Positioning you within Education: A critical exploration of the Lead Practitioner role in English secondary schools

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Glossary of abbreviations

AST	**Advanced Skills Teacher**
CP	**Critical Professionalism**
CPD	**Continuing Professional Development**
DfE	**Department for Education**
DL	**Distributed Leadership**
EdD	**Doctor of Education**
LM	**Leadership and Management**
LP	**Lead Practitioner**
LPs	**Lead Practitioners**
PGCE	**Postgraduate Certificate in Education**
PLC	**Professional Learning Community**
SLE	**Specialist Leaders in Education**
TL	**Teaching and Learning**

Glossary of central concepts

There are several central concepts that are directly relevant to this research. In turn, where I explain and critique my own understanding of concepts including, crucially, the way my interpretations are grounded in particular readings of literature, further influenced by wider educational and research activities, I accept that it is possible to assert a variety of alternative historical, contextual, even oppositional presentations. That said, I will now establish how I specifically use notions of emancipation; hegemony; identification; practice; and subjectivity in this thesis.

Emancipation

I recognise different ways that emancipation might be embodied (for instance Courtney and Gunter, 2015; Hall, 2013), and moreover that my use of emancipation in this thesis is also characterised by an evolution in my own understanding. For example, as I discuss in Chapter 5, there was a time I perceived emancipation primarily through the lens of being a change to individual circumstances through academic achievement, echoing Biesta's (2013: 4) discussion of "*[q]ualification*." Recognising however an increasingly nuanced view of this interpretation as an educator, drawing upon an emergent sense of inequalities within presentations of emancipation (see also Freire, 1998a), as well as challenges I myself have faced, it is important to also consider Laclau's (2007: 1) statement that

> *[t]here is no act of emancipation without oppression, and there is no oppression without the presence of something which is impeded in its free development by oppressive forces.*

In response, I developed an interest in critical perspectives on education (for example Gibson, 1986; Marx and Engels, 1998; Schroyer, 1973; and Thompson, 2017), However, guided especially by my reading of Biesta (2013), reflecting simultaneously on my own problematic experiences of trying to overcome "*oppression,*" I found myself increasingly drawn to Rancerian notions of emancipation, which Bingham and Biesta (2010: 33) present as "...*a*

process of *subjectification*." Where I draw in turn upon work such as that of Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 41), who prioritise spaces "…*that are already present…*" my use of emancipation as a core foundation of this research should therefore be understood in terms of Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 33) contention that it references "…*a* *supplement*[1] *to the existing order*," involving moreover what Fuller (2012: 686) considers to be a form of "*self-knowledge*," linking here also to my later discussion of subjectivity. More specifically, acknowledging of course the potential for deeper exploration of what might be meant by Bingham and Biesta's presentation of principles such as "…*supplement…*" or indeed "…*the existing order*," I primarily seek to consider how this research might reveal additional modes of educational practice, whether or not this actually means "…*interven[ing] in and reconfigure[ing] the existing order of things*…" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). Expanding upon this, when Bingham and Biesta (2010: 33) themselves juxtapose notions such as "…*police*[2] *(or police order) and politics*," characterising these as distinct from each other, where police might be understood as "…*everyone has a particular place, role or position*…" and politics in turn is an "…*extremely determined activity antagonistic to policing*…" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 34) I am intrigued by how my research might actually reveal interfaces between seemingly distinct demands. Certainly, I am interested in how any representation of "…*a* *supplement* *to the existing order*" through my research could surface a nuanced understanding of "…*a way of being that had no place and no part in the existing order of things…*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). Establishing this, I will now expand upon how I also represent hegemony in this research.

Hegemony

I locate my own use of this concept primarily in relation to Gramsci's (1999: 448) significant work on the "…*cultural hegemony of a social group over the entire society*…" Where this in turn inevitably involves a number of complexities and avenues for exploration, it is important

[1] "supplement" is italicised in the original so the underlining here (and in other uses of this quote throughout this thesis) should be seen as my way of expressing the original, italicised, emphasis.

[2] As per footnote 1, the underlining in this quote represents italics in the original. This is true for all further uses of this quote.

that I also clarify a particular distinction I first encountered in Mouffe's (2014: 179) presentation of Gramsci's work. For her

> *…a class is dominant in two ways, that is to say it is dominant and ruling. It rules the allied classes and dominates the opposing classes.*

In this regard, without denying my own early research interest in Marx and Engels (1998) work on class (see also Chapter 2) and, in particular, attempts to rationalise my own problematic experiences of education (for example Chapter 5) as the result of being dominated by the ruling classes, however they might be constituted, where I present an evolving understanding of hegemony in this work, I identify less a concern with dominant social groups *per se* but rather to an allusion contained in Mouffe's articulation of the "*allied classes*." That is, drawing again upon Gramsci (1999: 770), an interest in understanding the part education, and indeed I, might actually play, if hegemony is understood as "…*an element of cohesive force*…" Recognising here the potential impact of also drawing on work such as that of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), I am therefore especially struck by Giroux's (1981: 5) statement, grounded in Althusser's work on ideology, that "*schooling functions as an agent of reproduction*." Indeed, rather than see this as a limiting expression of cultural hegemony, I am intrigued that Dawson (1982: 150) also references the potential of an interpretative approach to understanding hegemony. For him, education might in fact offer spaces through which to engender "…*broader social change through… re-definition of the realities of day-to-day school life*," even create "*counter-hegemonic momentum*…"

Identification

Although this notion might often appear synonymous in policy and research with categorising individuals, or diagnosis of specific individual needs (Department for Education, 2015; Smeets and Roelveld, 2016), I position my use of identification in this thesis through Lacan's (2012: 2) statement of *"…the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image…"* Presenting a more abstract use of this term, this in turn goes beyond Voelkl's (2012: 193) *prima facie* alignment of identification with notions of "…*belonging and valuing*…" Indeed, what is especially important in this thesis is that the idea of identification can be

characterised not only as "…*valuing…*" particular educational realities, but also as a simultaneous concern with the impact of this on individual actions, and therefore how (individual[3]) understanding of education might actually be open to change.

Practice

Featuring throughout this thesis, practice is an important concept in education. It is consequently unsurprising that it is widely present in policy (for example Department for Education, 2020b) and literature (for instance Darling-Hammond et al, 2020). It might therefore be assumed, as Carr (2006: 163) states, that "…*the meaning of 'educational practice' is so straightforward and clear that we can safely rely on our common-sense understanding*." Still, where James (2007: 34) frames practice "…*in relation to the immediate context – how we currently do things,*" how might this actually be understood, especially if Carr (2006: 163) is also correct that "…*understanding ofeducational practice… [might be] radically ambiguous and incoherent…*"? Acknowledging that notions of context might themselves be characterised in different ways (see also Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 148), it would not be unreasonable to suggest some variety of interpretation, not in only in terms of different roles or settings, where for Mahon et al (2017: 15) "…*multiple kinds of different practices occur*…" but significantly, as James (2007: 34) touches upon "…*social, economic and political influences on practice…*" To illustrate this, it is reasonable to suggest that notions of effective, even compliant, practice (for example Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3) might inform particular discourses around professional development (for example Sachs, 2011: 158). Here, I also highlight Carr's (2006: 164) disquiet that we might "…*ignore the essential role in educational practice that theoretical generalisations and abstract ideas can play*…" such as when Block (1997: 273) asserts that "…*Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics*…" might specifically make a key contribution to understanding the relation between theory and practice. Where I use the notion of practice as a way to represent what we currently do as educators, my use of this term should therefore be seen to embody a critical concern, as

[3] Where I place (individual), and other such statements or ideas, in parentheses, this is in order to recognise potentially relevant, but essentially subsidiary, further layers that are present, but not necessarily the core focus, of specific statements I make.

Kemmis (2019: 94) ponders, not only with what we do as educators but also with how and why "…*we make choices about what to do*."

Subjectivity

As with other definitions discussed, there are numerous understandings of subjectivity. Where Nordtug (2007: 169) states that subjectivity is "…*related to practices of knowledge that continuously change in the light of new knowledge,*" for Levinas (1985: 95), "…*the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity*" is responsibility. In this regard, I specifically frame my presentation of subjectivity in this research in terms of Biesta's examination (2013: 20) of "*…unique subjectivity as it emerges for […] singular, unique responsibility.*" Referencing in turn Biesta's (2013: 64) interest not in "…*how individuals become part of existing orders but how they can be independent,*" I again adopt a nuanced position towards Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 33) assertion of "…*a <u>supplement</u> to the existing order*…" Specifically, I am drawn to Biesta's consideration of (2013: 21) "…*situations in which it matters that I am unique*" (Biesta, 2013:21). Taking this further, where Rancière (1991: 33) asserts that "*to emancipate someone else, one must be emancipated oneself,*" it is necessary to consider how subjectivity understood in this way might be engendered, starting perhaps with Freire's (1970: 73) work upon the *"…critical consciousness which would result from… intervention in the world as transformers of that world*."

Abstract

Motivated by discord at the heart of my own identifications as an educator and predicated upon a constructivist approach (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) to knowledge, my thesis examines representations and experiences of educational purpose through exploration of the Lead Practitioner (LP) role. Potentially occupying similar spaces to a previous model of Leadership and Management (LM), Advanced Skills Teachers (AST), I present the LP role as a particular expression of Distributed Leadership (DL) in the context of English secondary schools. Working with data produced primarily through autoethnographic and critical conversation methodological approaches, I specifically respond to the following research aims:

1. **Understand how Lead Practitioners conceptualise a sense of educational purpose within their specific professional challenges;**
2. **Explore how Lead Practitioners might enable changes in professional practice;**
3. **Theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised.**

Framing this project through hermeneutic (Gadamer, 2004) processes of understanding, I am able to chart an evolution in how I identify with key educational notions. Where fundamental considerations such as emancipation, hegemony, and subjectivity simultaneously emerge as significant in my research, it is possible to suggest that the LP construct might also engender transformative (LM) educational practices more broadly. Indeed, accounting for findings that emerge through my interpretation of literature and data, I believe that my thesis makes four particular contributions to knowledge and practice. Specifically, these are:

i) Presenting the LP role as a legitimised counterpoint to current gaps in (LM) literature;

ii) Identifying a framework for critical modes of collaboration;

iii) Establishing the potential for subjective constructions of practice as a LP;

iv) Proposing the LP role as an emancipatory model of LM.

Chapter 1: An introduction

You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view [...] until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.

Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird (2010: 33)

Context

Reflecting my interest in exploring how and why people, and indeed, I myself, might understand the world in individual ways, reiterating here also my presentation of the central concepts in this research (for example Freire, 1970: 73), my use of Harper Lee's (2010: 33) above quote also embodies a motivation to engage more deeply with different interpretations of education, including representations beyond my own direct experience. Certainly, as Bingham and Biesta (2010: 148) recognise:

> *In one respect it is, of course, obvious that the world is not a school...The world, on the other hand, is everywhere and allows for a multitude of roles, identities and encounters.*

Framing this moreover in terms of the endemic uncertainty that seemingly characterises contemporary educational discourses (Ball, 2013), I will therefore draw upon various sources throughout this research, including literature, educational and otherwise, data that is constructed through collaboration with others, and my own experiences, in order to consider whether any findings that emerge might iteratively shape new, even wider, understanding of the LP role. In short, where I engage reflexively (Archer, 2010) within spaces, including this research, that are physically and temporally removed from what I have previously enacted, referencing for example Gadamer's (2004: 291) work, where this is "*…a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated,*" I aspire that my research will be the genesis of an evolution not only in my own identifications but also for how notions of educational purpose or practice might be represented more generally.

How so? Drawing upon interpretations of La Haine (1995) in order to exemplify how I position key concepts in this research

"*Et moi j'sais encore qui j'suis et d'où j'viens.*" Vinz, La Haine (1995)

To begin this work, I reference the above statement by Vinz. I do this for various reasons. Firstly, reflecting again the key influence that wider literature has, and has long had, on my

own understanding of the world, Vinz's statement is moreover made within a core facet of my practice as an educator, featuring as it does in a semi-fictional film about perceived inequality in French society during the mid-1990s. Furthermore, echoing my opening use of Lee's quote, where I have taught this film for many years as a French teacher, I have long been personally drawn to understanding the main protagonists, of which Vinz is one, perhaps even the tragic hero. In particular, interpreting an ironic sense of clarity in Vinz's above assertion that he is aware of "*who he is and where he is from*[4]," I present what is, for me, an important analogy for how I identify, and have identified, (Lacan, 2012: 2) with my own experiences within education. Certainly, as I demonstrate in my glossary of central concepts, I have become increasingly convinced that critical understanding of notions such as emancipation, hegemony, and subjectivity is essential to grasp how I myself am positioned within educational structures and practices. In fact, where an emergent sense of my own subjectivity, understood in terms of Biesta's (2013: 20) *"…singular, unique responsibility,"* might prompt me to specifically draw upon my practice as a French teacher in this thesis, it is also clear that Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 33) presentation of emancipation as *"…a supplement to the existing order…"* might especially embody essential questions at the heart of this research, including how my own experiences might relate to Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 33) treatment of ideas such as "…*police*…" and "…*politics*."

Exemplifying this here through reference to La Haine (1995), it is certainly illuminating that insofar as Vinz otherwise appears adrift in a sea of uncertainty, asserting his own sense of purpose only by positioning himself consistently in contradiction to the prevalent power structures that are made explicit throughout his story, I recognise a crucial dichotomy that is emblematic for my own educational journey. Certainly, not unlike the other main protagonists, Hubert and Saïd, it is possible to argue that Vinz exists as a negative entity, exists only to the extent that he resists apparent super-structures imposed by wider society, namely the police and other representatives of broader authority, with particular implications for how I might in turn consider notions such as hegemony (Gramsci, 1999: 448). In reality, Vinz has a complex relationship with societal norms in that he espouses a rejection of consensus principles and yet remains entrenched in behaviours that emanate from deeper enactment

[4] My translation.

of more general imperatives, themselves in opposition to beliefs he loudly extols to those around him. His actions therefore betray a lack of clarity in what he says, what he does and what competing cultural influences demand of him. Ultimately, his final act during the film places him within the realms of tragic hero, whether as a victim of wider parameters or of his acceptance of them. The choice he finally takes, when he surrenders the police gun he had found, and previously kept to assert his own power, demonstrates a symbolic acquiescence to broader frameworks, and directly leads to an unfortunate end for him and his friends. Having outlined particular tensions through reference to La Haine (1995), I will now expand on these below to explain how this is especially meaningful for my research here.

Anything else? Drawing upon interpretations of La Haine (1995) in order to expand upon how I position key concepts in this research

> *I have a feeling that I tend towards performing my professional role as a 'functionary' or in the strictest French sense 'fonctionnaire'. I.e. as acting through the lens of a 'state employee' in education.*

Although not made explicit within the above excerpt of my first reflective journal, by producing this at the very beginning of my research journey within the Doctorate of Education (EdD), it is apparent that I already sought to consider the impact of my own identifications with parameters that I perceived structure performance of my professional roles. Albeit less obviously dramatic than my depiction of La Haine (1995) in the previous section, where what I present might also signify a fundamental concern that my own actions as a teacher might be subject to framing by others, I interpret this in turn as indicative of tending to perceive myself as a passive construct of educational hegemony, referencing here my earlier discussion of Mouffe's (2014: 179) treatment of Gramsci's work, where:

> *…a class is dominant in two ways, that is to say it is dominant and ruling. It rules the allied classes and dominates the opposing classes.*

Relating this again to my use of La Haine (1995), if I then locate Vinz as a member of the "*opposing*" class, doomed to disempowerment through his opposition to governing values, as I will later consider for my own response to a particular school marking policy, I recognise

that I have actually tended to vacillate between exposing myself to greater vulnerability, and alternatively suppressing a deeper sense of dissatisfaction with established norms, in order to minimise the threats of challenging dominant notions. In this way, my own experiences as an educator might instead more closely echo the story of Vinz's friend, Hubert, who, like Vinz, is continuously torn between oppositional perspectives, namely an acceptance or rejection of broader social values. Where he differs from Vinz, however, is that he is aware that particular choices he makes mean he is increasingly disenfranchised from his friends, where he weighs up the opportunities and losses he faces by ascribing importance to prevailing structures, and not least when he also presents a sense of his own subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 64) as someone who is positioned in liminal spaces between opposing demands.

Referring more closely here also to Mouffe's (2014: 179) presentation of the *"…allied classes…"* where Hubert struggles with the sense of loyalty he feels to his friends, simultaneously seeming obligated to support them yet resenting the negative influence of their behaviours and attitudes upon the capacity to realise his own aspirations, it is possible to locate an equivalent concern with how individual identifications and behaviours might contribute to the maintenance of established educational practices, including in ways that I am troubled by. Indeed, reiterating an interest in emancipatory forms of practice, and especially those that might enable subjectivity, including my own (Biesta, 2013: 21), as an educator, I refer directly here again to Lacanian notions of identification (Lacan, 2012: 2), specifically *"…the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image…"* where the intrinsic mutability of identifications means that (perceptions of) educational practice might themselves be subject to alternative interpretations and even transformations. Without doubt, it is accurate to state that my research journey to date is on one level a journey of interrogating the situational quality of seemingly fixed frameworks that influence actions as an educator. Still, similar to the key characters of La Haine (1995), simply articulating where and how difficulties arise does not allow me to satisfactorily address questions that persistently arise as an educator. In fact, the very first reflective journal I produced at the beginning of the EdD process remains pertinent for how I seek to interrogate my experiences as an educator today, albeit with a more nuanced understanding of how I articulate entanglements that caused me most concern:

> *I increasingly find myself bogged down in the day to day performative requirements of teaching in a school, and have begun to question why, and indeed what is it, I teach?*

As I describe here, and unlike Vinz, it is potentially significant that I am aware that I have variously found myself stuck in a state of confusion about who I am, what my purpose as an educator is, and with what I should identify. Indeed, exemplifying disillusionment long experienced through my own involvement in education, where I also recognise a lack of clarity in this reflection, this presents a space to examine how my own reactions to prevailing norms can be better understood. In turn, this could enhance my ability to choose how I might assert particular identifications at specific moments in the future. Referencing Freire (1998a: 102) who argues that "*…the degree that the historical past is not "problematized"... tomorrow simply becomes the perpetuation of today*," where my above interpretation of Hubert's (or indeed Vinz's) struggles symbolises the importance of critically reflecting upon the impact of particular representations of professional understanding throughout this work, it is therefore imperative that I examine how I myself have embodied, continue to embody or might embody notions of educational practice and purpose. This said, where I aim to chart a shift in my own perceptions as to the purposes of education in order to identify opportunities for emancipatory practice and enhanced subjectivity as an educator, referring throughout to how these and other notions are presented in my central concepts section, what do I specifically aim to explore through this research?

Aims

Where I seek to account for the shifting sands of educational contexts (Ball, 2013), I also aim to situate this thesis in aspects of education that embody broad imperatives, specifically within the area of LM. Certainly, seeking to ground my research in a material construct, on being appointed as a LP at an English secondary school in September 2017, at a time when I was about to start phase B of my EdD, I was immediately struck by the potential of the role to offer interesting spaces within which to consider interrelated ambitions, not least in

comparison to any other (LM[5]) role I had fulfilled. As I will examine throughout the different chapters of this thesis, the LP role could be characterised in a number of different ways, and indeed, might be seen as something of a vague, emergent, even contestable, notion, something I will expand upon in Chapter 2. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the somewhat uncertain detail of the job description I was personally presented with as a LP (Appendix A), starting with a vague purpose to: "*Develop teaching and learning…Take a leading role in the development of policy and practice…support the further professional development of all staff…*" I therefore identified a degree of freedom, which I had not previously encountered within education, to shape actions, not least my own, albeit linked to improvement agenda (for example Department of Education, 2019: 26). Not without challenges, and certainly, as I will also reflect upon elsewhere, not without difficulties on practical and emotional levels, my early experiences of the LP role were nevertheless suggestive of a potentially enhanced capacity to enact, evaluate, and construct educational practices, perhaps even in ways that especially spoke to the concerns, and indeed key concepts, I have already begun to explore here. In this regard, not only did the LP role quickly become something of interest to me in the evolution of my own research but also as my examination of literature and other sources of data will show, I was encouraged that it might be possible to locate it as a potentially significant model of LM in the current educational climate (for example Department of Education, 2016a: 8), worthy of examination.

Manifestly, grounding my work in this way emphasises the importance of expanding upon not only what I examine but how. As I have already alluded to, where I also account for presentations of the LP role, whether through literature or a consideration of participant experiences, I might further constitute crucial spaces to examine the way in which I and others identify with dominant notions of educational purpose as Lead Practitioners (LPs). At the same time, I will also examine how my own positions in relation to emergent findings on the LP role place me at the centre of a hermeneutic circle of understanding, interpreted in terms of Gadamer (2004: 293) as *"…the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter.*" By fostering critical exploration of particular identifications, at once unsettling, constructing, or reconstructing modes of education I am engaged in observing, I

[5] Where I specifically place (LM) in parentheses, I do this to acknowledge that although my concern is with LM in particular, what is stated might also have broader implications, or involvements, than LM alone.

will consider whether, and if so, how, educational practices might be re-conceptualised beyond my own direct spheres of experience. Framing my aims in concrete terms, I will seek to:

1. **Understand how Lead Practitioners conceptualise a sense of educational purpose within their specific professional challenges;**
2. **Explore how Lead Practitioners might enable changes in professional practice;**
3. **Theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised.**

The need for reflexivity

In this section, drawing upon the central concepts explored earlier, as well as a recognition that there are many potential influences upon how education is both conceptualised and enacted (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 148), I will present issues that I believe are specifically significant if I am to build understanding of the LP role through this research. In particular, revisiting La Haine (1995), I must not ignore that as for Hubert, not least when he refuses to join his peers in active resistance against perceived oppression, there is a failure to navigate the competing values of his social environment and governing structures. Indeed, by seeking to respond appropriately to broader expectations this conceivably results in reinforcement of unease, even promotes behaviours that are troubling not only to his friends but to Hubert himself, explained perhaps in terms of his own contribution to the prevailing hegemony (Mouffe, 2014: 179). In this regard, where I am now an Associate Assistant Head in the school where I was appointed as LP, principally due to my own successful performance of the LP role, it is possible to identify elements of being a LP that characterise tensions I have experienced more widely within contemporary English education, despite otherwise positive experiences of the role. Indeed, as I exemplify when I present the central concepts in this research, it is problematic to persistently seek emancipation from compliance with(in) broader parameters, at the same time as identifying with social norms that one cannot, and perhaps should not, attempt to challenge. Where I now explore notions of reflexivity (Archer, 2010; Raffo, Forbes and Thomson, 2015), this in turn presents a key parable for my involvement as a teacher-researcher and, at least initially, as a LP myself. Specifically, expanding upon the role of reflexivity, I must ensure I navigate the particular, potentially thorny, entanglements of participation in this research, as well as the specific impact of how I might identify with my own professional roles at any given time.

Reflexivity: Rationalising competing demands

In this section I will now explain how I seek to account for the competing demands I face as an educator, and specifically a teacher-researcher. Alluding first to the influence of Vygotsky (1978: 131) for whom it is said "…*we actively realize and change ourselves in the varied contexts of culture and history*," as Guba and Lincoln (2008: 279) state, reflexivity:

> …demands that we interrogate each of our selves regarding the ways in which research efforts are shaped and staged around the binaries, contradictions, and paradoxes that form our own lives.

Where individuals might simultaneously embody multiple identifications to varying degrees, I believe that the construction of reflexivity within and through this research is therefore vital to make sense not only of my own representations of the LP role, but also how it might be understood by others. This includes attempts to account for work produced by other researchers. For Dean (2017: 8), if:

> *…we are standing on the shoulders of giants, reflexivity is a tool we can use to understand our relation to those giants and the foundation on which we base our own knowledge.*

Certainly, seeking to conceptualise the LP role, and considering the implications of how I am positioned as a teacher-researcher, my examination of literature in chapter 2 offers a medium through which to explore my own perceptions. Where I can surface representations beyond my own direct experience, this conceivably locates me concurrently as an observer, and as an agent, in reimagining (my own) past, present and future educational practices within education, drawing upon and contributing to wider understanding of the LP role. Referencing Foucault (1994: 133), I do not therefore frame this work as:

> *…a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural, within which it operates at the current time.*

Reflexivity: The social construction of understanding

Here, I will consider how I will construct reflexivity through this research. In particular, emphasising social constructivist perspectives, linking these to how I interpret notions of hermeneutic understanding, I ground my work primarily through Berger and Luckmann's (1967: 27) depiction of "…*the social construction of reality*." Extending this, acknowledging that reflexivity could develop through collaborative exchanges between and across

individuals and contexts, where for Laclau (2007: 1) this might involve all areas "...*of social life and there is a relation of essential imbrications between its various contents in these different areas*," it is essential that the methodological decisions I expand upon in chapter 3 enable modes of interaction that support not only the capacity to navigate my own understanding but also that of fellow participants. Certainly, where for Raffo et al (2015: 1131) "…*structure, culture, modes of reflexivity and agency relate to the way individuals engage with education…*" it is important to consider how the potential for reflexive subjectivity might be influenced by an awareness of contextual and relational imperatives, including whether participants intersect as teacher, student, researcher, colleague, leader, questioner, respondent... or equivalent combinations thereof.

Reflexivity: Barriers to, and solutions for, reflexivity

Where I present in this section some potential barriers to developing reflexivity, I will also consider how these might be addressed for, and through, this research. As a product of my own experiences to date, it is of course difficult to disentangle entirely how identifications are, and have been, experienced at any given moment, not least as an involved teacher-researcher. I am clear moreover that I will position my own evolving understanding of the LP role, coloured by my educational journey to this point, to play a key role in the construction and analysis of any findings. What is more, where I engage in research-related dialogue with others (Chapter 4), I acknowledge that data produced in collaboration with participants is in and of itself entwined with the personal histories of those same participants. I will nevertheless seek to chart understanding of representations that emerge, not least through conceding a perceived powerlessness to overcome dominant educational parameters, and even implication in processes that I find troubling. Indeed, it is crucial that my ambition to develop mutually influential relationships and platforms (see also Chapter 3) might contribute to how understanding, even enactment, of the LP role subsequently evolves through this research. Of course, it remains plausible, when considering data thematically, that I will miss specific concerns or perhaps more appositely, will interpret data in ways that most speak to me and the story of my own life in education. Still where it is clear that I already prioritise the construction of reflexive understanding of the LP role, it is to be hoped that I will also posit a

strong case for how this research can enhance the way we: understand how Lead Practitioners conceptualise a sense of educational purpose within their specific professional challenges; explore how Lead Practitioners might enable changes in professional practice; and theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised.

Overview of Chapters

Subsequent to this introduction, my thesis will be structured through the following key sections:

Chapter 2

Here I will consider literature that has informed, framed, and challenged my own thinking in relation to key questions that have emerged both prior to, and during, this research. This examination of literature will cover a range of areas but, more specifically, I will seek to identify spaces that are simultaneously suggestive of the significance of the LP role as a construct of educational LM, as well as of gaps that encourage further conceptualisation of what the role might be. Drawing upon notions including improvement agenda, Distributed Leadership (DL), Critical Professionalism (CP) and legitimised emancipatory or transformative spaces such as Professional Learning Communities (PLC), I will frame deeper engagement with understanding the potential of the LP role.

Chapter 3

In this chapter, I will develop the methodological positions I have taken, expanding upon my research design to also consider ethical questions**.** Accounting for particular theoretical perspectives, I will predicate this research upon a constructivist stance. Building my construction of data predominantly through autoethnography and critical conversations, I will highlight, and seek to account for, the relative strengths and limitations of the methods employed, explaining how these contribute to the iterative development of my work.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 will elucidate, and embody, key themes that emerge through data collection in relation to my research aims. Considering at all times suggestions within literature, as well as interplay with my own identifications, I will examine what might be interpreted through

collaboration with other participants in critical conversations. Broadly speaking, these will touch upon spaces that might be available as a LP, and in particular, how these are constructed, navigated and used. Drawing on important themes within literature such as improvement agenda, DL, CP, and PLC, I will also consider additional opportunities for how the LP role might be understood beyond what is already presented through existing research.

Chapter 5

In chapter 5 I will seek to account for my own educational journey, including the impact of this on how I was positioned to undertake this research, and to become a LP myself. Reflecting hermeneutic processes once again, I will incorporate collaborative exploration of the LP role, including representations that surface through literature and critical conversations in order to examine my own identifications, and how they have evolved through engagement in this work. I will further suggest implications of my own understanding of the role, not only in terms of my own subjectivity, but also for wider advocacy of LP as a significant construct of LM.

Chapter 6

Finally, I will conclude how I have been able to respond to the stated aims through my research. In particular, I will assert the specific contributions my research makes to knowledge and practice. Contained within this, I will observe the implications and limitations of my study, suggesting also how the findings that I present demonstrate what steps might, should, and will be undertaken subsequently.

Chapter 2: Locating the Lead Practitioner role through interpretations of literature

Key Discourses

…there were times when I used to have very restless moods. I kept thinking how I was going to spend my life; I wanted to test the future that awaited me…

Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Idiot. (1992: 62)

Acknowledging above a desire to interrogate, even understand, how I experience my own life as an educator, I have always relied upon my own wide, and varied, reading to guide how I perceive the world. Restating also that I seek to frame this work through a broadly social constructivist lens, where Berger and Luckmann (1967: 15) believe that understanding "…*is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations*," it is important to recognise that my interpretation of particular literature has also transformed throughout the enactment of this thesis, and may yet engender further shifts in understanding in relation to future identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2) with literature or data. For example, as I state in the glossary of central concepts, at the time I began to write this thesis my own reading of emancipation had already begun to evolve. What I explore within literature therefore results as much from my own prior examination of conceptual models, as it does from other contextual influences, producing a dialogue with what I read that promotes investigation in particular ways, as well as an evolution in how I now present those concepts themselves. Put another way, recognising that what I include here is unavoidably built upon the selection of particular perspectives, it is imperative to concurrently navigate how my own developing relationship with education, referencing also my earlier discussion of reflexivity (for example Guba and Lincoln, 2008: 279), underpins my engagement with conceptual frameworks. In turn, I will consider how this affects the way I am positioned to understand interpretations of the LP role, and specifically the emancipatory potential (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) of this as a construct of LM.

Literature and Policy contexts: What is a Lead Practitioner?

In this section I will explain and critique what might be understood by the term Lead Practitioner, including in policy terms. To begin with, it is noteworthy that LP is a relatively emergent construct, potentially also a contested notion, which currently wants for representation in literature. Alongside a lack of existing research into the LP role, there is moreover a dearth of policy documents that deal explicitly with this exact position *per se*. Where LP is increasingly present within contemporary educational structures, it is therefore important to consider how it might be characterised. In this regard, as I will expand upon throughout this chapter, I will explore a range of (LM) literature that is especially meaningful

for understanding how the LP role might be framed. Added to this, there are examples of significant policy that are themselves suggestive of how the LP role might be positioned. For example, although also relatively under-represented, it is possible to identify different examples in policy that present "*leading practitioners*" (Department for Education, 2016: 33). Indeed, where this policy document contextualises "*leading practitioners*" to play a part in determining "*what good teaching looks like*…" it is moreover significant that in policy relating to "…*appointments to leading practitioner roles*…" (Department for Education, 2019: 26):

> *…leading practitioners should take a leadership role in developing, implementing and evaluating policies and practice in their workplace that contribute to school improvement.*

Where this is in turn predicated upon leading the development of Teaching and Learning (TL) practices, this is reflective of other sources that might further frame the LP role as a construct of LM. This includes the school-level policy position of my own specific job description (Appendix A), to:

> *[s]upport, guide and motivate teachers of the subject and other adults e.g. teaching assistants, administrative and technical staff promoting a positive staff culture, good practice and continuing professional development.*

Acknowledging that a LP job description such as my own might therefore designate a degree of responsibility (see also Biesta, 2013: 20) for the implementation of governing policy, it is pertinent to consider where this might also respond to, even be determined by, relevant wider policy such as the DfE Standards for teachers' professional development (Department for Education, 2016b) in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Standards for teachers' professional development

Summary of Standards for teachers' professional development

1. Professional development should have a focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes.
2. Professional development should be underpinned by robust evidence and expertise.
3. Professional development should include collaboration and expert challenge.
4. Professional development programmes should be sustained over time.

And all this is underpinned by, and requires that:

5. Professional development must be prioritised by school leadership.

Certainly, there are parallels between my own job description which, as I reference earlier, frames LP responsibility (see also my conceptualisation of LM in the next section) for CPD activities, and key notions contained in the above policy statements, not least the idea that "*[p]rofessional development programmes should be sustained over time*." Extending this, it is also interesting that CPD opportunities for LPs themselves, for example as provided by the UCL Institute of Education (UCL, 2020), also present "…*developing as a Lead Practitioner…"* in terms of "…*the impact you have on teacher practice…*" This is further reinforced when accreditation as a LP with the schools, students and teachers network (SSAT, 2020) is founded upon the principle that:

> …*the greatest drivers of professionalism in your school are the practitioners who always aspire to improve, nurture and lead colleagues, and develop the next generation…*

Expanding upon this, examination of a range of educational policy and related literature (for example Boylan, 2016) predominantly produced within the past 10 years for the field of LM, not least in Educational Excellence Everywhere (Department for Education, 2016a: 8), makes it clear that a discourse of extending leadership influence is present, where "*this system will respond to performance, extending the reach of the most successful leaders*." Where this in

turn points to improvement discourses, it is possible to identify broader themes within policy documents such as the education inspection framework (Ofsted, 2019), which might play a crucial part in framing understanding of the LP role. Certainly, there are striking significant parallels with the implication of leading practitioners in leading improvement, as exemplified earlier (Department for Education, 2019: 26) and the School teachers' pay and conditions document (Department for Education, 2020a: 57) where:

> *"leading practitioner" means a teacher in a post the primary purpose of which is to model and lead improvement of teaching skills…*

All things considered, where I recognise that there remains a relative silence of the LP role within educational literature, combined with a comparative absence of direct characterisation in policy, the above examples certainly point towards an important foundation for this research. Indeed, where I seek to enhance understanding of the potential of the LP role, drawing upon the concepts at the heart of this work, it is illustrative that significant policy (Department for Education, 2019: 26) itself recognises that there "*…are no national criteria for appointment to these posts.*" In this way, where current policy positions provide a basis for examining the LP role as a construct of LM, my research also presents a particular opportunity to develop a response to gaps in contemporary educational (LM) policy, literature, and practice.

Literature and Policy contexts: Conceptualising Leadership and Management

Where the LP role might be presented as a construct of LM, it is imperative that I also explain how I conceptualise notions of educational leadership and educational management for this research, recognising in turn that there are particular tensions in how these might be understood. Certainly, when Connolly, James and Fertig (2019: 504) state that "…*a lack of clarity has emerged over time*…" in how LM is presented, it is important to acknowledge that this can be captured in many ways. Considering, for example, policy derived LM training programmes, Educational Excellence Everywhere (Department for Education, 2016a: 43) asserts that these should "…*equip teachers aspiring to leadership positions with the*

knowledge and practical skills to manage…" However, although Hallinger and Kamontip Sidvongs (2008: 10) also argue that "…*moral leadership and sound management need not be viewed as competitors*," Courtney and Gunter (2015: 395) raise concerns that particular notions of LM might result "…*in silencing and potentially removing professional voice, knowledge and contributions*," exemplifying perhaps what, for Dimmock (1999: 442), are *"…tensions between competing elements of leadership, management...*" Moreover, where Irvine and Brundrett (2019: 76) believe that leaders "…*must be able to fulfil*…" LM functions, presenting these as distinct from each other, Bush (2008: 272) argues that *"…concepts of management and leadership overlap with each other*…" It is therefore unsurprising if, for Connolly et al (2019: 507), we are faced with a situation where notions of LM risk becoming "…*confused and/or conflated*…"

Where policies such as the School teachers' pay and conditions document (Department for Education, 2020a: 26) do not specifically define what it means "…*to lead, manage and develop a subject or curriculum area*…" this emphasises in turn some of the challenges faced when trying to locate the LP role itself in policy and wider literature, with implications for how the LP role might specifically be framed as a LM construct. Certainly, Hallinger and Kamontip Sidvongs' (2008: 19) concern with how it is possible to "…*articulate guiding values, develop and communicate a shared vision, develop a strategy*…" raises important questions for how the LP role might feature in terms of Grint's (2005: 1472) assertion that there is "…*a typology that distinguishes between LM as different forms of authority...*" Indeed, for Connolly et al (2019: 515), although *"[e]ducational management…and educational leadership…are conceptually different…*" they argue this is "…*a difference that is not recognised in the literature*," explaining perhaps Boylan's (2016: 57) belief that there is a need for "…*conceptual developments in leadership theory…*" Still, when the 2016 white paper Educational Excellence Everywhere (Department for Education, 2016a: 42) itself states that *"[t]he nature of leadership is…*" changing, it is also possible to suggest that this might actually present a particular opportunity for my research into the LP role, positioned as a LM construct, especially where I hope this work might offer "…*a supplement to the existing order*..." (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) more broadly.

Accepting the above, let me now state that I believe Connolly et al's (2019: 504) framing of educational leadership as "…*the act of influencing others in educational settings to achieve goals…*" contrasted with educational management as "…*carrying the responsibility for the proper functioning of a system*…" offers an important basis for this research, not least where I have already begun to position the LP role in relation to improvement discourses (for example Department for Education, 2019: 26). Certainly, and regardless of tensions within presentations of LM, as touched upon above, an examination of significant educational policy, including the English education inspection framework (Ofsted, 2019), places influence at the heart of notions of leadership, characterised in this document (Ofsted, 2019: 11-12) as having "…*a clear and ambitious vision*…" (see also Bush, 2008: 278), while a concern "…*that resources are managed well,"* would appear to align with Connolly et al's (2019: 504) above presentation of "…*responsibility for the proper functioning…*" In this regard, and drawing moreover upon how I have already begun to contextualise the LP role through literature and policy, an emergent association with influencing others (Department for Education, 2020a: 57), added to a need to contribute to systemic functioning (for example Department of Education, 2016a: 8), in turn highlights how Connolly et al's (2019: 504) above conceptualisation is potentially significant. Certainly, this will feature as a key issue throughout my work, where problematising how the LP role might fit in relation to such notions of LM has broader implications for the conceptual positions that I take, not least whether the LP role might represent subjective understanding of LM itself (Biesta, 2013: 20), or indeed be "…*a <u>supplement</u> to the existing order*…" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33).

