As It Happens: The Lived Journey of Early Career Teachers in Their First Year of Teaching

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Abstract

Stepping into my first classroom as a newly qualified teacher, I quickly learned that no amount of preparation could fully capture the reality of those early days. This research was driven by a desire to understand and support early career teachers (ECTs) during this pivotal and often overwhelming transition.

This study explores the early experiences of five ECTs as they transitioned from initial teacher training (ITT) to their first year as fully qualified primary school teachers. Addressing a gap in the existing literature, it focuses on the continuous but non-linear nature of professional growth during this critical phase. Here, 'non-linear' refers to the unpredictable and fluctuating nature of early career teachers' growth, which does not follow a steady, upward trajectory. Instead, ECTs experience periods of progress, setbacks, and plateaus as they navigate the complexities of their professional environments. This journey is further characterised by shifts between being supported, providing support to others, and at times needing to be supported again, reflecting the evolving nature of their roles within the school community.

Grounded in my conceptual framework, which draws on the sociocultural concepts of communities of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998), legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and the value creation framework (VCF) (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020), this research provides a nuanced understanding of the professional journeys of ECTs.

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining mobile ethnography through the Indeemo (2017) mobile application with two semi-structured interviews to capture real-time, "as it happens" data on the lived experiences of ECTs, collected between January 2023 and July 2023. Real-time data refers to data that is available as soon as it is generated (Castanedo, 2023). Mobile ethnography, as described by Briggs (2023), leverages the portability of smartphones to document both fleeting and significant moments in participants' lives, generating nuanced insights into their experiences. Indeemo (2017), as noted by Read (2019:2), is a mobile ethnography tool designed to provide a visually immersive, social-networking-style interface for both researchers and participants. By transforming smartphones into powerful tools for documenting lived experiences, this method offers unprecedented access to the nuanced, everyday realities of the participants' lives.

The term "mobile ethnography" is employed in alignment with the creators of the application and existing research using this method (Muskat et al., 2013; Bjørner and Schrøder, 2019; Briggs, 2023; Loh et al., 2023). This approach not only engages participants as co-investigators, documenting activities through diaries, photos, or videos, but also incorporates a distinctive mood-tracking component. Participants

use a five-point emoji scale (outlined in Section 4.5a) to convey their emotional responses during significant moments, providing valuable insights and capturing shifts in perspectives over time.

The findings reveal that ECTs encounter initial challenges such as self-doubt and managing workload. However, supportive mentorship, a positive school culture, and strong leadership emerge as pivotal in boosting confidence and facilitating their progression from peripheral participation to central roles within their school communities. This research uniquely contributes to the field by employing mobile ethnography to capture ECTs' evolving experiences and emotional states in real time. Unlike snapshot approaches seen in previous studies, this method provides a holistic and dynamic understanding of the non-linear nature of ECTs' professional growth. The study highlights the significance of small yet transformative moments—such as successful lessons and positive feedback—in shaping professional identity and emotional wellbeing. Focused support, including mentorship and fostering a positive school environment, is shown to enhance ECTs' integration, satisfaction, and resilience. Furthermore, this study underscores the need to embed tailored transition support within ITT programmes, ensuring smoother entry into the profession while bolstering ECTs' readiness and capacity to navigate the complexities of teaching.

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List of Abbreviations and Terminology

Abbreviation	Meaning
BA	Bachelor of Arts
CCF	Core Content Framework
CoP	Communities of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
ECF	Early Career Framework
ECT	Early Career Teacher
EHCP	Education Health Care Plan
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
INSET	In-Service Training
ITaP	Intensive Training and Practice
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ITT	Initial Teacher Training (Government preferred term)
ITTCCF	Initial Teacher Training Core Content Framework
ITTECF	Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Framework
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
MMU	Manchester Metropolitan University
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher (now replaced by ECT in England)
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PPA	Planning, Preparation, and Assessment time
PSCoP	Primary School Community of Practice
Pupils	Refers to the children being taught in a school setting, typically in primary or secondary education.
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
Students	Refers to those studying at the university level, typically those training to become teachers.
VCF	Value Creation Framework

Table 1: List of Abbreviations and Terminology

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Having concluded this writing, I now look forward to rejoining the real world with gratitude for all who have shared this journey with me.

Chapter 1- Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Teaching in a primary school, for me was a journey of discovery—a path shaped by the transition from training to the dynamic, ever-changing realities of the classroom. Later, as a university lecturer, I watched my trainee teachers embark on their own journeys, encountering moments of growth and challenge as they stepped into the profession. This study, drawing on my dual perspective as both teacher and university lecturer, explores the lived experiences of early career teachers (ECTs) as they navigate the transformative first year of their teaching careers.

The transition from student teacher to fully qualified primary school teacher is both a significant personal and professional journey. Beauchamp and Thomas (2011:7) describe this as a "critical period of change" where teachers move from a protected learning environment to the complex realities of the classroom, often feeling unprepared for its challenges (Flores and Day, 2006; Hobson et al., 2009). For many ECTs, this period involves mastering classroom management, developing pedagogical skills, and adapting to the cultural norms of their school communities (Kagan, 1992; Wang and Odell, 2002; Day and Gu, 2014). However, as Woodley and McGill (2018) highlight, unsupportive school environments, including leadership failures and high staff turnover, can exacerbate these challenges, leaving ECTs feeling isolated or questioning their competence.

This thesis examines how ECTs experience this transformative phase, shedding light on the challenges and achievements that shape their professional identities. Central to this exploration is understanding how ECTs become integrated into their school communities and develop their professional identities. This process reflects an ongoing journey of growth, where individuals must actively engage with the tensions between external expectations and their internal sense of self. Senyshyn (1999) describes this becoming as a reflective and experiential process, requiring individuals to navigate uncertainties, contradictions, and moments of self-discovery as they strive for authenticity in their roles. Drawing on sociocultural concepts such as communities of practice (CoP) and legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), the study considers the ways in which ECTs engage with their professional environments, gradually moving from peripheral participants to more central roles within their communities. Additionally, the value creation framework (VCF) (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020) provides insights into how ECTs derive value from their experiences and interactions within these communities.

The study explores how ECTs navigate their early careers within the framework of their school communities, focusing on their professional growth as a holistic process. Here, "professional growth" refers to the broader development of teachers beyond formal training, encompassing personal and

career progression as they acquire practical skills, confidence, and a deeper understanding of their practice (Wang and Odell, 2002; Hobson et al., 2009; Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2009; Day and Gu, 2014; Coldron and Smith, 1999).

1.2 Context in England

This section outlines the educational and policy context in England to provide a foundation for understanding the lived experiences of ECTs. A more detailed exploration of these themes will follow in Segment 4 of the literature review.

Teacher retention remains a pressing challenge in the English education system, with high attrition rates particularly evident during the early years of teaching. Many ECTs face excessive workloads, insufficient support, and the complex demands of classroom management, all of which contribute to significant numbers leaving the profession within their first two years (Schuck et al., 2012; Schaefer et al., 2021; Hulme and Wood, 2022; Hulme et al., 2024; Maready et al., 2021). The transition from initial teacher training (ITT) to qualified teaching is critical, yet fraught with challenges, making this an area of acute policy focus (Maisuria et al., 2023).

To address these challenges, the initial teacher training core content framework (ITTCCF) was introduced to ensure a strong foundation for teacher development. The ITTCCF outlines the minimum entitlement for all trainees, setting out evidence-based knowledge and skills they need in five key areas: behaviour management, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and professional behaviours. It emphasises the importance of high-quality mentoring, opportunities to practise core teaching techniques, and learning from expert colleagues, all aligned with the teachers' standards (DfE, 2019b).

