledge was accessed and shared within informal, and social interactions at the point of need, aligned with teacher values and interests.
Access to range of qualifications including knowledge-based NVQ	Little or no access to qualifications	Whilst qualification access was less pertinent to spatial dynamics, participant and institutional values differed with examples of participants having aspirations to pursue wider qualifications aligned to their subjects (e.g. language skills linked to catering).
Planned time off-the-job including for knowledge-based courses, and for reflection	Virtually all-on-job: limited opportunities for reflection	Location of learning and reflection in informal spaces moved *around* the job, between scheduled tasks, including into social non-work environments. Planned courses were considered of less value (e.g. college CPD, 'synthetic'/ manufactured CoPs)
Gradual transition to full, rounded participation	Fast – transition as quick as possible	IPGs developed organically, independent of formal processes. New employees

EXPANSIVE	RESTRICTIVE	SPATIAL DIMENSION
		were supported/inducted by colleagues informally.
Vision of workplace learning: progression for career	Vision of workplace learning: static for job	Informal learning and collaboration related to the job, yet interactions had a dynamic energy and a connection to wider career based values. Conversations were more than static, mundane/trivial issues - participants 'grabbed time' to talk about their subjects and shared scholarly interests.
Organisational recognition of, and support for employees as learners	Lack of organisational recognition of, and support for employees as learners	IPGs contained their own informal support for learning (e.g. induction, creative projects and subject pedagogy)
Workforce development is used as a vehicle for aligning the goals of developing the individual and organisational capability	Workforce development is used to tailor individual capability to organisational need	Informal spaces and the development within them existed independently - organisational needs were served 'invisibly' and unrecognised due to their focus on students and an informal collective sharing of responsibility and strategies
Workforce development fosters opportunities to extend identity through boundary crossing	Workforce development limits opportunities to extend identity: little boundary crossing experienced	Collegial spaces supported confidence building and identity development. Participants independently pursued the crossing of boundaries (e.g. to find other subject specialists and collaborators)
Reification of 'workplace curriculum' highly developed (e.g. through documents, symbols, language, tools) and accessible to apprentices	Limited reification of 'workplace curriculum' patchy access to reificatory aspects of practice	Participants projected their own meanings into discussions about work and students. The enacted curriculum was therefore influenced by teachers, outside of formal frameworks
Widely distributed skills	Polarised distribution of skills	IPGs initiated the distribution of skills (e.g. pedagogic and subject knowledge). Participants were shown to 'scatter' and come back together with knowledge and ideas
Technical skills valued	Technical skills taken for granted	Participants valued and shared each other's skills and differences within their own

EXPANSIVE	RESTRICTIVE	SPATIAL DIMENSION
		interactional spaces (e.g. combining respective creative and IT skills in informal collaboration)
Knowledge and skills of whole workforce developed and valued	Knowledge and skills of key workers/groups developed and valued	Participation in IPGs showed some niches and 'outliers' but these spaces cannot be directed as they develop organically
Team work valued	Rigid specialist roles	'Team work' is less resonant as a term applied to informal spaces, however there was an unseen sense of shared responsibility and collaboration was organic, spontaneous and fluid, not 'rigid'.
Cross-boundary communication encouraged	Bounded communication	Teachers' interactions transitioned into social and private spaces. Participants sought out interactions with others external to their immediate colleagues, directed by self-identified needs.
Managers as facilitators of workforce and individual development	Managers as controllers of workforce and individual development	Informal spaces 'worked around' this to focus on development agendas as they arose
Chances to learn new skills/jobs	Barriers to learning new skills/jobs	Participant-led informal projects arose from social interaction and sharing creative ideas. These were sometimes imperfect chances which relied on opportunities arising, but they could result in rich learning opportunities
Innovation important	Innovation not important	See above regarding creative projects taking place as a result of chance encounters and informal conversation 'spaces'.
Multi-dimensional view of expertise	Uni-dimentional top-down view of expertise	IPGs facilitated teachers sharing a deep understanding of each others' roles, experience and specific challenges