1. Understand how Lead Practitioners conceptualise a sense of educational purpose within their specific professional challenges

Considering my first aim, this section will examine contexts that frame the emergence of the LP role, including what existed previously, accounting also for contemporary spaces that might present particular interpretations of educational purpose or practice as LPs.

Inherited framing: The LP role understood in relation to existing constructs

"…*growing the next generation of leaders: spotting, nurturing and managing talented staff*…" (Department for Education, 2016a: 41)

To begin with, I will consider previous, or existing, educational structures, and how they might contribute to framing understanding of the LP role. For example, referring back to my discussion of LM, including in the above reference to the educational white paper (Department of Education, 2016a), Emira (2010: 593) identified that "…*there is a shift towards more shared forms of leadership in schools*," perhaps paving way for the emergence of roles such as the LP position. Capturing how this has been represented in practice, Boylan (2016: 63) describes a previous articulation of DL (discontinued in 2013), where a putatively equivalent position to LP involved, "…*those designated as ASTs, recognized as expert teacher leaders*…." Raising additional questions about how notions of the "…*expert*…" are framed, I nevertheless present this as specifically pertinent for this research where it might be assumed that such a role involved, at least in part, the filtering of policy through what Boylan (2016: 63) describes as "*delegation of authority*." Characterised as "…*expert teacher leaders*…" it is possible to interpret that ASTs were positioned to model best practice for other teacher professionals, however this is constituted. Certainly, and emphasising notions of influence that I already articulated in my earlier presentation of LM (for example Connolly et al, 2019: 504), as well as the broader conceptual positions I take in this research (for instance Mouffe, 2014: 179), it is conceivable that this could, to a certain extent, involve supporting and enacting dominant educational agenda, especially where I also identify the importance within

characterisation of LM of "…*carrying the responsibility for the proper functioning of a system*…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504). When understood in this way, positions such as AST, Specialist Leaders in Education (SLE) or, in light of my own research aims, LPs, are not necessarily therefore grounded in conceptualising educational purpose but might instead be framed as agents of existing ideologies (for example Gramsci, 1999: 448), charged with enhancing impact in relation to accepted principles, including through models of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as denoted in Figure 1.

Legitimate framing: The LP role as a performative construct

Certainly, it is striking that significant Government policy such as the 2016 white paper (Department for Education, 2016a), as well as a number of examples of (LM) literature, emphasise notions of effective professional practice, which might in turn reduce individual identifications of purpose within prevailing structuring of professionalism. By this, I mean there is a range of literature that predominantly examines how to fulfil leadership roles through appropriate modes of implementation. For example, Jenkins and Andenoro (2016: 57) describe how "…*those with decision-making power attempt to implement technical solutions to address these challenges*." Extending this, with particular implications for the LP role, as well as for how I might conceptualise notions such as subjectivity (for instance Biesta, 2013: 21) in this research, Dillabough (2000: 321) considers that:

> …*the dominant notion of "professional identity" appears to be premised on a rather simplistic and instrumental model of teacher development*...

Although this inevitably also raises questions about why one might choose to act in particular ways, echoing Kemmis (2019: 94), as well as the reasons for my own engagement in this research, there is not here an obvious emphasis upon any (meta)institutional need for variation in the form and function of LM roles, including it must be said the LP position. Rather than inviting critical reflection upon educational purpose or practices, as I highlight above there might instead be a legitimate mandate to lead improvement through normative actions or even within more established models of LM, such as subject leaders, something I myself have experienced and expand upon later. As Courtney and Gunter (2015: 396) also recognise,

where models of LM are predicated on the basis of a fabrication "…*whose goal is the local enactment of ideological policies seeking to raise standards*," it is possible to imagine contexts where notions of the LP might at most be located through the lens of "…*the instrumental goals of the state*…" and framed in particular as a key component of improvement agenda in contemporary educational practices. Perhaps emphasising in turn responsibility for "…*the proper functioning of a system*…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504), this would surely at least challenge an individual's capacity to explore notions of educational purpose more critically. Certainly, when for Boylan (2016: 66), it is the "…*support of formal organizational structures that confer legitimacy*," it is also important to acknowledge that structural validation of practices, irrespective of individual intentions, has clear implications for whether the LP role might be presented as a crucial model of educational LM. That is, assuming the role is present, where there is a need for actions as a LP to be legitimised through how they meet asserted goals of their given contexts, it remains that the acceptability of actions taken as a LP could depend upon how the role is specifically positioned within (meta)institutional frameworks, where LPs might even perpetuate particular discourses against which this research is problematised.

Personal framing: The LP role as an individual construct

Whether or not this solely pertains to being a LP, it is also logical to suggest that responding to personal identifications, however they are articulated, and through whichever role, is unlikely to be institutionally desirable if, and when, they were to contradict accepted policy or expected outcomes. This is not to suggest that these are mutually exclusive principles. Indeed, there is every chance that the expression of institutional values simultaneously represents individual motivations and interpretations of purpose, especially where performance as an educator, presented here as a form of compliance with these same values, has already enabled an individual to occupy a LM position such as LP (for example Department for Education, 2016a: 8). Still, by also accounting for a potential limitation to self-expression through this, I touch upon a further gap. Reiterating challenges to aspects of LM literature (for instance Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 395), as well as the broader conceptual positions I take in this research (for example Mouffe, 2014: 179), I would contend that positioning the

LP role purely through notions of compliance is inherently problematic, especially when, as Dillabough (2000: 315) puts it, doing this "…*serves to constrain educational professionals' authenticity in practice*." Indeed, for Courtney and Gunter (2015: 400) this potentially results in:

> …*spaces where the interplay between such calculations about agency and structure are located are increasingly squeezed and difficult to challenge*…

Contradicting moreover what Fuller (2012: 685) depicts as "[*l*]*eadership with emancipatory intent*…" not least as I frame emancipation in this research (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), there is a real possibility that positioning the LP role to influence, even structure, the practice of others through accepted norms, might render the agential possibility of being a LP as intrinsically limited, with implied repercussions for the agency of others. At odds with my own motivation to undertake this research, and presenting a challenge to the conceptual positions I take, not least in terms of subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 21), there is even a risk that this will contribute further to Hurst and Hurst's (2017: 441) depiction of a reality where teachers "…*fear losing the very motivation that brought them to the profession in the first place*." Still, by retaining a focus upon how LPs might be positioned to conceptualise a sense of educational purpose within their specific professional challenges, it is clear that even if the LP role is presented as an instrumental tool of leadership, specifically within improvement agenda, being a LP must at least enable access to a legitimised wider sphere of influence, which as I have already presented, is simultaneously a key element of my conceptualisation of LM in this research (for example Connolly et al, 2019: 504). Assuming the role is also conferred value, based for example on performance (Department for Education, 2016a: 8), even if only on a specific institutional level, it might be expected that a certain degree of personal autonomy might ensue, especially if impact is achieved. Indeed, my own experience, not least my subsequent promotion within my own school hierarchy to leader of the LPs, encapsulates what Boylan (2016: 64) asserts as an important tenet of LM structures, characterised by "…*devolving greater responsibility as capacity is demonstrated*…" Still, considering the aims at the heart of this research, how might notions of the LP also enable actions that navigate dominant agenda differently?

Critical approaches: The LP role as an alternative to established LM practices

> *In addition to certain operational skills that new leaders must acquire, they must also develop an awareness of their own personal values.*
> (Hurst and Hurst, 2017: 439)

In this section, I will expand on my presentation so far in order to explore whether the LP role might be specifically placed to offer alternative understandings of educational practice. Acknowledging that my own journey has developed over a decade of professional experience, to date in five schools and involving different roles, I have already recognised tensions in my own life as an educator, exemplified by a concern with what Hurst and Hurst (2017: 439) term above as the notion of "…*personal values*." Although often unarticulated, I have fostered a deep sense of unease about how I impact upon the education system, and of course, how it impacts upon me, including how I am positioned to embody notions of educational purpose. It is predictable, therefore, that I began my research by interrogating trends within literature that predominantly present notions of LM instrumentally, feasibly locating the LP role in particular ways, where notions such as "…*carrying the responsibility for the proper functioning of a system*…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504) might, on certain levels, be problematic (see again Dillabough, 2000: 315). Certainly, drawing once more on Mouffe (2014: 179), it is unsurprising that I question the part that identification (Lacan, 2012: 2) with dominant constructs might play in framing actions as a LP. This is especially true where Oolbekkink-Marchand (2014: 124) references "...*the structures and social arrangements that dominate [...] arrangements that the teachers themselves reinforce*..." More precisely, it might be perceived that I reiterate here an overriding interest in examining the extent to which I, as an individual, can enact, even frame, the exercise of transformative practice as an educator, specifically as a LP. Considering this, and in particular a more profound engagement with the influence of context upon my own reflexivity (Guba and Lincoln, 2008: 279), I found myself increasingly drawn to research that examines the impact of identifying with wider parameters. Where I aim to understand how LPs conceptualise a sense of educational purpose, at the same time as recognising the potential importance of hegemonic validation, or inherited contexts of the LP role (Boylan, 2016: 66), responding in turn to how I frame LM more broadly (Connolly et al, 2019: 504), I therefore began to consider literature that might be described as critical theory**.**

Aligned to the Frankfurt School, I do not here reference a homogenised approach but rather acknowledge the similarities in attitude of what might be included by such an umbrella term, drawing upon notions that may (or may not) prove to be meaningful for how LPs are, or might be, positioned as a construct of educational LM.

Critical approaches: How the LP role might be framed differently to other (LM) roles

In this section, I will explore the extent to which critical theory might frame understanding of the potential of the LP role as an alternative to current educational (LM) practices and structures. For Thompson (2017: 2), a critical theory of society means we are:

> *…set with the task of uncovering the social conditions under which knowledge about itself is articulated, since the way we comprehend the objective world is related to the ways we conceive of ourselves*.

Where this emphasises literature that not only interrogates the apparent structures of professional practice but indeed the hermeneutic influence of the very identifications (see again Lacan, 2012: 2) upon which these are constituted, it is especially useful to highlight the importance I ascribe to Schroyer's (1973: 35) belief that "…*critical theory anticipates a release of emancipatory reflection and a transformed social praxis*." Building from this pretext, I have considered work by writers such as Freire (1998b), Giroux (1992) and Marx (1998) in order to consider how the educational landscape within which I teach has been structured, in order to reconcile how I am, or might be positioned, as a LP, where what I might have once defined as repressive mechanisms are in fact understood to be constructed as opposed to objective measures of experience. Inevitably, given the focus of my early explorations into how education is framed, and especially when I account for the weight of my own personal histories, including a concern with navigating parameters that I perceived to be beyond my control, I was initially drawn to Marxist perspectives on how power relationships may structure actions as an educator. This has potential implications for how I might subsequently represent the LP role itself. As Marx and Engels (1998: 34) believed:

> *The Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education, they*

do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class…

Even now, I have by no means abandoned a sense that education is influenced by the *"…ruling class…*" Indeed, it would be tautological to do so given I am an employee within an English secondary school, subject to the edicts and policies formulated, or at least framed, at source by the Government, by definition an expression of dominant groups within society. Returning to interpretations of Gramsci's notions of hegemony (Mouffe, 2014: 179), I am however not necessarily referencing a specific elite who insidiously promote a particular ideology but rather that I recognise decisions are taken within educational governance that ultimately define, whether via acceptance or rejection, the actions of those who enact educational policy. Accepting my own emotional, indeed philosophical (Glossary of central concepts), refutation of how this might influence identifications, it is possible to understand why I present instrumental framing of education as problematic, seeking as a consequence to understand whether the LP role might also be framed to interrogate dominant notions of practice. Without denying, as I have discussed, that LM constructs inevitably respond to external validation (Boylan, 2016: 64), where particular notions of performance prevail (Department for Education, 2016: 8), what do perspectives that seemingly contradict dominant discourses therefore offer for an enhanced understanding of how LPs are, or might be, positioned? After all, it is of course unrealistic to expect that hegemonic practices are likely to be over-turned (see also Dawson, 1982: 150) to the extent that I, and I alone, am to define the conditions of my relationship to education, not least where I have already established that a key tenet of LM is "…*carrying the responsibility for the proper functioning of a system*…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504). Indeed, would this even be desirable?

Critical approaches: Framing the LP role through critical theory perspectives

As I mentioned in my proposal for this thesis (Appendix B), even if it were possible to replace prevailing educational constructs, suppressing also how I frame notions of emancipation (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) in this research, this might simply engender "...*an educational version of Orwell's 'Animal Farm', where the current hegemony is replaced by an authority of someone else's, perhaps the teacher-researcher's, making*." These objections alone would be sufficient to make me question the strength of adopting a purely Marxist approach to

understanding my own relationship with education and indeed, the potential for LPs to build an understanding of practice that goes beyond dominant discourses. Certainly, although I am conscious of the importance of power relationships within my own dissatisfaction as an educator, I cannot deny multiple weaknesses in adopting Marxism as the defining lens of my research into the LP role. In particular, I recognise the difficulty, even undesirable impact, of seeking to disrupt power relationships, not least where I have already begun to hint at how individual identifications might even be a constituent part of maintaining these (Mouffe, 2014: 179). In this way, also acknowledging Gibson's (1986: 10) challenge to "…*orthodox Marxism's reduction of the individual to a mere tool or puppet of wider economic forces*," I am especially struck by his (1986: 5) statement that:

> *Critical theory attempts to reveal those factors which prevent groups and individuals taking control of, or even influencing, those decisions which crucially affect their lives*.

Responding to concerns behind my engagement in this research, this hints at the way educators might be positioned to identify with practices that are perceived to be more problematic. Drawing also upon Laclau (2007: 2), where "…*playing within the system of logical incompatibilities… can open the way to new liberating discourses*..." this moreover promises a response to a key contradiction explored by Biesta (2013: 82), for whom:

> *The one to be emancipated is, after all, dependent upon the intervention of the emancipator, an intervention based upon a knowledge that is fundamentally inaccessible to the one to be emancipated.*

Considering my aspiration to explore how LPs: conceptualise a sense of educational purpose; …enable changes in professional practice; or indeed …how educational practices might be re-conceptualised, this in turn presents opportunities to understand the part LPs play, or might play, in constructing wider notions of professionalism, especially given policy to lead improvement (Department for Education, 2020a: 57). Indeed, appropriating the writing of Brown and Roberts (2000: 659), if LPs are simultaneously located as a legitimate expression of dominant principles (see again Boylan 2016: 66), adopting critical theory perspectives as a lens for exploring practice could offer "...*a reflective/constructive narrative*

layer that feeds whilst growing alongside the life it seeks to portray." In this way, where Gibson (1986: 5) declares that "...*critical theory claims to afford insight into how greater degrees of autonomy could be available*," it may be possible to frame the LP role through more exploratory, more critical, notions of educational purpose, with implications moreover for how the LP role might be positioned in relation to notions of LM (Connolly et al, 2019: 504), or indeed Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 34) treatment of notions such as "…*police*…" and "…*politics*." Nevertheless, acknowledging challenges within presentations of instrumental rationality (see also Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 396), or more purely Marxist outlooks on hegemony and resultant power relationships (for example Marx and Engels, 1998: 34), there does remain a gap that cannot be easily explained by simply identifying contradictions that cause discomfort. After all, unless identifying the inherent tensions of being positioned to enact dominant discourses as a LP also offers a rationale for conceptualising educational purpose in less constrained ways than would be possible through other roles, there would appear to be little sense in advocating that the LP role features more widely as a model of LM.

2. Explore how Lead Practitioners might enable changes in professional practice

In relation to my second aim, I will consider significant educational discourses, such as improvement agenda, which frame the LP role in particular ways. In turn, I will examine existing structures, especially in terms of DL, through which I will seek to locate the potential of the LP construct to simultaneously enact, and also enable changes to, dominant notions of practice.

Designed to improve: Improvement agenda and changes in professional practice

"…*the spaces we propose are often structured or managed by a guide, mentor or facilitator*…" (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 55)

To begin with, I will revisit the notion of improvement agenda, and specifically how this might enable LPs to contribute to changes in professional practice and understanding. For example, seeking to interpret what Appleby and Pilkington's above statement might mean for the LP role, referencing also my earlier contextualisation of the LP role through policy (Department for Education, 2020a: 57), I remain concerned by what Godfrey (2016: 302) asserts as the "…*renewed and reinvigorated obsession with school autonomy and accountability*," where for Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 26):

> *[w]hilst the prevailing discourse in education may be of choice, autonomy and the increased value of professionalisation, the reality for many may be in stark contrast.*

Certainly, accounting for my own experiences as an educator, there are parallels with Hall and McGinity (2015: 1) for whom "…*a new professionalism of increasing regulation and restrictions upon practice… act to restrict and confine professional identity formation*…" In this way, positioning notions of the LP role through improvement agenda might result in a Catch 22 situation. In other words, given that this research is predicated upon emancipatory (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) ambitions, there is a danger, for Courtney and Gunter (2015:

405), that engagement as a LP might mean that "…*professional identities [are] re-written*…" plausibly in ways that individuals find problematic. Extending this further, Hall and McGinity (2015: 3) argue, "...*professionalism has become ineluctably tied up with compliance even where accompanied by personal or professional resistance*." In fact, there is a risk that the exercise of any form of leadership vision (Bush, 2008: 278), including as a LP, could inevitably equate to the imposition of policy or even ideology. In turn, if LP activity frames the actions of others, it could even be argued that this might irrevocably reduce the subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 21) of subordinate members of educational hierarchies, where LPs might be as much a participant in hegemonic construction of practice as any other LM role (Gramsci, 1999: 770). With repercussions for how I might qualify the potential of being a LP, this also emphasises the importance therefore of considering how the role might be constituted to interrogate, even change professional practice.

Designed to improve: How LPs might enable changes in professional practice

Taking a more nuanced approach to interpreting arguments proposed by Courtney and Gunter (2015: 401), for whom leadership distinguishes those who are "*in positions of hierarchical authority […] from other workers in school*," it is possible to move beyond normative presentations of improvement agenda to also capture the emancipatory (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) potential of being positioned in this way. Of course, I have already identified that any understanding of the LP role implies engagement as a key actor in policy-derived models of professional development (Figure 1), with implications in turn for representing how subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20) might also be experienced as a LP. Still, embracing the fact that I position the LP role as a construct of LM, it is also clear that this could be characterised through a fundamental separation from particular aspects of performativity (for example Hall and McGinity, 2015: 1; Department for Education, 2016a: 8) that are encountered within other established LM positions. Indeed, as I will discuss further in Chapter 5, even where I have myself experienced the LP role as being an agent of change through improvement agenda, I actually find this aligns consistently with Cramp and Khan's (2019: 350) depiction of "…*a mode of working to encouraging teacher learning*," perhaps framing a nuanced view of what it might mean to carry "…*the responsibility for the proper*

functioning of a system…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504), suggestive moreover of interfaces between notions such as "…*police*…" and "…*politics*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 34). Extending this, for Godfrey (2016: 302) it is possible to perceive:

> *…the deep, reflective professional learning that takes place as a result of conducting research; the incentive to work collaboratively in teams; and the contribution made to the organisational learning of the school.*

This could be important in several ways, not least the promise of a more symbiotic understanding of educational practice (Kemmis, 2019: 94) through research engagement. However, returning to my previous section, it is also clear that irrespective of the potential of interrogating practices, it is unlikely that such a system, or even institution, wide model of LM would be easily encouraged, especially if this were to provide a challenge to dominant modes of practice, referencing again Gramsci (1999: 448). As Courtney and Gunter (2015: 414) quite bluntly put it, returning to a particular concern with how notions of professional practice might be constructed:

> *The implications for the profession are clear; this management of teachers such that the discursive dominance of the standards agenda is sustained will lead to a profession consisting mostly of those who believe, or who stay quiet.*

In this regard, where I account for particular challenges of positioning LPs through improvement agenda, it is imperative that I now expand upon how perceived restrictions could actually contribute to how LPs might also enable emancipatory changes in professional practice.

Distributed Leadership: Positioning the LP role within contemporary educational structures

"*This is only possible within a framework of distributed leadership*." (Godfrey, 2016: 314)

In this section, I will present the importance of DL structures as a framework for the LP role. Seeking to chart how professional practice is, or might be, represented differently as a LP, Godfrey's above statement makes a strong case that locating the LP role within a broader

discourse of DL might have important implications, not least when Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 26) touch upon notions of "…*professional capital*…" This becomes significant when we also consider that for Hall (2013: 484) "…*the lack of conceptual clarity around the term DL and its correspondingly elastic qualities have left the door open to a myriad of understandings*…" Of course, as Hall (2013: 467) also identifies, "…*the forms which distributed leadership takes […] are in part shaped by particular contextual features within individual institutions*." Still, where Jenkins and Andenoro (2016: 57) describe a model of "…*flexible and adaptive leadership*," it would seem that notions of DL could offer an interesting framework for understanding the potential of the LP role, regardless of specific context, and especially when accounting for gaps within literature. Again, this is not to suggest that individual educators would be free to reject dominant structuring of practice but that presenting the LP role as a model of DL potentially provides a legitimate foundation for LPs to lead, interrogate, perhaps even reconstruct, notions of professional practice. As Hall (2013: 471) describes, framing the LP role through DL structures might even represent an "…*officially authorised approach*…" where "…*these functionalist literatures also appeal to the emancipatory, participatory and, sometimes, democratic possibilities for educational practitioners*…" Expanding upon how I have already begun to represent notions of influence or legitimacy for the LP role, irrespective of how I seek to define the nature of LM more broadly, I therefore reiterate the potential of what McMaster (2014: 433) describes as "*the Weberian idea that authority is derived from legitimate or positional power*."

Distributed Leadership: Key implications of positioning the LP role in this way

Recognising again the influence of performative agenda (Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 400) within contemporary English state secondary education, and certainly a central concern in this research, it should not be a surprise if educators are reluctant to challenge, or are even unaware of, being positioned through hegemonic identifications (Mouffe, 2014: 179); if they are unable to articulate a deeper sense of purpose in a language that is their own, and especially when they themselves are threatened by more nefarious control measures (Dillabough, 2000: 315), including competency procedures. Where this might restrict how individuals, including LPs, identify with contemporary educational discourses, by promoting

what is acceptable, or indeed necessary, DL legitimacy is presumably therefore also tied to the problematic nature of compliance with dominant discourses, in turn framing interactions with others, including where LM involves "…*the responsibility for the proper functioning of a system*…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504). As Hall (2013: 471-72) recognises:

> *One of the implications of socially critical work on DL is that it is a development that appeals to the agential and participatory emotions and fantasies of teachers and headteachers, but in a wider policy environment highly unpromising in terms of the possibilities for such fantasies to be enacted.*

In fact, as Courtney and Gunter (2015: 402) exemplify in an exploration of educational vision, it is even possible that there is "…*manipulation and indeed the removal of staff who challenge or have legitimate rival visions as experts in pedagogy*…" On face value a shocking statement to make, I am nevertheless unconvinced that conceding this should automatically negate the potential of framing LPs as a construct of DL. Without denying the potential limitations exemplified here, when Hall and McGinity (2015: 12) identify that "…*the practices of teachers necessarily involve frequent micro encounters, for example with young people, that evade performativity and marketization*," it is possible to argue that there can be ample opportunities through DL structures and spaces for educators to express personal views, to promote individual principles, assuming that individual impact does not contradict (meta) institutional requirements. Certainly, extending this, Boylan (2016: 68) believes we can enable:

> *…teacher system leaders, such as Specialist Leaders of Education and other similar designations discussed earlier, [other] than as implementers of a centrally directed school improvement agenda or one defined by headteachers*.

Referencing again my earlier exploration of LM (see also Connolly et al, 2019: 504), when McMaster (2014: 435) also states that "…*the key purpose of leadership is influence*," it is therefore interesting that according to Godfrey (2016: 312), the role of a leader is understood in part as "…*nurturing, developing and setting the culture and structures that engender knowledge creation."* Indeed, it is important to consider whether DL structures might specifically position LPs in ways that concurrently promote the assertion of individual

subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20), or emancipatory changes in professional practice (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33).

Distributed Leadership: Key opportunities of positioning the LP role in this way

To begin with, expanding upon my earlier presentation of Fuller (2012: 686), it is plausible that positioning LPs to reflect upon professional practice through improvement agenda, and as an expression of DL, could at least frame:

> *…emancipatory interest through self-knowledge…to fulfil a core responsibility of leadership to understand, deploy and create a vibrant range of interpersonal spaces*...

Of course, this also implies the need to first succeed through performative structuring of practice, in order to be given the opportunity to undertake such a LM role. After all, as Courtney and Gunter (2015: 398) point out, school leaders aim to "…*attract the right type of people who could deliver the right type of outcomes*." It is by no means certain therefore that any given individual would be offered the position of LP, just as not everyone is able, or enabled, to under-take any number of diverse leadership roles. Furthermore, referencing again notions of hegemony (Gramsci, 1999: 770), there is a question as to why an institution would even require LPs to inform alternative, more critical, conceptualisation of professional practice.

Revisiting Ball (2013: 10) and his depiction of the fact that, *"[w]e are moving back towards a 'system' of education that is messy, patchy and diverse*…" might be one reason, and for institutions that are actively engaged in processes of improvement, which as I have already established, are central to understanding the LP role, it could undoubtedly be argued that an alteration in educational practices is integral. If, as Rayner (2018: 750) contends "…*unprecedented operational challenges and value conflicts*…" are also characteristic of contemporary education, this in turn hints at a need for other approaches to professional practice. Of course, this would seem to raise additional concerns. Without doubt, there is a risk that positioning the LP role as a different response to endemic tensions might bring about

less clarity, potentially even engendering additional problematic modes of practice, however these might be conceived institutionally or individually. Nonetheless, even though Hall and McGinity (2015: 12) also ponder whether compliance is "…*now so high that teachers' resistance to neo-liberal educational policy in this context is no longer worth taking seriously*…" for Fuller (2012: 685) it is already possible to identify examples of leaders (Head teachers) working "…*simultaneously within and beyond the system.*" This has interesting parallels for how the LP role might be constructed to enable changes in professional practice as an expression of DL structures**.**

On the one hand, it could of course be suggested that this is primarily representative of contexts that might be supportive of active interrogation of established principles. On the other hand, it might also be indicative of the potential of positioning LPs to navigate any problematic, yet liminal, spaces between dominant ideologies and individual identifications, alluding here moreover to where the LP role might represent a particular response to Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 34) presentation of "…*police*…" and "…*politics*." For example, drawing upon Sheard and Sharples' (2016: 670) depiction of mediators, it is reasonable to suggest that DL structures might involve LPs as "…*an integral link between research and practice*," even where for Oolbekkink-Marchand (2014: 122) there inevitably exist "…*guidelines for practitioner research – to specify the goals, outline the process, and articulate the possible outcomes for stakeholders*…" Indeed, writers including Brown and Zhang (2017: 383) postulate that it is possible to position research engagement *per se*, perhaps extending notions of the expert, as central to engendering "*a learning culture in which staff work together to understand what appears to work, when and why*." Still, regardless of whether this might be said to specifically characterise aspects of LP activity, it is above all important to recognise that for Ball (2013: 5) such development of practice:

> …*will require a new kind of teacher and a move towards forms of democratic professionalism, with an emphasis on collaborative, cooperative action between teachers and other educational stakeholder*s.

Where the LP role might therefore be legitimised, as the (research-engaged) expert, and through DL structures, to lead notions of educational practice, it is plausible that a reiteration

of the coincident, emergent nature of this model of LM might also be a constituent part of being positioned to express, and indeed influence, alternative understandings. For Taysum (2016: 282) this in turn offers "…*opportunities for others to build their narrative capital*," or put another way, for LPs to enable different modes of thought. Taking this further, for Godfrey (2016: 314) it is even possible to imagine that:

> …*responsibility for defining, implementing and overseeing a school's teaching and learning strategy is taken more collectively by staff at all levels of seniority*.

As Gade (2016: 405) argues, "*[h]uman beings simultaneously transform the world and themselves while pursuing meaningful activity*." If I expand further to account for Cousin's (2019: 525) contention that we have "…*heralded a new era of governance, defined by the devolution of power and decision making to professionals*," it is possible not just to imagine the LP role within DL structures but to actively assert the importance of enabling them to feature there. Still, if Boylan (2016: 67) is correct we must develop "…*notions of leadership that locate agency with teachers*," on what basis should this happen? After all, as Fuller (2012: 686) also recognises:

> *Distributed leadership in itself will not result in empowerment, how and who distributes leadership to whom, and how that is perceived by others remains a critical concern.*

Indeed, having acknowledged a consistent emphasis within LM literature upon the need for educational practices to be legitimised, understanding now how it might be possible for LPs to represent legitimacy differently is in and of itself representative of a crucial question at the heart of my research aims, namely to theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised.

3. Theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised

In relation to this final aim, I will seek to examine how literature might suggest that LPs are conceivably positioned to interrogate, even re-conceptualise, dominant educational practices, with a particular emphasis on notions of CP. I will focus in turn on the potential to create emancipatory spaces within DL structures, characterised here specifically as PLC, understood primarily as a space for CPD, or as Godfrey (2016: 309) might put it "*…collective learning."*

Critical Professionalism: Setting the scene

"*…professionalism, sometimes also referred to as professionality, can be seen to be constructed, contested and changed over time.*" (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 13)

As I have already acknowledged, my work so far illustrates that there are complexities and even contradictions in how LPs are, or might be, positioned, including within LM structures. This is perhaps unsurprising given Appleby and Pilkington's (2014: 13) above statement. In this section I will therefore recognise that there are competing presentations of professionalism, and in particular, identify what this might mean for the LP role. Certainly, it is illustrative that Ozga (1995: 22) contends:

> *Professionalism is best understood in context, and particularly in policy context. Critical analyses of professionalism do not stress the qualities inherent in an occupation but explore the value of the service offered by the members of that occupation to those in power.*

Drawing also upon a key framework for teachers within secondary schools, namely the Teachers' Standards (Department for Education, 2011), it is evident that there is an expectation for teachers, including therefore LPs "…*to have proper and professional regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach*." However this might be interpreted, it is nevertheless possible to see this as a reiteration of the important role policy plays in framing educational practices. Certainly, where the Teachers' Standards

(Department for Education, 2011: 13) determine that teachers are expected to "…*take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development*…" I reiterate my presentation of subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20), as well as the broader importance of notions of responsibility within LM (Connolly et al, 2019: 504), added to the specific significance of framing the LP role through improvement agenda (for instance Department of Education, 2020a: 57). Certainly, it is reasonable to suggest that educational practices might be framed through forms of professionalism that Day (1999: 13) characterises as a "…*consensus of the 'norms'*," alluding here again to notions of hegemony (Gramsci, 1999: 770). Expanding upon this, for Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 27):

> …*competing external and internal notions of professionalism can be experienced as a growing sense of frustration, cynicism and stress in which individual understanding does not engage with the ways that the wider drivers are affecting current practice and shaping professional identity*.

Still, rather than perceive contrasting notions of professionalism in a purely deficit way, I have already begun to explore whether this could even influence whether LPs are positioned to actively interrogate particular identifications with dominant discourses, not least in a system of DL. After all, Evans (2008: 3) presents notions of professionalism not "…*as an absolute or an ideal*..." In fact, for Schostak and Schostak (2008: 139):

> *The power to judge circumstances, the right to make an account of what is actually going on defines what is to count as reality.*

Critical Professionalism: How this might frame practice as a LP

In this section I will consider Appleby and Pilkington's (2014: 1) statement that there is a need "…*for critical professional development linking the individual, the organisation and the wider context, showing possibilities for individuals and for organisations*," where "…*enabling structures and learning spaces …[are]… fundamental components within it*." Extending this, for Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 9), it is also of paramount importance that CP is understood not as "…*a linear individual or organisational response to external change*…" but that instead it builds upon what Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 12) term "…*critical consciousness*…"

Indeed, for Fullan and Boyle (2013: 9):

> *The best leaders are learners within the framework so to speak. One thing should be noted at the outset. Effective leaders are not born – they learn to become more and more effective through reflective action.*

Acknowledging work by Benson (2001: 174), touching also upon the central concepts in this research (for example, Lacan, 2012: 2), an example of this might include "*the recognition of one's own professional freedom in the implementation of curriculum guidelines*," while, echoing my earlier discussion of reflexivity (Raffo et al, 2015), Brown, Atkinson and England (2006: 19) describe reflective layers that feed "...*whilst growing alongside the lived experience they seek to portray and activate*." Added to this, where I have already referenced the particular role that LPs might play in CPD structures and processes (Department for Education, 2019: 26), pointing here also to spaces including PLC, as I will expand upon later, I also restate the particular significance of Courtney and Gunter's (2015: 402) view that "…*change is mandated through authority*." Indeed, where I have already explored whether LPs might directly be legitimised (Boylan, 2016: 66) to influence (Connolly et al, 2019: 504) changes in professional practice, for Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 18) it is possible for "…*new perspectives on individual identity, workplace context, professional role and the influences upon the individual to emerge*." With relevance moreover for how I conceptualise emancipation in this research (Bingham, and Biesta, 2010: 33), this might in turn enable LPs to contribute to what Foucault (1994: 456) describes as "…*making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted*." Of course, merely stating the tensions faced as an educator is unlikely to contribute alone to CP. After all, emphasising tensions I have already explored, as Courtney and Gunter (2015: 408) argue, there is a risk that:

> *Even concepts of leadership meant to invoke participation, such as distributed leadership, are re-imagined such that what is produced is a sort of omniscient, ubiquitous leader…*

Still, located within a nuanced understanding of how LPs might engage with dominant modes of practice (James, 2007: 34), as Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 26) put it:

> *The notion of professional capital enables the professionalism of teachers to*

> *be seen as a dual concept; both as something individually developed (personal value) and at the same time as something which is externally constructed and regulated (use value).*

Understood in this way, specific characterisation of competing perspectives is seemingly less important than the fact that what is captured is a potentially more critical representation of practice (Kemmis, 2019: 94). That is, if LPs might legitimately (McMaster, 2014: 433) engender different responses to dominant modes of thought, there is every reason for thinking that the LP role itself is important for the potential development, perhaps even re-conceptualisation, of educational practices, where for Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 32) we "…*are in a process of always becoming through critical doing, thinking and being*…"

Emancipatory spaces: Characterising Professional Learning Communities

> *The capacity to tame, inherent in ideology, makes us at times docilely accept... a moment of economic development, subject to a given political orientation dictated by the interests of those who hold power...*

In this section, I will consider how PLC might be characterised. Reflecting upon Freire (1998a: 113) above, I must not deny the importance of ideology in the structuring of actions including, it must be assumed, educational practices, potentially also spaces such as PLC. However, emphasising again earlier presentation of hegemony (Mouffe, 2014: 179), my above discussion of the potential significance of CP, and Freire's concern with how one might "...*docilely accept*," it is also essential to expand upon the potential of positioning the LP role as a vehicle to interrogate dominant conceptualisations of educational purpose, not only on an individual level but as a response to performative demands more broadly. For Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 41) this might invoke spaces that "…*are already present. It is the way we use them to develop professional capital that is important*…" In particular, it is interesting to consider how PLC might provide LPs with what Kruse and Johnson (2017: 588) term "…*a location for the practice of mindful leadership*."

Of course, it is clear that there is a rich and deep history of research into PLC. It should therefore be unsurprising if for Stoll and Seashore Louis (2007: 2) "*[t]here is no universal*

definition of a professional learning community…" Conversely, Stoll (2010: 153) does identify a consistent range of features in presentations of PLC in literature, including as spaces defined by reflective exploration, collaboration and collective responsibility, building here on some of the issues I discuss already (for example Fullan and Boyle, 2013: 9). Indeed, for Owen (2014: 54) it is apparent that, globally speaking, "…*there is broad consistency across the literature…in terms of core PLC elements of shared vision and values, collegiality...teacher inquiry…*" Contributing further to assertions of a consensus, Bolam, Stoll and Greenwood (2007: 18) argue that PLC are fundamentally spaces where colleagues "*…support and work with each other…to enquire on their practice and together learn new and better approaches…*"

This does not of course preclude the possibility of divergence. With some relevance for understanding the potential influence of the LP role, Bolam et al (2007: 19) themselves consider the impact of differing levels of PLC inclusivity, where "*[m]uch of the reviewed international literature tended to assume that only teachers are members.*" Indeed, it is possible to problematise various challenges in the construction and implementation of PLC. For example, Stoll and Seashore Louis (2007: 8) examine the impact of issues such as connectivity, equity and institutional stability. Likewise, Dimmock (2012: 123) poses a number of questions, acknowledging possible difficulties regarding how to "*…develop and sustain PLCs…*" Recognising this, where I also seek to integrate important themes that have already emerged in this research, not least notions of CP (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014), how might exploration of PLC contribute further to understanding the (potential of the) LP role as "*…a <u>supplement</u> to the existing order*…" which "*…intervenes in and reconfigures the existing order of things*…" perhaps even as an important interface between "*…<u>police</u>*…" and "*…<u>politics</u>*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33)?