The early career framework (ECF), introduced by the Department for Education (DfE) and implemented between 2021 and 2025, also sought to address these issues by extending the induction period from one year to two. This framework emphasises comprehensive professional development, workload management, and strategies to reduce early-career attrition, aiming to provide ECTs with structured, sustained support during their formative years (DFE, 2019a). However, the framework's success relies heavily on effective implementation at the school level, where factors such as leadership quality, school culture, and access to adequate resources play a pivotal role (Long and Denechi, 2021; Hulme et al., 2022; Gu et al., 2023; Ovenden-Hope and Passy, 2020).

Building on the ECF, the DfE developed the initial teacher training and early career framework (ITTECF) in January 2024. This review was undertaken to ensure the framework reflects the evolving evidence base and the changing experiences and needs of trainees and ECTs. The ITTECF integrates the ECF with the ITT core content framework (ITTCCF), creating a more cohesive three-year training journey for

new teachers. Scheduled for implementation in September 2025, the ITTECF aims to better align teacher preparation and induction, ensuring a seamless transition from ITT into the teaching profession. It emphasises research-informed practice and a developmental trajectory that fosters professional growth and resilience among ECTs. My thesis contributes to this dialogue by providing valuable insights in Chapter 7 into the experiences of ECTs during the period when the ECF and ITTCCF were in place, offering findings that both align with and inform the proposed developments.

1.3 Rationale and significance

My motivation for conducting this research stems from my dual experiences as a primary school teacher and a university lecturer. I witnessed firsthand the struggles and achievements of ECTs, noting how initial enthusiasm and passion often waver in the face of professional challenges such as workload pressures, insufficient support, and the complexities of classroom management. Having experienced these challenges myself, I brought a unique perspective on the systemic issues faced by ECTs and the factors that influence their early professional journeys. These experiences drive my commitment to explore ways to better support new teachers, both during Initial ITT and as they transitioned into their early career phase.

Despite existing research on the challenges faced by ECTs, there remains a shortage of longitudinal studies that capture the real-time progression of their professional growth. Hulme and Wood (2022) emphasised the need for longitudinal and mixed-method research to capture the complexities of early career teachers' professional learning journeys. This study addresses that gap by offering a longitudinal analysis of ECTs' transitions from peripheral to more central roles within their school communities. It also uniquely highlights their experiences with the early career framework (ECF), giving voice to perspectives on its effectiveness.

Although the data collection spans only two academic terms, from January 2023 to July 2023, it aligns with Menard's (2002) definition of longitudinal research, capturing data over multiple periods and incorporating reflections on the entire first year of ECTs, including their training before September 2022. This mix of real-time and retrospective data mirrors Menard's retrospective panel design and provides a broader view of ECTs' professional growth, consistent with the approach advocated by Nesselroade and Baltes (1980).

This research captures the experiences of ECTs during the 2022–2023 academic year, a critical period when both the ITTCCF and the ECF were in place. By focusing on this transitional phase, the study contributes to evaluating the ECF's effectiveness in supporting ECTs' professional growth. These insights are particularly timely as the forthcoming initial teacher training and early career framework

(ITTECF) aims to create a more integrated developmental journey. While this study may not directly inform policy, it offers practical insights for teacher educators and mentors working in ITT to better prepare trainee teachers for the challenges of transitioning into their early careers and integrating into school communities.

An often-overlooked element in existing research is the emotional dimension of ECTs' experiences. Emotions are deeply intertwined with how teachers engage with support frameworks, influencing motivation, identity formation, and their sense of belonging within school communities (Demetriou et al., 2009; Hargreaves, 1998). Despite its importance, this dimension remains underexplored in the context of ECTs, particularly during their transitional early career phase. By shedding light on this emotional dimension, the research provides a more holistic understanding of ECTs' journeys and highlights the importance of fostering emotional resilience alongside professional competence.

By examining ECTs' experiences through the lens of CoP (Wenger, 1998), LPP (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and VCF (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2011), this research contributes to understanding how new teachers integrate into school communities and develop their professional identities. Rushton et al. (2023) highlighted a significant gap in research concerning the professional identities of primary and early years teachers compared to secondary educators, further underscoring the relevance of this study.

1.4 Overview of the study and research question

This study adopts a qualitative, longitudinal design grounded in an interpretivist paradigm to explore the lived experiences of ECTs during their first year of teaching. The central research question guiding this study is:

How do early career teachers (ECTs) experience becoming a member of the primary school community of practice (PSCoP)?

As noted above, this research question emerged from a critical review of the existing literature on teacher development and retention. While the professional challenges faced by ECTs, such as workload pressures, classroom management, and inadequate support, are well-documented, there remains a gap in understanding how these experiences shape their integration into school communities and evolving professional identities. Additionally, the emotional dimensions of ECTs' experiences, which play a significant role in their professional growth, have been underexplored. These gaps informed the research question, conceptual framework, and methodological design.

The research is underpinned by my conceptual framework that integrates the sociocultural concepts of communities of practice (CoP), legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), and the value creation framework (VCF). CoP (Wenger, 1998) conceptualises schools as social learning systems where collaboration and shared activities enhance professional growth. Within these systems, sociocultural theory—rooted in Vygotsky's work—emphasises that human cognition develops through participation in social activities and interactions within specific cultural environments (Johnson and Golombek, 2011). Vygotsky argues that higher mental functions originate in social interactions and are gradually internalised by individuals, demonstrating that cognition is fundamentally shaped through engagement with others in shared cultural contexts.

Building on this, LPP (Lave and Wenger, 1991) describes how ECTs, as newcomers, begin with simpler tasks and gradually took on more complex responsibilities as they gain competence and legitimacy. However, this progression is not always linear; ECTs often shift between peripheral and more central roles based on their evolving expertise and confidence (Coldron and Smith, 1999). The VCF (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2011) extends this analysis by exploring how ECTs perceive and create value from their participation in professional communities, identifying forms of value—immediate, potential, applied, realized, and transformative. These frameworks provide a lens to examine the multifaceted nature of ECTs' professional and emotional journeys.

The methodology is designed to align with the research question and conceptual framework, focusing on capturing the dynamic and context-rich realities of ECTs' early careers. This study employs innovative mobile ethnography via the Indeemo (2017) platform to collect real-time, in-situ data on ECTs' day-to-day experiences. Participants documented significant moments through photographs, videos, audio recordings, and text entries, with the concept of a "significant moment" explained to them as outlined in Chapter 4, Section 4.5a. To complement this, a 5-point mood tracker—an approach supported by Davies et al. (2024) for its ability to capture nuanced emotional fluctuations—was used to record participants' real-time emotional responses, ranging from "very happy" to "very unhappy," which they associated with each significant moment. Semi-structured interviews, conducted at the start of the spring and end of summer terms, provided additional opportunities for participants to reflect on their experiences and connect their real-time data to broader patterns in their professional growth.

The longitudinal design enabled the capture of daily, week-to-week, and termly fluctuations, offering a comprehensive view of the non-linear progression of ECTs' professional growth (Flores and Day, 2006). This approach embraced the subjective nature of ECTs' experiences, acknowledging that each entry and reflection was shaped by their unique contexts. Drawing on the narrative inquiry tradition (Sandelowski, 1991; McAdams and McLean, 2013), this study explored "narrative truths" (Polkinghorne, 2007; Spence, 2008), which provided authentic and context-rich representations of participants' evolving professional identities and emotional landscapes.

Findings from this research highlight the interplay between ECTs' emotional responses and their professional growth, shedding light on the factors that facilitate or hinder their integration into the primary school community of practice. By combining real-time data collection with reflective interviews, the study offers a nuanced understanding of how ECTs navigate their early careers, providing valuable insights into the emotional and practical challenges they faced. These insights could contribute to the development of more effective training and support systems, ensuring that ECTs are better prepared to navigate the complexities of their early careers.