Looking at Table 10, it therefore appears that teachers in the study were able to adapt within, and counter, the kind of environmental restrictions outlined above, driven by their

values and the bonds they shared with each other, and through moments of meaning. In this way, it could be argued there existed 'eruptions' or 'pockets' of expansiveness, owned and directed by teachers themselves. The way this occurred was often seen as an antidote to those conditions, and I have aligned this with a clash between the linear and cyclical rhythms and forces at play in the everyday (Lefebvre, 2020). However, the systemised barriers needing to be overcome were sometimes significant, as discussed above. The extent that environmental factors could be overcome depended on opportunities for 'chance' encounters to occur, organisational structure, timetabling and the availability of shared, unobserved physical spaces; these factors all contributed to the extent of the challenge. It is therefore enlightening that teachers were nevertheless able to create their own spaces within an unseen, socio-collegial consciousness. However, an area of concern is the extent to which the key functions of the institutions they worked for relied on them, and yet failed to value or even see them; as one participant stated, they were seen as a 'non-thing'. On the one hand institutions tried to replicate 'collegiality', yet on the other they failed to resource or provide time for the 'real thing'. Trust, time and opportunity would be needed to nurture the special and unique nature of IPGs, and perhaps the 'transmutation' of institutions in the way that Gull and Doh (2004) envisaged, as discussed in Chapter Two. Yet the research has shown how beneficial such relationships and interactions were to teachers' practice, confidence and identity, and also therefore to them remaining in the profession.

Applying a spatial and rhythmanalytical lens to the research has revealed that for the participants in the research there did exist a 'social time or social time scales which are distinct from biological, physiological and physical time scales' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.525). The seemingly impenetrable linear forces within their environments clashed with more human and organic rhythms of everyday life and presented barriers, yet these spaces bent, lurked and 'erupted', invisibly and sometimes fleetingly 'in passing', at lunchtime, over coffee but always in response to what was needed. In doing so they provided the 'murmur' of constant conversation that had in its power the capacity to override alienation through spontaneous exchanges, creative collaboration and through deep relational connections between people. The research has captured some of these moments, and shown how when they occur, 'the uniting of the Moment and the everyday, of poetry and all that is prosaic in

the world, in short, of Festival and ordinary life' is 'on a higher plane than anything which has hitherto been accomplished' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.643).

7.2. Reflections on my journey and development as a Doctoral researcher

Savva and Nygaard (2021) discuss academic identity and what it means to be a scholar. They highlight how aspects which might have been praised in previous education or professional contexts may need to be re-evaluated by a student undertaking a doctoral programme. In my own position as a part time professional student, I had first learnt academic skills during a Bachelor of Science degree and continued my academic journey with an educational master's programme, where my research included a more quantitative approach. Both experiences were tightly structured and linear in process, which I found to contrast with this research project which has involved a high degree of self-organisation and information management, and which was also entirely qualitative. In addition, my self-identity on beginning this journey was firmly placed within the boundaries of a practical professional, as opposed to an academic scholar, since at that time I was not working at a university and did not consider myself an 'academic'. Therefore, my experience as a doctoral research student has involved a re-alignment of previous perceptions and I can now see an expanded identity involving both elements, which will continue to evolve.

There are specific areas where my skills as a researcher have developed during the research. Applying reflexive practice to the research was important, particularly due to the qualitative nature of this research. Fulton et al (2013, p.37) state that this means 'truly understanding yourself as a professional, being aware of your own values, prejudices and limits and ensuring that you act in full knowledge of why you are doing something'. This was critical in every stage of the research process and the military approval committee in particular (see Chapter Four) made me think more deeply about the positioning of the research in its wider context, as well as elucidate the rationale behind my approach to a challenging and unfamiliar audience.

I also gained a greater awareness of the role of creativity within the research process. Sternberg (2006, p.97) suggested that 'creativity is in large part a decision that anyone can make but that few people actually do make because they find the costs to be too high'.

Having the confidence to make a decision to choose a more creative approach was something which grew during the research process. Using visual imagery gathered via an online data collection tool was an unfamiliar approach through which I expanded my perception of the nature of data and the methods of collecting and analysing this available to the researcher. Using creative methods in analysing large amounts of qualitative data, as discussed in Chapter Four, was also something that added to my experience as a researcher, and helped give me sense of confidence that such a task, when at first seeming overwhelming, can be accomplished. This also highlighted the need for perseverance and patience; this stage of the research in particular took time, reflection and revisions to the themes and organisation of the data which could not be rushed.