<u>Emancipatory spaces: Professional Learning Communities as an emancipatory construct</u>

Grounding PLC in important issues that have emerged so far throughout this research, not least LP involvement in leading improvement (Department for Education, 2016b), or indeed characterisation of LM influence (Connolly et al, 2019: 504), Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 33) consider models of practice where not only can individuals "…*have some degree of*

professional autonomy and agency…" but where there are benefits for the institution "…*by it becoming more fully a learning organisation […] supported by critical professionals*…" In this way, it is especially illuminating that Godfrey (2016: 312), contrasting notions of professional development that too often involve "…*passively acquiring skills and knowledge in one-off 'whizz-bang' sessions*," advocates the creation of PLC which:

> …*provide a mechanism for engendering a cultural change in a school, as well as the kind of interchange of ideas that allows for knowledge to be converted in forms that lead to transformation of practice.*

In turn, where this might pose further questions as to the form and enactment of PLC in general, and LPs role within this, it is possible to identify a potentially crucial departure from notions of PLC, even CPD more broadly, which are grounded in approaches that, for Huijboom et al (2020: 751), "…*are still traditional by nature, directed at the individual teacher*…" Recognising also Appleby and Pilkington's (2014: 33) contention that to be a critical professional, individuals need to "…*engage with her/his own values, assumptions and the influences of policy and organisational systems and processes*," it is interesting that PLCs might present a contrast to forms of CPD that for Sachs (2011: 157) are *"…done to teachers*…" or "…*concerned with compliance and control*…" (Sachs, 2011: 163), especially when contextualised by my earlier consideration of potential constraints on practice (Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3). Indeed, where for Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 51) dialogue is "…*a central vehicle for learning within and around practice…*" actual outcomes might become ancillary to the process of engagement that could emerge through such spaces. That is, rather than building "…*transmission*…" derived responses to shared concerns (Sachs, 2011: 158), borrowing from Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 58), PLCs might instead engender the "…*confidence to challenge the status quo*…" through legitimised collaborative participation, where for Andrews and Lewis (2007: 136) "*[n]ew ways of working*" might respond to the emancipatory ambitions of this research (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33).

Emancipatory spaces: The potential impact of LP involvement in Professional Learning Communities

Where it is clear in my own job description (Appendix A) that LPs have responsibility for "…*promoting a positive staff culture, good practice and continuing professional development*…" it is significant that PLC are also presented in my school as the space within which most CPD takes place. Indeed, where I seek to theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised, LP involvement in PLC might even help to guard against what Kruse and Seashore Louis (2007: 108) acknowledge to be a risk that "…*reform may undermine existing community*." With regards to this, considering also the particular conceptual foundations of this research, I was especially struck by Godfrey's (2016: 309) depiction of PLC as a vehicle for "…*collective learning,*" not least because of parallels with my own experiences of the LP role but also how this promises what Fuller (2012: 673) describes as a "…*shift in emphasis away from exercising power <u>over</u> to acting <u>with</u> to empower*...[6]" Certainly, without denying Cramp and Khan's (2019: 350) depiction of "…*the friction between collegiality and notions of leadership*," the interplay of alternative perspectives and demands at the very least edifies tensions that must be explored, further hinting at the potential for PLC to engender what Little and Horn (2007: 79) describe as "…*generative conversation among teaching colleagues*."

As Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 29) argue "…*the exploration of practice and theorising around practical knowledge*…" is in turn significant for sharing "…*understanding and [to] construct a culturally situated knowledge base*." Put another way, where a LP might impact upon identifications held by others through PLC, there is also potentially an iterative, dialogic quality that may influence the development of collective CP, informing how educational practices might be re-conceptualised, as well as enabling changes in professional practice, both within and beyond formalised spaces. This in turn has implications for how subjectivity as a LP (Biesta, 2013: 20) might be understood. This of course assumes deeper engagement than is located by the performative demands of contemporary educational practices (see again Hall and McGinity, 2015: 1), and indeed, leads me also to highlight the importance of

[6] Underlining here represents italics in the original, and in other uses of the same quote.

Cramp and Khan's (2019: 351) assertion that "…*innovators need to be outside traditional leadership hierarchies or their work could be misinterpreted as senior management 'messages'*…" By this, I do not proclaim that LPs must purely be considered in terms of innovation. Rather, where LPs are indeed presented with opportunities to influence how identifications with practice are formed through leadership of PLC, it will be necessary to further expand upon how they are also positioned in ways that are different to alternative notions of LM if, for Godfrey (2016: 306), they can truly be "*cast as an agent of intentional school design*," or indeed as a "…*supplement to the existing order*…" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33).

Concluding remarks

"…*building and exploiting a proper sense of "democratic fellowship*" (Ball, 2013: 5)

Framing the LP role in terms of the above statement by Ball does not seek to deny potential constraints that have also emerged through my examination of literature. Certainly, Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 56) encapsulate a number of key themes that have surfaced so far through this research when they recognise that there are "...*challenges and tensions between spaces and structures that support individual critical professional development and those that are institutionally organised.*" Without doubt, any perceived benefits of the LP role might also engender additional challenges, including but not limited to institutional upheaval, cost implications, potentially even the replacement of one form of hegemony with another (Dawson, 1982: 150). However, in addition to synthesising literature in order to examine a role that is less present in current literature, where this research might begin to assert the potential significance of the LP role, my examination so far does point towards particular modes of professional collaboration, not least PLC (Godfrey, 2016: 312), possible opportunities for subjectivity as a LP (Biesta, 2013: 20), and, furthermore, a basis for suggesting that the LP role could present a specific response to limitations within current articulations of LM (for example Dimmock, 1999: 442), including tensions between more personal construction of practice and "…*carrying the responsibility for the proper functioning of a system*…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504). Developing this, as Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 30) argue:

> *By recognising that there are competing agendas, for example between policy, quality measures and educational processes, professional dialogue may be employed to produce effective and workable solutions which can be owned by both parties.*

Certainly, borrowing from Ball (2013: 40), framing LP as a critically engaged construct of LM might contribute significantly to identifying (Lacan, 2012: 2) that current dominant discourses are not in fact "…*end states, they are things that will always need to be struggled towards and struggled over*." Whether or not this accounts directly for improvement agenda

(Department for Education, 2020a: 57), where the LP construct is founded upon an ambition not to overcome current policy but engaged in shaping practice (Kemmis, 2019: 94) differently with, and for, varied and multiple stakeholders, there is every reason to believe that a response to the aims at the heart of this research might be framed in interesting, and potentially significant ways, especially when I account for my core ambition for emancipatory (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) re-conceptualisation of educational practices. Of course, this is not to deny that there remain gaps, including within literature itself (Department for Education, 2019: 26). Indeed, in order to expand my presentation further, I will now need to consider how the LP role is actually experienced, including how participants perceive it is positioned within spaces that for Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 63) can be:

> *…interpreted as formal, structured, dialogic, reflective, organisational and practitioner-based. The learning spaces can be physical, temporal or virtual. The key is that they are facilitated and facilitative…*

Chapter 3: Methodological discussions

What we have here is a conflict of visions of reality. The world as you see it right here, right now, is reality, regardless of what the scientists say it might be.

Robert. M. Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. (1999: 60)

Epistemological issues

"*Who controls the past controls the future, who controls the present controls the past…*" (Orwell, 1984: 191)

1. **Understand how Lead Practitioners conceptualise a sense of educational purpose within their specific professional challenges;**
2. **Explore how Lead Practitioners might enable changes in professional practice;**
3. **Theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised.**

Where the texts that preface this chapter (Pirsig, 1999; Orwell, 1984) replicate my own concern with how dominant educational discourses prevail it is also clear, as Scott and Usher (1999: 10) argue, that "…*philosophical issues are integral to the research process.*" I will therefore use this section to explain the conceptual foundation of my methodology. To begin, where I draw upon the central concepts in this research (for example Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), I am especially interested in exploring how, referencing Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017: 23), LPs might *"…construct their own views, worlds and learning…*" Indeed, restating the three aims at the centre of my project, which emphasise potential conflict between understanding the present whilst imagining, or reimagining, the possibilities of education, I am convinced that methodological perspectives should inform, and yet also emerge, through this research. Rather than some fixed, external statement of knowledge, I therefore seek to frame my own methodology as generative of understandings, in and of itself an active and deliberate process through which, as Cohen et al (2017: 23) also state:

> *…we come to understand our-selves and how this affects the worlds we inhabit and the way in which we interact with the objects and people in them.*

By asserting moreover the potential for a shift in how notions of professional practice might be interpreted (Aim 3), I also implicitly acknowledge that any immediate interaction with data will inevitably be no more than the expression of a particular point in time, of the embodiment of multiple and various filters of experience that we are all subject to at any given moment. When Muijs (2011: 3) presents arguments that the "…*truth is out there*..." it is important

therefore to recognise that my research is framed by understanding notions of truth as constructed. Certainly, I position my research in line with what Mahoney (2013: 185) describes as:

> *…the need to connect ourselves to the new stories that are being told about contemporary life and understand how these newly constructed identities and experiences help to reshape our understandings and change our worlds.*

Seeking to engender data not simply through interrogating the research aims but, rather, as part of synchronously constructing and even responding to those same aims, my research design is moreover predicated upon the use of data as a constituent part of creating the educational realities I aim to investigate. For example, Rancière (1998: 140) argues "...*the writing of the Idea is two things at once: it is both text and interpretation*." Framing this project as a space to evaluate or even disturb modes of education, accounting for interplay between my three research aims, is therefore suggestive of approaches to data collection that for Bingham and Biesta (2010: 48) must stage "…*the contradiction between… two unconnected, heterogeneous worlds*…" Considering my first reflective journal, I stated that:

> *...my own writing here perhaps even betrays a tendency to think in institutional language, reflective of a deeper seated policy-driven 'professionalism' in my own actions...*

Although I was able to describe aspects of how being a teacher made me feel, I have already acknowledged that I have found myself consistently unable to explain, and lesser still enable, an evolution in these perspectives. Truthful insofar as this is how I chose to represent my own identifications, by describing how I was framing my own practice, it is nevertheless clear when looking back that I was concurrently grounding myself in the moment, whilst also generating data that not only served as a powerful medium to present my identifications at that time but which now serves as a starting point to interpret current observations. As Denzin (2014: 1) puts it "...*traces of what has been, what could have been, and what now is*." In whichever way I now choose to interpret this data, I would argue accordingly that capturing perceptions at given moments assumes particular importance for this research. Positioning my own, and other participant's, reflections within the wider research process might not only lead to a

reconsideration of what went before but, perhaps more powerfully, foreshadow a reimagining of current perceptions, which in turn might inform interactions that take place more broadly. Indeed, this might contribute further to representations of the LP role as a potentially transformative paradigm.

Research approaches: A rationale for using autoethnography and critical conversations in this research

In this section, I will seek to explain why I specifically use autoethnography and critical conversations in this research.

Defining Autoethnography

> *...I teach, I continue to search and re-search. I teach because I search, because I question, and because I submit myself to questioning. I research because I notice things, take cognizance of them. And in so doing, I intervene. And intervening, I educate and educate myself.* (Freire, 1998a: 35)

Whether my earlier example of personal data provides a contemporary account that I have either moved away from or, as I allude to through my use of Freire's (1998a: 35) above quote, now interpret differently, I consider Denzin's (2018: 33) call for "...*critical, performative practice*..." to be integral within this project, even where I simultaneously open up opportunities for criticism. Not insignificantly, for Doloriert and Sambrook (2012: 86), it is possible to argue "…*a narrative formed from memories can represent a partial and incomplete "truth" and become distorted over time*." Still, positioning my own reflective journals as a form of autoethnography, a mode of research that Anderson (2006) presents as having a long and varied history, let me now determine why I have interpreted this as critical for the positions I take within this research. Namely, the production of writing that places me, and my own subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 21), as the teacher-researcher, at the centre of what is written. For Anderson (2006: 378) there are five key features of enabling analytic autoethnography:

> *(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity,*

(3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis.

Considering various depictions of autoethnography, not least Denzin (2014), it is evident that in addition to framing research in ways that I find important, including for Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011: 273) as a challenge to "…*canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act*," there are particular implications for how autoethnography might feature in my own work. For Ellis et al (2011: 273) autoethnography is above all "…*both process and product.*" Still, although autoethnography is for Ellis et al (2011: 273) an approach to "…*research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience*…" it is also likely that the specific enactment of such research practices will vary. As Crawley (2012: 144) asserts when describing the use of autoethnography within feminist research, this might be situated as "…*a kind of self-interview, which is not a defined method with specific parameters*…" Where Doloriert and Sambrook (2012) also highlight inevitable differences in how autoethnography has been, and might be, constructed, inclusive of critique as a research approach, my own stance in relation to Anderson's above presentation seeks to account for Adams, Holman and Ellis (2014: 1) delineation of autoethnographic stories as "…*analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experience*."

An exploration of autoethnographic reflexivity

Accounting for my own aims, I am struck by Adams et al's (2014: 1) belief in the capacity for this research approach to enable a teacher-researcher such as me to "…*engage ourselves, others, culture(s), politics, and social research*," all the time whilst navigating liminal spaces between "…*insider and outsider perspectives*." Of course, when I reflect on the influence of remaining globally framed by the same experiences, aims and interpretive lenses that prompted me to produce writing in the first place, it is telling that Rancière (1998: 127) has considered circumstances where "*[t]he writer becomes the copyist of a copyist who himself copies the discourse of stupidity from which he wanted to escape*." In this regard, it should also be unsurprising if, for some commentators, the usefulness of such data is limited insofar

as it is credible, insofar as the teacher-researcher has credibility, much as it is possible to argue that the LP role itself might be limited by assertions of legitimacy (McMaster, 2014: 433). As Denzin (2014: 69) discusses:

> *Autoethnography has been criticized for being nonanalytic, self-indulgent, irreverent, sentimental, and romantic. The focus on the narrative, not the performative I, has also been criticized...*

Recognising in turn more individualist perspectives on constructivism as associated with Piaget (1954), might the use of autoethnography even threaten to produce, at best, what I have already described on p.40 as "…*an educational version of Orwell's 'Animal Farm', where the current hegemony is replaced by an authority of someone else's… [in this case specifically] the teacher-researcher's, making?*" Indeed, when Muijs (2011: 3) considers arguments that researchers must "...*use objective methods*..." is my own work potentially restricted through the use of autoethnographic approaches? In response, I am especially struck that in addition to placing me at the heart of my own research, this method might contribute to addressing the ethical challenges of commodifying human experience through more objective data collection techniques. As Schostak and Schostak (2008: 138) ask:

> *Can the voices of people, their rights and their judgments concerning 'reality' be progressively embedded into normal research designs in order to bring about real change?*

Furthermore, and restating socially constructivist foundations in this research, far from aspiring to expressly achieve generalisable, objective data, or even sequence measurable experiences, I have already established that it is how I engage with data that is of most interest to me. Without denying aspects of Piaget-inspired perspectives, which are equally rooted in the idea that knowledge is not fixed, it is especially crucial to reiterate the integral part social factors also play in the hermeneutic construction of knowledge, including in terms of individual reflexivity (see also Laclau, 2007: 1). In particular, I repeat a concern with how these might influence the construction, or transformation, of collective understanding. This includes when I reiterate the potential of reconsidering my own historical perspectives upon actions I have myself taken as an educator, with concurrent relevance for how I might then

re-conceptualise broader interpretations of educational practice as a LP, informing exchanges both within and beyond research spaces. By illustration, a personal reflection I produced at the beginning of my time as a LP (September 2017) describes how:

> *I also feel like I have less of a 'voice' – is this because of doubt in my own sense of purpose or 'what is right'? Is this because I feel that the highly prescriptive model of leadership is fixed?*

When analysing this, alongside my earlier excerpt on p.63, both separately and together, I might identify any number of interpretations, as would be the case for another person looking at the same data. I might for example argue that both autoethnographic pieces are characterised by a sense of being externally framed, bereft of emancipatory (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) understanding of my own purpose. The validity of whether this can be argued is nevertheless less important here, than the fact that reflecting upon autoethnographic writing interrogates how I myself have tried to understand educational practices. Indeed, this hints at influences upon my interactions with others. As Ellis et al (2011: 276) state, "*[w]hen researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies*…" More specifically, through reflective writing, and subsequent attempts to unpick it, I engage with a deeper process of understanding, much as I might also represent my engagement with wider literature. Namely, I retrospectively attempt to draw conclusions from my own prior identifications, forming the basis of renewed viewpoints and further iterations of investigation. As Mahoney (2013: 186) puts it:

> *Self-reflexivity, in this sense, implies both a distancing and a unity with the other at the same time. It makes the ethnographer aware of him- or herself as both subject and object.*

The intended contribution of autoethnographic writing to new understandings

By grappling with emergent tensions within my own reflections, I have already recognised that I might frame questions that are meaningful, at least to the extent that they focus attention upon those areas that I find challenging within my own practice as an educator.

Likewise, by also considering this data beyond the specific temporal contexts of its production, it is plausible that I might generate additional modes of understanding, even new paradigmatic perspectives. Put another way, for Denzin (2014: 1):

> *Stories are like pictures that have been painted over, and, when paint is scraped off an old picture, something new becomes visible. What is new is what was previously covered up.*

Indeed, borrowing from Rancière (2010: 172) it might even be possible to imagine that "…*the gap between the present of the work and the future of the people turns out to be a constitutive link*." Referencing again how I seek to locate notions of emancipation (Bingham, and Biesta, 2010: 33), the vision of autoethnographic writing that I present here therefore stages an opportunity to both interrogate, and define, even redefine, how notions of educational practice are conceived. By allowing for engagement with previous manifestations of how I have tried to identify with educational practices, it is possible that autoethnographic writing might constitute research spaces through which epiphanies may take place for me, and it is to be supposed, prepare the ground for broader impact. Rather than simply being a self-indulgent expression of my own feelings, by framing myself as someone investigating nebulous notions of educational purpose, autoethnographic writing, as Denzin (2014: 6) describes, also gives notice "…*to those who may otherwise not be allowed to tell their story or who are denied a voice to speak*." As I have already alluded to, in using my own personal reflections across time, I am if nothing else speaking to myself as a teacher, exploring liminal spaces through which I might be able to intervene in my own practice (Freire, 1970: 73). In speaking to myself as a teacher, I also speak to the unknown reader, the other who may be voiceless but who, through me, is embodied, or if too grandiose a statement, is present in how I grapple with my own perceived tensions. Even if the other is only the future me, there is at least a basis to suggest this research might respond to my asserted aims. Borrowing from Rancière (1995: 10), "*[w]hat did it matter how many people read the letter? What mattered was that it was signed and addressed*."

Accounting also for an intention to consider educational practices beyond my own direct influence, it is significant that Denzin (2018: 197) captures how autoethnography invites

individuals to engage in "...*moral and ethical dialogue while reflexively clarifying their own moral position*," characterising my own attempts to represent the LP role more broadly. Still, even when accepting this viewpoint, where Anderson (2006: 386) argues that, "*[t]he ethnographic imperative calls for dialogue with "data" or "others,""* it is also clear that how I position myself within this research through, and in relation, to my own writing, must also account for collaboration with wider participants, not least given my own asserted epistemological positions, founded significantly upon notions of hermeneutic understanding (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 15), as well as particular representation of emancipation (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). After all, as Ellis et al (2011: 276) state:

> *Autoethnographers must not only use their methodological tools and research literature to analyze experience, but must also consider ways others may experience similar epiphanies...*

Contextualising the selection of critical conversations

> *…break out of pre-existing moulds and shape the world together in ways that affirm what we wish to become, rather than one that reminds us of what others wish us to remain.* (Fielding and Bragg, 2003: 55)

Where I draw upon the above statement by Fielding and Bragg, this is in part to reiterate that a central imperative of exploring my own subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20), as well as articulating the potential of the LP role more generally, must be grounded in research decisions that enable interactions with the experiences of others. Certainly, considering also Brinkmann's (2013: 163) general belief in the capacity for qualitative research to "…*throw light on people's private experiences and opinions*," examination of other perspectives is necessary to augment how I might represent the LP role, replicating in turn key themes that have already emerged in relation to the LP role through literature (for example Godfrey, 2016: 302). Accounting for this standpoint, Silverman (2000) demonstrates how capturing the views of other people could nevertheless involve a myriad of methods. Indeed, in his consideration of social surveys, May (2011: 94) recognises that even equivalent research strategies will inevitably be framed differently according to the requirements of the research and could moreover engender data of comparable interest. Certainly, I do not ignore the risk of missing

benefits that could be offered by adopting discrete methods of investigation. Still, returning to the aims at the heart of this project, including how I have so far positioned my methodological goals, I am especially drawn to what Denzin (2014: 52) describes as "...*interactional moments and experiences which... alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life*."

Affirming an ambition to nourish or even expand on emancipatory (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) spaces through this research, where I elaborate on emergent themes that surface within literature and my own reflective writing, it is also important to consider Giroux's (1992: 11) assertion that individuals need to call "...*into question the forms themselves*," especially given that for Scott and Usher (1999: 119) people interpret their situations "...*in ways perhaps others would not*" and indeed, considering Datchi's (2013) work on "*Performance-Centred Research,*" do so in multiple and complex ways. Accepting this, when Barbour (2007: 42) believes interviews are "…*suited to eliciting detailed contextualised histories*," I was particularly intrigued by the potential of framing these as a form of critical conversation. Certainly, where I sought to collaborate with other participants through this research, it was important (Briggs, 1986: 4) to consider "…*a communicative event*…" that can "*contribute to our understanding of these basic and theoretical problems*." For Burbules (2000), interviews can of course be constituted in different ways, and indeed, might be predicated upon quite distinct methodological positions. In this way, replicating my own wider journey through literature, I variously reflected upon perspectives described by Burbules (2000: 252-254) as ranging from the Socratic to the Freirean via the Platonic to work by Habermas or Gadamer. Without denying criticisms of different approaches, or claiming that my own enactment of critical conversations complies entirely with one or another approach, my intention was nevertheless to shape interactions that might also enable transformation of identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2), whether my own or those of others, through considering the experiences of different participants.

Characterising critical conversations

Considering key themes that have already emerged through this research (for instance

Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 29), and suggested moreover by my own direct experience of practice as a teacher and LP, I was perhaps unsurprisingly drawn to examples in literature of the use of critical conversations as a pedagogical tool for building constructive dialogue (for example Forneris and Fey, 2016; Kang and O'Neill, 2018). In particular, it is illustrative to consider how Pierce and Gilles (2008: 40) present these as building "…*on one another's ideas and creat[ing] meaning together*." After all, for Helsby (1995: 320), "...*teachers are potentially key players in... accepting or resisting external control and asserting or denying their autonomy*." Where I aimed to engender iterative**,** collaborative**,** hermeneutic understandings of the LP role, my use of interviews as a form of critical conversation was therefore predicated on Silverman's assertion (1993: 95) that "…*one should try to obtain intersubjective depth between both sides so that a deep mutual understanding can be achieved*." Furthermore, reflecting once more upon the conceptual framing of this research (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), it was essential that my own specific presentation, and use of, critical conversations as a mode of interaction should seek to evade what Burbules (2000: 251) describes as "…*dominance that belies its emancipatory rhetoric*…" valuing instead an emphasis upon "…*equality and reciprocity within the dialogical relation*." Of course, for Brinkmann (2013: 152), all interviewing might be perceived as:

> ...*a powerful method for investigating people's lives, and many see it as a democratic and emancipatory form of social research*.

Additionally, responding also to what Silverman (2000: 4-5) terms as a failure of other approaches "…*to understand the 'meanings' that are brought to social life*," this does not preclude justifiable critique of the nature of data that might be produced in this way. Indeed, conducting interviews of any form might raise significant practical and ethical questions, as I will expand upon in my section on ethical considerations. Still, it is also clear that critical conversations might present opportunities to constructively explore, even disturb, professional practices that trouble participants, in collaboration with others. That is, critical conversations, like my earlier examination of PLC (Godfrey, 2016: 309), could engender spaces through which new educational meanings are negotiated. More specifically, I refer here to Brinkmann (2013: 150) who emphasises the idea of producing knowledge through conversation "...*that has been arrived at through dialectical processes of questioning*."

The intended contribution of critical conversations to new understandings

As opposed to positioning critical conversations purely as the expert probing the subject on areas of interest, where, for Denscombe (2007: 174), the researcher gains insight into "…*things like people's opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences*…" reality itself might actually be constructed, or reconstructed, through critical conversations. As Brinkmann (2013: 150) argues, "...*we should see language and culture as emergent properties of dialogues rather than the other way around...Human reality is a conversational reality*." By valuing this perspective, it follows that how I frame critical conversations could further contribute to representations of educational practice, responding to the specific aims of this research at the same time as offering a solution to some of the potential limitations of conducting interviews more generally. For Brinkmann (2013: 160) this draws upon processes characteristic of dialectic approaches to questioning (see also Foucault, 1994: 396), where the interview or conversation moves away "...*from mere opinion*..." in order to enable "...*a growth in our understanding*." As Freire (1998a: 107) states, "*[t]rue listening does not diminish in me the exercise of my right to disagree, to oppose, to take a position*." When questions inevitably emerge from what challenges us as the researcher, including during critical conversations themselves, it is crucial in turn to consider the way Briggs (1986: 25) positions those involved as "…*co-participant in the construction of a discourse*," where understanding might be composed collaboratively. Accounting for social constructivist perspectives, it should not therefore be a surprise that I was especially influenced by Brinkmann's (2013: 160) depiction of a dynamic process of epistemic interviewing. Not without fault, such conversations:

> *...do not necessarily aim for agreement between interviewer and interviewee, and there is consequently no danger of instrumentalization of the researcher's feelings...The interviewer is allowed to question and challenge what the interviewee says.*

Certainly, by characterising myself not as an objective interviewer, but rather as someone who is actively involved in co-producing responses, there is every reason to think that in addition to an exploration of other people's perceptions, participants might collaboratively engender new identifications, conceivably creating spaces where the LP role might be

critically problematised, even re-conceptualised itself. Grounding this more specifically in challenges that trouble me as an educator, perhaps emerging through my own autoethnographic writing, or wider examination of literature, there is every reason to believe that critical conversations might therefore be a central component of reflexive construction of the very reality I am striving to understand, especially where for Derrida (2000: 104):

> *The question is always posed (determined) by someone who, at a given moment, in a language, in a place, and so on, represents a program and a strategy…*

Summarising the potential contribution of combining autoethnography with critical conversations

Through the potential symbiosis of autoethnography and critical conversations, it is plausible that even if there were no substantive change to how participants relate to their professional parameters, data constructed in this way might at least be revelatory of how educational practices, specifically as LPs, could be re-conceptualised with others. Acting both as window into other people's interpretations, as well as a mirror for my own understanding, it is possible that critical conversations, when allied with my own wider engagement as a teacher-researcher, might enable transformation in how educational realities are perceived. Indeed, they could prove to be essential for the elucidation of new possibilities, enhancing a capacity to reflexively engender a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of my own identifications, with consequences moreover for how I might perceive, even enact, my own subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 21) as a LP. At the very least, I situate critical conversations to enhance the impact of what emerges through my own autoethnographic writing. Much as for Brown and Roberts (2000: 659), reflective writing can be "...*a reflective/constructive narrative layer that feeds, whilst growing alongside, the life it seeks to portray*," critical conversations might influence how I, and indeed others, might read notions of educational purpose. In addition to potential triangulation of data, this could even build materiality for the possible contribution of the LP role to educational (LM) practices.

Research processes: The practical enactment of autoethnography and critical conversations in this research

"…*there are no universal methods to be applied invariantly*." (Scott and Usher, 1999: 10)

Accepting Scott and Usher's above position, this research will incorporate autoethnographic writing through reflective journals, and interviews, which I construct as critical conversations. I will now use this section to explore how I specifically use these in my research.

Reflective journals: What I did

As I have stated, I first began to produce reflective journals at the very start of my participation in the EdD process, initially in response to a specific assignment that was set. Subsequently, I began to keep reflections at times when I wanted to make sense of my practice as an educator. In particular, I wrote these when I felt a need to capture experiences that were proving problematic for whatever reason. In total, I produced 66 word processed entries between 02/10/2014 and 21/06/2020. Although these varied in length and detail, they consistently featured interrogatory thoughts and questions on my own practice, and often also captured the perceived influence of my own wider research activities. Indeed, a number are characterised by extended description of my contemporary identifications and, on occasion, demonstrate attempts at simultaneous analysis of why I might perceive things in particular ways, synthesising wider reading and research engagements. In addition, I kept a physical, hand-written, journal throughout phase A of my EdD. This contains 31 dated entries, each one coinciding with University sessions I attended between 27/09/2014 and 17/04/2016, and incorporates a variety of information, including once again reflections on links between my own practice and wider research. I also regularly captured ideas by keeping short notes as less formalised theoretical memos. Although these were not always written within a specific medium or length, I regularly recorded informal thoughts and questions, often on paper, that occurred to me at times when I did not have time at that moment to produce extended reflections. Finally, added to all of these, when exploring literature, or data

that emerged through critical conversations, I produced pieces of writing that informed other aspects of my wider research.

Critical conversations: What I did

I opted for a series of individual critical conversations with purposively selected participants, in order to inform what Denscombe (2010: 30) has termed "*sequential discovery*" of key themes. Although I only met with each person once, I aimed to build understanding through the cycle of critical conversations with different participants, where one informs the next, contributing to further iterations of my research, irrespective of what might also emerge during critical conversations themselves.

Sampling of participants

At the time I came to carry out the critical conversations, a year after I had begun the thesis stage of my EdD, I found myself disconnected with initially identified potential participants, not least as I had by this time changed both school and, crucially for this project, role. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that at this point, I felt a sense of disassociation to the context that I shared with previous colleagues, furthermore weakening the social bonds (Briggs, 1986: 63) that I increasingly experienced, and have presented, as intrinsic to my sense of impactful interactions as a teacher-researcher. For example, as I stated in a personal reflection in October 2017:

> *I feel concern that by challenging them through 'epistemic interviews' at best I may be unable to follow up, given our different contemporary contexts*...

Where the evolution in my own aims also involved a shifting emphasis from engaging with how teachers conceptualise a sense of educational purpose more broadly to an exploration of the LP role as a potentially important model of educational LM, it therefore seems inevitable that the critical conversations I decided to conduct involved collaborating with key stakeholders for the LP role. Specifically, as a LP, I was initially part of a group of 5, line managed by two members of the school senior leadership team, within a larger Multi

Academy Trust (MAT). The context I work within is a mixed sex, 11-18 Comprehensive school, where collective values are represented in the school motto, which I have not published here for purposes of anonymity. Located in a relatively disadvantaged location in the North-West of England, this school is one of two secondary schools, within a MAT of five schools; my school was originally invited to join at a time of great institutional difficulty, under the auspices of needing to improve quickly.

Considering again what has already emerged through this project, it should not therefore be surprising that I soon became interested in the perspectives of colleagues who were themselves engaged in the construction of TL practice and spaces within my own school and the broader MAT. In other words, individuals who were also central to the process of establishing the materiality of the LP role, in terms of producing resources, policy and presentations of specific ideological perspectives, characterised in turn by processes of change. As a result, I adopted purposive sampling to identify potential participants for critical conversations. Choosing to do this, I was especially influenced by Robson's (1993: 141-142) affirmation of:

> *…the researcher's judgment as to typicality or interest. A sample is built up which enables the researcher to satisfy her special needs in the project*.

Accounting for my first impressions of key colleagues, enhanced by working with them in our shared planning meetings, I was certainly encouraged by a deep, critically reflective commitment to issues that might otherwise be described as notions of educational purpose. In this way, added to their own direct experiences of the LP role, I soon positioned a number of individuals as prospectively important participants to facilitate a deeper contextual understanding of educational priorities, together with engaging interested participants in what Bingham and Biesta (2010: 48) describe as the collaborative "...*staging of dissensus*..." In total, I carried out six critical conversations, one with each participant (Figure 2), where each critical conversation lasted approximately one hour, and took place in neutral spaces agreed with the participants.

Figure 2: Critical conversation participants (in order of conversation date)

Name	Job title	School	Other details
Mario	LP	St Bede's Northern	1st year as a LP. Previously a Head of department.
Jordan	LP	St Bede's Southern	1st year as a LP. Offered role instead of Head of department.
Dominic	LP	St Bede's Southern	2nd year as a LP. Previous colleague of mine, in a previous school, as Head of Science.
Paula	LP	St Bede's Northern / St Bede's Southern	1st year as a LP. MFL background like me.
Jessica	LP	St Bede's Northern	LP since St Bede's Northern was incorporated into the Multi Academy Trust. Promoted to member of the senior leadership team at the same time as I was.
George	Head teacher	St Bede's Northern	Also has a son who is a LP (in a different school).

Sequence of critical conversations

For my first critical conversation, I began by identifying a colleague, Mario, who as well as quickly establishing a personal connection, not least as we were both in our first year as LPs, had shown an interest in questioning, if not actually challenging, dominant modes of practice that were also problematic for me. Subsequent to this conversation, and in response to emergent data, I carried out critical conversations with participants Jordan and Dominic, who were LPs within our partner school. Through these, I sought to confirm, or even contrast, key themes that already seemed important for the LP role, and especially as they were performing this role in a school where this approach to LM was already long established and, indeed, had been used as an example for my own school. Following this, I carried out a critical

conversation with a LP, Paula, who worked across both institutions, including with me within my own subject area. By this point, I had been presented not only with a number of themes and questions, some of which confirmed equivalent identifications, but also emergent ideas that were of interest in terms of the dissonance they represented, not least in relation to my own experiences, or indeed what might be suggested through literature.

By now, I had also begun to recognise the intrinsic challenges of seeking to probe as well as capture identifications through critical conversations with colleagues, where attempts to engender analytical reflection in the moment were at times actually limited by the personal rapport I had with individuals, adding to any wider failings of my own to lead critical conversations (or listen!) as effectively as might have been ideal, considering also forms of bias, or interactional barriers (Holstein and Gubrium, 2016: 77). Likewise, placing myself and my own perspectives at the heart of these interactions meant that my attempts to maximise potential data were at times restricted not only by any explicit failings in conducting this, or any, form of interview (Briggs, 1986) but in particular by my own identifications with our respective, and relational, professional roles beyond the research spaces. This was especially true when, at the point of carrying out my final critical conversations with fellow LPs, I was presented with the ethically, and methodologically, interesting challenge of promotion within my school, including responsibility for leading the LP team. This was potentially problematic on a number of levels, as I will reflect upon in my section on ethical considerations.

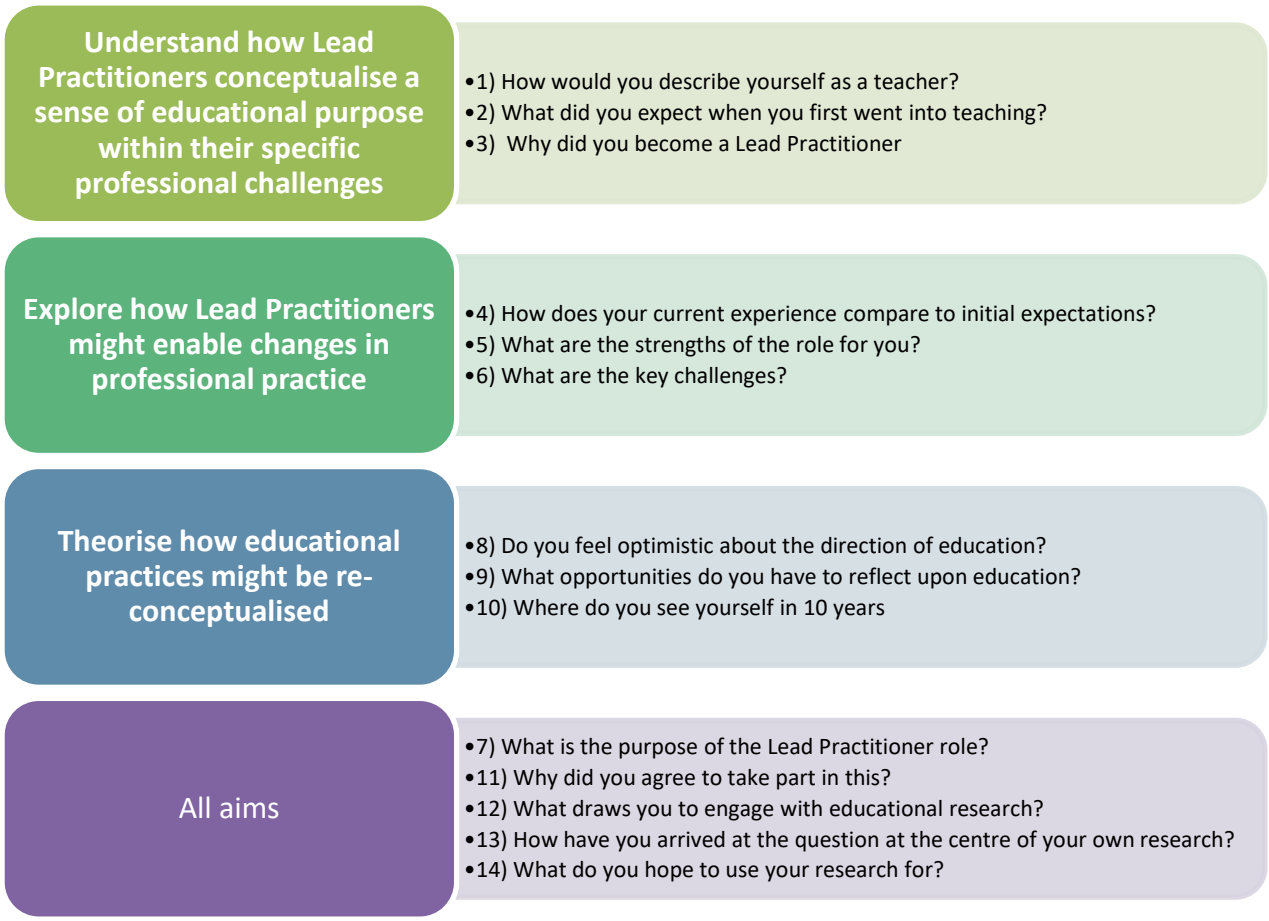
Recognising, for example, that I was now hierarchically senior to any LPs I had not yet met with, as well as henceforth the line manager of both Mario and Paula, it was also possible that additional critical conversations with LPs from our partner school would potentially position me as something of a threat (Thompson and Pascal, 2012: 319) beyond the symbolic, or representational, limitations that I will also further examine. Added to this, my own promotion was in part as a result of my direct line manager leaving the school, reducing my opportunity to capture the views of key stakeholders who were also hierarchically senior to me, and involved in the enactment of the LP role. Of course, I have not sought to construct a case study (Yin, 2018) *per se*, certainly in terms of representativeness or the ability to directly replicate findings. Nevertheless, accounting for an ambition to ascertain perspectives for a

range of colleagues, the specific change in situation I found myself in actually presented what has since proven to be an additional opening to extend my understanding of the LP role, at least within the context in question. Seeking to untangle some of the ethical provocations I was now faced with, I carried out my final critical conversations with Jessica, who was a LP at the same time as me and who, like me, had successfully performed the role to the extent that she was also promoted to a position in the senior leadership team at the same time as I was, and George, the Head teacher who had appointed me to the role, and who it might be argued is the ultimate arbiter for the construction of the LP role within my school. Certainly, I hoped that finishing with these two critical conversations might offer revelatory, co-constructive avenues for exploration, particularly where collaboration might position, even reposition, how the LP has been experienced or perceived by other participants (including me), or indeed as it is arguably represented through policy or literature. Having decided upon participants, what though did I actually ask?