1.6 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter, **Chapter 2** presents a comprehensive literature review on the experiences of ECTs, focusing on key challenges such as workload, self-doubt, and classroom management. It also examines the support mechanisms in place, including mentorship and professional development and explores the process of identity formation among early career teachers. Additionally, the chapter addresses the influence of policy and school contexts, situating this study within the broader academic discourse and highlighting gaps that this research seeks to fill.   The chapter concludes by presenting the sub-questions that build upon the overarching research question introduced in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3 outlines my conceptual framework underpinning this research, drawing on the sociocultural concepts of communities of practice (CoP), legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) and the value creation framework (VCF). It explains how these concepts are applied to offer a deeper understanding of ECTs' professional journeys, identity formation, and their transition from peripheral to more central roles within the school community.

Chapter 4 details the research design and methodology, describing the qualitative approach adopted. It discusses the innovative use of mobile ethnography via the Indeemo (2017) platform, the integration of a mood tracker using an emoji-based scale to capture real-time emotional responses, and the use of semi-structured interviews. The chapter highlights how combining these methods provides a comprehensive view of the participants' professional and emotional journeys, and addresses ethical considerations, participant recruitment, and the data analysis process.

Chapter 5 is a short chapter that delves into the personal narratives of five ECTs central to this study. The chapter draws on data collected through two semi-structured interviews, uploads to the Indeemo (2017) mobile platform and real-time mood tracking, offering a detailed view of each participant's unique professional and emotional journey. By focusing on individual experiences, it captures the diversity of

challenges faced and significant moments encountered, setting the stage for a thematic presentation of the data in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 presents the key findings, focusing on the professional growth experiences of ECTs. These findings illustrate the transition of participants as they move from peripheral to more central roles within their school communities. The data is grouped and presented using my conceptual framework, which organises findings around ECTs' evolving participation, identity development, and integration within their school environments. The inclusion of the emoji-based mood-tracking tool provides real-time insights into how emotional responses shape their journey. By tracking both professional growth and shifting emotional states, the chapter highlights the interplay between external feedback, self-perception, supportive relationships, school culture, and mood.

In **Chapter 7**, the discussion shifts to a critical analysis of the findings through the lens of my conceptual framework, drawing on the sociocultural concepts of CoP, LPP, and VCF, and addressing the research questions. This chapter reflects on how the research contributes to existing knowledge by providing real-time insights into ECTs' emotional and professional journeys, addressing gaps in understanding their lived experiences. It explores the novel use of the emoji-based mood tracker, demonstrating its potential to deepen the analysis by offering a closer look at how changes in mood influence and reflect the experiences of ECTs throughout their professional journey. The chapter concludes by summarising the main findings, discussing their implications for practice and policy, particularly regarding teacher support and retention, and offering suggestions for future research, including the potential for expanding real-time data collection methods in educational research. Additionally, it incorporates thoughtful reflections on my own journey of completing this research, exploring how the process has shaped my perspectives and professional practice.

Thomson (2013) argues that the use of tense is not merely a grammatical consideration but a methodological decision that shapes how research is presented and understood. In this thesis, the abstract adopts the present tense to provide a concise snapshot of the research, emphasising its current relevance and significance at the time of writing. Similarly, the introduction and discussion chapters use the present tense to underscore the immediacy and applicability of the study's arguments and interpretations. The literature review chapter employs a combination of tenses to reflect both the current relevance of the themes explored and the historical or contextual grounding of specific studies. When discussing broader trends or conceptual frameworks, the present tense is used to highlight their ongoing relevance. However, when referring to specific authors' findings or methodologies, the past tense is used to situate these contributions within their original contexts and acknowledge their temporality. The conceptual framework chapter also primarily employs the present tense, reflecting the ongoing relevance of the concepts underpinning the research. In contrast, the methods and findings chapters

predominantly use the past tense to situate data collection and participants' experiences within specific historical and contextual frames, acknowledging their temporality and allowing for reflection on change.

This distinction, as Thomson (2013) highlights, respects the lived realities of participants and avoids "fixing" them in an unchanging research present. By carefully aligning tense with the purpose of each section, this study underscores its dynamic and evolving nature, guiding readers through the research process with precision and transparency.

1.6 Enhancing the Reader's Experience

This study utilises the innovative Indeemo (2017) platform, which has generated a wealth of rich, real-time data, bringing the lived experiences of ECTs vividly to life. Participants used the mobile app to upload photographs, videos, and text entries, documenting significant moments from their first year of teaching. While the thesis can be fully understood without these 'visually immersive' elements, I have introduced an optional augmented reality (AR) feature to deepen reader engagement and provide a truly interactive experience gain a deeper insight into the lived experiences of the ECTs.

By scanning the Quick Response (QR) code below and following the designated symbols throughout this thesis, readers can unlock an immersive layer of augmented reality powered by HaloAR (2021). This feature provides exclusive access to videos, journey maps, and photographs, offering a unique window into the emotional and professional journeys of the ECTs. This AR integration transforms static text into a dynamic, multi-dimensional narrative, allowing readers to step into the world of the ECTs in a way that traditional methods cannot replicate.

While not essential to understanding the study, this feature enhances the experience by overlaying digital elements onto the pages of this document, making the research more interactive and engaging. For instructions on accessing the AR features, please refer to Appendix A. For those unable to access AR, hyperlinks to the same content are provided in Appendix K. This innovative approach ensures that the richness of the data is accessible to all while offering an optional, cutting-edge tool for those seeking a deeper connection to the study.

Figure 1- Augmented reality (AR) QR Code for HaloAR(2021) and the symbol used throughout the thesis to indicate AR content.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The experiences of early career teachers (ECTs) are crucial and can impact on their professional growth, job satisfaction, and long-term commitment to the profession (Akiri and Dori, 2022; Hulme and Wood, 2022; Long and Denechi, 2021; Sullivan et al., 2021). The initial years of teaching represent a critical period where challenges and support systems can significantly influence a teacher's career trajectory (Hulme and Wood, 2022; Mena and Clark, 2021a; Schuck et al., 2018; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011; Whalen et al., 2019b). The intricate blend of challenges they encounter as they navigate student life, to professional practice affects the growth and evolution of new teachers' identities over time (Flores and Day, 2006; Hong et al., 2018; Schaap et al., 2021). While the literature includes findings from both primary and secondary education, Rushton et al. (2023) highlight a significant gap in research specifically addressing the professional identities of primary and early years teachers. Nevertheless, insights from studies on secondary teachers provide valuable perspectives that can help inform our understanding of early career experiences.

ECTs face numerous challenges that can affect their job satisfaction and decision to remain in the profession. Supportive environments, manageable workloads, and opportunities for professional growth are essential for higher satisfaction, resilience, and lower attrition rates (Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019; Akiri and Dori, 2022; NFER, 2023a). However, globally, teacher retention and attrition remain pressing concerns, with many ECTs leaving due to various individual, organisational, and contextual factors (Avalos and Valenzuela, 2016; Gu and Day, 2007). These factors range from the demands of classroom management, and excessive workload to the level of support they receive (Mansfield et al., 2016; Maready et al., 2021; Schaefer et al., 2021; Schuck et al., 2012; Tiplic et al., 2015). In addition, a lack of support networks, the pressure to be 'classroom ready,' and uncertainty about what constitutes a 'good teacher' contribute to attrition (Sullivan et al., 2021).

Long and Denechi (2021) reported that UK recruitment for initial teacher training (ITT) exceeded targets by 15% in 2020/21, with primary education surpassing its target by 30%, likely influenced by the economic impact of COVID-19. However, recruitment has since declined, falling below target from 2022/23 onwards. In 2022/23, primary ITT recruitment was 4% below target, despite meeting or exceeding targets in five of the previous nine years (Maisuria et al., 2023). Alarmingly, by November

2022, 13% of newly qualified teachers had left the profession within one year, rising to 20% within two years of qualifying (Maisuria et al., 2023).