A recent study showed that over 80% of participant researchers found that Covid-19 restrictions had forced them to change the way they went about their research (Vitae, 2021). This was a further significant area of my development, with the pandemic occurring within the midst of the second stage of my fieldwork. The need to respond to change, and yet still maintain the integrity of the research was a valuable experience to negotiate.

7.3. Limitations of the research

The need to adapt research methods due to the pandemic, as mentioned above, meant that a change of method was made from participants collecting interactive, multi-modal real time data to online interviews instead. This was unavoidable without causing an unacceptable delay to the research. However, it resulted in more interview data being collected than was originally planned, and therefore a reduced opportunity to triangulate different forms of data. This did not remove but perhaps limited the opportunities through which I could look at the findings 'from more than one standpoint' (Cohen et al, 2018, p.265). The data in this stage of the fieldwork was less multi-modal than I had intended, although there was still a range in the type of data participants captured. The original plan for this stage of the fieldwork was also that data occurring in everyday life would be captured as close to 'real time' as possible, in alignment with my intention to look inside the operation of collegial groups and relationships, with a Lefebvrian focus on the everyday. With participants in lockdown and working at home, this was not possible, and therefore an element of this

intention could not be fulfilled to the extent planned. This did occur to an extent, and the shortfall was otherwise mitigated through in-depth one to one accounts. Where this did occur, through the use of KoBoToolbox, the data was rich, and this is something I would like to pursue in future research. It was not planned for all participants to use the KoBoToolbox system due to the security and confidentiality of military and offender learning settings, so some variation in data capture for this stage had already been considered, however, it would have perhaps strengthened the research to have had a single, consistent method throughout this stage.

7.4. Contribution to knowledge

In reflecting on the original contribution to knowledge of my research, there are several dimensions on which this evaluation can take place. Cohen et al (2018) identify a number of elements as below which will be helpful in informing this evaluation:

> It is important to consider how the research takes the field forwards not only in terms of data, but also conceptually, theoretically, substantively and/or methodologically. At issue here is not only the contribution to knowledge that the research makes, but the impact of that knowledge. (Cohen et al, 2018, p.157)

The research looked at collegial relationships through a fresh theoretical lens; one which drew on rhythmanalytical and spatial concepts to consider informal teacher interactions and relationships within the pressures of a managerialised context. The sections which follow will outline several areas of consequence arising both conceptual and for application within the context of post compulsory education in England.

7.4.1 Advancing the concept of IPGs

The findings concluded above can now lead to a refinement of the concept of the phenomenon I termed IPGs at the beginning of this thesis. In Chapter Two I discussed how, up until this point, various terms and words had been used (and overused) to potentially describe a phenomenon, often interchangeably, and yet none had been capable of fully capturing its essence as a concept. I therefore introduced the term IPG in the thesis as an initial working description of an as yet undefined concept which would serve as a starting point for my investigation into informal, collective groups within the professional domain of teachers' practice. Reflecting on the research findings, I believe that the concept is broader

and more unique than IPGs, constituting the discursive and interactional energies and dynamism of the affective and relational process and spaces that the research has illustrated, and the nature of the close bonds between teachers presented in the findings. In order to conceptualise this more accurately, there is a need to rescind its identity as a 'group'. We have seen interactions discussed been between pairs of individuals, fleeting moments and conversations and rich exchanges which have not always been boundaried within a specific group or number of people. This has presented a more fluid picture than the more static, structured connotations of a group. In addition, although the interaction process was indeed found to be both 'informal' and operating within a 'professional' context, there needs to be more recognition that this is an affective, social and highly complex process. Often unseen and operating within liminal, sometimes private spaces, this is a powerful energy which serves a critical purpose as an antidote to alienating working practices, characterised by moments of significance, synergy and impact between individuals at any moment in time. It may be informal, yet is it has significant impact. Therefore, in order to represent this as an important, shared social process, capable of vying for its own space, I now see the concept as that of *socio-collegial discursive spaces.* The development of this concept reflects a shift in focus from a less precise and generalised group concept into a more specifically defined discursive process which acknowledges the shared spaces themselves and their value. Rather than being focused on the notion of a more physically orientated group, socio-collegial discursive spaces as a concept encompasses both the importance of the social aspect of shared values and collegial work but also highlights the energies of the changing and flexing rhythms which we have seen at play as interactions supported teachers to adapt, persist and maintain their values around the linear pressures of the conceived space of marketized settings. I believe, therefore that the concept of socio-collegial discursive spaces provides a significant advance on the earlier and broader notion of IPGs and this is valuable in advocating the facilitation of spaces for discourse and interaction amidst the tensions of organisational spaces.