Interview schedule: What I asked

Reiterating the social constructivist foundations of my methodology (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 27), added to a particular intent to frame interviews as a form of critical conversation (for example Pierce and Gilles, 2008: 40), my use of an interview schedule is relatively open-ended, where specific questions did vary across individual. That said, core foci were at all times informed by the research aims, regardless of what might have subsequently emerged, with each question constructed to surface data for particular aims. An example of the relationship between my aims and planned questions is now set out in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Example interview schedule



Modes of analysis

"*…understand how our own personal values, beliefs and practices are influenced by our previous experiences, circumstances and understanding*." (Pollard, 2014: 8-9)

Contextualising how the data is interpreted

Accounting once again for the methodological positions I have taken in this research, my analytical approach to data here involves synthesising particular accounts of the LP role with multiple layers of possible meaning, not least when acknowledging Pollard's above presentation of how a teacher-researcher such as myself might position their own understanding of data. In particular, I have already established that I sought to articulate the potential of the LP role through my own autoethnographic writing alongside critical conversations, where a process of iterative analysis itself contributes to hermeneutic understanding (Gadamer, 2004: 291). Certainly, following Charmaz (1983: 170), for who "*…the self is fundamentally social in nature*," I aimed to engage in modes of analysis that permit "*…examining the ways in which changes in self-concept occur…*" With an ambition to elicit key notions, as well as influenced by Bingham and Biesta (2010: 48) to explore gaps "*...between ways of being and ways of doing, seeing and speaking*..." I certainly hoped that my analytical approaches, not least subsequent to individual critical conversations, would guide additional phases of research, as well as the development of identifications, including my own. Interpreting work by Silverman (1997: 149), critical conversations might after all be seen as "*…examples of unfolding conversational interaction where the sense of social categories is refined and reworked*." Borrowing from Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006) in order to analyse data thematically, subsequent to critical conversations taking place, or through consideration of reflective journals, I planned that subsidiary questions might then emerge. I hoped that these in turn could successively inform additional critical conversations with key stakeholders, as well as an iterative evolution in representations of the LP role, including in my own writing.

Analysis: What I did

In order to analyse my data, I incorporated a variety of strategies. As I have stated, I used reflective journals to capture my own experiences as an educator. These were written at various times, in part as a means to marshal my own contemporary thinking. Reiterating my own use of these to also mark or ground specific moments, I have consistently returned to my reflections at critical moments in the research. On the one hand, as my burgeoning knowledge of literature relating to this thesis has grown, I have increasingly considered assertions that I have previously made in terms of what I have sequentially interpreted through engagement with literature. Additionally, continuing to produce reflective journals in between, and subsequent to each critical conversation, I have noted thematic equivalence and differences in order to consider next and future steps within my research. In this way, I have revisited many examples of my own writing with a desire to surface examples of themes that have proven to be increasingly important elsewhere, whether to confirm or contradict any conclusions that I might otherwise draw, or indeed have drawn.

In order to do this, and quite apart from attempts at *intra* conversation analysis, or even what Briggs (1986: 81) terms "…*metacommunicative competence*…" I listened to individual critical conversations, recorded on an audio device, on multiple occasions, writing down many segments of these *verbatim*, grounding initial selections, and theoretical headings, in what was meaningful to me at the time. In this way, I organised the transcript around categories or themes that, over time, became subject to an evolution in importance. When transcribing (Silverman, 1993) key passages that emerged in critical conversations, I organised, and subsequently reorganised, these not chronologically but in terms of sustained themes (Denscombe, 2007) that I deemed important upon first listening to, and then simultaneously revisiting what was said (Figure 4). Coding the data in this way, I also drew upon examination of literature and my own reflective writing in order to categorise revelatory quotes around particular strands of enquiry, which for Saldana (2013: 3) can be understood as:

> *…a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data*.

For later critical conversations, revisiting themes that I had already established through analysis of earlier data, I carried on coding the data according to emergent concepts, albeit seeking at all times to incorporate elements that might be unexpected, or indeed distinct from my own preconceived approaches (Saldana, 2013). Not only did I begin to hone an evolving sense of what I wished to probe but by also adding analytical notes (Figure 5) within the transcription process, I found I was better able to interrogate the significance of particular themes that I previously represented, asking questions of my perceptions at that time in order to chart changes to my own understanding of the data itself. In the beginning, it might be argued that this was relatively broad and characteristic of concerns that had motivated both my engagement in this research and the framing of any questions. By revisiting the recordings and transcripts at different points, including following later critical conversations, I was subsequently able however to reconsider premises that had previously emerged as important, accounting for hermeneutic modes of understanding that might establish a shift in identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2). This allowed me to evaluate the significance of different findings as well as inform further iterations of the research, including of critical conversations themselves. I also wrote theoretical memos or notes, after critical conversations took place, specifically when I had additional questions or interrogatory reflexes that struck me as important (Figure 6). These served not only to guide the framing of my next critical conversations but also to support how I analysed data that had already surfaced. Constituting in and of themselves valuable data, this makes a further contribution to thematic enquiries at the heart of my research, supporting my own attempt to position the LP role as a crucial model of educational LM.

Figure 4: Example thematic coding

Purpose of being a teacher / education	M 15:10 "I just went into a school." M 15:35 "I didn't particularly enjoy my school." M 16:05 "Maybe I could make the experience for other people better than what I had." M 16:15 (what makes it better) "Different reasons..." M 36:30 "It's massively changed... it's ridiculous." M 37:24 "the balance isn't right."

Figure 5: Example thematic coding with analytical notes

Theme	Quote	Notes
Potential of the role	0:00:12 "I think obviously a year in there is a lot of scope to see how that role will develop"	Expressing a degree of emancipatory 'spirit' through the role?
	2:25 "I think it is other I like to think it's a nice other"	A certain collegiality of the role that despite broader responsibility is actually a way to remain intrinsically part of the construction of practice and not just the imposition of ideology???
	8:08 "I can certainly see it for a good chunk of time...it's got such depth to be able to change"	Emphasising the range and possibility of working within the role to follow interests / develop / impact.....
	8:20 "so I could do oracy for a few years I could move on to do something else as something comes up and is interesting I'm sure I could approach the headteacher and I could say we've had this	Scope and empowerment of the role (self-identifitying areas of development and validity to approach the head.... = empowered)

Figure 6: Example post-conversation theoretical memo

Opportunity to reflect on my own questions / perceptions through analysing the emerging data - Moments of epiphany for me where the responses and analysis therein provoke me to think differently – is the interview process actually emancipatory for me?!

Ethics

"*…all research is contaminated to some extent by the values of the researcher*." (Silverman, 2000: 200)

Ethical considerations: General implications

Intrinsic to the methodological positions that I take within this research are various ethical considerations, some of which I have already considered, and not least Silverman's above belief that the values we hold as a researcher influence data. As de Laine (2000: 2) states, "*[e]thical and moral dilemmas are an unavoidable consequence*…" These range from theoretical to practical and, as I have already touched upon, encompass a number of areas including notions of voice, representation and truth. It is essential therefore that I account for these in both the way I have designed my research and also how understandings might surface in relation to the core aims of this project. For example, where I recognise an inherent concern with my own subjectivity (for example Freire, 1970: 73), I hint at ethical tensions that are central to the construction, and interpretation of any data that emerges, as well as being significant for how I might present the LP role as a crucial model of educational LM. As de Laine (2000: 3) asserts:

> *Ethical decision making includes being consciously aware of one's values, principles and allegiances to ethical codes, intuition and feelings, within a context that is characterized by professional and power relationships*.

Ethical considerations: Autoethnography

Examining the knotty nature of any development in my own reflexive self-awareness or subjectivity through autoethnography, I am conscious that there is in particular a risk of commenting on professional experiences that might reference actions or behaviours by non-consensual others that would be potentially problematic if made public. As Doloriert and Sambrook (2012: 88) point out, it is essential that "…*consent is sought from those we write about as a consequence of writing an autoethnography*." Equally, and quite apart from the

impact this could have on other people's rights to privacy, there is a plausible threat to the richness of any data produced if, by failing to acknowledge this, I were to also fall into patterns of what de Laine (2000: 3) has termed "…*partial self-censorship*." In fact, where I have engaged in exploratory research processes grounded in part upon a search for my own subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20), it is crucial that I have considered the ethical entanglements presented more broadly through the adoption of autoethnographic approaches. As Doloriert and Sambrook (2012: 88) state, *"[t]he ethics of revealing one's own identity is a complex moral and ethical minefield*." Accepting the importance of this, not least in terms of work by Goffman (1956) on how a researcher might present themselves, with repercussions for a teacher-researcher such as myself, I primarily value reflection upon experiences and not direct transmission of what these experiences constitute *per se*. Here I draw especially on what Anderson (2006: 382) has termed as *"[a]nalytic [r]eflexivity*." Additionally, although I do not seek to suppress less positive accounts of my own experiences of current (at the time of writing) contexts and parameters, by aiming to represent the possibilities of the LP role through this research, I do not intend to be constrained by dominant perspectives, or how my own portrayal might be judged negatively. Rather it is crucial that my use of autoethnography is predicated upon a desire to contribute to opportunities for emancipatory (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) practice through examining the potential of the LP role, rendering possible negative appraisal of my work as ancillary to the constructive personal impact of accounting for contemporary identifications.

Ethical considerations: Critical conversations

Extending my above examination, it is also clear that ethical issues abound within the use of any form of interview. Not least, for Burbules (2000: 252), if I am to remain cognisant of the potential that "…*there are unresolved power differentials or unexamined silences and omissions within a dialogue*…" it is essential that the interviewer, in this case me, must at all times navigate the possible imposition of their own evolving understanding of the issues presented. Indeed, for Burbules (2000: 251), dialogue can itself involve the restriction of "*self-expression into acceptable channels of communication*." Depending on whether these can be characterised by what Brinkmann (2013: 150) describes as "...*pollster and prober*..." data

produced might even at best be trivial, if not entirely disconnected from the sphere that they are intended to impact. Certainly, the pollster chances reproducing the same identifications that the research is engaged in changing, especially where questions are framed, at least initially, through my own identifications as an involved teacher-researcher. Indeed, Burbules (2000: 252) represents this as, "…*the solution to the problem is more of the same*." As for the prober, ethical tensions abound where I, as the person framing (initial) questions, might risk what Brinkmann (2013: 150) describes as "...*transgressing the lines of intimacy*," especially where, as I have acknowledged, I myself was a LP at the time I carried out critical conversations with colleagues and have, latterly, including at a time when I have revisited this data for the purposes of this research, been made responsible for leadership of the LP team. Added to this, referencing Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977: 4) discussion of symbolic violence, it is essential to recognise that how I iteratively construct my position as a teacher-researcher must necessarily also involve how I am perceived by participants involved in my research. This includes the specific dynamic of our shared professional relationships, where power inequalities inevitably affect the nature of data that is produced. Reflecting on work by Thompson and Pascal (2012: 319):

> *...power relations can be seen to inhibit learning… by discouraging learners from discussing certain issues or from expressing their feelings about aspects of their work or their organisation.*

As a consequence, and as I recognised for autoethnographic writing, I must account for the latent ethically and practically problematic nature of intruding into respondent accounts during, and subsequent to, the critical conversation process, especially as these involve colleagues, for whom addressing questions, especially about shared educational frameworks, may prove to be an area of sensitivity. In this way, a crucial element of my own methodological approaches reveals additional, and specific ethical challenges. In particular, such an outcome could contradict the potential to overcome restrictive parameters *per se*, leading even to interpretations of data that deny contemporary perceptions that were actually held by participants, imperilling the contribution that critical conversations might make to broader understanding, or triangulation of conclusions that I might draw. As Cohen et al (2007: 26) point out:

> *There is risk in interpretive approaches that they become hermetically sealed from the world outside the participants' theatre of activity – they put artificial boundaries around subjects' behaviour.*

Indeed, for Brinkmann (2013: 152), there is a danger that "...*worthwhile information can be meager (sic)*..." Nevertheless, by also recognising the possible limitations of my chosen approaches to this project, it is more likely that I was able to account for, and even overcome the particular ethical challenges of my research, especially when strengthened by the particular practical steps I have taken.

Ethical procedures: Practical steps

Recognising at all times the aims at the heart of this study, I have made certain that my research has followed essential guidance to ensure that ethical procedures have been maintained. Basing all actions upon the essential primacy of what Silverman (2000: 201) terms "*informed consent*," I have considered what for Diener and Crandall (1978: 57) are key steps to ensure that I prioritise the protection of participants. As I explained in the ethical application for this research, I have specifically adopted Manchester Metropolitan University guidelines (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2011) to support my compliance with well-established protocols. In turn, where my research activities, including an evolution in my own roles or emergent findings, might present any further ethical considerations, these have also been examined at length and accounted for in any research developments, in collaboration with my own supervisory team.

Pragmatically speaking, I began with ethical approval through Manchester Metropolitan university ethical application processes. Once given, I anonymised any direct references in citations related to my own reflective journals. Furthermore, and prior to critical conversations, participants were provided with a Participation Information Sheet (Appendix C), which covered elements such as: an overview of the research; voluntary nature of participation; interview structure; recording of data; use of data; data collection and confidentiality; anonymisation of participant names and quotes; right to withdraw at any time; intended research outcomes, including publication of findings; contact details should

any concerns arise. In turn, this was accompanied with a consent form (Appendix D) that was read, completed and signed in advance of critical conversations taking place. Voluntary participation was clarified upon receipt of the completed paperwork and in advance of commencing recording for each critical conversation, including on the day they took place. Participants were also given opportunities to ask any questions, or raise any issues prior to conducting critical conversations, which in turn took place in neutral venues, all public places at the convenience of each participant. At all times, the Head teacher, including prior to his own direct participation, was aware of the over-arching nature of my research, although he was not informed of specific participants, or the nature of the questions and responses that were involved during individual critical conversations. Likewise, when first approaching my partner school, this took place via a gatekeeper with responsibility for the LP team; again, this individual was not informed of specific participants, or the nature of the questions and responses that were involved during individual interactions.

Concluding remarks

> *…the more I acknowledge my own process and attitudes and perceive the reasons behind these, the more I am capable of changing and advancing from the stage of ingenuous curiosity to epistemological curiosity*. (Freire, 1998a: 44)

How does my methodology respond to the position taken above by Freire? Let me reiterate that I could have adopted a number of different approaches to designing my research, not least when accounting for the specific aims of my study. It also remains that constructing my research in the way described here creates**,** and does not simply respond, to questions, including on epistemological and ethical levels. For example, the lack of (meta)physical distance might produce an overly context-derived understanding of the LP role, whilst matters such as voice, representation and truth remain potentially problematic when engaging with any data that surfaces. Furthermore, even though I have selected autoethnography and critical conversations as my methodological approaches here, I do not deny that other forms of research design might have revealed equivalent, or perhaps even different findings. In fact, there are inevitably limitations to what has emerged through my construction of data collection, some of which I have explicitly stated, others that I may still not be aware of myself, including the fact that I have not revisited participants, singularly failing therefore to chart, or even ascertain, whether or not they themselves perceive a shift in their own identifications. I nevertheless return to notions of truth in particular. Where Mason (2002: 236) argues that "...*the act of stressing some feature implies, or is often taken to imply, a disregard for those not stressed*..." at no time have I claimed to establish a methodology that would be wholly representative for the LP role more broadly. In fact, where I acknowledge relative limitations, these are perhaps a necessary consequence of what I have intended to achieve through the methodological decisions I have taken. After all, considering Mavers (2009: 264) discussion of photography, "*[a]ll images represent a selection [...] Selections are not random or accidental. Rather they are highly principled*..."

Certainly, given I have retained at all times a focus on an iterative process of examination, I have drawn upon emergent themes before, during, and subsequent to critical conversations in order to inform each and every stage of my research, incorporating also interaction with

literature and my own reflective writing. In this way, where questions might remain of my methodology, I feel that the choices I have taken are legitimate, if not necessarily uniquely applicable. As I begin to present the data that has emerged as a result of my methodological decisions, I will as necessary return to my research design, describing, charting and evaluating any evolution in the research instruments employed, and in particular, where there is an apparent impact on the nature of findings that develop through this study. However, even where challenges remain unresolved, I feel well placed to suggest that any gaps left by my methodological approaches at worst present opportunities for future and further consideration of the LP role as a potentially significant model of LM**.**

Chapter 4: Thematic analysis - Critical conversations

…shouted questions at me over his shoulder in a vaguely hostile manner, asking me what I was looking for.

Bill Bryson, The Road to Little Dribbling. (2015: 29)

Drawing once again upon my wider reading, I was struck by the way Bryson (2015: 29) seemingly captures inherent challenges in seeking to reveal similarities, contradictions, and potential gaps that are relatable to how the LP role might be constituted through critical conversations, including in terms of the specific influence of my own involvement in this research (for example Freire, 1970: 73). Furthermore, even though all of the critical conversations were conducted with colleagues from my own, and closely linked, partner schools within the same MAT, it is reasonable to suggest, referring once again to Hurst and Hurst (2017: 439), that any research participant is also always influenced by their own histories. Still, where I do structure my examination of critical conversation data around the core aims, I will elucidate converging if not entirely equivalent representations, perhaps leaving aside key concerns of individual participants in response to more general emphases I note within the data. Extending this, drawing upon what emerged through my synthesis of literature, or indeed my own experiences of the LP role, where themes do feature strongly within and across critical conversations, including any key differences, I will indicate how I believe these might be meaningful for understanding the potential significance of the LP role.

1. Understand how Lead Practitioners conceptualise a sense of educational purpose within their specific professional challenges

Inherited framing: The LP role understood in relation to existing constructs

"…*reflective, growing, evidence-based, research-based, practitioners*…" (George)

Where it can be interpreted that George touches above upon particular notions of expertise, building moreover on key themes in literature (Boylan, 2016: 63), I will first explore if participants perceive that LPs occupy legitimate spaces within LM structures (see also Fuller, 2012: 686) and, if so, whether they believe that LPs might simultaneously be placed to interrogate, potentially even determine, how those same spaces are shaped (for example Godfrey, 2016: 306). More generally, I will consider where participants observe that the LP role fits in relation to dominant notions of purpose or practice, and furthermore, whether there is meaningful difference in comparison to other models of LM, referencing here also my initial characterisation of these notions (Connolly et al, 2019: 504), and indeed Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 34) presentation of "…*police*…" and "…*politics*." Starting my analysis with George, it should not be a surprise that as the Head teacher who first appointed me as a LP, I locate him as one of the key figures in promoting, structuring, and designating the role within the context where I myself experienced being a LP. Indeed, if the Head teacher of a school asserts the importance of a particular role, it is reasonable to contend that this presents in and of itself a form of legitimacy (Boylan, 2016: 66). Certainly, it is clear from early on in our conversation that George himself considers the LP role to be expression of LM. Moreover, relating this to my earlier presentation of LM (Chapter 2) it is interesting that George himself hints at critical interrogation of what this might represent, when he asks:

> *One of the crucial things, if you look at the title, is what does lead mean, […] is it about being a leader?*

Expanding on this, it is also notable that, for George, LPs are individuals who need to be "…*an expert at getting teachers to become experts, a coaching model*…" elaborating further to include a description of "…*the things that are transferable*…" Of course, as I have explored in my methodology, it could be possible to perceive multiple interpretations within this assertion, and indeed, I soon find myself posing a number of further questions. This might include what George means by expert. What is "…*transferable*…"? Likewise, what does a "*coaching model*" imply? Reiterating how I have interpreted my own job description (Appendix A), what is certain is that other participants also identify as being positioned to guide others, including Dominic who believes that "…*if you are a good LP then you will bring out the best in people*," in turn pointing to my earlier discussion of how the LP role might be positioned through policy to lead change or improvement (for example Department for Education, 2019: 26). Of course, it might be argued that "…*getting teachers to become…*" also references a potentially problematic relationship to notions of compliance or performative frameworks, a not unexpected allusion perhaps given my earlier examination of literature (for instance Hall and McGinity, 2015: 1). Nevertheless, where I do accept that critical conversation data is at least suggestive of legitimacy framed by improvement discourses, emphasising an important theme in literature, it is also important to consider how LPs might specifically embody such legitimacy. After all, George himself makes a potentially significant statement when describing my own performance as a LP:

> *And that's one of the things that you did Andy, and I think there's […] not to say that everyone does it.*

Reflecting on what it was that I "…*did*…" I was especially drawn to George's above assertion that not "…*everyone does it*," not least where this might point at a fluidity in what constitutes an effective LP. Manifestly, where for George this might centre upon "…*that evidence-base behind what we do*…" this again raises additional points of enquiry, including what constitutes the "…*evidence-base…*," Still, revisiting George's belief that the LP role is "…*a coaching model*…" it is pertinent to highlight that from the beginning of our conversation, George specifically presents the LP role in relation to how a previous position, AST (Boylan, 2016: 63) has evolved, where "…*if you go back I suppose a step, potentially before that, […] what was an AST?*" It is also clear that for George, the development of the AST role represented a

potential diversification of leadership, echoing my earlier discussion of DL in particular (see also Emira, 2010: 593), where he notes:

> *…criticism of the profession was that at certain points of the profession, people had a choice to make if you wanted to advance professionally, […] the inevitable outcome at that stage was that it took people further and further away from the classroom.*

This is further contextualised by George's depiction of how "…*the AST role in terms of the restructuring of education at one level disappeared*." Alluding therefore to the LP role, in part, as a response to historical LM space within educational frameworks that would otherwise remain unfulfilled, it is important to ascertain how such spaces might have been imagined previously by my research participants, and to what extent being a LP is an evolution or even a departure from earlier models, especially where my research is predicated upon Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 33) presentation of emancipation. For George, identifying individuals to become AST:

> *…wasn't necessarily done on the basis of […] their ability even to articulate what that was. It was on the basis of they led the most effective department in terms of outcomes…*

Legitimate framing: The LP role as a performative construct

Where George states that AST were individuals identified as successful in terms of accountability measures, it might be argued that this is also representative of a key discourse in contemporary policy (Department for Education, 2016a: 41). Contrasting this however with the principle of engagement in communicating a more critical understanding of educational practice (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014), where wider influences might also be considered (see also James, 2007: 34), this therefore presents a broader challenge for the key conceptual foundations in this research, and specifically how the LP role might be a "…*supplement to the existing order*…" not least understanding where it might fit in relation to notions such as "…*police*… and "…*politics*…" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). Certainly, where George specifically emphasises ideas of effectiveness, it is also plausible that such representation of

the LP role would render it as not necessarily distinct from established managerial hierarchies (see also Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 396). Indeed George's assertion that LPs are "…*expert at getting teachers to become experts*…" could even be seen as synonymous with performance or compliance, hinting at key issues that emerged through my earlier consideration of literature which, as I cited for Dillabough (2000: 315), are not unproblematic. In this way, it is apposite to recognise that George charts the evolution from AST to LP along equivalent lines when he explicitly presents the need for LPs "…*to actually have impact and sustain impact*…" However we understand this, George references some sort of objective measure of the role, which in turn seemingly layers notions of performativity upon being a LP. Where George also explains, "…*let's find an equivalent, a LP or a Head of […] a large department*…" this might present the LP role in essence as a reiteration of what is already understood as a construct of LM, subject as they both are to recognisable notions of accountability or success, prevalent within contemporary educational realities (Ball, 2013).

Personal framing: The LP role as an individual construct

Considering once again how I frame this research, as well as key notions within literature (for example Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 398), I have already established that if, indeed, LPs are legitimised insofar as they respond to notions of performativity, effectiveness, or compliance, this could provoke tensions, with repercussions in turn for how, indeed if, the role might constitute "…*a supplement to the existing order*…" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). Where there is a perceived benchmark that must be met in order for actions, perhaps even the role itself, to be validated, it is in effect plausible to repeat a perception that LPs must communicate what are, at least, institutionally acceptable principles (Dillabough, 2000: 321), not least if they were explicitly positioned to ensure "…*the proper functioning of a system*…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504). Raising concerns of the capacity for LPs to therefore interrogate or, indeed, assert educational practice on a more individual basis; this could negate the very intent behind why individuals, such as me, seek or might seek to become LPs instead of alternative roles, as well as present a particular challenge to the conceptual foundations of this work (for example Biesta, 2013: 21). Grounding this in LP activity more specifically, as

Mario quite acerbically puts it "…*that's the policy, the school policy, that I deliver in those bloody meetings*." Extending this further, Paula adds that:

> *I see within the role [people] who have been doing it for longer. I think they're at a time of frustration... wanting to have more impact than they currently do.*

For Jordan, this can mean that even as a LP he at times feels "…*like a bit of a sell-out*…" Added to this, we cannot assume that just because Paula states that she can "*approach the Head teacher, and I could say we've had this idea, and could we run with this*," that this would actually be supported, especially given an apparent need, at least to some extent, to respond to broader performative measures. Even where individuals feel able to assert more personal notions of professional practice, it is not unknown to chart a sense of being constrained as a LP. For example, Mario articulates "…*the one thing I had conviction about was practice*." In presenting "…*the one thing*…" we might of course suppose that Mario is restricted*,* if not trapped, in a reality constrained by the parameters of accountability, or what more influential stakeholders constitute as important, echoing representations in literature such as Hall and McGinity (2015: 3). This in turn becomes problematic when we then begin to consider individual motivations for becoming a LP, including the capacity to interrogate educational practices, not least when Dominic acknowledges, "*what you say and what you generate in those meetings is all filtered*." Still, raising questions again of how the role might be positioned in relation to notions of LM (for example Connolly et al, 2019: 504), and indeed particular understanding of subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20), it cannot be denied that not only does he embrace the fact he, "…*gradually started to realise that it was decidedly less responsibility*" as a LP than alternative, established, leadership roles he had held, or might otherwise hold, for example as an Assistant Head teacher, but that ultimately taking this role, "*followed through in […] every way, more ways than I imagined it would*." Considering Dominic's below interpretation of the Head of MAT's ostensible perspective:

> *…you have a massive potential for impact within the school as a LP because he really values us LPs, he really sees them as very experienced people outstanding teachers…*

Critical approaches: An examination of whether the LP role might present an alternative to established (LM) practices

Where Dominic emphasises here notions of credibility as a LP, he directly identifies an inherent assertion of trust, not least when he believes that the Executive Head teacher "…*just assumes that you are*…" good. Accepting this, it is also revealing that George charts a distinction between his historical perception of AST spaces, and how he conceptualises the LP role, where he questions AST's "…*ability even to articulate*…" expert understanding. Of course, when George depicts the need for an "…*evidence-base*…" it is salient that Dominic asserts "…*there is pressure on your shoulders to be that good*…" Considering this further, it is however possible to identify a nuanced shift in perceptions, where representations of the LP role do actually differ from established, or previous, LM models for the participants. For Dominic, although there is "…*a membrane of Assistant Heads, which basically are like basically in control*…" this also means that "…*they are accountable*." Indeed, even where there is not an obvious *prima facie* distinction, this might frame a discrete understanding of performance in relation to the LP role. Certainly, echoing in turn my earlier discussion of a potential dichotomy between notions of LM (Grint, 2005: 1472), Jessica describes concerns of alternative leadership roles including that "*being a Head of department, your time is taken up with a lot of paperwork*." She juxtaposes this with the LP role, which she "…*could talk about […] forever […] because it's such a great role*,"

Significantly, even if LPs may also be subject to the tensions and enmeshed challenges of being an educator in what might be presented as compliance heavy contemporary English secondary education (Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 395), as Mario states, "*there's absolutely nothing wrong with us questioning it*." Indeed, even when he discusses, at length, the way he feels and exposes a sense of vulnerability through performance as a LP, I find that there is in fact no contradiction in considering if one might be less accountable, or at least have greater critical engagement (see also Appleby and Pilkington, 2014), than in other LM roles, where the LP role might even be framed differently in relation to my presentation of LM, including in terms of how LPs might influence "…*others in educational settings to achieve goals…*" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504). Certainly, it is telling that in response to tensions he himself felt, Mario actively sought to be a LP rather than his previous, more conventionally structured

leadership role, as a Head of department, echoing Jessica's journey to becoming a LP as framed by an initial desire, towards the end of her first year of teaching "*to be an AST at that point*…" rather than taking another LM role.

Critical approaches: How the LP role might be framed differently to other (LM) roles

In order to examine the potential of positioning LPs to actively interrogate dominant notions of practice, indeed whether they are even able to do this, it is also important to consider a potential difference in how "…*police*…" and "…*politics*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 34) might be experienced as a LP. By illustration, when Jordan argues that even though he doesn't "…*get to choose what's on the curriculum*," or indeed that each time you expose your own practice as a LP "…*you're sort of opening yourself up to criticism by pupils and by staff*," he is nevertheless "…*in this bubble of 'there's my classes I want them to do well, and when they do well I'll get my job satisfaction, and that's it'*." Self-determined in emphasis, I could of course interpret this as a rejection of particular notions of practice (for example James, 2007: 34), as opposed to the specific expression of emancipation as I frame it in this research (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). Likewise, it is possible to argue that this is indicative more of particular understanding of being a teacher than of actions as a LP *per se*. However, even if I were to accept this, I would actually fail to capture not only the more positive aspects that might be attributed to being a LP specifically, legitimised for example as a construct of DL (Boylan, 2016: 66), but simultaneously suggestions of the possible lesser accountability of not having a department or larger body of colleagues for whom you are directly responsible, with further relevance for understanding how the LP role might be positioned in relation to my characterisation of LM (Connolly et al, 2019: 504).

Considering this, and contained within the particular tensions of George locating LPs to communicate principles that are, at least in part, determined by stakeholders other than the LPs themselves ("…*aggregation*…."), it is certainly possible to affirm a more personal, interpretative sense of purpose, especially for educators who wish to influence the direction of their own educational actions within a space that for Paula, avoids "*the bit that […] is having lots of eyes looking at you lots of management*." On this point, Dominic makes an especially

powerful assertion when he declares, "*as a LP and a middle manager you have to be that person that offers them a slightly different viewpoint*..." Adding this to my previous presentation of Schostak and Schostak's (2008: 139) belief that "…*the right to make an account of what is actually going on defines what is to count as reality*," George's depiction of the "…*coaching*…" model takes on particular meaning. Indeed, there are grounds for suggesting that the legitimacy accorded to LPs as an expression of LM, specifically improvement discourses (Department for Education, 2019: 26) could represent a significant statement of how LPs might be positioned to perform differently within widely held accountability structures.

Of course, this does not deny that through being a LP, one might be as much a filter for received wisdom or policy as in any other educational role. Indeed, I have already contended that legitimising the LP role might, in ways, depend on this to a certain extent (Department for Education, 2016a: 8). As I have also noted, including through literature (Day, 1999: 13), this can result in behaving in ways that do not necessarily represent how we believe we should act because, as Mario believes, "…*our interpretation of best is not going to be mirrored by the person watching*." Indeed, this conceivably leads to particular presentations of professional practice that oppose what individuals value as important (see also Gramsci, 1999: 770). As I have considered in earlier sections, this might even result in the perverse scenario where, as opposed to asserting what we believe to be considered actions, whether or not "*evidence-based*," LPs fail to respond to, even modify, personally held identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2). In turn, failing to probe broader understanding in this way may limit an individual LP's capacity to achieve self-actualisation, or put differently, subjectivity as an educator (Freire, 1970: 73). Indeed, Mario himself asks of his own actions in supporting others, "*what can I offer […] a part of it for me is I don't want to feel or look a charlatan*." Likewise, quite apart from what might be considered a sort of performance anxiety, it is notable that for Paula, "*you still have to toe the line and bring other people like over to your side of the line if that makes sense*" because, for Mario, "*your neck's on the block isn't it*…" conceivably hinting again at particular experiences of LM responsibility (Connolly et al, 2019: 504), including as a LP.

It would also be naïve to assume that George advocates *carte blanche* for the construction and enactment of the LP role. Certainly, as I have already remarked on at length, LPs are by

no means exempt from referencing typical notions of accountability or external demands, embodying in turn my earlier examination of how hegemony might be understood (Mouffe, 2014: 179). This has evident implications for assertions of CP, and undoubtedly, the development of reflexive identifications (Foucault, 1994: 133) as a LP. Furthermore, for George, there is a recognition that irrespective of how one might present notions of the "*expert*," or "*evidence-base*," structuring of educational practice is inextricably shaped "…*by political decision […] and governmental decisions and so on*…" This reiterates the importance of policy in understanding the potential of the LP role (for example Department for Education, 2019). After all, irrespective of the specific situation of any school, or individual, including the Head teacher, education is inexorably subject to external forces (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 148). When George also considers whether schools "…*can't afford them*…" it would be fanciful therefore to deny that external agenda might determine whether or not a leader such as George wishes to, or can, actively promote the LP role as more than simply "…*an add on, an addition*…" to established hierarchical LM structures within schools, including my and George's shared context (see also Hall, 2013: 471-72).

Nevertheless, rather than present the LP role as modelling practice so that "…*someone can go and copy that*," which would perhaps align more closely with how he describes historical understanding of the AST model, or indeed particular notions of CPD (for example Sachs, 2011: 158) it is interesting that for George "…*it's gotta to be something more than that*." Indeed, when George also refers to the ability "…*to articulate what that was*…" he contrasts this with what he considers as a less critical emphasis on AST to stimulate within people the ability "…*to analyse*…" In fact, identifying this as a possible gap within previous iterations, including within literature (Boylan, 2016: 57), it is significant that George presents the LP role as explicitly different to other established constructs. As he states:

> *…people need to have certain skills and attributes in order to be able to do […] and they aren't necessarily the same attributes that are entailed in actually being an effective classroom practitioner.*

By directly contrasting here notions of effectiveness with the "*skills and attributes*…" needed to be a LP, George also hints at how LPs may in fact be positioned to lead, and not only

communicate, educational understanding, especially when he juxtaposes the LP role with established modes of LM practice where "…*brutally people might say 'you know that one is a very accountability role and the other is less'*…" This touches in turn upon key issues at the heart of this research, not least how the LP role might be characterised in relation to notions of LM (Connolly et al, 2019: 504) and certainly the potential subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20) of framing the LP role through CP (see also Fuller, 2012: 685), pointing moreover to an emergent sense of otherness that could seemingly characterise the LP role in meaningful ways.

Otherness: How the LP role might be characterised as other

"*I think it is other; I like to think it's a nice other*." (Paula)

Building on the sense of otherness that I have begun to highlight in my presentation of data thus far, and drawing on significant trends within literature (for example Godfrey, 2016: 312), in turn emphasising a concern with Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 33) presentation of emancipation as "…*a supplement to the existing order*…" and certainly a nuanced understanding of how LPs might experience notions such as "*police*…" and "…*politics*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 34), I will use this section to explore whether the LP role might be presented not only as different but also, how Paula's above statement of a "…*nice other*" might hint at important characterisations of the LP role.

Other expectations: What participants expected of the LP role

When Paula positions as "*other*" the role of LP, where I also reference notions such as CP (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014), I have already suggested that LPs might experience professional practice differently in comparison to any other established model of educational LM (see also Department for Education, 2016a: 42). In this section I will therefore examine whether, and if so how, the LP role is specifically experienced in relation to what might have been anticipated by the participants in this research, or as is revealed through literature. Undoubtedly, it is interesting that, almost universally, my research participants depict a difference between their expectations of what the LP position constituted, in advance of

being appointed to the role, and how they identify with the realities they have since encountered. This includes being at times unclear on what the role actually is. In this way, further emphasising a gap in literature and policy that merits further exploration (for example Hall, 2013: 484), where Paula's initial quote on p.103 might actually signify that the LP role evades consistent description (see also Department for Education, 2019: 26), existing in ways as a nebulous, even contestable, construct, this itself could serve to reveal new ways to embody educational purpose as a LP. Take for example Dominic, who "…*had no idea what a LP was*," instead "…*just assumed it was Head of Science*" before he applied for the position in a school he had not worked in before. I was especially struck by Dominic's statement here for personal reasons. Namely, my prior school was the same school Dominic had also worked in previously, and like him, albeit one year later, I had changed institution for a role that I also interpreted as Head of… Why is this important? Is this indicative of our own failures to understand a job description, as much as any lack of clarity in the LP role itself?