This concerning trend has shifted policy attention from recruitment to sustainability, recognising that retaining teachers is as crucial as recruiting them (Hulme and Wood, 2022). The focus on sustainability emphasises the need for ongoing support and professional development to prevent the significant loss of teachers in the early stages of their careers. Researchers have investigated resilience to determine the individual and contextual factors that influence job satisfaction, burnout, and wellbeing among teachers (Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019; Day et al., 2011; Kidger et al., 2016). Plunkett and Dyson (2011) argued that while teacher attrition rates are like those in other professions, the impact on the education sector is more significant, particularly due to the potential negative effects on pupil learning and overall workforce productivity.

Research consistently shows that new teachers remain in the profession due to positive interactions with children, supportive professional relationships, mentorship, and a sense of belonging within a supportive school culture (Blase, 2009; Hulme and Wood, 2022; Nguyen, 2021; Schaefer et al., 2021; Schuck et al., 2005). Teacher motivation, particularly intrinsic enjoyment of teaching and the desire to positively impact pupils' lives, is also pivotal in both entering and staying in the profession (Chiong et al., 2017; Karavas, 2010; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000). Teacher motivation, while crucial for career satisfaction and longevity, evolves over time and cannot solely predict future attrition (Chiong et al., 2017; Watt et al., 2012). Despite changes in teacher motivation, intrinsic and altruistic reasons remain central to why individuals choose and continue teaching, rather than practical benefits like holidays or pay (Cohen, 2009; Heinz, 2015; Manuel and Hughes, 2006; Ross and Hutchings, 2003; Stanford, 2001).

Nguyen (2021) emphasised the unique nature of each teacher's journey, highlighting the importance of understanding these individual experiences. This research aims to capture the unique and varied lived experiences of ECTs to provide a better understanding of their realities. By employing mobile ethnography and real-time mood tracking, this study captures rich, personal insights from each participant, providing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of their professional growth. This literature review seeks to uncover the primary challenges faced by ECTs, the impact of support systems, the development of professional identities, and the effects of educational policies and school contexts on their careers.

2.2 Structure of the Review:
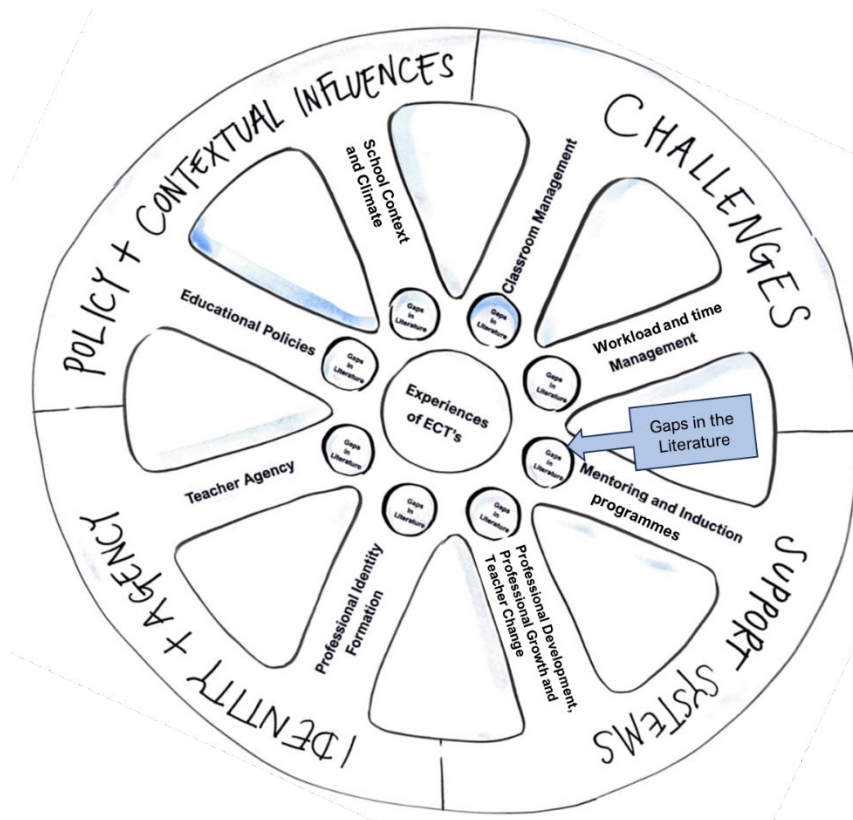
Figure 2 - Literature Wheel designed by Karen Tuzylak and Illustrated by Lou Godley (2024).

The literature review is structured using the wheel approach, a method that integrates multiple bodies of literature to support a central research theme (Thomson, 2016). This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of the diverse elements that collectively contribute to understanding the experiences of ECTs. Each segment of the wheel represents a key area of focus: challenges faced by ECTs, support systems available to them, the development of their professional identities and agency, and the influence of educational policies and school contexts. Each segment is accompanied by two spokes that act as subthemes. The diagram above illustrates this structure, with gaps intentionally included to highlight areas where research is lacking.

By exploring these interconnected aspects, the review aims to provide a holistic understanding of the experiences of ECTs. The following sections delve into each of these areas, examining how they interact and influence one another, ultimately contributing to a nuanced view of the challenges and support needs of ECTs.

2.3 Segment 1: Challenges Encountered by Early Career Teachers

ECTs frequently encounter a range of significant challenges that contribute to the high attrition rates within the profession. Research by Klassen et al. (2013) conducted across four countries highlights that the primary sources of teacher stress include student behaviour and excessive workloads, which are exacerbated by insufficient support and adverse working conditions. These challenges are closely linked with dissatisfaction and the intention to leave the profession, as consistently demonstrated in the literature (Mansfield et al., 2016; Maready et al., 2022; Schaefer et al., 2021; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011; Wang et al., 2015). The relentless demands placed on ECTs, coupled with the lack of adequate support in managing these pressures, are key factors driving the high rates of teacher attrition (Billingsley et al., 2004; Hulme and Wood, 2022). This section explores two critical areas, classroom management and workload/time management, that pose challenges for ECTs and have profound implications for their wellbeing, job satisfaction, and retention.

Spoke 1 - Classroom Management:

Effective classroom management remains a significant concern for ECTs, with direct implications for both teacher wellbeing and pupil success (Emmer et al., 2003; Evertson and Weinstein, 2013; Schuck et al., 2018; Sutton et al., 2009). Schuck et al. (2018) reported that nearly 30% of ECTs identified classroom management as a major challenge, often exacerbated by inadequate support systems, such as inconsistent behaviour policies and limited leadership backing. Hulme and Wood (2022) emphasise that classroom management continues to be a key developmental focus as teachers transition into their second year, alongside addressing diverse learner needs and supporting pupils with additional requirements.

A crucial element of classroom management is the self-efficacy that teachers possess in this area, which reflects their confidence in managing classroom dynamics effectively. This includes setting clear guidelines, interacting successfully with individuals and groups, and maintaining control over disruptive behaviours (Pfitzner-Eden et al., 2015; Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The stress associated with managing pupil behaviour is well-documented across multiple studies, with Aloe and Shanahan (2014) identifying it as a significant contributor to teacher stress and burnout. In the results chapter, I illustrate how participants reported lower moods on the emoji scale when recalling significant moments related to challenging behaviour (sections 6.2). The relationship between behaviour problems and teacher burnout has been consistently illuminated by research, with studies by Hulme and Wood (2022); Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010); Kokkinos (2007); and Tsouloupas et al. (2010) highlighting this issue as a recurring theme over the past two decades. The findings underscore the vital role that classroom management skills and self-efficacy play in enhancing teacher wellbeing and effectiveness.

Fantilli and McDougall (2009) highlighted that managing pupil behaviour and diverse needs is a top concern for new teachers, often due to a gap between theoretical training and practical application. Melnick and Meister (2008) observed that even experienced teachers sometimes feel underprepared in this area, while Akdağ and Haser (2016) pointed out that strategies learned during training are not always effective in real classroom settings. This gap underscores the need for more practical, hands-on training. The new intensive training and practice (ITAP) programme which providers were expected to introduce in September 2024, looks to address this by incorporating focused, expert-led practice that allows trainees to trial, refine, and embed specific teaching techniques, such as classroom management strategies, in a controlled, feedback-rich environment, ultimately improving their preparedness for real-world challenges (DFE, 2023f). The Intensive Training and Practice (ITAP) is an integral part of the initial teacher training (ITT) curriculum. Postgraduate trainees are required to complete at least four weeks of ITAP, while undergraduate trainees must undertake a minimum of six weeks.