7.4.2 Refining Lefebvrian theory

In applying rhythmic and spatial concepts to my research within a real, working context, I have reflected on whether this practical application and operationalisation of Lefebvrian concepts can provide any refinement on Lefebvre's theoretical perspective. Although this

might first appear an unattainable task, it is notable how a significant element within the research has been its illustration of pivotal moments for participants, and how these occurred. Lefebvre's theory of moments seems therefore to present a potential area for further illumination from a theoretical perspective. Lefebvre's writing on the theory of moments has been inspiring to me as a researcher, with its focus on possibility and opportunity encapsulated within a transitory exchange or experience. That there are 'always 'moments' of revelation or rebellion' (Middleton, 2014, p.22) resonates with the narratives shared by participants in the research as they have countered hostile circumstances. However, although beautifully conveyed, how is 'the attempt to achieve the total realization of a possibility' (Lefebvre, 2014, p.642) actually created and enacted? Lefebvre states that the moment is 'born of the everyday' (ibid, p.645) yet it is not always clear how such metaphorical possibilities occur and are mobilised in reality. Looking back on the research findings, these moments have some commonalities which could support a refinement of our understanding of this aspect of the theory. We have seen in the research findings how participants' 'moments' occurred dialogically, since it was through their discourse that they brought together their respective emotions and recall of experiences in a momentary instant. These instances were often prompted by a challenge or problem which initiated this dialogue and 'got the conversation started' and sometimes this was instigated by emotion, for example the feeling of vulnerability after a difficult classroom incident, or the overhearing of a critical dilemma being discussed and the desire to support a colleague. For these conversations to be mobilised into moments of meaning however, they required the underpinning of the shared values and relationships already in place. Sparked by crisis and emotion, moments were then formed through a dialogue which relied on trust and the bonds between teachers. The collegial, bonded and affective spaces we saw participants appropriate created a state of readiness for these moments to occur and, when they were enacted, they created an enabling force which had the capability to change a negative incident or feeling into a more positive energy, such as having more confidence in your teaching approach, feeling that a responsibility was being shared or moving on from a dilemma to try a new approach. In this therefore there seems to be a complex affective dimension to Lefebvre's theory of moments. Lefebvre himself (1991, p. 402), drawing on Hegel and Marx, reflected that 'there can be no thought, no reflection, without language,

and no language without a material underpinning' and it perhaps it is in this area of 'underpinning', specifically in terms of its affective domain and connection to dialogue, that the theory of moments can be further conceptualised. This is an area which remains critical to teachers working in the English post compulsory education system because, as we have seen from the research, their dialogue and interactions are vital to their wellbeing and survival as professionals working under significant pressures. I would like to explore this further to extend my research.

7.4.3 New contextual knowledge

Braun and Clarke (2013) emphasise how the application of a topic within a specific context, or with a particular sample, can generate new knowledge and in this case increasing our understanding of what are now being termed socio-collegial discursive spaces has highlighted the implications for teachers' practice and identity in everyday life. In applying this element to the research, I have reflected that this is a key strength. Much of the existing research about collegiality amongst teachers relates to the school context, and took place some time ago, whereas my research looked at a range of complex, contemporary settings in PCE which, as I reported in Chapter One, have been under-researched. The concepts I have considered, such as CoPs, have been criticised for their failure to apply to contemporary settings, and I have used the research as a vehicle to do this.