In some ways, continuing with this train of enquiry is not as important a dichotomy as, less prosaically, whether it is actually the fact we both entered these roles without specific preconceptions that might simultaneously be a determinant factor in being able to perceive the constructive nature of being positioned as a LP. For example, Jordan describes how "…*maybe I didn't anticipate the way it is now*." As Mario, a participant who became a LP at the same time as me but who had already been working in my school for almost a decade also describes, you are "…*thinking to yourself either consciously or subconsciously, you're thinking is this is this the best use of my time?*" Less negatively, Jessica does however characterise her experience of a lack of clarity of the LP role as "…*a blank canvas, it was a complete blank canvas, and it was new to the school*…" echoing potentially significant themes in literature (for example Ball, 2013: 5) Indeed, contrasted with a "*defined middle role*," it might be interpreted that for Jessica being a LP offers spaces through which an individual is able to develop professional practice and their own "*skill set*," with less concern for the performative limitations I have already considered at length (Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3). Developing this, George describes the AST, *ergo* LP, role as "…*a potential alternative career pathway*" instead of "…*moving into management roles*…" presenting a particular statement in relation to my earlier discussion of LM (Chapter 2). When George subsequently asks, "*why would people go one way rather than the other*…" it is worthwhile to note that he describes

here not necessarily a concrete difference in spaces occupied as a LP but a perception of difference. This includes operating in ways that are "*less easy to be accountable for*…" Extending this, George also describes:

> *…the Head of department, […] which is more of a leadership and management role […] in terms of the quantified measure that [you are] held to account for…*

Arguably, reiterating some of my presentation to this point, alluding also to key concepts at the heart of this research (for example Kemmis, 2019: 94), this is suggestive of the fact that it may be acceptable, even desirable, for an individual LP to interrogate dominant practices, perhaps also construct the conditions of their own practice, contrasting perceptions of being an AST (Boylan, 2016: 63), or as a more conventionally defined middle leader. Hinting moreover at a shift in identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2) with broader educational discourses and frameworks, not least a nuanced understanding of where the LP role might fit in wider presentations of LM (Connolly et al, 2019: 504), and expanding upon an earlier use of her quote (p.98), it is perhaps understandable that an individual such as Paula therefore feels able to suggest to our Executive Head teacher that the school might:

> *…do oracy for a few years. I could move on to do something else as something comes up and is interesting. I'm sure I could approach the Head teacher and I could say we've had this idea, and could we run with this.*

Other choices: Why individuals might choose to become a LP rather than another established (LM) role

Seeking to surface a deeper understanding of the implications of Paula's above statement, including in terms of notions of subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20), it is potentially significant that LP is a role that appears to fit best as a construct of LM, specifically as a model of DL (for instance Hall, 2013; Boylan, 2016). As I have also already pointed to, it is moreover striking that the LPs who participated in critical conversations with me acknowledge at some point making an active choice to pursue, or remain in, a LP role rather than a different educational construct of comparable hierarchical importance. This includes Dominic, who places being a

LP as a relatively influential leadership position where "…*it was on the leadership scale, so I wasn't going to be losing out on money*." Indeed, he maintains that in relation to the potential of becoming an Assistant Head teacher, "…*the only reason I am not them is because I have chosen not to apply*." Appreciating this as a potentially key finding for advocacy of the LP model, stating this does not however specifically determine why this might be, although Paula does contrast this with other forms of LM that she perceives are framed through "…*management I think*," touching in turn upon key issues that have already emerged through this work, including in my conceptualisation of LM (for example Grint, 2005: 1472). Consequently, extending my earlier examination of whether literature suggests that the LP role might be framed as a personal construct (see also Chapter 2), what does critical conversation data reveal of why an individual might aspire to undertake this role rather than another?

For Jessica, becoming a Head of department as opposed to a LP risked the restriction of her involvement in "…*pedagogy. I just love exploring teaching and learning*…" Conversely, where becoming a middle leader might present individuals such as Jessica with the choice to undertake a role that was potentially less responsive to a personal sense of educational purpose, the question should also be asked, why change at all? This obviously raises a number of further questions, not least what it was about being a classroom teacher that was so appealing for Jessica and why, indeed, other participants in this research, myself included, may at times see classroom practice itself as particularly constrained by performative frameworks (Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 400). Certainly, Mario quite clearly states a more negative outlook on an individual's capacity for self-determination as a teacher, specifically that "…*the walls have closed in a bit in terms of our accountability*," hinting again perhaps at problematic experiences of hegemonic structuring of practice (Gramsci, 1999: 770). Still, even where I have already acknowledged that it is possible to perceive variation in the influence of accountability structures for different roles, and different individuals, it is interesting that Jessica seems less obviously concerned with this directly. Rather, as above, Jessica sees no contradiction in seeking an alternative position that could offer her the opportunity to construct her own understanding of educational practices without losing what, for her, are the essential strengths of being a classroom teacher. In fact, as Jessica describes of her own educational journey:

> *Since an NQT, this school community has always given me an opportunity to develop, and have a new opportunity to do something...*

The question remains however as to why she, and others, specifically chose to become a LP. It is not of course unreasonable to suggest that contemporary professionalism, including within education, invokes notions of advancement (as Dominic also demonstrates on p.106) and that for many people, Jessica included, there is a desire to challenge themselves, whatever form this might take. Take Mario, who aims to "…*make the experience for other people better than what I had*," articulating a particular sense of educational purpose, alluding moreover at a concern with his own potential subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20). Indeed, Jessica also states that she wants to "…*be the best for myself*…" Undoubtedly, as I have stated, Jessica was motivated not only to remain in the classroom but also to develop her own range of educational experiences. At the same time, Jessica contrasts her own journey with other roles that either might have been offered or were even rejected ("…*there were opportunities, jobs came up*…") in favour of becoming a LP. Ultimately, Jessica describes reaching a point in her career where she was presented with the chance to become a LP:

> *There was that question of do I become a Head of department but […] my heart and soul is in the classroom.*

Echoing equivalent decisions taken by other LPs, including Paula, for whom "*I think Head of Science, I think yes, it is different*," it is revealing that Jessica expresses above a long-held dilemma that developing as an educator might otherwise have involved becoming a conventional middle leader i.e. as a head of department, explaining perhaps her specific ambition at the end of her first year of teaching meant she "…*said to him [the Deputy Head teacher] I'd like to be an AST*…" Alluding also to a perceived deficit in under-taking a more established LM role (see also Dillabough, 2000: 315) there is here an implicit emphasis that following an established pathway could essentially be characterised as limiting for her, despite the notional hierarchical advancement, further replicating concerns articulated by Courtney and Gunter (2015: 414). This is also emblematic of disquiet for Jordan, who is primarily concerned with "…*the experiences that pupils have on a daily basis*." Given her own concern with remaining "…*in the classroom*," it is nevertheless significant that Jessica sought

an alternative position through which to further enhance her own understanding of professional practice, whilst concurrently retaining the benefits of focussing upon classroom-centred activity, touching here once more upon my discussions of CP (for example Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 29). For Jessica "…*from a LP it's actually expanded, it's actually even more so than just being a teacher in a classroom*." Indeed, moving away from individual choices to consider wider imperatives, hinting in turn at key concepts that are at the heart of this research, not least notions of emancipatory practice (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), George goes as far as to state that:

> *…[the] LP role is very much […] not just a statement but is a statement or a recognition […] as to how crucial [it is] that we as a teaching profession are more than functionaries in a system […] we're not just tools to function at some level in a machine*.

Other identifications: Whether LPs are specifically positioned to engage differently with dominant notions of educational purpose

Appearing to position the LP role somewhere between the individual and the structural, not only might I argue that George's above statement appears to counter challenges presented within a culture of performativity (Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3) but also, this hints at the ways that the role might have "…*actually expanded*..." for someone like Jessica. As Mario asks, "*how do you step outside of it and think more philosophically?*" In this section I will therefore consider whether it might be suggested that the LPs are specifically positioned to engage differently with dominant notions of educational purpose. Certainly, George's above assertion would seem to contrast framing the role through successful enactment of contemporary educational norms alone. Rather it might be argued that whether or not this directly references ideas such as "…*police*…" and "…*politics*," George explicitly presents the LP role as "…*a supplement to the existing order…*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). Referencing again notions of CP (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014), this is furthermore suggestive of spaces (for example Godfrey, 2016: 302) that could enhance educational practices, and certainly, go some way to offsetting concerns present at the beginning of my own EdD studies. As I wrote in my first reflective journal:

> *I have a feeling that I tend towards performing my professional role as a 'functionary' or in the strictest French sense 'fonctionnaire'. I.e. as acting through the lens of a 'state employee' in education.*

Aside from the apparent coincidence of language with George's statement on p.108, and therefore possible cohesion of interpretation of the role of governance in state secondary education (see also Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 414), what especially speaks to me here is the way that, unlike for the AST role, George directly assigns the LP role an importance through engagement in the augmentation of educational practices, pointing perhaps to how the LP role might be characterised in terms of "…*influencing others…"* albeit without fixed goals, or as it would appear here, quantifiable responsibility "…*for the proper functioning of a system*…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504):

> *People find the role of a LP […] there's great satisfaction […] in what we do […] one of the things that we […] also enjoy is professional reward of […] seeing colleagues develop.*

Significantly, this is echoed by Jessica who "…*got a buzz out of seeing someone's teaching develop and seeing them develop as a practitioner*." Indeed, reflecting further on her decision to become a LP, she believed that her own "…*skill set from that would advance at a much faster rate than just being […] a Head of department*…" Of course, rather than see this as a wholly positive articulation of the LP role, it might also be argued that this actually also challenges how constructive notions of the LP role are otherwise emerging, specifically if these are skills involve participation in problematic constructions of LM that I have already considered (for example Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3), raising in turn questions of how the LP role might be understood as an emancipatory construct (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). Indeed, Jessica herself encapsulates corresponding unease with undertaking such a role when she references "…*a lot of […] meetings, a lot of managing*." Nevertheless, when Dominic contrasts the LP role with other middle leadership roles, stating that actually there is "…*much less being pulled in different directions*…" as a LP, why might this be so?

Certainly, Jessica promotes further investigation of how LPs conceptualise a sense of educational purpose when she frames practice (see also Kemmis, 2019: 94) as being "…*about*

reflection, and as teachers we should be reflective practitioners." Resonant in turn of the methodological stance I have taken for this research, where Jessica argues not only that "*we should be reflective practitioners*" but that "…*the whole purpose of […] a LP is to be a reflective practitioner*…" there is every reason to believe that enhanced opportunities for critical interrogation, as I discussed earlier, not least in terms of CP (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014), might suggest LPs are positioned to engage differently with performative frameworks. This might have particular repercussions for how, or why, they might make particular choices faced by the myriad demands (Ball, 2013) that characterise contemporary educational practice. Furthermore, this might also contribute to understanding why someone like Jessica, given her asserted ambitions, would be less interested in remaining a classroom teacher, or "…*as a Head of department…"* where for Jessica "…*your time is squeezed*." Of course, echoing my earlier discussion of LM (Chapter 2), this is not to deny that more functional elements of LM might also characterise the LP role. For Mario, this is inexorable given "*it's not as though we are in a cocoon that is very specific to us*." Likewise, Jessica points to potential management responsibilities of the LP role (Connolly et al, 2019: 504) when she describes:

> *…there was a real need, I suppose, in terms of the outcomes that we […] have here and the quality of teaching and learning…*

Certainly, reiterating positions I have taken to this point, and framed as the above statements are by collective imperatives, it is clear that LPs are not immune to accountability structures or indeed perceptions that it is possible to define constructs like the "…*quality of teaching and learning*…" Indeed, in Jessica's consideration of more established LM roles, the extent to which you are limited as a middle leader might even depend "…*on the person who […] is the Head of department, and how they mould their role*..." Added to this, it is potentially revealing that she states, regardless of specific role:

> *…you have to reflect upon yourself, you have to very much […] absorb things you might not like […] process it…*

Still, when it might also be suggested that LPs are seemingly positioned through critical conversations to not only navigate but actively reflect upon, even construct or reconstruct, professional practice, referencing for example my presentation of Appleby and Plkington's

(2014) work, it is at least reasonable to suggest that the LP role might satisfy subjective (Freire 1970: 73) imperatives, or more personal notions of educational purpose, at the same time as influence (edu)cultural norms. Indeed, without denying the implicit potential subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 21) of specific individuals such as Jessica becoming LPs, including "*cos I read a lot educationally*," there is every reason for thinking that a potentially important model of educational LM is under consideration, especially where notions of influence are also integral to how I characterise LM more broadly (see again Connolly et al, 2019: 504). Extending this examination further, I will now consider representations of how being positioned as a LP might in turn enable changes in professional practice, perhaps even in systematic ways that differ from what might otherwise be accepted norms.

2. Explore how Lead Practitioners might enable changes in professional practice

I will use this section to consider at greater length how LPs might influence changes in professional practice. In particular, I will explore how LPs perceive they are structured by particular educational discourses, referencing also the conceptual foundations of this research, as well as presentations through literature.

Designed to improve: Improvement agenda and changes in professional practice

Drawing also upon my earlier discussion of literature (Chapter 2), I will consider here how participants perceive that the LP role is positioned through dominant discourses to enable changes in professional practice and understanding. As I have already attempted to show, it is inevitable that, amongst other things, notions of professional practice (see also James, 2007: 34) are framed by particular accountability demands, expectations of other key stakeholders, institutional policy and of course personal motivations. Significantly, and regardless of the potential gaps that currently exist in literature, it is moreover clear that I locate the LP role primarily through DL structures (Boylan, 2016: 63) and, more specifically, ground this in improvement agenda (Department for Education, 2019: 26). Furthermore, where LPs are legitimised through systematic and systematised structures, it is reasonable to suggest that they might, to a certain extent, identify with the parameters of their professional practice in expected, perhaps even problematic, ways (Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 405), highlighting in turn inherent barriers to an evolution in identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2). Of course, this does not preclude alternative responses to dominant discourses as a LP. For example, Jordan feels able to assert that he is "…*good at being able to say this is what we've been told, but this is what we should be doing*." In reality, with further implications for how I have sought to present notions such as subjectivity in this research (for example Biesta, 2013: 20), it is meaningful that LPs such as Jordan actually perceive they behave in ways that are dualistic, or even hypocritical in their nature. Indeed, even when legitimised actions as a LP lead to concerns for Jordan that he acts according to the demands of dominant representations of professional practice (see also Carr, 2006: 164), it is interesting that this

does not necessarily mean that he publicly rejects what is constituted as important. As Jordan also describes, he often finds himself:

> *…trying to be enthusiastic about something that I know they're nodding away at. I know I've sat there, I've nodded, and yeah, I'm playing a game aren't I?*

Certainly, for Mario, what LPs perceive and what they do might even be a "*…contradiction in terms*." In this regard, where I frame emancipation in terms of "*…a <u>supplement</u> to the existing order...*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), it is inevitable that a key issue for me, suggested also through literature, remains to identify how LPs perceive that they might legitimately reconcile external demands with more personal construction of practice (Kemmis, 2019: 94) in order to also explain how LPs could enable changes in professional practice.

Designed to improve: How LPs might enable changes in professional practice

It is imperative that I now further examine how being a LP is directly storied through critical conversation data to engender more personal, perhaps subjective (Biesta, 2013: 21), modes of influence (McMaster, 2014: 435), in turn addressing particular gaps within broader discourses such as improvement agenda that have emerged through my examination of literature. For example, on the one hand Dominic believes:

> *…I've got amazing whole school experience, which would be really attractive to any […] employer who's advertising an Assistant Head role, so it's not got a shelf life…*

On the other hand, he seemingly contradicts this by avowing, "*I don't think I have much say in whole school policy*," perhaps because "*some people in places of power don't acknowledge just how experienced LPs are*." Where he identifies with being positioned as someone who is hierarchically important but who does not actually have influence in framing aspects of school policy, reflecting broader trends that are present throughout this research (for example Hall and McGinity, 2015: 12) I am intrigued as to how he therefore believes he is able to navigate competing realities at the same time, reiterating a sense of implicit otherness within any embodiment of subjectivity or emancipatory practice as a LP. Indeed, Dominic alludes to how

he uses being specifically positioned as a LP in order to overcome perceived constraints on the way he might enact the role:

> *It's easy for my lessons to be Good or Better, and it's easy for my books to be Good or Better, because that's my job, and my extra responsibility enhances those aspects.*

Examining the conversation we shared, it is especially revealing that Dominic believes "…*in the LP role in terms of CPD and research, [...] I think it's the other way we basically lead that*." This expands upon a key theme that also emerges through examination of literature (for example Department for Education, 2016b; Godfrey, 2016: 302). Namely, that responsibility for CPD has the potential to frame LP legitimacy as well as engender deeper engagement with understanding professional practice. Indeed, touching specifically upon my presentation of subjectivity throughout this research (Biesta, 2013: 20) it is reasonable to suggest that LP engagement in research (for example Sheard and Sharples, 2016: 670), as well as CPD processes and spaces, might be especially crucial. Certainly, consensus is shown on this point, where all participants claim involvement in theoretically exploring aspects of their own daily realities, whether as a response to being, or as a drive to becoming, a LP. As Paula puts it, she is "…*quite idealistic in that I want everyone to be excited and interested in teaching and learning*." Indeed, for her, becoming a LP was closely tied to the fact that:

> *…there has to be intrinsic motivation to do with the teaching and learning and development of others to go down that route, rather than looking to be an Assistant Head teacher.*

Still, even where this is an important motivation, I must also acknowledge a more nuanced presentation, where for participants such as Mario, early enthusiasm for this aspect of how the LP role appears to be positioned in our shared institution has ebbed to the extent that "*if you think about the literature we were looking at, […] I've hardly dipped into that since […] we're on the treadmill*." This is especially interesting when Jordan then goes on to identify that "*there's a lot of experts out there now; they've all got a platform there's the internet Twitter*..." culminating in the statement within the same critical conversation that he is "…*disillusioned with CPD and research.*" Nevertheless, differences in experience do not

themselves restrict the potential importance of being framed in this way as a LP (see again Department for Education, 2016b). Indeed, considering my earlier discussion of the construction of legitimacy, including through what George might denote to be the "*evidence-base*," or expertise, it is possible that particular responsibility for CPD, combined with direct engagement in research could be a significant for asserting the particular potential of the LP role to enable changes in professional practice, as well as a contributory factor to enhanced subjectivity (Freire, 1970: 73) or emancipatory construction of educational practices (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). After all, as George himself says, LPs are specifically positioned to lead based upon "…*a body of evidence here from research*…"

Enabling changes: Collaboration with other colleagues

> *You do that you naturally, do that as a LP in that group of however many, you [are] constantly even just having bite sized conversations on the corridor…*

Where I recognise equivalent experiences of the LP role to what was also presented through literature earlier, it is clear that I do however also chart something of a departure, certainly in terms of how LPs might perceive particular framing through improvement discourses. In particular, where LPs acknowledge legitimate positioning (see also Boylan, 2016: 66) to enable changes in professional practice, it is pertinent to also account for the way that participants specifically locate the significance of collaboration as LPs. Starting with the above quote, the fact that Jessica engages informally with colleagues suggests that something about the role, despite concurrently embodying hegemonic framing of engagement (Gramsci, 1999: 770), might promote particular experiences of collaboration. Indeed, despite changing roles subsequently, Jessica believes that because she was previously positioned as a LP, "*that still does happen like even in the role that I've got*" where "…*we still have teaching and learning conversation on the corridor*." It would be fanciful of course to imagine that this is not possible through other models of LM, especially where these might also be broadly characterised in terms of my presentation of Connolly et al's (2019: 504) work. Likewise, it is not certain that such interactions as LPs are necessarily always egalitarian or perceived as constructive. After all, as Dominic portrays, there may be a need to take a less positive dualistic position where, as he suggests, he can be "…*quite manipulative in a way about how I get things in*," with

inherent implications for representing emancipatory practice (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). Still, when Jessica frames interactions with colleagues through a belief that "…*probably the most important thing [is] raising their confidence and their self-esteem*…" she alludes at least to being positioned as someone of wider influence, reiterating here a core foundation for understanding notions of LM (see again McMaster, 2014: 435).

Linking collaboration in turn to the development of TL practices more broadly through CPD structures, embodying key discourses within policy (Figure 1), and not least my presentation of notions of DL (for example Ball, 2013: 5), this further emphasises a theme that has already emerged as meaningful through examination of critical conversation data. As George puts it, the role exists as "…*something much more about sustaining professional development*." Likewise, hinting moreover at particular interpretation of spaces I have already considered through literature (see section on PLC, Chapter 2, including Kruse and Johnson, 2017: 588), Jessica reiterates the need "…*to create a climate*…" where "…*CPD is growing a confident practitioner; it's reflective practitioners*" Indeed, if Dominic is correct that "…*our role is so CPD based then we do get to direct a lot of that*," it is significant that for George "...*thought and process is*…" framed by the belief that being a LP cannot be fixed by "…*an outcome because it will continue to develop as our understanding, as our professionalism grows*."

Hinting here also at a discourse of systematic impact or climate (Department for Education, 2016a: 8), framing the LP role as an important construct to contribute to, even structure, notions of professional practice through direct designation to collaborate with others (see again Department for Education, 2016b), this plausibly therefore presents opportunities for the LP role to navigate both institutional and individual imperatives. In fact, when George portrays the role as a necessity because "…*of the way we have been, and are being, question mark, inducted into our profession*," there is every reason to believe that collaboration as LPs could play an important part in the structuring of professional practices more generally, where the LP role might not only occupy but actively navigate interfaces between "…*police*…" and "…*politics*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 34), perhaps even exploit performative or accountable spaces in education as "…*a <u>supplement</u> to the existing order…*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33).

Enabling changes: Particular opportunities of collaboration with other colleagues

Placing collaboration at the heart of exploring notions of professionalism as LPs, George moreover seemingly advocates a form of leadership where critical spaces are not just navigated but also actively created, highlighting in turn the potential for particular expressions of subjectivity (Freire, 1970: 73):

> *Is part of […] what we need to do […] as a profession; create a professional body of teachers who have those attributes, […] determination to be reflective, growing, evidence-based, research-based, practitioners?*

Touching upon individual reflexivity (Raffo et al, 2015), there is also for George "…*a qualitative element of kind of feedback at that level, which is kind of self-affirming isn't it*…" where reflections as a LP might even be dialogic in quality, replicating work by Little and Horn (2007: 79) and indeed certain (meta)decisions I have taken for this research, including within my own methodology. That is, rather than being unilateral, collaborative exploration of notions of professionalism might impact upon the LPs themselves "…*in a learning institution*…" alluding here also to work by Godfrey (2016: 312). As Jessica describes, there is even positive impact of "…*sometimes going in and teaching their lesson and making errors yourself*..." Indeed, it might be argued that presenting the role in this way provides a particular challenge, if not contradiction, to the idea that LPs are legitimised primarily as the expert imparting received wisdom (Boylan, 2016: 63).

Extending this, although Dominic, grounding this further in aspects of directed LP activity, at least in our shared context, feels that "…*a large part of MTF*[7] *is really cynically about policy*," it is revelatory that rather than being a limiting space for Jessica, and putting the broader problematic nature of constructing professional practices through such control mechanisms aside (for example Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 395), she is certain that participating here as a LP "…*benefits your own teaching you […] get something out of that process*." Reiterating that for Jessica, "*the whole purpose of […] a LP is to be a reflective practitioner*," as George

[7] Moving Teaching Forward (MTF) – A performative policy that teachers are 'placed on' for 3 weeks in advance of (and intended to avoid) competency measures.

himself describes of his own development "…*I think that a lot of my own personal journey in education was I suppose self-discovery*…" this emphasises in turn an inherent opportunity for enhanced, critical, understanding as a LP, touching once again upon CP discourses (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014). Recognising the important role that legitimising the LP role as a model of LM (see also Boylan, 2016: 66) might play here, it is also illustrative that in his own way, Jordan considers that LPs "…*give teachers opportunities to do that; we need to free them of any negativity they are experiencing*." Indeed, rather than reject what are essentially constructs of accountability, Jessica argues that LPs are specifically positioned through these constructs to change "…*people's fixed mind-set about what this process [MTF] was*…" Describing how this happens, Jessica characterises collaboration between LPs and colleagues within MTF as "…*actually it's a very reflective process*…" where LPs "…*coach and work alongside and collaborate with other staff, who maybe do need a bit of support and guidance*…" With implications moreover for my later examination of how educational practices might be re-conceptualised, not only do critical conversations suggest that LPs are facilitators of dominant practices, framed in turn by improvement agenda (for example Department for Education, 2020a: 57), but in fact it is possible to argue that where LPs lead mutual exploration of these same practices, it also emerges that LPs might specifically enable changes in professional practice, furthermore in ways that also present the opportunity for more subjective, more emancipatory forms of (LM) practice (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33).

Enabling changes: Collaboration with other LPs

Accounting above for the impact of interactions with non-LP colleagues, I will now also consider the particular significance of working with other LPs. As Jessica describes below, when she was first appointed as a LP, she was the only person performing this role within our school. Without ignoring what this might mean for any aspiration to engage with reflexive development of understandings (Guba and Lincoln, 2008: 279), or suppressing experiences of this that might be constituted as potentially constructive, Jessica does articulate specific limitations of being a single LP, representing her own experience of this as "…*you come in as a singular person; […] all of a sudden an infrastructure's created*." With no precedence for how the role was understood by others within this specific context, it should not be a surprise

if there were therefore challenges in representing the position, not least in terms of potential influence (McMaster, 2014: 435) other than as a particular expression of performative intent (see also Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 396). This is especially the case when I have already argued that the LP role is relatively under-represented in policy and wider literature (see also Department for Education, 2019: 26). Still, accounting for themes that have surfaced earlier, including through literature, the fact that this role was established at a time when the school in question had been integrated into a MAT, under the auspices of a need for change, it should not be surprising Jessica's early experiences of the role were framed, at least in part, through improvement agenda (Department for Education 2020a: 57). Reiterating a number of problematic elements within this assertion, some of which I have already considered (for example Hall and McGinity, 2015: 1), for Jessica it was especially clear that:

> *…having one has a very minimal effect, it […] has an effect, it's like the story of the starfish […] but more than one LP actually becomes a catalyst, and actually creates something very different in what it's doing in a positive way…*

Where one has "…*a very minimal effect*," I can moreover surmise that Jessica sees this facet of solo exploration of professional practice as a LP as a fundamental barrier to the legitimate value the role represents not just to others, but also in terms of enabling an individual to engage more deeply with collaboratively, and reflexively, understanding their own identifications (see also Godfrey, 2016: 309). Of course, I have already established the potential impact of collaboration with non-LP colleagues. However, rather than see this as a contradictory statement, it is also evident that for Jessica, the LP role is more empowering when it is affected as part of a team of LPs. Certainly, when she characterises her later experiences of the role as "…*you've got a team of LPs; you've then got two senior leaders supporting that team of practitioners*…" it is important to reiterate central notions such as hermeneutic understanding (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 27). Of course, Jordan touches upon independence of practice, whether or not you are a LP where he believes you do not "*need to worry about education until it directly influences what I do when the door's shut.*" Likewise, I do not propose that the capacity to construct the conditions of one's own practice is necessary to enable broader impact or limited to the LP role alone. Still, although there is inevitably a tension here, for the LP to flourish, to become "…*a catalyst*…" Jessica argues it is

important that the role be founded upon collaboration with fellow LPs, echoing perhaps my own earlier examination of the influence of collaborative reflexivity (Raffo et al, 2015: 1131) on understanding, and in turn how individual identifications and subjectivity might be constructed (see also Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 29). At the very least, this resonates given the methodological stances I have myself taken throughout this project. As Jessica contends:

> *…if you only just kept with one practitioner, that whole thing that you're talking about, that dialogue, and all of that happening, wouldn't take place, and it could become quite a narrow*…

Enabling changes: Particular opportunities of collaboration with other colleagues

Providing a fundamental perspective on collaboration with other LPs, as Jessica expounds, "…*to be an effective LP do you have to have other LPs? I think probably yeah*…" Extending this to consider what might constitute meaningful shared spaces, I will use this section to reflect on my earlier presentation of PLC in particular, where for Jessica having "…*influence and the effect on other teachers*…" is specifically enabled when "…*people are working with each other in the PLCs, and actually they are coaching each other*." Adding to this, Mario, who often seems to struggle with the conflicting demands of his own identifications within performative structures, replicating my earlier discussion of hegemony (Mouffe, 2014: 179), acknowledges the need to engender equivalent spaces stating that, "*contemplation in a conscious sense is not something we often do is it?*" Still, where it might be possible to present PLC as a tool through which LPs are specifically positioned to construct, and lead, deeper engagement with educational discourses (see again Godfrey, 2016: 312), there are opportunities for LPs to lead changes in professional practice, in ways that might even move beyond the particular influence of dominant discourses (Sachs, 2011: 158) or, indeed, individuals such as George. Certainly, by placing the leadership and development of PLC within the gift of a group of LPs such as Jessica or Mario, I have already considered how the LP model of LM could be located to legitimately exploit spaces as other. Furthermore, where I suggest that LPs are specifically positioned to lead through CPD structures and processes (see also Appendix A), it is plausible that such structuring of the LP role might even engender interrogation of the very parameters

that frame collaborative engagement with professional practice (for example Bolam et al, 2007: 18).

Changes problematised: Particular challenges of positioning LPs to enable changes in professional practice

> *With some staff […] was quite sort of negative, and then twinned with that, not only was I being a Lead Prac, I also was observing people so that doesn't work…*

Returning to my earlier discussions of notions such as legitimacy (McMaster, 2014: 433) or performativity (Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 395), I will present particular issues of positioning LPs to enable changes in professional practice. When Jessica emphasises above a problematic experience of attempting to lead changes as a LP, this has potential repercussions also for how the role is perceived by colleagues, not least those experiencing programmes such as MTF. Indeed, I have already highlighted that a possible barrier to being positioned as a LP, or perhaps more importantly sustaining this position, is the extent to which someone who enacts the role responds to what George presents as "*…a school's vision and what they're trying to achieve*," where my framing of LM (Connolly et al, 2019: 504) poses questions moreover of how subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 64) might be represented as a LP. Added to this, and restating concerns held for example by Sachs (2011: 163), where participants see the LP role as constrained by a pervasive perception of accountability, not dissimilar to other LM constructs, and certainly offering a test for my own engagement in this research, it is possible that LPs might actually fail to exploit potentially transformative spaces such as PLC (for instance Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 33).

For example, acknowledging that LPs are not entirely exempt from performative structuring of practice, Jessica describes situations where she thinks "*…you can be a bit safe as a LP…*" because as Mario further explains "*…I feel more exposed by colleagues that are in less senior positions than me*." Indeed, involvement in such spaces might actually become conduits to reinforce dominant presentations of professional practice (see also Ozga, 1995: 22) including, as Mario alludes to above, when individual LPs are affected by how they are perceived by others, regardless of relative positioning. Certainly, it is possible to contend that this could at the very least limit how LPs publicly assert their own identifications with professional practice.

As Jordan suggests when discussing Breakfast Club[8], a further vehicle through which LPs are positioned to influence practice:

> *I'm delivering it, and I hate it. I'll […] openly admit that I stand there on a Tuesday morning, and I think this is absolute garbage.*

When Jessica believes that interactions as a LP must fundamentally be built upon "…*being reflective, […] not directing colleagues to do certain things*," this therefore becomes problematic. In particular, Jordan's above experience would seemingly oppose more critical engagement with prevailing notions of practice (for instance Carr, 2006: 163), highlighting again key issues in relation to emancipation, hegemony, or subjectivity (Glossary of central concepts). Certainly, Jessica is not unaware of the challenges to internal consistency presented by "…*developing pedagogy in teaching and learning in this school community […] to ensure that the outcomes became better*." Indeed, this might further contribute to, even perpetuate, the impact of performative frameworks (see also Dillabough, 2000: 315). Furthermore, where for Jessica you are empowered through "…*reflecting in a slightly different way*…" there is also an assumption that LP activity is in fact constructive, a supposition that any change, or difference, is indeed positive. In fact, she recognises that there is no guarantee that being a LP will necessarily engender positive outcomes; however, we identify with what that means:

> …*you could technically be a LP, you could have the title of LP, but you have to be an effective LP*.

Still, expanding here again on articulations of how the LP construct is located within notions of effectiveness, or through improvement discourses (Department for Education, 2019: 26), partly due to being positioned as other, if we accept that legitimised exploration of practice is a key characteristic of the LP role, there is every reason for thinking that although also indicative of particular criticism of LM practice (for example Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 395), the challenging nature of improvement discourses can itself be constitutive of meaningful spaces that participants expound through their description of identifications with the LP role,

[8] A short pre-school session where Lead Practitioners brief colleagues on current innovative principles and what constitute good strategies for Teaching and Learning.

especially when understood in light of Appleby and Pilkington's (2014: 33) depiction of "…*a learning organisation*." As Dominic describes, "*If we sit and have a conversation for half an hour about PLCs […] then that's great*." Similarly, Jessica goes as far as to suggest that:

> …*every practitioner should aspire to be the best practitioner, and also be a practitioner that coaches, and works alongside other people, to reflect upon their practice*…

Changes problematised: Particular concerns of enabling changes in professional practice

Irrespective of how Jessica might understand "…*best practitioner*…" it is important that she is in essence advocating that all educators should engage with the potential for change. In other words, "…*a school environment that is literally a reflective teaching environment*…" This is not to say that being a LP is the only way to facilitate changes in professional practice but rather that the LP role can make significant contributions. Certainly, as Jessica describes she is "…*a stronger practitioner from being a LP 100%, […] and that's because of the reflection element*," echoing in turn a key statement by Fullan and Boyle (2013: 9). Expanding upon this, building moreover upon what is suggested through literature (for example Kruse and Johnson, 2017: 588) Jessica especially believes that leadership of PLC as a team of LPs positions the LP role with "…*a whole different sort of scope of reflection*…" where:

> …*when you are a LP you're reflecting upon your own practice, you're also reflecting upon other people's practice, and then you're actually, holistically, reflecting upon the school's practice*.

Still, where "…*you have to be very careful of, you don't want people coaching people who are coaching people not reflectively*…" there remains the danger not only that performative discourses are perpetuated through LP activities, challenging, for example, the emancipatory intent of this work (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), but that the LP role contributes negatively to notions of educational practice. As Dominic emphasises, there are occasions when LPs "*actually, […] we don't have any say in that*." Put another way, representing LPs as a potentially crucial model to enable changes in professional practice does not in any way deny

Jessica's interrogatory statement that "*…it depends on how good the coaching is doesn't it?*" Furthermore, even where I seek to build understanding of how the LP role can contribute positively, indeed importantly, to understanding of professional practice, there is a risk that advocating notions of the LP in light of the individual identifications of participants within this research could even engender the self-obsolescence of the construct. Although Jordan feels that "*I can't imagine what this will be like long-term*," for Jessica, the constructive impact of the role within our shared institution, and certainly any meaningful changes in professional practice could ultimately mean the role is no longer needed:

> *…with the growth of having more Lead Pracs, […]this college is a model, is a prime example of why there would be a need to have people in […] that role […] but […] if everyone becomes a LP, you wouldn't need a LP*.

Changes problematised: Contextual barriers to enabling changes in professional practice

Alternatively, if the above is too pessimistic a view for the long-term future of the role, and even though it is also possible to recognise here particular assertions of subjectivity as LPs (Biesta, 2013: 20), by accepting Jessica's presentation of the need to be reflective, driven by wider engagement with understanding professional practice, it is nevertheless also likely that there remain contextual barriers to enabling changes in professional practice as a LP. For Jessica:

> *You have to be reading around […] the area of study. You have to be constantly looking at research on teaching and learning.*

Certainly, built first of all upon an assumption that LPs will do this, echoing earlier discussion of the importance of LP involvement in CPD processes and research, if the LP role is to enable changes in professional practice that also respond to a central focus upon emancipation as "*…a supplement to the existing order…*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) it is also clear for George that the way in which the LP role is framed "*…reflects probably where […] the institutional thought and process is*" (see also Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 396). Highlighting again the contention I described earlier that for George it is important to consider whether a

school can afford to appoint a LP philosophically, as well as, more pragmatically, as "…*a retention and recruitment tool*," it could be argued that in order to advocate the LP role as important for changes in professional practice, this must therefore take place within a context that is sympathetic to and supportive of interrogation of professional practice, by LPs who are research engaged (Godfrey, 2016: 302). Indeed, noting again challenges inherent in implementing a vague construct such as LP, especially given it is subject to various and multiple possible characterisations (Department for Education, 2019: 26), it is inevitable that how the role is enacted will differ according to the specific context and specific individual. After all, if Mario is correct that "…*you can't change society*," and that schools are ultimately expressions of broader educational norms (see also Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 148), the capacity for LPs to enable critical changes in professional practice will depend on a number of considerations. As George points out, this might depend on "…*how secure they are in […] status, and at a particular point in time*…" Still, it is significant that for George it is:

> …*probably the ideal isn't it, which is in a sense that we've […] got a thirst for […] openness of mind […] but that's quite an uncomfortable position for some people*…

Certainly, where a central figure such as George argues that "…*it's also successful in informing I suppose what might be different going forwards*…" it remains, to a certain extent, that being a LP must be predicated upon exploring, even transforming, the conditions of educational practice, not least one's own. Of course, when George also recognises that critical reflection is also "…*an uncomfortable position for some people to be in*…" it is likely that the LP role will still be identified as a functional, or formalised, role in some contexts. In cases such as this, where Huijboom et al (2020: 751) account for particular notions of developing professional knowledge, this would present a further challenge to how I position notions such as subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20) and emancipation (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) in this research, certainly in terms of how they might frame understanding of the LP role. In fact, George himself recognises that the actions of a LP might centre upon making "…*it the mechanism to function, wheel it, rather than produce a new model*…" perhaps contradicting any intent to explore how LPs might enable changes in professional practice, or indeed as I will return to, theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised.

Changes problematised: Critical implications of framing the LP role to enable changes in professional practice

Before we accept from the above that the potential of the LP role is inevitably limited within particular contexts, when George also describes inherent contradictions in how the LP role might be positioned, he also alludes to earlier examination of spaces occupied by LPs as somewhat liminal, including perhaps particular representations of PLC (Godfrey, 2016), and certainly draws my attention back to notions of CP (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014). Likewise, when George argues that engagement in exploratory practice means, "…*we're not putting things at risk, only the risk is potentially to make things better*," it is possible to perceive a couched interpretation. On the one hand, a capacity for critical changes in professional practice might be restricted by likely outcomes, or perhaps more accurately perceptions of what these might be, yet on the other hand is dependent on a variety of influences including, as George ponders:

> *…the question is what came first? Was that the thing that made them successful? Whatever successful means, or […] then they did that because they were in a position of security, […] or was it that that came first, […] but they were prepared to take that risk*.

Aware of the contradictions and limitations within possible expositions of this position, it remains therefore illustrative that George consistently asserts understanding of the LP role as framed by the deconstruction or interrogation of broader notions of professionalism, or educational purpose. As George recognises, it is likely that being framed within a restrictive model of LM, as presented for example by Sachs, 2011: 158 would be "…*almost disabling […] stops development*," further contributing here to an emergent perception that the LP role has the potential to embody emancipatory professional practice (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). Extending this, for George:

> *…if we in a sense are accepting that […] it isn't fixed, that it's not a fixed outcome, […] we can grow in terms of professionally*.

This is not to claim of course that there are not intrinsic difficulties, a number of which I have already alluded to or expanded upon, including in this section. As Jessica points out for her

experiences of the LP role, "…*there were many positives with it but also there were many difficulties with it*." Still, where literature and critical conversations demonstrated that LPs might be positioned to enable critical changes in professional practice, let me now also consider how data produced through critical conversations contributes to theorising how educational practices might be re-conceptualised.

3. Theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised

Representations for Critical Professionalism: The particular significance of notions of Critical Professionalism for the Lead Practitioner role

> *Are we growing people to be successful in […] the education system or [are] we growing people to be successful in our view of that?* (George)

Starting with George's above question, reflecting also upon key themes that have emerged through literature, I will use this section to incorporate elements of how the LP role is positioned within critical conversations to conceptualise a sense of educational purpose within their specific professional challenges, as well as enable changes in professional practice in order to suggest contributions that LPs might make to understanding how educational practices might be re-conceptualised. More specifically, I will expand upon how the LP role may constitute a different mode of framing educational practices with particular reference here to CP. Extending this, I will consider how LPs might be able to navigate competing demands in ways that other models of LM might not.

Critical professionalism: Expanding upon how notions of legitimacy might be constituted differently as, and for, LPs

I have already explored various representations of how legitimacy might be accorded to LPs. Framed not insignificantly by notions of the expert (Boylan, 2016: 63), I have considered at length how this might be understood in terms of performative success (Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3), or grounded in aspects such as improvement agenda (Department for Education, 2019: 26), or specific engagement with broader research (Godfrey, 2016: 302). Certainly, where critical conversations add to how policy and literature might locate LPs as experts charged with considering and communicating broader research principles, I have examined the contribution that this might make in and of itself to endorsement of the LP role as an important model of LM. Likewise, building again on particular notions of credibility (Boylan,

2016: 66), I must not ignore that acceptance by colleagues within a process such as MTF may be explained as much by the way the LP is positioned within this process as an extension of LM structures, specifically "…*carrying the responsibility for the proper functioning of a system*…" (see again Connolly et al, 2019: 504). Still, rather than consider once again the sources of LP legitimacy *ad infinitum*, what emerges as specifically illuminating for this section is the implication that however legitimacy is constituted, LPs might consequently be positioned at a relative advantage to explore, if not enact, more critical notions of educational purpose and practice, touching here moreover upon the potential for enhanced subjectivity as a LP (Biesta, 2013: 20).

Related to this, the LPs who participated in critical conversations with me are globally assertive in their understanding of educational issues, even where they find them problematic. For example, Dominic confesses his love of "…*sort of being seen as a bit of an expert*," in turn reiterating a potentially crucial foundation for LPs to act legitimately. Indeed, when LPs identify as an expert, there are at the very least grounds to suggest enhanced confidence to influence re-conceptualisation of educational practices, irrespective of how LPs are perceived by other stakeholders. Considering other examples of LM roles, it has also already emerged that LPs might specifically be positioned as experts differently. Potently, I have already acknowledged that participants place engagement in research and, as George promotes, active interrogation of professional practice as potentially significant issues of LP practice, replicating representations through literature such as Godfrey (2016: 302). Indeed, George's representation of LPs as the "…*people with the expertise to make everybody I suppose have that understanding*…" might explain the way in which I and other LPs have critically explored, and might be positioned to explore, practices within spaces that could otherwise be perceived as restrictive (Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3). As I have already acknowledged, it would of course be naïve to suppose that this is straightforward or even that being a LP is entirely positive. Still, recognising the potential significance of this for how I present notions of emancipatory practice in this research (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), let me now reflect again upon the importance of particular spaces through which educational practices might be re-conceptualised.

Critical professionalism: The significance of conscious duality as a LP

In this section I will consider the way that LPs recognise they navigate competing demands in particular ways. I will in turn elaborate upon why this might be significant. Expanding upon earlier discussions of CP (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014), interweaving a number of the important themes that have surfaced through my examination so far, it is clear that LPs might be positioned in ways that are distinct from other models of LM, including, as I touch upon above, notions of expertise. At the same time, it is not certain that the LP construct will evade conventional framing at all times and for all contexts, recognising within critical conversations and literature that there are inherent tensions or limitations to the LP role. For example, even where the Head teacher of the context examined presents a seemingly positive appraisal of how LPs might interrogate the conceptualisation of educational practices, participants bear witness to the fact that it is not necessarily certain that this will always, in all circumstances, be a lived experience for LPs themselves. This includes Mario "*because the system doesn't allow it*," while for Paula "*I think it depends how much it conflicts with or agrees with the Head teacher's own ideas because ultimately, we are subject to his own point of view*," rendering a more negative view of aspects of LM engagement as a LP (see also Dimmock, 1999: 442), and indeed the potential for subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20).

Still, it is interesting to note again that different LPs typically present dualistic identifications, even actions, in response to such master discourses. For instance, articulating an ambiguity of experiences as a LP, Jordan claims, "*I've just learned to find that gap between what I've got to do, and what is going to need to be done at some point in the future*." Perhaps this is purely pragmatic, and indeed may simply be typical of many of the actions carried out by all educators, irrespective of personal journey or role. After all, where I accept the prevalence of performative demands (Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3), themselves contributory to endemic tensions within education and the ancillary impact of this, it would be foolish to characterise such duality as specific to how LPs are positioned. It is nevertheless powerful to note that, to a certain extent, this features in responses given by all of the participants, in all of the critical conversations. When I also reiterate that I myself have experienced this as a LP, it should not be surprising that this might be presented as a key premise of being a LP, with implications

for the aims and central concepts at the heart of this research, not least in terms of how educational practices might be re-conceptualised.

What makes this especially important is that as opposed to again typifying the internal struggle I for one have consistently experienced in trying to rationalise actions faced by broader demands, referencing here my discussion of notions of hegemonic understanding (Mouffe, 2014: 179), is that critical conversation participants demonstrate independent consensus of how they are positioned, or perhaps more potently perceive they are positioned, to navigate liminal spaces between expected and actual actions, with implications in turn for how the LP role might be positioned in relation to my characterisation of LM (Connolly et al, 2019: 504), and indeed, in terms of how they might influence educational practices (see also Kemmis, 2019: 94). Certainly, for Dominic the LP is "...*a little bit of a mediator between those two sides*..." echoing particular themes in literature (see also Sheard and Sharples, 2016: 670) as well as experiences for Paula, for whom it is possible, "…*we do both and I think there's different aspects*…"

With relevance moreover for how I present notions of emancipation (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), including how they (2010: 34) situate ideas of "…police…" and "…politics," it is edifying that the LPs who participated in this research themselves consistently identify the conscious navigation of, as they see them, conflicting demands. For example, Mario asks, "*can things be right and wrong at the same time?*" Jordan expresses a similar viewpoint when he acknowledges that "*I'm good at being able to say this is what we've been told but this is what we should be doing,*" while Paula states, "*yeah but sometimes you to get them to jump through that hoop you want them to do, a lesson that hits a formula*." Indeed, although Mario is perhaps less obviously confident in the strength of his position in the wider hierarchy he still believes that "…*if you've done your […] homework you've got authority on something [...] that gives you a platform*," touching again upon notions of legitimate (McMaster, 2014: 433) impact, including in terms of how educational practices might be re-conceptualised. Perhaps even more powerfully, this points in turn to assertions of subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20) as a LP. Certainly, when Dominic goes as far as to state that "*you've got be canny about where you cut corners and where you can't,*" built perhaps on his perception that "*sometimes you know*

that what you are thinking is exactly the right thing," as Jordan says "*I've been there for a while, and I'm looked up to, I'm respected, people come to me for advice*."

Critical professionalism: The importance of critical uncertainty for the LP role

As I have already considered at different points in this research, drawing upon critical conversations as well as my own reflections, further supported by exploration of literature, there is every reason for supposing that critical uncertainty might be decisive for LPs to adopt dualistic positions through the LP role. Persuaded by this, I will use this section to expand upon the particular contribution that this might make to theorising how educational practices might be re-conceptualised. For George, returning to broader representations of the LP role:

> *In the context of different schools, it's being done for different reasons and […] that's part of the tension so when we say the role of LPs, I think it's quite interesting to actually sort of see how far that is institutional, rather than system wide.*

Reflecting earlier framing of the role through literature (for example Department for Education, 2019: 26), as well as what has emerged through critical conversations, this adds to a picture that it might be especially significant that the LP role is a relatively emergent LM construct, even where for Jessica it did exist in "*our sister school that […] at that time wasn't our sister school, but is now.*" Indeed, this remains true even where Jessica is more obviously clear on how the LP might be characterised, for example where she states that she was already:

> *…completely aware of a Lead Prac's role cos I'd seen other jobs, or I'd read articles about this whole idea.*

When she also remarks that "*the role can go loads of different directions, and it's […] how you mould it*," I have already argued that this might have implications for framing notions of subjectivity in terms of Biesta's examination (2013: 20) of "*…unique subjectivity as it emerges for […] singular, unique responsibility.*" Expanding upon this, and my above consideration of duality, it is certainly possible to contend that not only does Jessica herself identify with, and

enact, expected norms of practice in an individual way but, crucially for this research, she believes that LPs are actually positioned to do this more broadly, supporting George's earlier assertion that LPs, in part, might interrogate the conditions of educational practice, including their own, referencing also again Appleby and Pilkington's (2014) work on CP. As she states:

> *You look at the team of Lead Pracs that we've got here, […] they're all very different ("Yeah, I'd say so") in their approaches…*

As I have established, this is not a repudiation of the fact that the LP role is framed in particular ways (see also Boylan, 2016: 63; Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 400), regardless of any lack of particular clarity in how the LP role is presented, including through policy (for example Department for Education, 2019: 26). Rather, I argue that this suggests any uncertainty might instead enhance the potential to theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised, where LPs might engage in the creation of activities that simultaneously respond to master discourses as well as more personal drives. As George acknowledges "…*with regards to […] the MAT […] from that point of view […] there is quite a blurring of what […] LP is*." As a key figure in structuring the LP role, this recognition of a lack of clarity in the purpose and function of being a LP consolidates the contention that any number of identifications is possible on both an individual and structural level, irrespective of performative demands, albeit assuming legitimised impact, emphasising again here notions of effectiveness (Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3) or authority (McMaster, 2014: 433). Indeed, touching upon how I frame concepts such as hegemony (Mouffe, 2014: 179) and emancipation (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), it is interesting that the inherent uncertainty engendered by difficulties experienced through the LP role might make a crucial contribution to how educational practices might be re-conceptualised. As Jessica describes of a particular challenge she faced:

> *As a Lead Prac, I relished the opportunity of working with a colleague who maybe was quite negative about the process of MTF, and actually changing their process, and […] that did happen a number of times*.

Referencing complexities within structured aspects of the LP role such as the MTF process (see also Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 395), not only did Jessica enjoy the critical dialogue that

ensued (for example Pierce and Gilles, 2008: 40), but she perceived that it was possible to influence others constructively, further reinforcing her own earlier contention that she herself develops from participation in PLC, or indeed the MTF process where:

> …*you work with some people and then they get something from your reflection that helps them. It's […] a very circular motion*…

If Jessica was able to change "…*their process […] a number of times*" as a LP, it follows that LPs might be in a position of some importance in relation to theorising how educational practices might be re-conceptualised, hinting furthermore at modes of engagement such as PLC, which might support Kruse and Johnson's (2017: 588) assertion of "…*the practice of mindful leadership*." Given that Jessica believes she was able to reconsider her own practices through the LP role, and indeed places critical and collaborative reflection (Raffo et al, 2015: 1131) at the heart of understanding educational purpose, there is every reason to suggest this is a potentially significant foundation for the LP role more broadly, especially where I have already established particular conceptual positions within this research, not least Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 33) presentation of emancipation.

Concluding remarks

"*…the ambition isn't it, for teachers at personal and professional level[s] to have that job satisfaction*." (George)

Whether or not the above is actually the case, where I reflect upon the broader aims at the heart of my research, I have found within these critical conversations encouraging, at times unexpected, revelations. Although I might have anticipated certain representations of the LP role given aspects of my own experiences, and my earlier presentation of literature, I could not be sure that George, as the primary arbiter of institutional vision, or other LPs for that matter, would associate a "….*resource we have is to have people in different roles, different descriptions*…" with collaborative construction of understanding (for example Bolam et al, 2007: 18), and specifically the development of identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2) that might contradict pre-existing institutional policy, or dominant values (see also Mouffe, 2014: 179). Indeed, referencing Freire's (1970: 73) work upon the *"…critical consciousness which would result from… intervention in the world as transformers of that world*," given this might present a challenge to Giroux's (1981: 5) statement, grounded in Althusser's work on ideology, that "*schooling functions as an agent of reproduction*," this might even have appeared counter-intuitive, especially where LM might, in part, be understood in terms of Connolly et al's (2019: 504) presentation of "…*responsibility for the proper functioning of a system*." In this way it is perhaps unsurprising that George predicates any challenge to prevailing discourses upon "…*a fundamental trust that that dialogue can be had and can be examined. It doesn't necessarily have to be enacted*." Linked to this, I was also struck by George's assertion that "…*some schools may have no LPs*…" inquiring also whether this is "…*because they don't want them, or they can't afford them?*" Certainly, when a key stakeholder like George might identify it as essentially superfluous, it is likely that seeking to assert the LP role, especially understood beyond particular observations upon accountability (Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3), must in all probability depend upon context-derived perceptions of importance.

However, rather than being a purely limiting view, embracing George's above presentation of the LP role may instead characterise the potential of this "…*as a <u>supplement</u> to the existing*

order…" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), where participant experiences of navigating interfaces between what Bingham and Biesta (2010: 34) might term "…*police*…" and "…*politics*" further emphasise the way the LP role might represent "*[n]ew ways of working*" (Andrews and Lewis, 2007: 136) including in relation to established notions of LM (see also Connolly et al, 2019: 504). After all, if the role is potentially superfluous, even for George, why does it exist at all? If it exists yet is still superfluous, it must surely offer something different, not only for individual self-determination but also on a broader institutional, even systemic basis. Of course, where I also recognise inherent complexities in presenting the LP role as a potentially significant LM construct (for example Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 408; Department for Education, 2019: 26), it is not sufficient to advocate the LP role based on George's, or any other decision maker's, views alone. Indeed, even when George himself ends our conversation by stating, "*there'll always be the need for […] that investment into the development of people as professionals*," there is no guarantee that the LP role can, or should, be the construct through which educational practices (Kemmis, 2019: 94) might be re-conceptualised. After all, if George were to perceive the LP model as successful, there are even grounds that this would actually reposition the role as obsolete. For George, if "…*everybody becomes part of that, […] I'm not sure that you necessarily need to keep having more and more LPs*…" Still, interpreting that this itself conceivably positions the LP role to make meaningful contributions to how we might identify with, and construct or reconstruct, contemporary educational practices, it is clear that George represents the potential for LPs to offer a potentially systematic response to challenges faced within a culture of performativity (see also Godfrey, 2016: 302), building in turn on key notions and gaps within contemporary practice, policy, and other literature (for example Rayner, 2018: 750).

Through consideration of participants' experiences of the LP role, and whether these stem from the specific conditions of their own practice, it is also possible to increase appreciation of the impact of actually being a LP. Undoubtedly, in my exposition of how the LP role has been, is, and might be constructed as other, participants enhance understanding of the potential of particular spaces, not least PLC (for example Owen, 2014: 54) that individuals might navigate, even exploit, more widely, in order to shape how they themselves identify with educational realities, at the same time as influence responses to broader demands (see again Connolly et al, 2019: 504). As a result, where it could be argued that the LP role might

be characterised by specific modes of engagement, grounded in hermeneutic principles (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 27) that in turn engender the potential for collective CP (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 30), my exploration of critical conversation data builds on my earlier presentation of policy and literature to potentially surface significant parallels for systematic and systemic LM practices more generally. This might include different contexts, where an alternative ethos might dominate. Certainly, as I have interpreted through literature (for example Ball, 2013: 5) and critical conversations, it is significant that the LP role might essentially be located outside current day-to-day educational provision. Accounting here also for the central concepts and aims in my research, not only might this therefore offer a response to challenges that I have faced during my time in education but in fact, the LP role might play a fundamental role that, in certain respects, has implications for all educators. Stating this, I will now consider my own contribution to representations of the LP role, and how examination of the LP role itself has become part of the hermeneutic development of my perceptions of educational purpose, added to an iterative sense of my own subjectivity "*…as it emerges for […] singular, unique responsibility*" (Biesta, 2013: 20).

Chapter 5: Accounting for me

…she had to tell them exactly how things were in the room, what Gregor had eaten, how he had conducted himself this time, and whether there was not perhaps some slight improvement in his condition.

Franz Kafka, The Metamorphosis in the Complete Short Stories. (1971: 114)

I recognise in Kafka's above depiction a potentially critical statement for also capturing the professional self. Certainly, I will need to account here for the impact that my earlier exploration of literature, and critical conversation data, have had on how I identify with my own journey as a LP and teacher-researcher. To a certain extent, this will be characterised as an emergent awareness of the potentially problematic nature of emancipatory discourses, embodied in part by a shift from considering emancipation through education, to emancipation within education, specifically in terms of what Bingham and Biesta (2010: 33) present as "*…a supplement to the existing order…*" with implications in turn for representation of the LP role.

> *A cursory glance back over my own writing here perhaps even betrays a tendency to think in institutional language, reflective of a deeper seated policy-driven 'professionalism' in my own actions...* (Reflective journal 1)

Referencing again essential questions upon the nature of truth (for example Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 189), further developed within my methodology chapter (Chapter 3), I recognise that I will not of course present a complete story of my own identifications with notions of practice or purpose. In the same vein, my above reflection should not be seen as a whole articulation of what might have been significant at a particular point in my research. Instead, relying on Sontag's (1977: 23) description of photography as a useful metaphor, "*…the camera's rendering of reality must always hide more than it captures*." Nevertheless, by also accepting Sontag's (1977: 23) belief that only "*…that which narrates can make us understand*," especially when understanding "*…starts from not accepting the world as it looks*," it is plausible that I will at least add personal insights upon the importance and potential impact of the LP role as a construct of educational (LM) practices. Indeed, reiterating the methodological positions that I take throughout this research (for example Bingham and Biesta, 2010; Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Ellis et al, 2011), this is imperative. Where it is not feasible to identify each and every influential element to how I am, and have been, positioned throughout my time in education, by accounting for meaningful themes in literature, as well as drawing upon what emerges through critical conversations, I will construct a narrative of key stages in my own educational journey, at least as I now see them. Simultaneously charting what I perceive to be central to a hermeneutic evolution in my own relationship to broader

educational parameters, it is to be hoped that by doing this I can also make a significant contribution to understanding the emancipatory potential of the LP role.

Early educational contexts

"*It seems indeed to be a Work that requireth some Exactness.*" (Swift, 2008: 177)

My early experiences of the emancipatory potential of education

In this section, I will explore my early experiences of education before I became a teacher myself. This will include how I perceive, and have perceived, particular aspects of these experiences as significant, and specifically the impact of these upon my understanding of the emancipatory potential of education. Of course, representing events that took place over 30 years ago requires recognition of the inherent challenges contained within Swift's above statement. What is clear, however, is that from a young age, I have been an avid reader, becoming ever more conscious that books exposed me to a world beyond my own (meta)physical barriers. This includes a sense of escapism from financial, social, geographical, and subsequent to my parents' divorce when I was eight, personal circumstances. Building also upon this as a participant in increasingly formalised educational structures after I first entered school, I am unaware of a time that I was not convinced of the potential of education to enhance opportunity, whether or not this is actually the case. Specifically, growing up in a council house, in an out-of-the-way small village near the coast in East Yorkshire, close to Hull, a large, industrialised and geographically isolated city that throughout my childhood encountered major economic deprivation, I have long associated academic success with greater life chances, singularly failing to consider what the impact of this is on those who do not succeed, or indeed possible challenges within this position (for example Marx and Engels, 1998: 34).

Certainly, I perceived that my own experiences of academic success combined with the chance to directly experience new contexts, not least through studying languages, presented alternative ways to envisage what the future might offer at the same time as a means to

reconsider contexts that I experienced at any given time. Indeed, finding that I was able to express myself academically, I am mindful that I began to esteem academic achievement as the determining factor of my own worth at a relatively young age, perhaps even before I started secondary school at the age of 11. This echoes my earlier presentation of Biesta's (2013: 4) work on the significance of *"…[q]ualification*" in terms of the emancipatory potential of education. Not unproblematic, as I touch on above, and with significant implications for how I have subsequently questioned particular notions of emancipation through education (see also Freire, 1998a), it is illuminating that this appears to feature in the majority of my earlier educational experiences, lending a particular accent to my later engagements in education.

Although I was aware it was acceptable, even desirable, within my community to leave school at the permitted legal age of 16 in order to start paid employment, or a practical apprenticeship, I actively rejected this stance. I sought instead to transform my situation by achieving through education, not to earn a quantifiable amount of money, or to fulfil a specific ambition, but to be free from an environment that I should admit I found stultifying, and it must be said, as a way of shielding myself from broader anxieties I, and presumably all, young people experience. Indeed, I strongly remember my own beloved Grandfather's advice, before I started secondary school, to make sure I "*learnt metal work*" (I paraphrase). This was something I felt was irrelevant to me, indicative perhaps of an unarticulated yet particular rejection of a localised and pragmatic understanding of education that (see also Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 396), it pains me to accept, I felt I was somewhat above. I certainly recall never wanting to do a manual job at this time, believing this would inevitably be a restriction of self-expression, where educational success would inevitably present more stimulating possibilities for me, hinting moreover at what was perhaps an early concern with understanding my own potential subjectivity (for example Biesta, 2013: 21).

How my understanding of the emancipatory potential of education began to change

In this section, I will examine how I began to identify differently (Lacan, 2012: 2) with the emancipatory potential of education, linking this in turn to particular experiences. Reinforcing

a specific exposition of emancipation through education (see again Biesta, 2013: 4), it is striking that rather than at any point interrogate whether academic success might for example result from compliance through dominant structures, referencing also my earlier examination of Mouffe's (2014: 179) presentation of hegemony, my over-riding belief was that it would in and of itself allow a greater degree of self-determination**.** Fed by my own personal identification as someone who found academic success relatively easy to come by, I responded to encouragement from supportive parents as well as the teachers who taught me, not least in my chosen subject area of modern languages. In fact, it might be said that where I was presented with aspirational and confidence-affirming teaching, I implicitly bought into a perception that success through education had a moral as well as a functional importance, with clear repercussions for how I might identify with, consciously or not, notions of educational purpose. At the very least, I believed that achieving sufficiently well to go to university would enable me to have the opportunity to change my own circumstances, and in particular to experience new and inspiring contexts.

It should therefore be no surprise that I sought to attend university, and indeed applied for universities that offered different environments to my own earlier childhood. Successful in gaining a place at the University of St Andrews, I was however soon aware of the difference in (financial) background that I had compared to many peers. Although insufferable to admit, I perceive that I therefore relied upon my own continued academic achievement as the means to present an assertive identity when faced by financially better off but, at times, seemingly less able, or academically successful, peers. Resenting the greater challenges I believed I had experienced in order to gain this opportunity compared to these same peers, I am also cognisant that I began at this time to become ever more entrenched in a view that although education was proving to be a vehicle for self-fulfilment for me, there was an inherent injustice in the relative ease with which wealthier young people were able to succeed.

Admitting a growing appreciation at that time of the potentially problematic nature of particular presentations of education as an emancipatory construct (for example Laclau, 2007: 1), it could be said that this reflects contemporary awareness that education was not necessarily a neutral vehicle through which individuals such as myself might engage with enriched opportunities for self-determination or subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20). Although

even now I do not deny the potential for alternative representations of emancipation, including the idea that it might be possible to change one's own circumstances through educational success (Biesta, 2013: 4), it is nevertheless clear that something had begun to change for me. Arguably, it was at this point that I started to pose critical questions of education as an emancipatory vehicle, simultaneously recognising challenges to how educational purpose might be constructed differently to what I had previously accepted. Characterised by an increased consciousness of, and discomfort with, inequality, it is here that I am now able to unequivocally acknowledge endemic uncertainty, whether or not for the first time, which I believe has become increasingly typical of my own identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2) with education in the English education system. It is therefore especially thought provoking that it was during this period, at a time I was living in France as part of my language studies, that I made the decision to become a teacher.

Becoming a teacher

"…*so eager for my great expectations to become a reality, that I had forgotten*…" (Dickens, 1983: 92)

Particular interpretations of why I became a teacher

Building further on a burgeoning sense of how I had begun to perceive problematic constructions of educational success, I will now chart my early experiences as an educator, and how it might be said that they create a foundation for subsequent representations of the LP role. Echoing the above quote from Dickens (1983: 92), although I do recognise that I was beginning to display an increasingly nuanced understanding of my own identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2) with educational purpose at this time, given that I had to this point primarily positioned education as a vehicle to enhance life chances (Biesta, 2013: 4), training to become a teacher nevertheless seemed a logical choice for me at the end of my undergraduate degree. Reflecting particular concerns developed through my life to this point, framed in part by a number of apparently practical desires (stability, salary, holidays…), as well as a nebulous sense of wanting to have a socially valuable role, I hoped that becoming a teacher would meet

a number of personal needs, echoing certain themes that also emerge through literature (for instance Hurst and Hurst, 2017: 441), and critical conversations (for example Jordan, p.119). Reiterating also that I perceived I was not only academically successful, but perhaps more saliently, had long identified with academic success as integral to my own sense of worth, it is perhaps inevitable that I sought to prolong my own participation in education, especially where this might in addition engender positive experiences for others.

Looking back at the range of imperatives present in my decision, adding to this values present in my wider family, where public service was typical, including my own father who was a police officer, it is expedient to reassert the pervasive lack of clarity in my relationship to notions of educational purpose that I have already begun to describe. At the very least, it could be read that accounting for a variety of simultaneous influences highlights a lack of clarity in my own thinking, and might even symbolise inherent uncertainty in the general construction of educational practice that I comment on elsewhere in this work (for example Ball, 2013). In any case, and without embroidering this period of my own life, it is perhaps not a surprise that I found the year I trained to be a teacher challenging on a number of levels. Re-examining my experiences at this time, it is hard to pinpoint the extent to which my motivation to persevere on a pathway to becoming a teacher was founded upon a desire to render my year of Initial Teacher Training, at the University of Oxford, worthwhile. Still, and regardless of how I now judge this, what is clear is that upon completion of my Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), I had a personal, practical, imperative to return to the North, where my now wife was based, and in an area that allowed access to my favourite football team. Indeed, as I have already commented upon, it is clear that practical considerations might have played as influential a role in my own decision-making as anything that could be termed as more ideological, plausibly making a concurrent contribution to any omission from a more holistic sense of educational purpose, drawing here again upon key discourses in Biesta (2013).

Particular implications of becoming a teacher

Without denying interplay between different incentives, as I expand on above, or claiming that any one seemed more impactful than another, it is however evident that at this time I actively engaged in trying to make sense of how education should, or should not, be constructed**.** Embellishing my own earlier disapprobation of what I perceived to be inherent inequalities in particular construction of educational success (see also Freire, 1998a), I recall in particular a heated debate at Oxford, where a PGCE colleague and I took strongly opposing views on the validity of private schools. Significantly, I am aware that this in turn directly contributed to a choice to locate myself within a context that offered apparent social impact, however it was that I actually understood this, perhaps highlighting an emergent concern with taking responsibility which, for Levinas (1985: 95) is "…*the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity*." Indeed, relating this here to a particular interpretation of Rancière's (1991: 33) assertion that "*to emancipate someone else, one must be emancipated oneself,*" this would ostensibly indicate a belief that as someone how had achieved academic success, coupled with my personal background, I perceived I was especially well placed to engender the emancipation of others. Framing this also in terms that I have already described for my early experiences of education (for instance Biesta, 2013: 4), a possible lack of critical engagement at this time would moreover seem to have implications for challenges I have subsequently faced as an educator (see also Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 13).

Reflecting upon this now, it is of course fanciful to claim that any current version of events, which took place over 15 years ago, is an accurate depiction of my views at the time (Denzin, 2014: 69). What is not in doubt though, irrespective of how I now interpret this, is that I was to spend the next three years working at a comprehensive school within a less privileged context in Warrington, in the North-West of England. What is also clear is that it was during this period that I encountered notable tensions between how I expected I would perform as a teacher and how I subsequently appraised the quality of my own performance. This presented me with an additional problem for how I had to this point predominantly understood notions of educational success or emancipation. Not uncommon amongst early career teachers, and certainly a key challenge for education more generally, where retention remains a crucial priority, I struggled with the attrition of failing each and every day. This is

not intended as a hyperbolic statement but is instead indicative of how I am aware I perceived a constant gap between intentions and the acts of teaching itself. As someone of relatively little experience, I lacked both the perspective and skill base to contextualise any difficulties faced, not least my own inability to rationalise a perceived rejection of the value of education by a number of the pupils that I taught. It is at this point that I am therefore able to locate what I now present as an especially significant provocation to how I had otherwise perceived emancipation through education (see also Biesta, 2013: 4), presenting a challenge moreover to my own sense of subjectivity (Freire, 1970: 73). I found that on a personal level, I felt increasingly constrained through educational activity, and a relative lack of success, to the extent that at the end of my first three years as a teacher, my sense of self-worth as an educator was appreciably hampered. In fact, at this point not only did I leave the school in order to travel but also, I fully intended not to return to teaching.

Entering LM

> *It would be impossible to describe the amazement and rage we felt on finding that we had returned to the shore we had left.* (Verne, 1983: 195)

How, and why, I took a LM role

Having elaborated upon early experience of education, including in ways that proved to be problematic as an educator, I will now seek to explain why I returned to teaching, how I found myself in a position of greater influence (McMaster, 2014: 433) and, perhaps even more revealing, how I interpreted this. Where Verne's (1983: 195) above quote especially resonates, this will include accounting for experiences that did not necessarily differ from the challenges I had previously experienced as an educator. Certainly, upon my return from a year travelling, I was soon teaching once again, this time, perhaps ironically given my earlier assertions (see also Marx and Engels, 1998: 34), in a local independent school; primarily it must be said for pragmatic reasons, namely the need to earn money, for time to travel, and possessing a relevant skill set (or at least the appearance of one!). Expanding upon what I then experienced, I found that working in a different context to my previous school, combined with the fact it was not a permanent post, assuming also a different mind-set subsequent to

a year travelling, gave me a greater sense of freedom than I had previously experienced as a teacher. Without doubt, I was sufficiently persuaded that teaching once again felt a meaningful endeavour to participate in, even if only for egocentric, practical reasons. However, this alone cannot explain how I then soon found myself in a position of greater influence and responsibility (see also Connolly et al, 2019: 504), with implications for how my own particular experiences of this might in turn inform broader positions on emancipation (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) or even a greater awareness of my own potential subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20).

Identifying with more positive experiences as an educator, when I was subsequently faced with the impending end of my contract due to the temporary nature of my initial appointment, I nevertheless felt confident enough to grasp the opportunity to lead a department. Betraying more selfish or individual imperatives at this time, I cannot deny that I retain fond memories of working in an independent school, irrespective of my own rejection of this type of school when I first sought a teaching role. It is worth noting, however, even if only incidental, that rather than accept the opportunity for my current role to be extended indefinitely, I instead accepted a LM role that returned me to a less advantaged context once again, this time located at the heart of my own community in inner-city Liverpool. Although I do not believe I actively sought a particular context, or even specifically a LM role, it is significant that I felt able to apply for, and then perform, a job with the potential for increased, even problematic, constructions of accountability (for example Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 414). Representing less troubled identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2) with professional practice than had previously been the case, it is striking that I moreover seemed unaware of the risk (Hall and McGinity, 2015: 12) of particular notions of hegemonic framing (Gramsci 1999: 770) in such a position, despite the difficulties I had encountered in my first teaching post. Indeed, it would appear that my first engagement in a LM position took no account of characteristic challenges to emancipatory construction of practice, as I have since come to interpret it (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), not least in terms of my later examination of literature or critical conversation data.

Rather, responding first to greater professional assurance borne through what I identified as the successful enactment of my contemporary role, credibly also a nuanced desire to

reposition education as an emancipatory vehicle, it is apparent that I felt better placed as an educator, demonstrating in turn a desire to lead (see again Connolly et al, 2019: 504). Furthermore, echoing later engagement in the EdD, and indeed this very research, I am struck that when I now find myself revisiting previous experiences or identifications, it appears I was actually able to reconstruct how I read particular events and their importance, perhaps even recognise something of a paradigm shift in my own relationship to education at that time, echoing the methodological positions I take throughout this research (for instance Brown and Roberts, 2000: 659). As such, it is possible that what I elucidate above, grounded as it is in perceived memories, and accounting for key transitions in my own earlier life, might represent in and of itself a reconsideration of my own educational identifications as opposed to the actual delineation of what I experienced (for example Adams, Holman and Ellis, 2014: 1). Whether or not this contributed to a change in understanding at the time, it is nevertheless apparent that I believed I would, at this point of my career, be better able to navigate tensions that characterised, perhaps even continue to characterise, aspects of my professional life.

Particular challenges encountered in my LM roles

Yet, as things transpired, this assertive presentation of how I perceived I might experience my first LM role was soon once again challenged in numerous and diverse ways. In particular, I began to become markedly more conscious of the potential impact of performative measures (Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 402), perhaps in part due to my specific LM role but also perhaps as a result of working here during transition to a Michael Gove led Department for Education. Specifically, unable to consistently rationalise the effective navigation of (changes to) policy to my own satisfaction (see also Fullan and Boyle, 2013: 9), I once more began to sense that there was a gap between my own actions, what was expected of me by the school, and my ability to impact positively on disadvantaged young people. Faced with contextual and broader educational uncertainty, I also attributed particular concern to the relatively lower academic results achieved by pupils in my new school, referencing here again Biesta's (2013: 4) presentation of notions of "…*[q]ualification*," compared to those accrued at the independent school where I had previously worked.

Looking back now, I did not have an over-arching responsibility for the results of any pupils in my immediately previous school. Adding to this any embryonic disquiet I felt with the inherent inequality of success through education (see also Freire, 1998a), it might be assumed that this would render invalid any direct comparison of the equivalence, and significance, of results as some sort of objective measure of impact. Yet this is clearly something I did not question at the time. In fact, this was aggravated when, as a subject leader, I was not only responsible for the day-to-day management of a department but also for leading the development of a vision for educational practices, touching importantly here upon critical notions at the heart of my presentation of LM (for example Connolly et al, 2019: 504). In particular, although I have already described that for Hallinger and Kamontip Sidvongs (2008: 10) "…*moral leadership and sound management need not be viewed as competitors*,[9]" my own experiences at this time that would seemingly relate to Dimmock's (1999: 442) view that there are *"…tensions between competing elements of leadership, management...*"

In many respects this also echoes a theme that surfaced through the critical conversations. Certainly, and without claiming to have assigned particular qualities to either at the time, I experienced the leadership and management elements of my role to be incompatible ambitions, not least where it was expected that I participate in the translation of policy as a member of the middle leadership team, yet was accountable when this policy did not produce the desired results. When I subsequently attempted to evaluate, and change, practices within my department, I found that not only were certain colleagues reluctant to consider my suggestions but also actively opposed them, raising questions of my particular legitimacy (for example Boylan, 2016: 66), or subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20) as a middle leader. This resulted in leading educational approaches that I concurrently rejected on philosophical levels, drawing here for example upon critical perspectives (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014) on practice (see also Kemmis, 2019: 94), as well as on a pragmatic basis, given I found them ineffective. As a consequence, I felt constrained by my own relative inexperience, as well as a personal need for external validation of performance, conceivably again an echo of my own historical success through education, as well as significant discourses in policy and wider literature (for example Department for Education, 2016a: 8). More specifically, where I led a

[9] Underlining here represents italics in the original.

department that was deemed less successful within the school, I felt personally judged by such structuring of my role as a member of LM. It is perhaps inevitable that I therefore tended to construct notions of practice through the lens of achieving best impact on exam performance (see again Biesta, 2013: 4). Indeed, considering again my own personal academic success, it is not necessarily a surprise that where I sought to identify with education as a vehicle for emancipation, I might have continued to position academic results as the key arbiter in how this might be constituted, implicitly suppressing any concerns that this might be incoherent.

Implications of particular challenges encountered in my LM roles

Examining the above now, I repeat that I do not of course suggest that results are unimportant, but rather I reiterate that previous identifications, including at the time being discussed here, were characterised not in terms of the potential richness of education, for example as encapsulated more broadly by Biesta (2013), but rather as a narrow representation of what success or emancipation means. However, this is not something I fully grasped in the moment. As such, I internalised my own relative lack of success at this time as indicative of a fault within my own teaching and leadership, although I cannot claim that this did not to some extent also play a part, as opposed to a reason to interrogate the very premises upon which practice seemed to be built (for example Carr, 2006: 164). Rather, I sought to overcome any personal sense of inadequacy as a teacher, not by challenging performative structures but rather through identifying opportunities where I might enact, or even enable, the performance of broader policy more effectively, referencing not only my characterisation of LM in this research, specifically "…*carrying the responsibility for the proper functioning of a system*…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504) but also touching upon issues at the heart of my earlier examination of Mouffe's (2014: 179) presentation of hegemony. Looking back now, one clear example of this, and indeed something that I used within my applications for later roles, was my involvement as a middle leader in building a tool for the performative appraisal of practice for all teaching staff. In this example, I was co-responsible for the design and implementation of a lesson-planning document that would frame, even inform, how lessons should be delivered in my school at this time. Although I can see a fundamental

contradiction now, in terms of the potentially restrictive construction of practices that would undoubtedly ensue from my own participation in framing compliance (see again Dillabough 2000: 315), I was nevertheless pleased when the senior leadership team praised the rigour of the document and adopted it as the model for all lessons. As I stated within an application for a new post at the time:

> *…my sequential lesson planning was outstanding and should be used as an example of good practice for the school. Currently, I am participating in a school Learning and Teaching group to this effect.*

Articulating a sense of positive impact that was divorced from more nuanced notions of emancipatory practice (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), it therefore seems especially perverse that I contributed to restricted professionalism in ways that were not dissimilar from the concerns I myself felt at this time (see also Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3). Indeed, it is reasonable to suggest that this might even present a limitation to potential subjectivity, which Nordtug (2007: 169) specifically relates "…*to practices of knowledge that continuously change in the light of new knowledge.*"

Emergent changes to how I perceived my position within LM structures

"*Je vous mettais en garde contre votre habitude néfaste d'interroger, de savoir, de comprendre tout*[10]." (Cocteau, 1934: 127)

Referencing Cocteau's above statement of the difficulties engendered through critical engagement with prevalent realities, it is clear that I have struggled with a sense of my own subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20), further impacting upon how I might experience education as an emancipatory construct (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). This section will therefore seek to account not only for how I began to navigate such tensions but also how my own experiences began to frame a motivation to represent notions of professional practice and emancipation differently where, reiterating a key statement by Appleby and Pilkington (2014:

[10] I warned you against your harmful tendency to question, to know, to understand everything (my translation)

32), I might be "…*in a process of always becoming through critical doing, thinking and being*…"

Subsequent to my previous context, I found myself working in a school, serving what remains an affluent community, not dissimilar to the context of the independent school within which I had previously worked. Unexpectedly, given how it appears I deemed notions of success upon joining the school, I was surprised to discover that I remained uneasy with still-evident performative demands; this despite leading a department that consistently achieved excellent results in comparative performance tables. Although I could acknowledge that I was successful in my new role, I was nevertheless aware that I was still unable to rationalise a deeper sense of unease with what I was doing (see also Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 414). As opposed to seeing results-based success as a validation of my actions (see again Biesta, 2013: 4), I instead felt constrained, almost fearful that subsequent results were unlikely to be as good. Indeed, part of my motivation to participate in the EdD programme, as well as to move to my current context, stemmed directly from leading the French department in this previous school to the best results over the two years prior to leaving, some of the best results nationally in languages.