The concept of "reality shock" is pertinent in this context. Dicke et al. (2015) describe how unpreparedness for classroom disruptions can lead to a reality shock for new teachers, resulting in increased stress and diminished wellbeing. However, their study also found that specific classroom management training significantly improves teachers' self-efficacy and wellbeing, reducing the symptoms of reality shock. This finding underscores the importance of effective, targeted training programmes to prepare ECTs for the challenges of classroom management, such as ITAP.

In summary, classroom management is a critical and ongoing challenge for ECTs. The combination of inadequate preparation and insufficient support exacerbates stress, leading to burnout and attrition within the profession. Therefore, providing effective classroom management training, which enhances teachers' self-efficacy in managing classroom challenges, is essential for supporting ECTs' wellbeing, potentially reducing attrition rates, and equipping teachers to handle the complexities of modern classrooms.

Spoke 2- Workload and Time Management:

Heavy workloads and time management issues present significant challenges for ECTs, profoundly impacting their job satisfaction, performance, and retention rates. Despite various policies aimed at reducing these pressures, research continues to emphasise the persistent nature of these challenges. Schuck et al. (2018) found that approximately 28% of ECTs identified workload and time management as major obstacles, reflecting the mentally and physically demanding nature of their roles. Many ECTs report working long hours to meet various professional demands, highlighting the multifaceted pressures they face. This is also reflected in my data, which showed a low mood linked to workload pressures, long hours, and challenges in balancing home and work life (section 6.2a). In a study by Billingsley et al. (2004), over 75% of new teachers reported that their routine duties interfered with their teaching efforts, and more than a quarter described their workloads as "completely unmanageable."

The workload faced by ECTs can be overwhelming, encompassing a broad range of tasks beyond their core teaching responsibilities. These include planning lessons, meeting parent expectations, managing pupil needs, handling resources, completing assessment tasks, and managing classroom behaviour (Schuck et al., 2012). Hulme et al. (2024) identify the intensification of workload as a critical factor that contributes to teacher burnout and professional dissatisfaction, often compounded by the increasing demands of accountability measures. Hulme and Wood (2022) reported that many teachers work over 50 hours a week on average, with much of this time dedicated to non-teaching activities such as marking, planning, and data management. This extensive workload has been shown to negatively impact job satisfaction and motivation, leading to feelings of frustration and burnout. Teachers experiencing burnout are more likely to contemplate leaving their schools (Brunsting et al., 2014) and may invest less effort and resources in supporting pupil learning effectively (Irvin et al., 2013; Ruble and McGrew, 2013).

New teachers frequently express feeling overwhelmed as they fulfil the complexities of their responsibilities, learn the intricacies of teaching, and establish their roles within the school environment (Billingsley et al., 2009; Youngs et al., 2011). Fantilli and McDougall (2009) highlighted that time constraints and workload are significant concerns for new teachers, with many struggling to manage daily and long-term schedules. This aligns with Schuck et al. (2018), who emphasised that the additional responsibilities and expectations placed on ECTs can result in feelings of being overwhelmed and unable to achieve a work-life balance. Respondents in their study described experiencing "pure exhaustion" from the multitude of tasks, underscoring the need for better support and more realistic workload expectations to ensure the wellbeing and retention of new teachers. This sentiment resonates with my participant Ted's comment of feeling "very overwhelmed" (T3CV).

Buchanan (2010) also explored the intense demands placed on teachers, noting that these demands extend beyond teaching to emotional, mental, and physical strain. Teachers are required to constantly engage and be creative, yet this effort is often inadequately appreciated or rewarded. The workload

frequently extends beyond school hours, leading to stress and exhaustion from attending irrelevant meetings and fulfilling additional duties. Public misconceptions about teaching hours often overlook the significant amount of out-of-class preparation and administrative tasks required (Buchanan, 2010). Similarly, Beutel et al. (2019) recognised teaching as a 'take-home job' that encroaches on personal, unpaid time. Their study participants described an intense workload, including marking and lesson planning, which invades personal time and negatively impacts family life and wellbeing.

Research by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER, 2023b) reveals that while mentoring and professional development can support teacher retention and job satisfaction, they often fall short in addressing the detrimental effects of excessive workload and accountability pressures. Teachers in the study highlighted that the overwhelming volume of administrative tasks, including paperwork and data entry, detracts from core teaching responsibilities, fostering frustration and burnout. Similarly, the Department for Education's (DFE) Teacher Workload Survey (2023b) identified marking, planning, and data management as key contributors to teachers' excessive workloads, with educators reporting an average of 55 hours per week spent on work-related tasks, much of it on non-teaching activities. These findings underscore the importance of initiatives like the workload reduction taskforce, which seeks to alleviate these pressures and improve work-life balance (DFE, 2023d)

The cumulative effect of these challenges—heavy workloads, time management difficulties, and insufficient support—has a profound impact on ECTs' job satisfaction and retention. Studies consistently show that inadequate preparation and support exacerbate stress and burnout, contributing to high attrition rates (Day and Gu, 2010; Hulme and Wood, 2022; Schuck et al., 2018; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011). Hulme et al. (2024) further suggest that addressing these systemic issues requires a holistic approach that prioritises sustainable workloads, meaningful professional development, and collaborative school cultures. This dissatisfaction with working conditions is closely linked with an intention to leave the profession, underscoring the need for systemic reforms to improve teacher retention.

In summary, heavy workloads and time management challenges are significant barriers for ECTs, profoundly affecting their job satisfaction, wellbeing, and retention. The demands of non-teaching tasks such as administrative work, planning, and marking often overwhelm ECTs, detracting from their core teaching responsibilities and leading to stress and burnout. Despite policies aimed at alleviating these pressures, the persistent nature of excessive workloads highlights the urgent need for systemic reforms and realistic workload expectations. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensuring ECTs can achieve a sustainable work-life balance, maintain motivation, and remain in the profession.

In conclusion, the challenges faced by ECTs in managing classroom dynamics and coping with heavy workloads are both pervasive and deeply interrelated. The gap between theoretical training and practical application intensifies ECTs' struggles with classroom management, leaving many feeling ill-equipped to handle disruptive behaviour effectively (Akdağ and Haser, 2016). Without sufficient support, these

challenges take a significant emotional and physical toll on teachers, contributing to burnout and high attrition rates (Billingsley et al., 2004; Dicke et al., 2015; Hulme and Wood, 2022). Additionally, the relentless demands of workload and time management further exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and frustration among ECTs, making it difficult for them to maintain a sustainable work-life balance (Brunsting et al., 2014; Fantilli and McDougall, 2009; Schuck et al., 2012). This body of literature underscores the urgent need for systemic reforms, including robust training programmes, comprehensive support systems, and realistic workload expectations, to improve teacher wellbeing and retention across the profession.