Highlighting the importance of teacher interactions and relationships has shown that informal and social spaces are essential components of everyday professional life. This is particularly important for teachers and the work they do with students and should be neither overlooked nor controlled. If the image of an idyllic, collegial garden, depicted at the start of this thesis, is realised then the research has shown that it is experienced through transitory moments which infuse the everyday. Their essence is social and reflects the persistence of humanity to, as Lefebvre said, 'create work and produce things' (Lefebvre, 1991, p.71). This is human, as opposed to mechanistic, communal as opposed to individualistic, and in its essence I see a connection between the metaphorical garden I visualised at the start of this journey and Lefebvre's connection between the social, the human and the spaces where meaning and possibility occur:

> With regard to social richness, it dates from an earlier time: gardens and (public) parks, squares and avenues (Lefebvre, 2020, p. 63)

However, the elusive spaces which teachers themselves created remained out of public sight. They appeared entwined in relationships and interactions as a state of consciousness, sustained by the social and professional bonds teachers developed with each other. As Epicurus himself wrote:

> This garden …does not whet your appetite; it quenches it. Nor does it make you more thirsty with every drink; it slakes the thirst by a natural cure, – a cure that demands no fee. This is the 'pleasure' in which I have grown old. (thestoicletters.com, undated, para.10)

7.5. Implications for future practice

Access to networks and connections which enable teachers to develop their subject knowledge is an area where institutions could work to improve support. Teachers need to talk about teaching their subject with others as issues arise, and therefore require ease of access to other subject specialists. This supports advocacy for the cross-boundary communications propounded in Fuller and Unwin's (2004) expansive environments. Examples where institutional structures were designed with seemingly impenetrable borders impeded this process and some participants worked in communicative isolation of any other subject specialist. This was exacerbated where mergers and the location of departments on different sites presented strong barriers to collaboration and co-development of practice. The research shows how teachers also value the freedom to move out of their immediate environment to connect with others as issues arise, for example, to explore how behaviour management was being dealt with in another department in response to a challenging class. If institutions could provide teachers with the time and support for self-directed networking with others in different areas this would extend their opportunities to share practice on the topics that matter to them, as opposed to formalised, 'top down' CPD or synthetic 'fake' CoPs.

How institutions deal with physical space, particularly following the pandemic, is also an important implication to consider. The research has shown how important spontaneous informal conversations are to teachers and yet we have found alternative means to communicate which are arguably less conducive to this form of dialogue. With more home-working and, perhaps as a consequence, further reductions in informal spaces, there is a danger of eroding the opportunities for teachers to collaborate. This has implications for

teachers as well as managers and policy makers to consider when making decisions around, for example home working, and its potential reduction in opportunities for those precious collegial interactions and moments.

Another key implication for future practice lies in the acknowledgement by institutions of the time and emotional care and skill required to support students. The research has shown how central this is to teachers' work, and yet little time, space or support is provided for this key part of the job, with an apparent perception that if it is not timetabled or has a measurable outcome, then it has little value. Talking about the strategies that might best support individual students, again as issues arise, and the chance to 'offload' to other close colleagues is critically important, rather than an aside to be taken for granted, and this process could be supported if timetables were less heavily workloaded and tightly controlled. Facilitating good chances, as opposed to 'imperfect chances' (Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikhahmadi, 2016, p.198) for these conversations to occur would also involve protecting, or in some cases re-introducing, the kinds of informal physical spaces available for teachers to talk and share practice in a trusted environment. We are reminded here how performative pressures and the desire to be always 'open to evaluation' (Page, 2017, p.37) have led to more surveillance: 'internal inspections, learning walks, open plan staffrooms, glass walls, the continuous collection of data, student voice activities, CCTV' (ibid). This presents challenges to the safe spaces where collegial trust is nourished, where there are a 'safe pair of ears', as one participant termed it.

There is also the further, important implication that teachers may need further support for this kind of work, since surely it is not the role of colleagues to provide this, albeit a positive collegial characteristic, and institutions should consider this.

This also reflects the need for an alignment of goals (Fuller and Unwin, 2004) between organisational priorities and how teachers see their work and development needs. If institutions are to facilitate expansiveness within their workplaces, and facilitate the creativity and rich collaborative practice seen within the research, then trust needs to be placed in teachers to identify what *they* need to enable students to succeed and this must be placed at the heart of organisational structure, timetable and teacher development decisions, so that they have the time, 'space' and freedom within their everyday lives to engage in the

informal collaborative work and conversations that arise organically through their proximity to each other, their bonds and their conversations. Improving these chances and opportunities surely involves no longer 'brushing aside the organic aspect of rhythmed movements' (Lefebvre, 2020, p.16), but developing the potential to enrich the everyday experiences of teachers and students, and the institutions where they work and learn. We are connected, and experience work and learning as a part of our existence as social beings. As Lefebvre summarises,

> Work is the foundation of personal development within social practice. It links the individual with the other workers…. and also with knowledge…. (Lefebvre, 2014, p.60).