Adding to this prevalent feeling of insecurity of position, although perhaps less obvious to me at this time, I was increasingly troubled by the way I consistently presented identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2) that I now interpret as the manifestation of my on-going concern with performative discourses (see also Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3), impacting upon how I might in turn construct notions of educational purpose. Indeed, it is clear that I progressively experienced a deeper awareness that whatever form success might take, I failed to explore what education could**,** maybe even should, be, conceivably as a consequence of how I positioned myself in relation to professional frameworks. As I reflected on at the beginning of this research, it is possible that on-going identifications with the materiality of hegemonic parameters (Mouffe, 2014: 179) directly impacted upon my capacity to engage more critically with notions of educational purpose or practice, where instead my own actions might be limited to core and almost pre-determined behaviours or, at best, problematic opposition to the parameters of my practice (Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 402). Still, acknowledging a nuanced shift in perspective, it is clear that where I did find my own experiences to this point

difficult, I also sought to engage more fully in understanding why this was so. Indeed, as I have emphasised at length, this might in turn be significant for how I began to assert notions of my own subjectivity or emancipatory educational practice (Fuller, 2012: 686). As I attest in my very first reflective journal of the EdD:

> *I increasingly find myself bogged down in the day to day performative requirements of teaching in a school, and have begun to question why, and indeed what is it, I teach?*

EdD: Beginnings

> *…the vital principle of the house had turned round inside its body to face the other way. Reversals of this kind, strange deformities, tremendous paralyses, are often seen to be inflicted by trade upon edifices…* (Hardy, 1993: 57)

Acknowledging Hardy's representation of the potential for transformation, emphasising also here my presentation of Lacanian (2012: 2) notions of identification, I will draw now upon interplay between my own educational histories and, for the first time, sustained engagement in educational research through the EdD, in order to chart a critical juncture in the evolution of my own perceptions and engagement with notions of emancipatory practice. Specifically, I became increasingly interested in ideas of emancipation within education, with particular reference to Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 33) framing of "…*a <u>supplement</u> to the existing order...*"

The early influence of engagement with educational research through my EdD

Encapsulating the fact that I had arrived at a point in my professional life where I was experiencing critical discomfort as an educator, I have already demonstrated that I had long been convinced of systemic and systematic barriers, to my capacity to navigate professional demands, perhaps even that the emancipatory potential of education was incompatible with hegemonic (for example Gramsci, 1999: 770) construction of practice that, furthermore, I was unable to influence (Dillabough, 2000: 315), with implications in turn for my own subjectivity

(Biesta, 2013: 20). Ever motivated therefore to find a resolution to challenges I myself faced as a member of LM, including the dichotomous interaction of my own experiences and an inability to conceptualise deeper moral value or purpose, it was at this point that I entered the EdD process. In particular, I aspired that doing this would allow me to reconcile gaps between my actions, and my understanding of these actions. Certainly, charting the influence of my participation in the EdD, upon reaching the end of my time in my previous school, I am aware that I was better able to examine and even describe, if not resolve, tensions I felt through my own professional practice. For example, I found I was especially troubled by the below excerpt in a card I received from a member of my form group who I had first met at the age of 11, and who was now 15 when I was about to leave the school for my current context:

> *We are all going to miss seeing you in the mornings, but were glad to have met you, and happy that you're going somewhere that they need you more*.

At the time, I was drawn to the above statement not just because of the warm tone I feel it shows, something of a validation of my impact upon at least one person during my time in the aforementioned school, where I spent four years. Rather, I was troubled by the avowal that I was "…*going somewhere that they need you more*." Even if I were able to unpick such a complex assertion as this, it is likely I would at least remain challenged by whether my impact as an educator can really be qualified as constructive. Did I actually move to my current context as someone who enhances, or indeed is concerned with, enhancing educational provision, whatever this might mean? Alternatively, echoing concerns I have elucidated when describing my previous moves, is it possible that this was again the expression of my own egocentric response to on-going professional dissatisfaction? Looking back now on my teaching experiences to date, it is clear that by failing to reflect more deeply upon how I might understand my own perceptions, I responded sequentially, and superficially, to representations of educational notions that were in themselves problematic (see again Mouffe, 2014: 179), provoking an iterative cycle of discord in my own continued experiences as an educator. Conversely, where I consider the above excerpt, I find that I was enabled, conceivably through participation in the EdD, and perhaps even for the first time, to assert

observations, which if not necessarily indicative of a tightly defined sense of purpose or vocation, at the very least might demonstrate a more profound engagement with interrogation of my own identifications, or an emergent sense of CP (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014). Restating what I also assert on p.68 of my methodology chapter, it is likely that by reconsidering previous perceptions of how I constructed practice, I might even have enabled a form of epiphany to take place (see also Fuller, 2012: 686). Taking a more critical view of what I experienced, grounded in literature I had begun to read, there is arguably a developing sense of the role my own identifications and actions might play in the way I am positioned, and position myself as an educator. This includes changes to how I might understand any decisions I have taken. Comparing for example how I present my experience of the lesson planning document earlier as something that I perceived positively at the time, this has implications for how I might also conceptualise notions of emancipation within education (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), representing a potentially seminal shift in understanding, certainly on a personal level.

Particular challenges presented by engagement with educational research through my EdD

Expanding on this, I cannot deny that this evolution in my own identifications might be, in ways, equally problematic. Certainly, when I chose to leave my previous school, I was concerned I might slip into repeated patterns of behaviour. Acknowledging above all a residual concern with the power of external parameters (for example Gramsci, 1999: 770), I felt I risked failing to contribute differently to the construction of educational understandings, further betraying a concern with my own subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20) that, at this time, I was perhaps unable to articulate. In particular, I was increasingly unhappy with identifiable restrictions and limitations of what I felt I could or couldn't do, namely leading the French department within formalised structures where I felt unable to influence notions of practice (Kemmis, 2019: 94) significantly, and furthermore despite my quantifiable success in the role (see also Department for Education, 2016a: 8). Highlighting once again a possible shift in my own understanding of educational discourses, working at the time within a context where my own LM role might again have been described as a filter for institutional values, there is no surprise that I therefore struggled with particular conceptualisations of educational practice,

and indeed LM more specifically where, as I have already stated, for Dimmock (1999: 442) there might be *"…tensions between competing elements of leadership, management*." Certainly, it is clear that however I understood these notions at the time (see also Grint, 2005: 1472), I encountered particular difficulty in rationalising what might be termed as the more managerial elements of my role (Connolly et al, 2019: 504), contrasted with an ambition to engage more critically (Schroyer, 1973: 35) with established norms. For example, as I alluded to earlier in this work, when considering a particular intervention I attempted in Phase A of the EdD process, I encountered a specific difficulty. Where I sought to conduct a small piece of research, which engaged with examining the intent as well as the implementation - to use Ofsted speak! (Ofsted 2019: 9) - of a marking policy introduced by a new Head teacher, 18 months into my time at my previous school, I found that:

> *Relating directly to my attempted intervention, it is clear that the Head was not positive about my use of research to investigate school policy…that the fundamental expectation is not for staff to conceptualise policy for themselves*.

Undoubtedly, this situation would seem to indicate the importance of the right circumstances or context, something I also considered within my wider reading (Hall, 2013: 467), and indeed, within the critical conversations conducted, where for Boylan (2016: 66) it is the "…*support of formal organizational structures that confer legitimacy*." Considering how this might relate to my own experiences, what is clear is that the relative challenges I faced when examining a dominant mode of practice was apparently less successful within a context where a particular performative, or hierarchical, understanding of LM was held, nodding here also to certain presentations in policy (for example Department for Education, 2016b). Indeed, reflecting key notions that surface elsewhere in my work, this might again pose questions of the extent to which I was legitimised (for instance McMaster, 2014: 433) to undertake research (see also Sheard and Sharples, 2016: 670) through my position within an established LM role. Certainly, it would at least appear that the extent to which key stakeholders were open to, or supportive of, any interrogation of policy, even by an engaged, normatively successful middle leader, as I was surely positioned at this time, was seemingly dependent upon how effectively any suggested re-conceptualisation might simultaneously perpetuate dominant notions, lending in turn a particular accent to interpretations of policy such as Department for Education

(2016a: 8). Perhaps this should have been inevitable given a history of academic success within the school, including within my own department, where it might be argued that it could be expected, indeed reasonable, to encounter less willingness to modify institutional construction of practice. After all, if a school were positioned as successful within broader performative structures, why would they invest in risking the structures that appear to enable this presentation, especially if key stakeholders such as the Head teacher did not themselves perceive a need to change the purpose and impact of particular approaches? In this regard, my early attempts to explore critical perspectives that I was ever more drawn to within the EdD process were perhaps doomed to failure within my previous context as an educator, especially if it might be argued that characterising LM in terms of "…*carrying the responsibility for the proper functioning of a system*…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504) could also present particular challenges to alternative construction of practice.

Emergent subjectivity through engagement with educational research through my EdD

Where I recognise that equivalent, and even new, challenges were presented through my early experiences of engagement in my EdD, it is striking that rather than suppress concerns in ways that I would have been likely to do, even recently within the same school, I was however able instead to demonstrate a degree of enhanced empowerment, or subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 21). I will now use this section to exemplify why I believe this to be the case. Certainly, I am conscious that as opposed to reconsidering my actions in hindsight, I felt able at the time to challenge the position taken by the Head teacher in this situation. Without denying that this appears a contradictory position to take, where I recognised limitations in what I was enabled to do through my specific LM role, I simultaneously felt able to publicly question prevailing norms, hinting here perhaps at an assertion of subjectivity linked to Biesta's (2013: 64) interest not in "…*how individuals become part of existing orders but how they can be independent.*"

As I explained in the assignment I wrote around this specific intervention, I certainly demonstrated new conviction in my actions. For example, although a subsequent meeting with the Head teacher, which I myself instigated, in relation to this issue "…*reinforced my view*

that the new policy was essentially prescriptive…" I nevertheless felt I was located to "…*challenge, and even develop, how I identify with an aspect of policy and therefore, my educational reality*." Whether, asserting again particular notions of legitimacy (for example Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 398), and despite inherent tensions in such a statement, this was because of strong departmental results, or indeed, because of my direct engagement in the EdD, it is clear I felt more able to respond to particular challenges than at any previous point as an educator. Certainly, for the first time in my recollection, I found myself less concerned with compliance (see also Sachs, 2011: 163) to external framing of my professional life than with a desire to assert the development of my own critical professional understanding (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014), including directly with the key stakeholder, as I saw it, in my school at the time. Nevertheless, however satisfying I found this personal attitude, I also remained aware that in many respects, I experienced this alone. In fact, I saw no real evolution in how I might construct notions of practice more broadly as an educator, recognising within this characterisation some key themes that have also emerged through literature and critical conversations, not least how collaboration might continue to emerge as a significant theme (Bolam et al, 2007: 18) in this research, and presenting a further challenge to how I felt able to assert a sense of my own subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20).

Accounting in turn for what was nominally my direct sphere of influence (Connolly et al, 2019: 504) as a leader of language teaching, it is worth noting that I also encountered an increasing diffidence towards, if not outright rejection of, attempts to deconstruct practices within my own department. Although I was positioned to lead the department, and therefore surely legitimised as a member of LM (for example McMaster, 2014: 435), I actually felt disempowered, partly perhaps as a response to transformation (Lacan, 2012: 2) in my own perspectives through the EdD process but also in recognition of the specific structures in place within the school, where I perceived that my role at this time was more closely aligned with "…*carrying the responsibility for the proper functioning of a system*…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504) through established institutional, and positional, norms than with more critical understanding of practice (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014). Certainly, whether or not this also says as much about my own identifications at the time (Lacan, 2012: 2), as of the specific LM role itself, it is clear that there was not however a formalised imperative to engender

collaborative interrogation, referencing here for example the potential of particular construction of PLC (Kruse and Johnson, 2017: 588).

Rather, faced by the relative success of established educational practices, it is perhaps again unsurprising that research, and CPD more generally, was primarily framed as a functionalist exercise to enable effective delivery of *status quo* principles (see also Sachs, 2011: 158). Adding to this the tyranny of my own department's success through established approaches to teaching, I found myself unable to filter theoretical perspectives that I increasingly believed were important. In particular, and returning to the heart of this very research, I struggled to incorporate notions of emancipatory purpose in my own practice as a leader, specifically as informed by my own reading of Bingham and Biesta (2010: 33). Above all, I was troubled by an inability to persuade colleagues of the importance of questioning our shared investment into hegemonic processes (Mouffe, 2014: 179), even where they themselves might feel constrained by our collective frameworks. Whether colleagues lacked faith in my assertions, whether I was unable to construct critical spaces to engender renewed identifications, or whether purely and simply there was no real appetite for change, it is clear that at this time, my own engagement in the EdD also served to reveal additional tensions that exacerbated my own disquiet as an educator.

Choosing to leave my previous school at a time when I was also beginning to frame a focus for this very research, I therefore sought a new role that might represent more emancipatory (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) conceptualisation of (LM) practice. Although I was already near the end of the taught phase of my EdD, and arguably more versed in critical approaches (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014) to understanding, this is not to say that I had identified a particular role, or context, where I might resolve this issue. Indeed, as I have already explained, the LP role is to this day one that remains less established, and indeed potentially less formalised (for example Department for Education, 2019: 26) than other established LM roles, and was consequently not one I was explicitly drawn to at this time. Rather, and perhaps of particular importance, when my most recent change in professional situation involved a move to a school during a time of great institutional flux, and as I have already considered, uncertainty, the fact I even encountered the LP role was to a certain extent an expression of

my own on-going search for subjectivity, where drawing on Biesta (2013: 21), I hoped I might at least identify "…*situations in which it matters that I am unique.*"

Becoming a Lead Practitioner: Situating my early experiences of the Lead Practitioner role

> *Without knowing it, he had made in reverse the journey which some of his ancestors had made a century or so before*. (Naipaul, 2011: 34)

Accounting for an increasingly nuanced personal understanding of educational emancipation, in part through examination of literature and other people's experiences of the LP role, as well as my own particular engagements in education, where I draw upon Naipaul's (2011: 34) above statement, I will now situate my own early experiences of the LP role in order to further expand upon how this very research began to take particular shape. Building on themes that have emerged through my examination of literature and critical conversations, and regardless of the fact I specifically became a LP at this point of my educational journey, it is clear that I have myself found particular expressions of educational (LM) practice problematic (for example Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 395). Indeed, despite charting an increasing shift in my own identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2) as an educator, I was actually a little reticent about becoming a LP, especially given the perceived security of success (see also Department for Education, 2016a: 8) in my previous role and the relative difficulties of my new school. In this regard, I was not necessarily surprised that I encountered challenges during my early experiences as a LP, arising in part out of endemic contextual problems due to a recent history of issues, not least in terms of exam performance, added to an impending, crucial Ofsted inspection (Ofsted, 2019). Similarly, where I might draw here upon my earlier examination of work such as Hall and McGinity (2015: 1), it is moreover clear that this was partly compounded by the implicit uncertainty of what, for me at least, was a new role, and certainly less prevalent, including in the specific context in question. Still, expanding also upon earlier analysis of the particular opportunities that might be presented within such framing of the role (Hall, 2013: 484), as Laclau (2007: 2) also states "…*by playing within the system of logical incompatibilities… we can open the way to new liberating discourses*..." potentially even in

relation to possible tensions at the heart of conceptualisation of LM itself (see also Connolly et al, 2019: 504). In this way, where, like other LPs who feature in this work, I actually entered this position with few preconceptions about how the role should be enacted, it is especially significant that I also recognised at the time an emergent personal interest in Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 33) presentation of emancipation "…*as a <u>supplement</u> to the existing order…*" hinting moreover at a desire to navigate interfaces between notions such as those Bingham and Biesta (2010: 34) describe as "…*police*…" and "…*politics*." In fact, given this increasingly influenced my own educational engagement, it is perhaps inevitable that this should also frame the way I sought to frame my early experiences as a LP.

1. Understand how Lead Practitioners conceptualise a sense of educational purpose within their specific professional challenges

"*They wanted me to be a priest, but I decided to become a shepherd*." (Coelho, 1995: 19)

In this section, presenting Coelho's above statement as a useful metaphor, I will seek to chart my own direct experience of the LP role, simultaneously accounting for the influence of literature and critical conversations, in order to expound my own understanding of how LPs might conceptualise a sense of educational purpose, potentially even in ways that differ from what might be anticipated.

Legitimate framing: My experiences of the LP role as a performative construct

Restating that my current school had been identified as struggling, and subsequently incorporated into an academy chain by a lead, successful local school, it is perhaps unsurprising that I soon encountered situations that were equally as challenging for me as a LP as any of my previous (LM) roles had been. Resonant of previous concerns, given the increased likelihood of highly controlled parameters of educational activity under such circumstances, touching here also upon my earlier critique of improvement agenda (for example Dillabough, 2000: 315), it is clear that I was also troubled by the direct impact my own actions might have on individual professional self-determination, notably when carrying out performative activities that were determined through institutional policy (see also Department for Education, 2011). Certainly, emphasising my discussion of hegemony (Mouffe, 2014: 179), and specifically, how I might be a participant in the maintenance of dominant notions of practice that I myself find problematic, I was soon troubled by the potentially negative impact of my own search for subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20):

> *I am very conflicted. I feel that I have been party to a colleague (in professional terms) becoming despondent to the extent that they are choosing to leave the school we both work in. As part of my 'leadership' role, I was the second observer in a performance management observation with the Deputy Head.*

Referencing above a reflective journal I produced within three months of joining the school as a LP, I wrote of the way I was troubled that a particular expression of my own performance of the role provoked an unexpectedly negative response in a colleague (see also Hurst and Hurst, 2017: 441). Although I had myself been the subject of observations throughout my time as a teacher and had, over preceding years, observed colleagues, including within performative structures, I had not experienced these as specifically difficult, beyond the situational anxieties that might be revealed when an individual publicly exposes their own practices to people whose views they value. In fact, and despite the obvious tensions I have felt more broadly within accountability frameworks (see also Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 400), I have already recorded that I felt particular pride when I successfully formulated lesson-planning documentation in my first leadership role. Moving to a context characterised by a number of externally judged weaknesses, and it might be assumed, presenting explicit priorities, I nevertheless found being a representative of particular aspects of school policy difficult, even where, or perhaps because, this served to position my own actions as institutionally legitimate. Certainly, on reflection, my early experience of contributing to "…*the proper functioning of a system*…" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504) as a LP was suggestive of a challenge to more emancipatory construction of LM (for example Fuller, 2012: 685), or indeed, my evolving understanding of what might epitomise emancipatory educational practice more generally (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33).

Personal framing: My experiences of the LP role as an individual construct

Increasingly, I experienced a sharp dismay at the way I positioned my own agency or subjectivity as a LP in ways that police others (see again Mouffe, 2014: 179; Dillabough, 2000: 315). Indeed, as I state above I remained troubled that my own actions might contribute inadvertently (or not!) to the restriction of potential subjectivity for others, elucidating concerns also about my own ability to manage my own reflexivity (Raffo et al, 2015: 1131) as a teacher-researcher. That is, in seeking to re-conceptualise how I understood notions of educational purpose, I chart here the expression of actions that constrained others at the same time as I sought to construct what I have argued elsewhere is crucial for institutional

legitimacy, echoing findings within literature (Boylan, 2016: 66) and critical conversations. As I stated in a further reflective journal, at the end of my first term as a LP:

> *...the tension of the situation, and the measurement culture of which I am now an active participant seems at best restrictive, if not counter-productive and yet is, it saddens me to say not un-representative of how educational 'values' are seemingly formed.*

I was particularly bothered here by the way my own actions stemmed not from a position of moral certainty or purpose, but rather as an extension of how I continued to identify with problematic parameters that pervaded my realities as a LP. By also prioritising an attempt to deconstruct my own place within education, and especially to understand a sense of powerlessness in the face of mechanisms that at this time seemed beyond my control (see also Gramsci, 1999: 448), it is perhaps inevitable that I found my own early experiences as a LP to be equally as challenging as any other (LM) role that I had previously enacted. After all, in seeking to resolve or at least rationalise my own relationship with dominant educational discourses, I found myself at the centre of responding to institutional needs to the detriment of deeper theoretical exploration (for example Carr, 2006: 164). Certainly, and regardless of whether it might present a form of subjectivity, at least insofar as I had particular responsibilities as a LP (Levinas, 1985: 95), it is unrealistic to suggest that my initial practice in this role denoted the expression of educational purpose through emancipatory intent as I have come to represent it (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33),

Extending this analysis, it is revealing that I also felt insecure in the validity of the judgements I held in relation to my earlier account of observing a colleague, yet still supported the Deputy Head teacher in his ultimate appraisal of the situation. Even if this could be explained in part through my own relative inexperience, or lack of confidence as a new member of the school, I was nevertheless presented with a dilemma that the LP role might primarily be legitimised as an expression of governing values (McMaster, 2014: 433), rather than as a vehicle through which to interrogate particular conceptualisations of educational purpose or practice. As I noted at the time "…*there were key issues with the lesson that seemed to stall potential learning*…" Indeed, I went as far as to write that for me "…*referring to the school process described here would seem appropriate*..." Revisiting this through a current lens, it could be

said that even this attempt, through performance of research activities, to make sense of challenges encountered remains representative of an on-going acceptance at that time, even failure to deconstruct, how my sense of purpose as a LP was initially framed. As opposed to charting an evolution in my own identifications, this is as likely to be symptomatic of the perpetuation of educational perspectives that I claimed to question at greater depth through my EdD activities, which would in turn present a challenge to Rancière's (1991: 33) assertion that "*to emancipate someone else, one must be emancipated oneself.*" Still, although I cannot deny that the above is characteristic of on-going challenges within my early experiences of the LP role, by also returning to Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 33) it is revealing when they contend that to be a critical professional, individuals need to "…*engage with her/his own values, assumptions and the influences of policy and organisational systems and processes*." Indeed, where I demonstrate above that I had begun to at least reflect more critically upon the particular challenges presented by my actions as a LP to this point, it is also possible to begin to frame a shift in how I perceived the potential of the LP role itself.

Other framing: My experiences of whether the LP role might be framed differently to other (LM) roles

Despite demonstrating an on-going apparent subservience to the views of senior staff in the above examples, and therefore to the dominant structures of the context, within my early reflective journals, it is evident that by capturing that I was troubled by this fact, I at least sought to rationalise my feelings through engagement in the EdD. Where there was moreover a synthesis between actual experiences, and how I might process these to assert purpose as a LP differently, this also emphasises key themes that emerge in literature and critical conversations, touching for example upon presentations of CP (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014), the importance of this for the LP role as a potentially emancipatory (LM) construct (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), and indeed, a sense of my own subjectivity (Freire, 1970: 73). Certainly, considering my job description in Appendix A, it is important to acknowledge that as a LP I was, globally speaking, less involved in the direct performative evaluation of other colleagues' teaching but rather was primarily designated to guide colleagues, and subject areas, who were identified as having significant failings in their own practices, reiterating of course the importance of improvement agenda for understanding the potential of the LP role

(Department for Education, 2019: 26), or indeed how I characterise notions of LM for this research (Connolly et al, 2019: 504). Still, highlighting again Cramp and Khan's (2019: 351) assertion that "…*innovators need to be outside traditional leadership hierarchies or their work could be misinterpreted as senior management 'messages'*…" one noteworthy difference with any of my previous experiences of educational LM was that although I was specifically responsible for leading changes in practice, this was in a supportive capacity with less emphasis upon particular modes of (results-derived) accountability (Godfrey, 2016: 302). For example, starting here with a reflective journal that I wrote early in my time as a LP, I reflected that this facet of the role:

> *…leads to a support cycle, offered by myself or another person fulfilling my role in the school… framed as a constructive process to 'improve' teaching…*

Extending the importance of this, reiterating that I was also aware at the time that my own critical examination of the broader, even (meta)institutional, potential of the LP role must not be reduced to how I alone was able to extend my own sense of subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20), it was also clear to me that collaboration with colleagues, even in ways that might be problematic (see for example my reflection on p.162), was central to how I began to first experience transformation in understanding (my) purpose as a LP. Without denying the challenges I personally faced as a LP, including in the examples referenced so far, or indeed in terms of my wider examination of potential limitations within improvement agenda (Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3), and what this might mean for understanding collaborative exploration of practice, when I described in an early reflective journal that collaboration with other LPs was "…*an opportunity to share*," it was for example revealing that I also pondered "[*w]hy was this space used in this way*..." as a LP, especially where I also perceived there to be an emphasis upon "…*tensions, issues… exposure about where they were struggling*…" Where I began to interrogate whether such collaborative spaces might therefore be central to exploring my understanding of the LP role, referencing also methodological positions I take in this research (for example Silverman, 1993: 95), this in turn echoes notions that have also since emerged as significant through my examination of literature (for instance Kruse and Johnson, 2017: 588) and critical conversations. In fact, through reference to this above account of my early experiences of collaboration as a LP, it is evident that I already had an

emergent sense that something about the role was distinct, including in terms of how I, and other LPs, might filter challenges, or indeed, represent particular enactment of LM imperatives (see again Connolly et al, 2019: 504) differently. Certainly, where I was aware that we reflected upon problematic aspects of practice together, there is a potentially crucial foundation for also exploring how my own experiences of the LP role might contribute to particular understanding of how LPs might enable changes in professional practice**.**

2. Explore how Lead Practitioners might enable changes in professional practice

"*But nothing worked. I sat outside and watched it all in amazement*." (Okri, 2003: 154)

Using Okri's above statement to exemplify my own concern with how I might relate a search for greater subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20) to wider challenges within education, I will now further consider my experiences of how it might be possible to change notions of professional practice, on individual, institutional and systemic levels as a LP. Extending my examination of particular spaces, I will seek to account simultaneously for the impact of literature and critical conversations on my understanding of how the LP role might enable changes in professional practice**.**

Designed to improve: Particular challenges within my experiences of being positioned through improvement agenda as a LP

As I have stated, my predominant early experiences as a LP at times represent equivalent, even heightened, tensions when compared with my previous LM roles, and certainly in terms of potential concerns with improvement agenda (see again Hall and McGinity, 2015: 1). As I acknowledged in one of my first reflective journals as a LP, at the end of my first month in the role, echoing a similar statement by Jordan "…*the very fact I am delivering 'functional' guidance feels at odds with my wider interest in the purpose of education*." Considering, for example, my engagement in the MTF process I also describe earlier, irrespective of whether I, as a LP, was involved in evaluating practices collaboratively, or as part of what in a later journal I describe is "…*to enable a future judgement of 'good'*," I am persuaded that I understood, at least initially, that my function as a LP was, to a certain extent, framed as a facilitator of hegemonic structures, regardless of whether, as I state previously, I might have been, broadly speaking, less involved in particular modes of results-derived accountability (Godfrey, 2016: 302) than I had been in other LM roles. For example, as I reflected at the end of my first month as a LP, I expressed unease that:

I also feel like I have less of a 'voice' – is this because of doubt in my own sense of

purpose or 'what is right'? Is this because I feel that the highly prescriptive model of leadership is fixed?

Raising concerns that might of course be attributed to anxiety within a new role as much as to my own wider interest in notions of my own subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20) or indeed, practices (see also James, 2007: 34) with which I felt I was expected to identify (see again Mouffe, 2014: 179), this nevertheless represents the LP role as potentially restrictive, both in response to challenges that are encountered within the role, as well as a vehicle through which to lead changes, or indeed for how I might understand my own identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2). This in turn might undermine any assertion of the potential of LPs to navigate any apparently liminal spaces that have already emerged within this research, including in relation to tensions at the heart of conceptualising LM (for example Grint, 2005: 1472), with particular implications moreover for how I might represent the LP role as an emancipatory construct (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33). Certainly, drawing upon the critical conversations that took place, there is sufficient evidence to argue that my initial experiences of the LP role might in ways be characterised by equivalent barriers to those I have faced in other LM positions, including, as Dominic or Mario in particular argue, subject to the views of stakeholders in more senior leadership roles (see also Dillabough, 2000: 315). For example, capturing a parallel experience of my aforementioned attempt to intervene within marking policy in my previous school, I reflected below upon a similar situation during the first month of my time as a LP:

Most frustrating however is that when it came to the idea of using active research as a tool to develop practice, it was so narrowly framed in discussion as to how to achieve progress.

Enabling changes: My experiences of the legitimacy of interrogating dominant notions of practice as a LP

Indicating an on-going gap between institutional parameters and a personal desire to interrogate practice more critically (Kemmis, 2019: 94) what is nevertheless of particular interest to me in the above section, and particularly the final excerpt from my reflective journal that I quote above, is that I specifically reflect upon my participation as a LP at a

meeting with the senior leader responsible (at the time) for TL policy within the school. Irrespective of unrest I felt about aspects of what surfaced, or even a perceived inability to influence proceedings at this early stage of my time as a LP, it is powerful that I subsequently wrote in a reflective journal that interrogation of practice or research "…*must not be imagined as I interpret this evening's meeting and can be so much more than a functional activity*…" When I also recorded that "*I feel capable of challenging and actually am willing to expose my own views, which I feel quite strongly*…" it is possible to link this to latent hermeneutic evolution of my own previous identifications. Indeed, when I state that "*I challenged this (without giving background) from a position of some authority*," it would be reasonable to assert a particular, emergent, appreciation of my own subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 21) as a LP. Perhaps even more powerfully, in terms of understanding the specific potential of the LP role, referencing again Rancière (1991: 33), I actually identified within the same reflective journal quoted above that this "…*new role is an ideal vehicle (given my formative role within the hierarchy and direct contribution to framing practice)*…" In particular, further establishing a mind-set that I possessed at the start of my time as a LP, I noted that:

> *…although incredibly prescriptively formed, I am unsure what exactly the T+L vision constitutes and almost feel like any 'success' in delivery or performance will stem from being able to engage those 'in charge' with a critical conversation.*

Reiterating that I did recognise tensions between perceptions of expected actions, and perhaps more personal motivations, certainly a desire to interrogate dominant educational norms, it is nevertheless clear that I already positioned the LP role as a legitimate construct through which to challenge perspectives held by senior arbiters of school policy, raising interesting questions for why this might be. Whether or not this was partly indicative of a particular sense of personal subjectivity (for example Biesta, 2013: 64) borne through my own experiences to date, including through the EdD, it cannot be denied that I was at this point also able to assert the part a LP might play in promoting critical dialogue (Little and Horn, 2007: 79) more broadly. Certainly, when compared again to my experience of implementing the marking intervention in my previous school, where I confronted the Head teacher's response with little, if any, institutional effect, I have found that there was a key distinction in the resultant impact of engaging in such interventions as a LP. Obviously taking place in a

different educational context, characterised by a need for change, it is possible to argue that I perceived it was legitimised, perhaps expected, that I would consider, contribute to, and even transform, prevalent educational practices, suggestive in turn of possible differences in how LPs might be framed in relation to wider conceptualisation of LM (see again Connolly et al, 2019: 504), at least in the context under examination. Exemplifying this further, as LPs we participated in weekly TL meetings that are used to discuss, design and disseminate educational policy. Revisiting literature (for example Bolam et al, 2007: 18) and critical conversations, this in turn points directly to the importance of collaborative spaces, in order to explore how LPs might enable changes in professional practice.

Changes summarised: Key implications of my experiences of enabling changes in professional practice

It is of course important to emphasise again that I became a LP in a school where the role was necessarily emergent (see also Department for Education, 2019: 26), albeit characterised by an aspiration to lead an evolution in professional practice. Replicating experiences for other LPs, and contained within the institutional challenges of wide-reaching cultural change, when I therefore encountered uncertain, or even restrictive experiences of the LP role, it is also likely that I was personally well placed to play an integral part in the way the role was itself constituted. Still, without denying the potential significance of my own subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 21) as a teacher-researcher, or the potential wider importance for example of research engagement as LPs (Sheard and Sharples, 2016: 670), it is beyond doubt for me that collaborative spaces navigated as a LP (for example Kruse and Johnson, 2017: 588) might especially embody the broader potential of the LP role to lead changes in professional practice (see also Kemmis, 2019: 94), including on institutional or systemic levels.

Certainly, critical conversation data, combined with key themes in literature (for example Godfrey, 2016), demonstrates that LPs might contribute to a variety of shared spaces, including PLC, where, especially in an institution seeking to change or improve, professional practice could be redesigned, constructed and formulated, even reshaped, regardless of particular challenges I have also considered (see again Boylan, 2016: 66). Indeed, replicating what I found in my examination of critical conversation data, collaborative interrogation of

the practices of colleagues, such as within MTF processes, offered me the privilege of deeper engagement not only in actions taken in the classroom but also (meta)consideration of influences upon why particular modes of practice (see again James, 2007: 34) might prevail, furthermore doing this within spaces free from personal risk.

Accounting for my own specific involvement in this research, I would argue that locating the LP role within change discourses is moreover suggestive of an intersection of mutually influential identifications (Freire, 1970: 73), building here upon my exploration to this point of the potential of being positioned through important discourses such as improvement agenda (for example Ball, 2013: 5). Adding to what I posit elsewhere, this reinforces a basis for advocating that LPs engage in collaborative research activities as a matter of course (see also Brown and Zhang, 2017: 383). This has important implications not only for how I have myself enacted the LP role but as a result, for how it could be represented more widely. Still, whether or not this should characterise all LP activity, where I present my own broader experiences of enabling changes as a LP, I above all evoke the hermeneutic impact of how this could be constituted through collaborative, reflexive (Raffo et al, 2015: 1131), exploration of (meta)institutional agenda and practices. Restating what this might mean for how notions of purpose or emancipation (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) are represented by the LP role, let me now specifically consider my experiences of the contribution LPs can make to how educational practices might be re-conceptualised.

3. Theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised

"*…Holmes alone could rise superior to petty influences.*" (Doyle, 1987: 123)

Acknowledging a concern with how I might understand accepted norms in different ways, undoubtedly influenced by literature such as above, I will now consider the development of my own identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2) through the LP role. Influenced also by critical conversation data, reflections on literature and my own reflections on emergent questions, I will present the LP role in particular and significant ways, specifically as a crucial construct through which it might be possible to theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised.

Critical professionalism: My experiences of how legitimacy might be constituted differently as a LP

I have described how the LP role had been recently introduced within my school because of contemporary structural changes taking place. I also found that the role was less tightly defined (see again Department for Education, 2019: 26) than, for example, my own directly preceding role of Head of department but, as I have already explored at length, despite taking a reflexive approach (Guba and Lincoln, 2008: 279) to what I myself have perceived historically, this does not mean LPs are exempt from broader performative expectations (for instance Courtney and Gunter 2015: 414). Indeed, as I wrote in a reflective journal during my first term in the school as a LP, I experienced moments of anxiety where "*…I was in some way not dealing with the situation well and that I may be adversely judged.*" Assuming this might always be the case to a certain extent in a field as complex and varied as education, it is striking that additional tensions I had not previously felt, or at least articulated, also characterised my early days as a LP. Certainly, when first appointed, reiterating contradictions in my own identifications, I have already established that I acted in ways that I myself see as oppositional to the way I seek to position emancipatory notions of educational practice (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) through this work. By illustration, early on in my time as a LP I felt that I imposed a very hierarchical relationship with the young people I encountered.

However, or perhaps because of how, I dressed this up, whether as necessary in order to function in the classroom, or conceivably as a means to legitimise (Hall and McGinity, 2015: 3) my position as a LP within the school, guided by particular school behaviour policy, I was conscious of, and continue to feel some discomfort in, how easily I adopted particular approaches, particularly where this touches upon my earlier presentation of Giroux's (1981: 5) statement that "*schooling functions as an agent of reproduction*." Acknowledging unease with this, I described within an early reflective journal as a LP that the "…*problem is that I am acting in an increasingly authoritarian manner with them*…" Appreciating the problematic nature of this at the time (see also Oolbekkink-Marchand, 2014: 124), a sense of pervasive tension was further exacerbated at the end of my first term in the school, when I was myself subject to being observed as a LP under performative circumstances. Perhaps, in part, because of my role as a leader of TL within the school, concerned with notions of legitimacy, and indeed aware of my specific responsibilities (Connolly et al, 2019: 504), this meant that I spent a:

> …*great deal of time agonising over my impending observation whilst simultaneously acknowledging to myself that the observation was in essence an arbitrary construct*.