2.4 Segment 2: Support Systems for Early Career Teachers
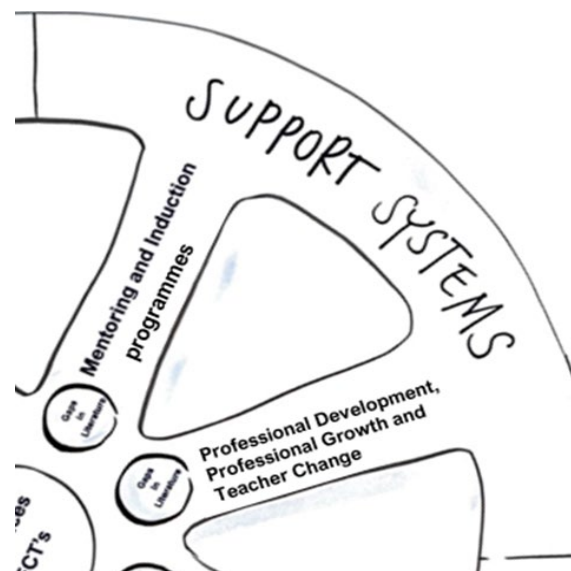
Support systems are vital for helping ECTs navigate the complexities of their profession. Effective mechanisms such as mentoring, induction programmes, and professional development initiatives enhance teaching abilities and resilience (Ainsworth and Oldfield, 2019; Ingersoll and Strong, 2011; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019a; Mena and Clark, 2021b; Whalen et al., 2019a). However, Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) suggest a teacher's ability to thrive is influenced as much by their environment as by their individual traits. This section delves into the critical role of mentoring, induction programmes, and professional development activities in supporting ECTs and helping to create a supportive school environment.

Spoke 3- Mentoring and Induction Programmes:

When an ECT starts their induction at a school, the process typically involves a structured programme designed to support and assess their performance against the teachers' standards. The school must ensure the ECT is provided with a suitable post, an induction tutor, and a mentor. The ECT receives reduced teaching hours to allow time for professional development, which includes regular observation of their teaching practice, one-to-one mentoring sessions, and formal assessments. At the time of this study, the induction period spanned two years and was underpinned by the early career framework (ECF) (DFE, 2024a), with progress monitored throughout.

Mentoring and induction programmes are vital in supporting ECTs by providing guidance and fostering professional growth (Glazerman et al., 2010; Smith and Ingersoll, 2004; Wood and Stanulis, 2009). These programmes create a structured environment where new teachers can seek advice, share experiences, and receive constructive feedback. While often interrelated, mentoring and induction serve distinct functions. Induction refers to the broader system of policies, resources, and professional development aimed at new teachers (Langdon et al., 2014). In contrast, mentoring specifically involves the direct support of an experienced colleague, sometimes even regarded as synonymous with induction (Hobson et al., 2009). Both are critical for developing the skills needed to navigate school challenges, significantly enhancing job satisfaction, commitment, and retention (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011; Maready et al., 2021; Mena and Clarke, 2021a; Whalen et al., 2019b). Additionally, support from colleagues plays a crucial role in developing resilience among teachers (Brunetti, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2006).

Induction programmes are widely implemented across the globe to assist new teachers and reduce the likelihood of them leaving the profession, particularly during their initial two years of teaching (Bower-Phipps et al., 2016; Kohen and Borko, 2022; Schwartz and Dori, 2020). These programmes serve as crucial bridges from student teaching to professional practice, typically including professional development, instructional training, observational feedback cycles, and sometimes a reduced teaching load (Glazerman et al., 2010; Smith and Ingersoll, 2004; Wood and Stanulis, 2009). Effective induction programmes are vital for equipping new teachers with the skills and strategies needed to manage classrooms effectively, improve teaching practices, and foster a positive classroom atmosphere (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). However, in many countries, the absence of standardised induction can result in reduced commitment, professional isolation, and higher attrition rates among ECTs (Mena and Clarke, 2021b; Wang et al., 2008). Moreover, well-structured induction not only supports ECTs' professional growth but also plays an essential role in creating supportive school environments that enhance overall teacher effectiveness.

The term "mentoring" can be ambiguously defined and often overlaps with coaching (Mok and Staub, 2021; Mullen and Klimaitis, 2021). While some research examines mentoring for pre-service teachers and others focus on ECT mentoring (Canipe and Gunckel, 2020; Richmond et al., 2020; Schuck et al., 2012; Stanulis and Bell, 2017; Wexler, 2020), this discussion emphasises mentoring as a long-term relationship between an experienced teacher and an ECT, designed to support professional growth and integration into the school environment (Aspfors and Fransson, 2015). Mentoring plays a key role in helping ECTs adapt to school norms and expectations, including developing "micropolitical literacy" (Kelchtermans and Vanassche, 2017), which is crucial for navigating school politics and pressures.

Beyond professional skills, mentoring also provides significant emotional and psychological support that is vital for ECTs' wellbeing (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019a). However, mentoring practices can have negative effects if poorly executed. Hobson (2016) warns of "judgementoring," where untrained mentors overly focus on criticism, potentially undermining the novice teacher's confidence and wellbeing. This issue was reflected in the experience of my participant, April, who found that overly critical feedback negatively impacted her mood and sense of professional growth (Section 6.4a). To maximise the benefits of mentoring, mentors must be adequately trained and equipped to provide constructive and balanced support (Hobson et al., 2009).

For mentees, inconsistent mentoring quality, lack of emotional and psychological support, and insufficient challenges or lack of autonomy can hinder development and may even contribute to leaving the profession (Beck and Kosnick, 2000; Malderez et al., 2007). The effectiveness of mentoring programmes is often constrained by insufficient mentor preparation, inconsistent mentor selection processes, and contextual factors such as time constraints and school culture (Hobson et al., 2009). This underscores the need for effective mentoring conditions, including contextual support, careful selection of mentors, thorough mentor preparation, and strategies responsive to mentees' needs (Hobson et al., 2009). Additionally, the success of mentoring depends on the willingness of new teachers to be mentored (Hobson et al., 2009).

Recent research highlights the role of instructional coaching (IC) within mentoring programmes for ECTs. Daly et al. (2023) explored the application of IC within England's ECF, identifying both its advantages and challenges. IC provides a structured mentoring approach with clear guidelines and focused goals, aiding ECTs in achieving manageable targets, thereby boosting their confidence and sense of achievement. However, its prescriptive nature can clash with the individual needs of ECTs, as some mentors prefer a more tailored approach, criticising IC for its "one size fits all" method (Daly et al., 2023). Effective IC implementation requires comprehensive training and professional development for mentors. Daly et al. (2023) emphasise the need for "sustained, high-quality professional learning for mentors" to enable them to support ECTs effectively. This issue is being addressed with the introduction of the new initial teacher training and early career framework ITTECF, which aims to offer a more

individualised and integrated development journey, better aligning the needs of ECTs with the support provided by mentors (DFE 2023e).

In summary, the literature consistently underscores the value of induction programmes and mentoring for ECTs, with their effectiveness largely dependent on quality and adaptability to individual needs and contexts (Clarke and Mena, 2020; Hong and Matsko, 2019; Schuck et al., 2012; Weimer, 2021). Different mentoring approaches can lead to varied learning outcomes and dispositions, shaped by the relational dynamics and personal conceptions of mentoring held by both mentors and mentees (Feiman-Nemser, 2001b; Kemmis et al., 2014; Richter et al., 2013).

Spoke 4- Professional Development, Professional Growth and Teacher Change

There are various terms used by researchers to describe the multifaceted and ongoing nature of teacher learning, including professional development, professional growth, and teacher change (Akiri and Dori, 2022; Bell and Gilbert, 1996; Clarke and Hollingsworth, 2002). While a comprehensive discussion of these distinctions is beyond the scope of this thesis, a brief overview is crucial to understanding the implications for ECTs.

Bell and Gilbert (1994) emphasise that teacher growth spans personal, professional, and social dimensions, highlighting the holistic nature of teacher development. Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) explore the complexity of teacher change, identifying multiple perspectives on how it can be understood. They argue that teacher change is not a single, fixed concept but rather one that can be interpreted in various ways, each aligning with different approaches to teacher professional development. This view underscores the need for flexibility in how we support teacher learning.

More recently, Akiri and Dori (2022) have advocated for the term *professional growth* to better encapsulate the comprehensive and continuous nature of teacher learning. They argue that this term more accurately reflects the evolving and dynamic aspects of teacher development, unlike the narrower concept of *professional development*, which often implies a more static, one-time process. Consequently, I use the term *professional growth* throughout this thesis to reflect this broader perspective.