Facilitating informal connectivity, valuing the rich relationships that support work and providing the space for teachers to collaborate on their own terms are therefore perhaps the most central implications arising from this research: sharing a collective working life matters.

7.6. A final message from the research findings for policymakers and managers

The research findings have illuminated that, whilst discursive spaces are critical to the people working often within challenging conditions of employment, and an unsettling climate of change, there is a significant tension arising due to these spaces being under increased threat. In Chapter One I discussed how Lefebvre saw the threat to 'communal forms of social life' as it became 'dominated by the time and space of markets' (Lefebvre, 2020, p. 16) and this resonates with a final message arising very clearly from the research. Collegial spaces have been shown to exist in a state of tension due to the impact of poor policy and management decisions and this must now be acknowledged. If these spaces are recognised and valued as a starting point then ways must be found to protect the benefits they provide. I set out some recommendations above in section 7.5, however improvement will only be realised if the process of acknowledging collegial interactions and spaces in their own right begins. Then it may be possible to take their true value into account when decisions are made. They are not a 'non-thing' but a critical element of practice which requires time and space if opportunities for teachers to talk and interact spontaneously as part of their everyday lives are to thrive. The importance of staffrooms, communal areas and timetabling decisions are therefore especially critical. Trusting teachers to flourish in their

own 'lived' spaces as an essential condition of working life, as we have seen, will support retention in the profession and enrich professional practice.

Furthermore, as discussed above, the research has shown how managers in PCE institutions have seemed to abdicate responsibility for key elements of support within their institutions and this gap is being filled informally by teachers themselves, for themselves and their students. This will have far reaching implications for the workforce in English further education if allowed to continue and represents a significant element within the tensions identified. Institutions can and should take measures to provide the support teachers really need at various stages of their career, including subject specific support and a recognition of the time and emotional work undertaken with students. This will mean listening carefully to the voices of teachers in order to discover where these gaps exist and what can be done in response. Lefebvre (2014, p. 110) stated that 'the fragmented character of modern industrial labour both encloses and conceals the social character of all the work done' and that in 'the overall life of the worker… his [sic] work and … attitude to work are linked to social practice' (ibid). This then connects to the quality of everyday life which, if policy makers and managers can recognise and make decisions to support it, will enrich the institutions and experience of the students within them as well as the wider communities they serve.

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Appendix A: Pre-interview narrative: an exemplar

This narrative is a brief account of some of the experiences which have led me to explore how teachers work together and collaborate. Please read it prior to the research interview we will undertake as it will provide some additional context for the discussion.

FE for me has been characterised by shared experiences and key relationships with other teachers and professionals. These have often been outside of the formally organised teams and departments of the organisations for whom I have worked. It has often been the informal interactions with colleagues, sometimes including external contacts and partners, that have most significantly shaped my learning and development as a teacher which continue to challenge and shape my own professional beliefs and identity.

My first experience of this was when I entered FE as an hourly paid 'agency' lecturer. I was fortunate to be welcomed into a culture which supported and nurtured me, despite this being a time of change and uncertainty which threatened jobs. There were staff who shared resources and gave time, advice and support regardless of any personal grievance caused by the external and internal politics of the time. Reflecting on this, our relationships were based on connecting as people. Conversations outside of the immediate day to day issues took place in the staffroom and at lunchtime. These discussions surprised me; they were sometimes philosophical, sometimes about the nature of the job and what we were trying to achieve, sometimes just a good laugh. But problems could be shared and advice, and lesson plans, given. As a new teacher, being accepted as part of something that seemed to have a sense of purpose was instrumental in allowing me to develop my skills and values.
Since then, I have been part of other groups, and experienced other relationships, which have been significant to my development and wellbeing at work, often providing a sense of support when external, politically driven factors have seemed at odds with my values.
During my work with foundation level learners, all of whom had achieved no school qualifications and in some cases had been excluded from school, I worked closely with other teachers to support these young people to improve their opportunities. We shared the stories of the students, together with a sense of loss when some fell back into previous patterns and a college course had been too difficult to complete at that time in their lives. We talked about strategies we could use to support individuals which took into account their