Aside from enhancing the empathy I felt for colleagues who I supported due to negative appraisal of their performance under these circumstances, including through MTF, it is especially telling in this excerpt that I was aware of deep-seated concerns, yet simultaneously denied the objective importance of these observations, identifying again here perhaps with concerns that Dillabough (2000: 315) characterises as constraints on "…*educational professionals' authenticity in practice*." Seemingly a further paradox, it is possible to perceive in this example both the hermeneutic development of my own identification with educational discourses through the EdD process (Gadamer, 2004: 293) at the same time as recognise how I still felt constrained as a LP. However, rather than assume that one set of self-described problems is simply replaced, or intensified, by becoming a LP, it is especially potent that I also proclaim in the same reflective journal that I was "…*a central participant in the construction of 'good' practice, with an insight into essentially vague expectations*…" Perhaps even more powerfully, I finish this reflection with the statement that in light of my role as a LP "…*it would*

have been almost self-defeating to 'grade' me as 'not yet good'." Exhibiting a more dismissive relationship with my own previously held identifications, regardless of any latent personal anxiety, this echoes a statement I have quoted earlier for Dominic (p.99), and indeed captures a particular expression of my own sense of subjectivity at this time (for example Biesta, 2013: 64). Certainly, it is apparent that I was aware of a difference in how the LP role was legitimately positioned in relation to established notions of accountability, or indeed how I might previously have perceived my own positions as an educator as a passive participant in hegemonic (Gramsci, 1999: 770) construction of practice.

Critical professionalism: My experiences of how collaboration might be constituted differently as a LP

As I have already considered at length, where I engaged with, but was not accountable for, the development of others as a LP, what is clear is that the LP role might present legitimised spaces for collaborative exploration, and even critical interrogation of notions of practice (Kemmis, 2019: 94). Indeed, echoed in literature as well as in the critical conversations I conducted, and have reflected on earlier, I became aware that particular understanding of collaborative spaces, not least PLC (see again Kruse and Johnson, 2017: 588), might represent opportunities to impact upon policy-derived framing of educational understanding, especially where I have already identified that my own job description (Appendix A) directly positions LPs to promote "…*a positive staff culture, good practice and continuing professional development*…" By way of illustration, where I stated in an early reflective journal that I was concerned that PLC-related activities were "…*so narrowly framed in discussion as to achieve progress,"* this is contrasted with a later reflection that *"...as a Lead Practitioner we are… developing practice via CPD / direct support / coaching*…"

Whether or not it is possible now to separate the impact of collaboration with other LPs, including through this research, or for that matter of my own identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2), upon how shared spaces have been increasingly shaped, I am persuaded that both materially and conceptually, there has been iterative development of CPD practices on an institutional level, where PLC are now used to interrogate particular conceptualisations of practice. Certainly, as I have examined, I and other LPs embraced the potential to co-create distinct

uses of spaces (see also Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 41), such as PLC, where it might be possible to critically discuss what happens in the classroom, and why colleagues might choose to carry out specific actions. As I touch upon in my examination of literature (Department for Education, 2016b; Department for Education, 2020a: 57), I did initially find this part of the LP role to be framed as a relatively didactic model of CPD (see also Godfrey, 2016: 312). It is however significant that I have subsequently been able to chart a movement away from approaches to PLC that, for Huijboom et al (2020: 751), "…*are still traditional by nature, directed at the individual teacher*…" towards what Fuller (2012: 673) describes as a "…*shift in emphasis away from exercising power <u>over</u> to acting <u>with</u> to empower*..." In fact, where the LP role might be aligned with Connolly et al's (2019: 504) characterisation of educational leadership as "…*the act of influencing others in educational settings to achieve goals…*" it is revealing that PLC might in turn be framed through broader principles of building CP (for example Appleby and Pilkington, 2014).

Correspondingly, accounting again for experiences of processes such as MTF, it is illuminating that relatively collaborative**,** critical engagement as a LP with educational parameters might even take place within formal spaces that seemingly should fundamentally be characterised by restrictive adherence to dominant principles (Sachs, 2011: 158). For example, as I reflect "*not yet good'…might be one way to engage constructively.*" Moreover, accounting in turn for broader representation of legitimacy as LPs (McMaster, 2014: 433), resonant of what also emerges through critical conversations, I have consistently experienced collaboration in less formalised spaces, captured in one early reflection where I consider an "*Informal chat with [a] colleague during a morning T+L meeting*". Reiterating the importance of Bingham and Biesta's (2010: 33) notion of "…*a <u>supplement</u> to the existing order*" for my work, I therefore believe my own experiences of collaboration as a LP are suggestive of critical modes of engagement, with significant implications in turn for how educational practices might be re-conceptualised, not least in terms of understanding how the LP role might navigate ideas such as "…*police*…" and "….*politics*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 34).

Critical professionalism: My experiences of subjectivity as a LP

In this section I will critically evaluate the impact of how I found myself increasingly empowered to propose, evaluate and develop approaches to educational practices, where collective engagement might legitimise interrogatory activity which, for Appleby and Pilkington (2014: 28), could in turn "….*reframe tools for agency, and…restructure processes that build capacity and capability*." Indeed, after approximately six months as a LP, when I was actually considering whether I should leave my current context for a greater sense of personal stability due to enhanced upheaval within my school, including the threat of widespread redundancies, I wrote that my own critical re-conceptualisation of educational practices was validated to the extent that "…*a number of senior figures convened and have actually offered me a more senior role in the school*…" Given I was clearly constituted as a valued member of the LP team, where I have explicitly stated in a reflective journal that "*I feel capable of challenging and actually am willing to expose my own views*," my own success here therefore presents an interesting case for advocating LP subjectivity on the basis of critical engagement (Freire, 1970: 73) with dominant educational practices, whether or not this involves concrete changes to institutional approaches. Of course, it is naïve to assume that this would, or could be the case for all LPs, even within my own context, not least in light of general tensions I have already considered (for example Dillabough, 2000: 315), or for that matter, specific challenges faced by individual LPs. However, without suppressing these and other relevant findings, it is noteworthy that the more senior role I was later offered actually involved leading the LP team. This would seemingly emphasise further that critical re-conceptualisation of educational practices plays an important part in understanding how the LP role has been, is, and might be represented, perhaps even beyond the specific institution where I have experienced being a LP. In fact, where it might be argued that this is an integral element of my own sense of subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20) as a LP, it is plausible that the very act of collaborative theorising on how educational practices might be re-conceptualised could be central to the wider significance of the role.

Concluding remarks

"*All in all you're just Another Brick in the Wall*" (Pink Floyd, The Wall, 1979)

Does the pessimism I articulated through my early reflective journals, and captured quite acerbically in Pink Floyd's above lyric, fundamentally capture how I would now represent understanding of the potential of being a LP? In this chapter, I have sought to deconstruct what I perceive to be the significance of my own experiences of the LP role, what the key constituents of this might be, and also hint at what some of the important questions that remain are. Accounting for the hermeneutic development of my own identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2) through education, where I contribute subjective interpretations (Biesta, 2013: 21) of the LP role, I also recognise the crucial contribution (Raffo et al, 2015: 1311) that critical conversations, or examination of the possibilities and gaps that are suggested through literature, make to how I might represent what, for me, is a vital model of LM within particular hegemonic constructions (Mouffe 2014: 179) of educational practice. As I discuss within my methodology, my data is predicated upon social constructivist (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 27) notions of knowledge creation. This attests in turn to an inherent ambition for collaborative construction of particular spaces as a LP (see also Kruse and Johnson, 2017: 588), irrespective of what might have emerged. In this way, the core questions at the heart of this research can be seen as the iterative expression of an interwoven journey through education, where my own histories have led me to not only participate in the EdD process but also make a crucial contribution to how I might now identify with the purpose of the LP role myself.

Simultaneously aware that what I represent here is necessarily dependent upon particular experiences within a given context, it remains to be seen how my own experiences of the LP role also offer broader meaning for (meta)institutional, even systemic changes to professional practice (Kemmis, 2019: 94). Still, where my examination of literature (for example Bolam et al, 2007: 18), critical conversations, and my own practice as a LP, would seemingly identify the potential of locating the LP role to collaboratively interrogate practice, this would at least suggest value on institutional levels. Indeed, it is plausible that this might also present a response to what Dimmock (1999: 442) believes are *"…tensions between competing elements*

of leadership, management..." where LPs might for example influence *"…others in educational settings to achieve goals…*" through engaging more critically with how *"…responsibility for the proper functioning of a system…*" (Connolly et al, 2019: 504) could be framed. Indeed, where my own successful performance of the LP role has subsequently resulted in me being promoted to the senior leadership team of my school with direct responsibility for leadership of the team of LPs itself, I have found that even where experiences of the role are not unproblematic (see also Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 395), this remains suggestive of the emancipatory potential (Freire, 1970: 73) of positioning the LP role to re-conceptualise educational practices, including as a particular expression of DL (Boylan, 2016: 66) or improvement agenda (for example Department for Education, 2019: 26). In fact, where my own experiences contribute to understanding how LPs might conceptualise a sense of educational purpose within their specific professional challenges; …enable changes in professional practice; or how educational practices might be re-conceptualised, it is significant that I above all identify the LP role as a "…*<u>supplement</u> to the existing order*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33).

Chapter 6: To be concluded…

"We are all prisoners here, of our own device."

The Eagles, Hotel California (1976)

Response to research aims

1. **Understand how Lead Practitioners conceptualise a sense of educational purpose within their specific professional challenges;**
2. **Explore how Lead Practitioners might enable changes in professional practice;**
3. **Theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised**

When I reference the above lyric by The Eagles (1976), relating this also to my initial interpretation of La Haine (1995), not only do I reiterate a consistent concern with the impact of particular identifications (Lacan, 2012: 2), specifically in relation to hegemonic (Gramsci, 1999: 448) presentations of educational purpose or practice (Kemmis, 2019: 94) but perhaps most significantly, a critical shift in my understanding of individual subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20) through this research. Where the inter-connected examination of all three aims in my work is moreover predicated upon exploring the emancipatory (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) potential of the LP role, I will therefore now consider how what has emerged in relation to these aims is suggestive of the contribution the LP role might make to notions of (LM) educational practice more broadly.

1. Understand how Lead Practitioners conceptualise a sense of educational purpose within their specific professional challenges

By alluding to the possibility of some external, deeper truth being discovered in the above aim, it was possible that I was doomed to betray the core intent of my research, where attempts to articulate understanding of a reality ever beyond my own grasp might, in fact, contradict deeper examination of a sense of educational purpose as a LP. Indeed, my professional history to date is testimony to an almost futile, cyclical, search for answers to how I interpret my own contexts, and identifications within these. Returning to my first reflective journal:

> *a cursory glance back over my own writing here perhaps even betrays a tendency to think in institutional language, reflective of a deeper seated policy-driven 'professionalism' in my own actions...*

Still, charting how notions of educational purpose have been, are, and might be conceptualised, I actually feel strongly that my work offers an important basis for understanding how these could be represented, with implications in turn for how LPs might experience subjectivity in particular ways (for example Biesta, 2013: 20). Developing this, throughout this thesis, I have recognised a growing concern with how notions of emancipation (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33) might be embodied within education, and not only through education. In this regard, drawing upon interplay between my wider reading, critical conversations and my own experiences, I am persuaded that the LP role constitutes a model of (LM) practice that allows for the construction of more personal responses to dominant values in education (see also Kruse and Johnson, 2017: 588). Where LPs might legitimately be positioned (for example Boylan, 2016: 66; Department of Education, 2019: 26) to interrogate alternative conceptual perspectives collaboratively (for instance Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 29), it is feasible that they can therefore construct more critical understanding of educational purpose (see also Freire, 1970: 73), and perhaps even contribute to changes in professional practice more generally.

2. Explore how Lead Practitioners might enable changes in professional practice

Reflecting upon experiences of the LP role that surface through this research, combined with wider engagement in the EdD process, it is possible that my work might offer a framework for change that has broader, (meta)institutional impact, drawing here also upon particular understanding of subjectivity (Biesta, 2013: 20). Furthermore, through consideration of how individual notions of educational purpose might be conceptualised as a LP, it is not only possible to chart an evolution in my own understanding of the role but, significantly, the specific importance of legitimised critical spaces (see also Godfrey, 2016: 312). Indeed, supported by synthesis of wider literature, critical conversations, and autoethnographic reflections founded upon my own experiences, I believe it is possible to suggest that collaborative spaces, not least PLC (for example Stoll, 2010: 153), are vital for the potential of the LP role more generally. Certainly, accounting directly for my above aim, I propose that what surfaces as especially meaningful through this research is that LPs position, and moreover are positioned by, collaborative spaces to conceptualise notions of educational purpose as well as, simultaneously, to affect critical changes in professional practice, indeed to influence how collaborative spaces are themselves structured (see also Andrews and Lewis, 2007: 136). If this in turn embodies what Fuller (2012: 673) describes as a "…*shift in emphasis away from exercising power <u>over</u> to acting <u>with</u> to empower*..." this moreover has implications for how the LP role might be framed differently, including in relation to conceptualisations of LM (see also Connolly et al, 2019: 504), and not least where these might be presented as more problematic (for example Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 400).

3. Theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised

Drawing on the importance of collaborative engagement through the LP role, where epistemic processes (Little and Horn, 2007: 79), such as critical conversations, might concurrently reveal and construct notions of the LP role, this frames expertise (see also Brown and Zhang, 2017: 383) in particular ways, not least in terms of notions of CP (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 33). By also acknowledging particular gaps in literature (for instance Cramp and Khan, 2019: 351), and indeed, challenges within current presentations of LM (for example Hall and McGinity, 2015: 1; Dimmock, 1999: 442), I moreover position the LP role to contribute to how educational practices, including presentations of LM itself, might be re-conceptualised on individual (Biesta, 2013: 21) and (meta)institutional levels (Godfrey, 2016: 309). Indeed, further framed by contemporary uncertainty of both designation and enactment (Department for Education, 2019: 26), I propose that the LP role can embody emancipatory re-conceptualisation of educational (LM) practices as a "…*supplement* *to the existing order*…" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33), where the relationship between notions such as "…*police…*" and "…*politics*" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 34) might even be re-imagined. Assuming this to be the case, it becomes even more important that additional questions are asked of the contributions my research makes, including, but not limited to, how the LP role might also present a crucial model for contexts where there is less motivation to engender a process of change (see also Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 414), or significantly, where the role is not yet present.

Contributions to knowledge and practice

> *I was offering my creations directly to the real world, and therefore it seemed possible to me that they could affect this real world in a real way, that they could eventually become a part of the real itself.* (Auster, 1987: 252)

Personal impact

Reflecting a need for my work to contribute to knowledge and practice, Auster's (1987: 252) above writing offers a key foundation for the impact of this thesis. Primarily, without revisiting in detail the same concerns that prompted me to undertake research into the LP role in the first place (for example Hall and McGinity, 2015: 1; Sachs, 2011: 158), I am convinced that this thesis has surfaced a different sense of my own subjectivity (for example Biesta, 2013: 21). In particular, I feel that my actions are, and have been, increasingly characterised by the development of CP (for instance Thompson, 2017: 2), in part through collaborative engagement (Godfrey, 2016: 309) as a LP, and without doubt influenced by direct participation in the EdD. Extending this, drawing also upon Freire (1998a: 35), where I now lead the LP team in my own school, this research has potentially critical implications for my continued contribution to representations of the LP role (see also McMaster, 2014: 435), at least within my own institution. In fact, even where there are consequences (Hall, 2013: 467) of locating this research within my own context, the broader enquiries that characterise my three research aims present more universal interest, whether to frame broader advocacy for the LP role itself or, more generally, to ground re-conceptualisation of (LM) practices and spaces that already exist (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 41), with consequences for how I myself now, and might continue to, embody emancipatory notions of educational practice (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33).

Wider impact

Where I seek to capture what has emerged as substantively new through my research, beyond how I myself have come to experience the LP role and my own subjectivity, a number of important themes have surfaced in this work. This includes taking a nuanced position to what

already exists in literature and practice. Specifically, I contend that there are four over-arching, inter-related, contributions that my research makes to knowledge and practice:

i) Presenting the LP role as a legitimised counterpoint to current gaps in (LM) literature;

ii) Identifying a framework for critical modes of collaboration;

iii) Establishing the potential for subjective constructions of practice as a LP;

iv) Proposing the LP role as an emancipatory model of LM.

i) Presenting the LP role as a legitimised counterpoint to current gaps in (LM) literature and practice

First and foremost, my research into the LP role examines a construct that currently lacks clear representation in literature (see again Department for Education, 2019: 26). In fact, it might be argued that Connolly et al's (2019: 515) problematising of LM in terms of "…*a difference that is not recognised in the literature*" describes a particular opportunity for this thesis to present meaningful findings. Of course, this is not to deny that some fundamental themes do relate to what is already suggested through (LM) literature and established practice. For example, I recognise the specific relevance of DL structures (Emira, 2010: 593) and improvement agenda (Department for Education, 2020a: 57), referencing above all the impact of these on notions of legitimacy (Hall, 2013: 471); for understanding the potential of the LP role. Still, stating this does not contradict the unique contribution my work also makes to wider presentation of LP as a significant model of educational (LM) practice. Instead, it is powerful that an explicit link between the LP role, and important educational discourses such as those above, has surfaced through my research. Furthermore, accepting this is meaningful in and of itself, it is not only the fact that I investigate a relatively emergent, and not widely researched, position that is especially noteworthy *per se*. Rather, where my thesis synthesises existing (LM) literature, including gaps within this (for example Boylan, 2016: 57), participant experiences, and reflections on my own practice as a LP, this also establishes the LP role as a distinct model of LM, characterised not least by critical modes of collaboration.

ii) Identifying a framework for critical modes of collaboration

Although it might be argued that collaboration is on some level intrinsic to all forms of improvement (for instance Department for Education, 2016b), it is certainly clear that there is no inherent form that this will inevitably take (see also Stoll and Seashore Louis, 2007: 2). Indeed, ranging from competing presentations (Godfrey, 2016: 312) to specifically problematic constructions of collaboration (for example Sachs, 2011: 157), where I now expand upon the above suggested contribution, I might reference a variety of spaces (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 63). That said, it is significant that my research consistently reveals the potential of legitimised (Boylan, 2016: 66) active engagement of LPs in bridging alternative perspectives (for example Sheard and Sharples, 2016: 670), and not necessarily as a means to build compliance within dominant discourses, but rather with the potential to co-construct CP (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014: 29). In fact, as opposed to a rejection or acceptance of dominant presentations of practice (see also Gramsci, 1999: 770), this research has shown that collaborative engagement founded upon, and through, the construction of CP is integral to the way LPs can contribute to the development of collective understandings (for example Bolam et al, 2007: 18). In this way, where my research also reveals the particular potential of PLC to enable critical modes of collaboration (see again Godfrey, 2016: 312), it is above all clear that this might be a crucial framework through which LPs support, or might be enabled to support, individuals in the navigation of seemingly competing demands (for instance Fuller, 2012: 673), with further implications for the development of frameworks for critical modes of educational collaboration more broadly.

iii) Establishing the potential for subjective constructions of practice as a LP

Where I have established that the LP role can be a central constituent of improvement processes (for example Department for Education, 2016b), or I locate the LP role within inherited DL spaces (Hall, 2013: 471), and certainly through critical collaboration (see also Kruse and Johnson, 2017: 588) my consideration of such themes also points to a crucial finding. Namely, when I seek to account for challenges (for instance Dillabough, 2000: 321) within hegemonic framing of education (Mouffe, 2014: 179), the potential for subjective

constructions of practice as a LP (see also Biesta, 2013: 20) has also emerged as significant through this thesis. Certainly, drawing again upon the personal impact of this research, and without denying the latent influence of dominant values (Courtney and Gunter, 2015: 400), my research demonstrates particular opportunities for LPs to interpret and construct practice (and spaces) in distinct ways to what is already established (see also Schroyer, 1973: 35). Differing here moreover from other constructions of LM (for instance Jenkins and Andenoro, 2016: 57), this could be especially meaningful for institutions (for example Fuller, 2012: 686) as well as individuals (Freire, 1970: 73), especially if LPs are specifically legitimised to do this (Godfrey, 2016: 306).

iv) Proposing the LP role as an emancipatory model of LM

Where this work reveals how notions of educational purpose and practice might be represented in new and meaningful ways through the LP role, this has corollary impact for how LM might be constituted more widely, regardless of role or particular characterisation (Connolly et al, 2019: 504). Indeed, where my research suggests that LPs might navigate, even construct, interfaces between, and within, particular notions of leadership and management (see also Laclau, 2007: 2), there are feasibly implications for how educational (LM) policy itself could be shaped, including on a macro level beyond my own context. In this regard, my research demonstrates that the LP role is not simply the replacement for a previous DL position such as AST (Boylan, 2016: 63), but instead is representative of a more fundamental change in how educational (LM) practices might be re-conceptualised. Specifically, where I suggest that the LP role makes a particular, subjective (Biesta, 2013: 20) contribution to "*[n]ew ways of working…*" (Andrews and Lewis, 2007: 136), it embodies above all "a "…*supplement to the existing order*…" (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 33).

Key spaces for impact

There are a number of current, and emerging spaces I use, or will use, to share the above contributions to knowledge with other practitioners, beyond my own practice and leadership of the LP team in my current school. For example, my increasing responsibility for CPD within

the wider MAT, characterised by my place within the weekly MAT leadership forum, presents an existing space to share what has emerged through my thesis. More specifically, I now lead the LP network within the (newly designated) teaching school hub my school is part of. This includes responsibility for the development of hub-wide research activities, and in particular, building collaborative frameworks, led by LPs, where core CPD activities are structured primarily through PLC. In this regard, where I furthermore now have additional responsibility within the school improvement strand of the teaching school hub, I have already begun to design and deliver hub-wide training on the development of critical collaboration, building on what has emerged through my research. Linked to this I am currently contributing to a forum on new MAT-wide appraisal structures that will be in place from September 2021, and will be delivering training in support of this from June 2021. This will involve modelling how to construct research in order to build personal subjectivity. Finally, I have initiated an open network, through which hub-wide colleagues will collectively create a monthly MAT TL research bulletin.

Implications of this research: Next steps?

“”*You had better take this, Gandalph. I daresay you can find a use for it.*”” (Tolkien, 1937: 269)

With the hope that my work can have continued and iterative impact, and paraphrasing Tolkien, 1937: 269), “*I daresay*…” my thesis will inform next steps, including my own, in a variety of ways. Where I seek to advocate the LP role as significant for current, and future, construction of educational (LM) practices, I must nevertheless recognise that there are inevitably limitations to what I have been able to present, some of which I have already considered, not least in my methodological section (Chapter 3). Addressing specific concerns, it could for example be interesting to revisit participants, ethical questions notwithstanding, to chart any changes in their identifications with the LP role. Asserting the potential to expand on themes that have emerged here, it might also be constructive to produce an in-depth comparison for different contexts, or even different roles, than I have specifically examined through my research. Indeed, although involving colleagues within particular contexts has been revelatory on many levels, I cannot deny that carrying my research out within a single MAT is a potential limitation, irrespective of how I locate notions of representativeness, with latent repercussions for the range of identifications that might have emerged.

However, in line with the contributions that I suggest my research might make, I actually see this potential challenge as a chance for further expansion upon, even enhancement of my work. Above all, I do not see the fact I have conducted my research within a single MAT as a barrier to the findings I express. Instead, reflecting on my aims, I am prompted to wonder not simply how other contexts and experiences might have revealed alternative perspectives on the LP role, but how wider investigation might engender collaborative understanding on a larger scale. For me, and reiterating the methodological positions I take in my research, this would-be limitation is therefore not actually a barrier to checking or triangulating proposed findings but instead, as I allude to throughout my thesis, an additional opportunity to engage in constitutive modes of educational practice more generally, highlighting the potential contribution to understanding that exploration of other contexts might offer.

Final representations of this thesis

> *'A lot of things,' he continued, 'have happened on this expedition – and before it started – which seemed very appropriate at the time.'* (Bowman, 1956: 165)

Just as Bowman describes of an expedition up a fictional mountain, it is clear that my thesis can be characterised by a number of different developments, which if at times inevitably distinct from initial expectations, at all times represent identifications that were held at particular points in the research journey. Returning to the genesis of this thesis, Saïd, the final key protagonist from La Haine (1995), has so far not asserted a significant presence in my work, beyond membership of the trio of friends I introduced at the beginning. In their own way, they all navigate the challenges and problematic experiences of their existence, to varying degrees of success. Certainly, as I alluded to when I first began to construct this work, Vinz and Hubert endure endings that are equally troubling, although they both achieve these through distinct assertions of emancipation. Where Vinz seeks to actively reject hegemonic constraints, Hubert seeks to navigate those same spaces for his own benefit. Instinctively drawn to Hubert, I cannot deny that even his approach results in negative consequences and, if I am to identify parallels with my own consideration of the LP role, this does not suggest a positive outcome for my own research endeavours. I do not believe, however, that this is where this research story ends. Instead, rather than abandon at this point the analogy I first sought to make, accounting for Saïd now, I am able to present a different conclusion for my exploration into the LP role.

Visible throughout the film, Saïd is a constituent member of the group yet simultaneously, and more than anyone, crosses (meta)physical boundaries. When faced with authority, it is he who engages in dialogue first. When encountering alternative, and competing, groups, it is he who seeks to engender interaction. Regardless of context, situation or individuals, Saïd bears witness to what happens, seeking at all times to manipulate (or re-conceptualise!) circumstances for collective ends. Less obviously egocentric than his friends, he lives above all through social imperatives. To be clear, it is not certain how the film ends for him. It is without doubt though that the difficulties he encounters are exacerbated by the impact of his

friends' demise. Still, in the dénouement, he is more present than ever and, as I interpret it, he concurrently represents both the losses and possibilities of how the viewer might identify with the final acts. Predicated upon social commentary, amongst other things, La Haine (1995), and specifically Saïd, therefore provides an illuminating metaphor for how I communicate my own understanding of this work, where I hope you, as the viewer, might perceive not only the challenges inherent within the LP role but also the potential, on individual, institutional, and systemic bases. Channelling Saïd, I trust my work effectively bears witness not only to key findings, but also charts the hermeneutic development of my own subjectivity through this research, contributing to what, for me, is presentation of the LP role as a significant, collaborative, emancipatory, model of educational (LM) practice.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Job description

JOB DESCRIPTION

Post: **Lead Practitioner - Modern Foreign Languages**

Salary: Leadership L7-L11

Terms and Conditions

In accordance with the current School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document

Professional Duties

In addition to carrying out the professional duties of a teacher other than a Headteacher, including those duties particularly assigned to him/her by the Headteacher, the Lead Practitioner will:

1. Core Purpose
   - Develop teaching and learning within Modern Foreign Languages.
   - Support, guide and motivate teachers of the subject and other adults e.g. teaching assistants, administrative and technical staff promoting a positive staff culture, good practice and continuing professional development.
   - Develop opportunities to share ideas and strategies that impact on classroom learning.
   - Take a lead role in planning collaboratively with the other specialist subjects.
   - Liaise with partner schools to provide support for staff and curriculum opportunities for pupils.
   - Prepare and deliver Inset which could include organising conferences on teaching and learning.

2. Strategic Direction
   - Take a leading role in the development of policy and practice to support the continued improvement of effective teaching and learning in the Modern Foreign Languages department and across the school.
   - Analyse and interpret relevant data, research and other documentation to inform future practice, expectations and teaching methods.
   - Contribute to monitoring the progress made in implementing subject plans and achieving targets, evaluate the effect on teaching and learning, and use this analysis to guide further improvement.
   - Contribute to students' spiritual, moral and cultural development e.g. citizenship, trips and visiting speakers.

3. Teaching and Learning
   - Use Teaching and Learning and Inset provision to provide guidance and support on the choice of appropriate teaching and learning methods to meet the needs of the College.
   - Develop enrichment activities to enhance teaching and learning, student motivation and an awareness of the use of Modern Foreign Languages in the real world.

- Prepare resources for staff that promote, for example, active learning differentiation, peer and self assessment.

4. Leading and Managing Staff
   - Support the team in achieving constructive working relationships with students.
   - Carry out performance management reviews and classroom observations in line with school policy and support the further professional development of all staff, including Newly Qualified Teachers and Initial Teacher Training Students.

To whom responsible: Senior Leader

This job description may be amended at any time after discussion with you, and will be reviewed at regular intervals.

Signed …… Date ……..

(Post holder)

Signed …… Date ……..

(Head Teacher)

Appendix B: Proposal

How might engagement in practitioner research enable the (ad)**vocation** of emancipation. An exploration of how teacher-researchers can shape educational practice.

Context

This study is a professional doctorate, specifically seeking to explore the role of teacher-researcher in relation to emancipatory practices. This work will examine a range of views on educational purpose for key participants in order to respond to uncertainty at the heart of English education, at best described by Ball (2013: 10) as "…messy, patchy and diverse…"at worst as "the regime of performativity, which displaces humanity…" (Ball, 2013: 27). Accepting also that the Education system is a key constituent of socialisation processes (Biesta, 2015), it follows that there is a critical imperative to find a different approach to understanding the purpose of education. This study will therefore navigate personal, professional, political and social dimensions of understanding and critically evaluate responses in relation to wider discourses on the form, function and possibilities of education.

Aims

1. Understand how teachers conceptualise a sense of educational purpose in the current climate.
2. Explore how the teacher-researcher role might enable changes in professional practice.
3. Theorise how emancipatory practices might be re-conceptualised

Theoretical framework

Educational development throughout the previous century to today can be understood in three fundamental ways: traditional, progressive and critical education. Accepting Giroux's (2012: xi) belief that education needs to be "...a viable, critical, **formative** (my emphasis) culture..." I am drawn towards Rancière's 'new logic of emancipation' as a way to address the contemporary challenges discussed at length by Ball (2013). Indeed, by understanding emancipation not as an ***end*** state, but rather as Bingham and Biesta (2010: 33) assert "…a way of being that had no place and no part in the existing order of things," it is possible to imagine involvement in "…a process of subjectification" (Bingham and Biesta 2010: 35) as a teacher-researcher, exploring deeper ethical questions at the same time as engendering a "…democratic fellowship," (Ball 2013: 5) to inform a reiteration of the educational landscape.

Methodology

Given the emergent nature of this study, methodological thinking will necessarily develop and change and is therefore indicative of current thinking. However, it will be essential for this research to produce an in-depth, sustained consideration of educational practice for a range of stakeholders including NQTs, experienced teachers, and of course, myself as a teacher-researcher. Accepting certain professional and ethical dilemmas are central to any attempt to intervene in this way, a further key consideration will consequently be how my own

evolving position as a teacher-researcher can ***positively*** shape wider educational constructs. In particular, by drawing upon a Rancerian sense of subjectification as "…a *supplement* to the existing order," (Bingham and Biesta 2010: 33), it is hoped this research might cultivate a space to evaluate and even disturb modes of education that trouble participants, where "…it 'stages' the contradiction between… two unconnected, heterogeneous worlds…" (Bingham and Biesta 2010: 48). By also critically engaging with tensions inherent in the dualistic (if not pluralistic) nature of being a teacher-researcher, it will be possible to explore key notions such as truth, power and subjectivity that would otherwise threaten to produce an educational version of Orwell's 'Animal Farm', where the current hegemony, for example as represented partly through Lacanian interpretations of policy, is replaced by an authority of someone else's, perhaps the teacher-researcher's, making. Such an outcome could contradict the potential to overcome restrictive parameters *per se*, limiting the impact of Rancière's 'new logic of emancipation'.

Research design

As I describe in more detail within the application for ethical approval, the research will adopt a phased approach aiming to deconstruct the interplay between the 'values' at the core of participants' actions and how this impacts upon the way educational realities are perceived.

Part 1

This will begin with a series of conversations with participating colleagues around the nature and purpose of education. The initial research will involve purposive sampling, recruiting through gatekeepers, primarily the Head teacher where necessary, with the aim of carrying out 6 semi-structured interviews to facilitate a deeper contextual understanding of educational priorities, including engaging interested participants in the collaborative establishment of "...political identities...". Acknowledging wider ethical considerations within this aim, I will at the same time keep a journal to record daily interactions as well as critically evaluate my own response to any interview findings. Given the emergent nature of the research, I also intend to borrow from aspects of Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) in order to thematically analyse the data produced. Constructing theory in this way will enable the identification of key concepts, as well as gaps "...between ways of being and ways of doing, seeing and speaking..." (Bingham and Biesta, 2010: 48), building insights to help guide additional phases of research into the (**ad**)vocation of emancipation within education.

Part 2

Building on data from part 1, including ongoing personal reflections, this phase will elaborate upon initial findings and enhance the ability to pose questions that enable democratic practice through "...the staging of dissensus..." (Bingham and Biesta 2010: 48) It is anticipated this will incorporate further interviews with other stakeholders, adopting a snowballing strategy, as well as workshops or discussion forums.

Ethics

As I have acknowledged, the nature of my proposed study raises broader ethical dilemmas, which themselves must inform the practical steps to be taken throughout the research. I include additional detail of this in the application for ethical approval, with the proviso that this research is necessarily

also embryonic in character. For this reason, I will also be in continual dialogue with my supervisors for any ethical issues or matters that arise in order that my ethical engagement with both my participants and my research will be under constant review. We will bring any unresolved or serious ethical matters to the ethics committee at MMU. In particular, by aiming to enable the subjectivity of participants, I shall need to navigate the possible imposition of my own evolving understanding of the issues presented, exploring and ultimately responding to questions around the nature of voice, representation, power and emancipation.

Outcomes

I aim to share any findings in the form of my doctoral work and subsequent academic articles in order to contribute to an expansion of the conceptual field, specifically a re-imagining of the enactment of policy as a teacher-researcher. In particular, it may be possible to re-conceptualise emancipatory practices by other teacher-researchers, in order to promote an embodied piece of research that influences educational purpose.

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Appendix C: Participant information sheet

Positioning ***you*** within Ed***u***cation: A critical exploration of the Lead Practitioner role

I would like to invite you to take part in the above research study. Before you decide to participate you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully, Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

Purpose of the study

I am undertaking a doctorate of education, which involves two phases. Phase A lasted two years from 2014-2016 and was primarily a taught course with 5 written assignments. I am now in Phase B, which is expected to last three years until 2019. This stage involves carrying out my own research project to be presented in the form of a thesis. The investigation will explore broader contextual influences upon notions of education and have three central aims:

1. Understand how Lead Practitioners conceptualise a sense of educational purpose in the current climate.
2. Explore how the teacher-researcher role might enable changes in professional practice.
3. Theorise how educational practices might be re-conceptualised.

Responding to uncertainty at the heart of English education, this work will examine a range of views on educational purpose for key participants, navigating personal, professional, political and social dimensions of understanding and critically evaluate responses in relation to wider discourses on the form and function of education.

Your participation

Despite the range of potential participants within education, I am most interested here in a critical exploration of the Lead Practitioner role. I therefore am interested in the perspectives you might offer upon an understanding of the form(s) and function(s) of education in its current articulation.

It is of course up to you to decide whether you wish to participate. I will therefore describe the study here and then ask you to sign a consent form to show, if you so choose, that you agreed to take part.

Your involvement in the research will encompass the below:

- One interview lasting approx. 60 minutes.
- Interviews will be recorded with an audio-recorder.
- Interviews will be 'conversational' in form and will involve different questions for all interviewees but will encompass equivalent themes, namely how you understand educational purpose, the nature of the Lead Practitioner role, key opportunities, and what the key challenges faced are.
- Data will be co-produced during the interview and will also be analysed subsequent to the interview event.
- The data produced will **inform** further work throughout the production of my thesis. Anonymised quotes may be used for the purpose of research talks, conference presentations, journal articles and my own thesis.

- If there is any further need for you to participate directly, additional permissions will be gained as necessary.

Data Collection and confidentiality

All information (name, school, role) which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential, and any such information about you which leaves the university will be removed so that you cannot be recognised. My name will appear on the thesis and therefore will be in the public sphere.

- Individual participant research data will be anonymous and given a pseudonym, known only to the researcher
- Electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer known only by researcher
- Only authorised persons such as the researcher, supervisors, and for monitoring the quality, regulatory authorities and the thesis examiners will have access to identifiable data.
- Interview recordings will be destroyed once transcription has been completed.
- Data will be retained and disposed of securely for the recommended minimum of 3 years.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, including during the interview itself, without giving a reason. Any quotes or parts of transcripts used will be anonymised in the thesis. Also, any audio recording of interviews that can still be identified as yours will be destroyed if you wish.

Potential benefits and risks

There are no anticipated personal benefits to you beyond your contribution to the potential expansion to a re-imagining of the forms and functions of educational practice. Likewise, there are no expected risks beyond the bounds of participation in research that involves your personal views upon the issues raised. Your name will not be directly implicated in any research outcomes or referenced in the thesis.

Outcomes

I aim to share any findings in the form of my doctoral work and subsequent academic articles in order to contribute to an expansion of the conceptual field, specifically a re-imagining of the enactment of policy as a Lead Practitioner. You will not be identified in any report/publication. Anonymised quotes will potentially be used in research talks, conference presentations, journal articles and the doctoral thesis itself.

Contact details

In the first instance, contact myself as the researcher in this project. I can be contacted via my university email address (andrew.m.forbes@mmu.stu.ac.uk).

Dr Catherine Pearce, Director of Studies (C.Pearce@mmu.ac.uk

Dr Sarah McNicol, Supervisor (S.McNicol@mmu.ac.uk)

If there is an issue that you wish to discuss with someone other than me or my supervisory team, you can contact
Ricardo Nemirovsky the Faculty Chair of Ethics (R.Nemirovsky@mmu.ac.uk)
Central Ethics team (ethics@mmu.ac.uk

Appendix D: Consent form

Date

Name Andrew Forbes
Course EdD
Department Education
Building Birley
Manchester Metropolitan University
Tel: 01257464279

Manchester Metropolitan University

Title of Project:

Positioning ***you*** within Ed***u***cation: A critical exploration of the Lead Practitioner role

Name of Researcher: Andrew Michael Forbes

Participant Identification Code for this project:

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated …. for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the interview procedure.	☐
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason to the named researcher.	☐
I understand that my responses will be sound recorded and used for analysis for this research project.	☐
I understand that my responses will remain anonymous.	☐
I agree to take part in the above research project.	☐

I understand that at my request a transcript of my interview can be made available to me. ☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Once this has been signed, you will receive a copy of your signed and dated consent form and information sheet by post.