Continuous professional development (CPD) is crucial for ECTs, enabling them to refine their teaching skills and respond effectively to new educational challenges. The ECF reforms grant ECTs two years of professional development following their initial teacher education, aiming to improve their teaching practice, knowledge, and work habits (DFE, 2023a). Many schools focus on curriculum training, yet teachers frequently lack a comprehensive understanding of curriculum planning (Ofsted, 2023). Additionally, long working hours are limiting all teachers' access to CPD in England, where they spend

only four days a year on professional development activities. This ranks England 30th out of 36 countries, with the average being 10.5 days (Sellen 2016). While this statistic reflects the broader context of CPD availability for all teachers, it underscores the challenges ECTs face in receiving adequate training and development, given their need for structured CPD to build foundational skills and confidence.

The quality of teachers significantly impacts pupil achievement within the school setting (Hanushek and Rivkin, 2012), and the most rapid development in teacher effectiveness occurs during the initial years of their careers (Allen and Sims, 2018). To elevate teaching to a world-class profession and enhance outcomes for pupils, it is crucial to provide teachers with more support and development opportunities from the beginning of their careers and throughout their professional journey (Chartered College of Teaching, 2019). Moreover, research indicates that conventional CPD methods, like single-session training workshops, frequently fall short in delivering relevant, context-specific knowledge when needed (Kraft et al., 2018), highlighting the need for more effective and tailored professional development approaches. Oates and Bignell (2022) advocate for collaborative professional development grounded in school-university partnerships, emphasising the value of reflective enquiry and shared expertise. Such partnerships offer a mechanism for delivering context-specific and evidence-informed professional development, ensuring it remains meaningful and impactful for teachers in diverse school settings.

An Ofsted review (2023) highlights the persistent challenges in supporting teachers' professional growth following the pandemic. Key findings highlight an increased demand for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) training due to pandemic-related disruptions, alongside significant workload pressures that limit teachers' capacity for sustained professional development opportunities. However, the DfE report (2024a) notes that ECTs, despite workload challenges, generally benefit from protected time during their ECF induction, allowing them sufficient time to engage in training and apply their learning. In contrast, mentors face difficulties balancing their mentoring responsibilities with regular teaching duties (DfE, 2024b). Often lacking both dedicated time and timely access to course materials, mentors may deliver professional development sessions based on personal interpretations rather than the intended ECF content, which can ultimately affect the quality of support provided to ECTs. This additional workload has raised sustainability concerns among school leaders regarding the continued viability of mentoring roles (DfE, 2024b)

Research consistently demonstrates that high-quality professional development (PD) for teachers significantly enhances pupil outcomes, with effects comparable to having a highly experienced teacher (Education Policy Institute, 2020; Fletcher-Wood and Zuccollo, 2020; Lynch et al., 2019). Additionally, PD is linked to improved teacher retention, particularly among ECTs, and is considered cost-effective when well-supported by school leadership. The Education Endowment Foundation's "Effective Professional Development: The Guidance Report" (2021) further underscores the importance of PD, highlighting key mechanisms such as building knowledge, motivating staff, and embedding practice as essential for impactful PD. Successful PD requires careful consideration of school context and

leadership support, with a focus on evidence-based content and a balanced design that accommodates teachers' workloads. Ultimately, the effectiveness of any PD initiative is heavily dependent on strong leadership that prioritises and supports these development opportunities (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021; DFE, 2016).

Spencer et al. (2017) surveyed ECTs in England to assess their professional development needs and found significant gaps, particularly in emotional support, behaviour management, engaging classroom activities, and reflective teaching discussions. While some needs are partially met through informal conversations, within-school CPD, mentoring, and external resources like social media, many ECTs reported that formal CPD often feels insufficiently tailored to their individual challenges, leaving them overworked and overwhelmed. According to Self-Determination Theory (Ryan and Deci, 2020), such gaps undermine motivation and wellbeing by failing to meet core psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are essential for resilience and professional growth.

In response to these limitations, Woodley and McGill (2018) highlight the value of social media as a flexible tool for professional support, particularly in challenging school environments where immediate, in-person support is lacking. Online professional learning networks allow teachers to seek mentoring, critique, and reassurance on their own terms, enabling connections with a global community of peers for guidance, collaboration, and emotional resilience. Spencer et al. (2017) recommend long-term, structured programmes that promote meaningful reflection, collaboration, and engagement with evidence-based practices to better support ECTs in navigating the complexities of their roles.

In summary, professional development is essential for refining ECTs' teaching skills, boosting confidence, and addressing early career challenges. While the ECF offers structured growth opportunities, challenges persist, including limited access to tailored CPD due to workload pressures, time constraints, and gaps in curriculum planning (Ofsted, 2023; Sellen, 2016). Research highlights that PD supporting autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan and Deci, 2020) fosters engagement, resilience, and retention. Effective CPD must be context-specific, collaborative, and backed by strong leadership to enhance teacher development and pupil outcomes.

In conclusion, mentoring, induction programmes, and professional development are crucial for supporting ECTs through their early careers. When well-implemented, these mechanisms foster resilience, improve teaching skills, and can boost retention. However, inconsistent support, insufficient mentor preparation, and systemic workload pressures highlight the need for policy interventions to ensure equitable and sustainable systems. Addressing these challenges can better support ECTs' professional growth, enhancing teacher satisfaction, retention, and pupil outcomes.

2.5 Segment 3: Identity Formation and Agency of Early Career Teachers
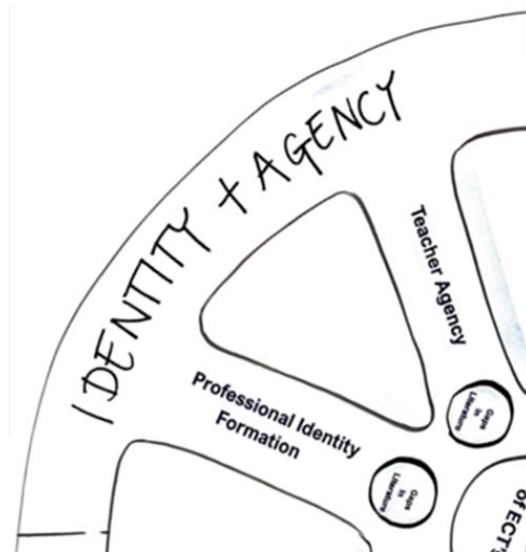
The journey from student teacher to fully qualified teacher represents a pivotal period for ECTs, characterised by profound shifts in both identity and agency (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011; Flores and Day, 2006). This segment explores the intertwined processes of professional identity formation and the development of teacher agency, both of which are essential in helping ECTs navigate the complexities of their new roles (Chong et al., 2011; Sachs, 2005). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for providing the support that ECTs need as they transition into the teaching profession, facing both internal challenges and external pressures (Hong, 2010; Kelchtermans, 2009).

Spoke 5- Professional Identity Formation:

Teacher identity is widely understood as a multifaceted and dynamic concept, shaped by professional experiences, emotions, societal influences, and personal values (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009). Senyshyn (1999) offers a complementary perspective by describing the teacher's journey as one of becoming—a process that extends beyond technical competence to encompass personal reflection and transformation. For ECTs, reconciling their intrinsic motivations with external expectations is pivotal to identity development.

Identity is not fixed; rather, it evolves as teachers engage with their roles and respond to new challenges in diverse contexts. This aligns with Darragh's (2016:19) categorisation of identity into participative, narrative, discursive, psychoanalytic, and performative types, emphasising a performative understanding of identity as "something we do, as an action." Teachers construct and express their identities through storytelling, group affiliations, behaviours, and their positioning within societal narratives. Zhai et al. (2024) extend this understanding by describing identity as both a process and a set of enduring attributes, cautioning against oversimplified dichotomies that reduce teachers to static labels such as "good" or "bad."