past influences, and their present challenges and issues outside college, and which we hoped would help them to re-write their frequently negative self-perceptions. Working alone this would be unrealistic, but collectively we could achieve this, if not in every case, to an extent which made a difference. The talking, and the sharing of approaches, frustrations and ideas, the personal connections we made between us by doing this, I believe enriched my experience as a teacher and contributed to my sense of identity and purpose. The environment we worked in was constructed by social relationships and interactions and this climate of sharing ideas and concerns on a day to day basis was emotionally supportive, practical and also enriching. I believe that this atmosphere had a positive influence on our work because we were engaging in non-judgemental conversations and exploring problems and approaches in a safe space.

My doctoral research seeks now to investigate how other teachers in post-14 education experience collaborative relationships with others at work, and what these mean to them.

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Aims:

- Undertake a minimum of twelve individual interviews across three different types of PCE setting.
- Explore participants' experience, with a focus on social working relationships. This will inform the analysis by placing responses within the biographical context and settings of individual participants.
- Discover practitioner perceptions about groups in which they have worked in the past, and in which they perceive they are currently working, and the nature of the relationships within those groups. It may be that there are relationships with one person, rather than a group, and this will be explored.
- Avoid using the term 'community of practice' within the interviews, or confirming this if participants use it. This is because this term has pre-conceptions and connotations, and the research is seeking to re-define it.
- Identify those who can proceed to the second stage of the research (subject to volunteering/content to continue). This will be possible if participants consider themselves to be part of a group of colleagues who interact and engage with each other, not necessarily because of the social structures of their organisation.

Research questions:

1. To what extent can socially situated IPGs be seen to exist within different strands of the PCE sector and how can these be conceptualised?
2. What is the value of these groups to teachers' practice and professional identity and how are they created and sustained?
3. How do macro and micro conditions affect the existence, growth and function of these groups within the context of PCE in England?

Questions

These are semi-structured to provide coverage of all of the core elements, but also allowing participants to describe and relay experiences which may lead to new unanticipated points being followed up.

Section 1: introductory biographical questions

1. Please tell me about your career and how you came to teaching and training in the post 14 sector.
2. How would you describe your current role and workplace setting?

Section 2: response to the pre-interview narrative

3. Looking back at the pre-interview narrative, is this an experience which resonates with you?
    - Why is this? Which aspects?

Section 3: past experience

4. Following on from the narrative, have you ever been part of a group like this at work yourself?
   - Can you tell me more about this group? Who were its members; what value did you derive from being a member? What function did it have e.g. practically, professionally, emotionally?
   - How would you describe the relationships within this group?
   - What did being a member of this group mean to you a) professionally and b) personally?

Section 4: current experience

5. In your current role, can you tell me about the main groups of colleagues, or individuals, you interact with?
   - Which do you consider to be most significant to you and why?
   - Can you tell me more about this group or person? (if a group, members, how it developed, purpose, relationships)
   - What words would you use to describe this group or relationship?
   - Can you give an example of a situation where being part of this group, or having this relationship, was helpful to you?
   - What do you see as its limitations?

6. Are there any other observations or comments you wish to make?

Appendix C: Stage 2 instructions

Instructions to participants for journal/diary completion

This research aims to capture your informal, social interactions with colleagues over a two week period. It asks you to use a simple survey application (Kobo toolbox) to record examples of these interactions, plus any supporting artefacts, documents you would like to include.

We will practice using the software together ahead of you completing your journal.

It is important for the research that you have the freedom to determine yourself which interactions you wish to record, and there will be the option to upload photographs, videos or make comments in a textual format.

Please record your experiences over the agreed two week period. The interactions and activities you might consider include:

Staffroom discussions, informal meetings, group decisions and problem solving, working with others to complete a shared task, joint decision making, sharing resources, reading materials and ideas.

The artefacts you include might be screenshots of emails, lesson resources, organisational charts, timetables or any photo relevant to your interaction. These are just examples so please be as creative as you like.

Important note about consent

If colleagues are being recorded or photographed as part of your journal responses, please use the attached consent form to obtain their informed consent. Please also provide any participating colleague with the attached briefing sheet which explains the purpose of the research and the measures being taken to assure the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants. Please return all consent forms to myself for secure storage for the duration of the project.