Teacher identity develops non-linearly, shaped by the interplay of past experiences, professional challenges, and school contexts. Unlike a steady upward trajectory, identity formation is marked by fluctuations, including periods of progress, setbacks, and plateaus. Alsup (2006), Danielewicz (2001), Rodgers and Scott (2008), and Sutherland et al. (2010) describe it as a continuous process of negotiation and adaptation. Similarly, Cooper and Olson (1996), Kelchtermans (1993), and Watson (2006) highlight the complex and evolving relationship between teachers' beliefs, classroom experiences, and policy influences.

During critical transitional phases, Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) introduce the concept of boundary spaces, where teachers move from the protected environment of teacher education to the unpredictable complexities of professional practice. For ECTs, these spaces are sites of tension and transformation, where pedagogical ideals are tested against real-world demands. This transition challenges ECTs to adapt, reflect, and reconstruct their professional identities. Flores and Day (2006) support this, emphasising that identity formation is shaped by conflicting influences and personal reflections, requiring ECTs to balance professional expectations with their evolving sense of self. Similarly, Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice underscores how identity evolves through active participation in professional communities, where teachers learn not only what they do but also who they become.

Teacher identity is shaped both individually and collectively through engagement in professional communities. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009, 2011) argue that collective identity emerges through collaborative interactions within professional environments, helping teachers align with shared goals and societal expectations. These interactions provide opportunities for reflection, validation, and professional growth.

The social identity approach further highlights this collective nature. Mavor et al. (2017) and Rushton (2023) argue that individuals' sense of self is shaped by group affiliations and shared norms within their professional settings. Participation in these communities fosters belonging, collaboration, and a shared purpose, all of which are crucial for teachers' identity development. Importantly, Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) stress that collective identity enhances, rather than diminishes, individual agency, enabling teachers to shape their own identities while working toward shared goals.

The growth of teacher identity is deeply influenced by emotions, alongside professional experiences and contexts. Zembylas (2003) argues that emotions are central to identity formation, functioning within a web of power relations, culture, and ideologies. They serve as both sites of resistance—challenging the status quo—and transformation, reshaping teachers' roles and self-perception. Woodley and McGill (2018) add that personal beliefs and values are integral to this process, enabling teachers to maintain authenticity when responding to emotional challenges. Emotions play a pivotal role in shaping professional identities, with reflection on emotional experiences critical for refining teaching strategies and fostering resilience (Shapiro, 2010; Sutton and Wheatley, 2003).

Emotional resilience—the ability to sustain balance and commitment amidst challenges—is vital for ECTs. Resilient teachers better manage the emotional demands of teaching, navigating its highs and lows with adaptability and perseverance (Day and Gu, 2014; Hong, 2010; Aguilar, 2018). Positive emotions further support resilience, aiding stress recovery and building long-term emotional resources (Tugade and Fredrickson, 2004).

Teaching is inherently emotional, shaped by feelings such as care, frustration, and joy, which influence relationships with pupils, classroom dynamics, and teachers' confidence in their effectiveness (Hargreaves, 1998; Nasrollahi Shahri, 2018). These emotions foster a caring professional identity and are central to teachers' reflections on practice (Dornan et al., 2015; Nasrollahi Shahri, 2018). Teachers also engage in emotional labour, managing and expressing emotions to connect with pupils and overcome challenges (Demetriou et al., 2009). Zembylas (2003) highlights the transformative role of emotions, viewing them as sites of resistance and self-transformation, where teachers reflect on their experiences to refine strategies and reconstruct their identities.

To explore these emotional dimensions, this study uses mood tracking with an emoji scale (Section 4.5a) to capture patterns in participants' emotional journeys. This approach reveals how emotions influence professional growth over time, with emotional journey maps (Appendix G).

The professional identities of ECTs are shaped by a complex interplay of tensions, effectiveness, and support mechanisms within their school environments. Hong et al. (2018) highlight that these identities—whether positive or negative, stable or unstable—are influenced by how teachers manage tensions and their perceptions of their own effectiveness. These factors are not only shaped by their initial commitment to teaching but are also significantly impacted by the level of support available at the school level. Van den Berg (2002) underscores that professional identity is inherently dynamic, shaped by teachers' emotions, motivations, and their capacity to sustain long-term commitment to the profession. Similarly, Hong (2010) argues that the interplay between motivation and support is critical for maintaining professional commitment amidst challenges. Supportive leadership, collegial relationships, and a positive school culture are therefore essential in enabling ECTs to navigate both broader educational policies and the immediate demands of their professional contexts (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011; Day and Gu, 2010). This multifaceted process requires teachers to balance external expectations with the everyday realities of their work environment.

As ECTs start their careers, they undergo significant transformations in identity influenced by their training and initial teaching experiences. Beijaard (2019) emphasises that learning to teach fundamentally shapes professional identity, which is integral to becoming a teacher. ECTs develop their identities based on past educational experiences, the pedagogical philosophies of their programmes, and their aspirations (Day and Gu, 2010). These formative experiences provide a foundation for their professional identities, yet this foundation is continuously reshaped as they encounter the practical

complexities of teaching. Wenger (1998) underscores that learning is not simply about gaining knowledge and skills but is also deeply connected to identity formation, as teachers are transformed by their participation in professional contexts. This ongoing process requires ECTs to critically reflect on their practice and re-evaluate their sense of self in novel and sometimes challenging ways (Flores and Day, 2006).

Exploring the dynamic evolution of professional identity, Schaap et al. (2021) find that ECTs experience significant shifts in their first two years of induction. Initially confronted with uncertainties about their roles, these challenges often evolve into balancing professional responsibilities with personal life. Emotional responses to these tensions can intensify, impacting classroom interactions, collegial relationships, and engagement with school leadership. Understanding how ECTs manage these pressures is crucial for identifying why some teachers remain committed to the profession while others leave (Cooper and Alvarado, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson and Birkeland, 2003; Lindqvist et al., 2014). This research underscores the critical role of school communities in providing the support necessary for identity formation and professional resilience (Section 6.4).

Advocating for more inclusive teacher education and support, Woodfine and Warner (2022) highlight the identity formation challenges faced by early career teachers from under-represented (UR) groups. These teachers often feel either invisible or overly visible within UK schools, where dominant cultural norms tend to favour white, middle-class, heterosexual female perspectives. Such an environment presents significant barriers to aligning personal identities with professional expectations, reinforcing the urgent need for systemic change to support a truly diverse teaching workforce.

The influence of social media further complicates teacher identity formation. Carpenter et al. (2023) note that while digital platforms provide opportunities for professional expression and reflection, they also pose risks such as "context collapse," where content can unintentionally reach unintended audiences. This risk can discourage teachers from fully engaging online, while idealised portrayals of teaching may create unrealistic comparisons that mislead or demotivate ECTs. My participant Gladys shared her experience of using social media to document and critically reflect on her teaching journey: "I created my own Instagram blog tracking my journey, critically reflecting and my progression" (Gladys, 5/03/2023). Her experience underscores the growing role of digital platforms in shaping teacher identities, offering both opportunities for growth and challenges to authenticity.

In summary, professional identity is a dynamic and evolving construct shaped by the interplay of individual experiences, emotions, and professional contexts. Hong et al. (2018) and Van den Berg (2002) underscore the importance of managing tensions and sustaining motivation, while Beijaard (2019) and Flores and Day (2006) highlight the transformative nature of identity formation as ECTs transition into practice. Supportive school environments, effective leadership, and engagement within professional communities are pivotal in enabling ECTs to navigate this complex phase. At the same time, systemic

barriers for under-represented groups (Woodfine and Warner, 2022) and the opportunities and challenges posed by social media (Carpenter et al., 2023) add further layers to the process. Recognising these dynamics is essential for fostering resilient, adaptive, and authentic professional identities among ECTs.

Spoke 6- Teacher Agency:

The transition from teacher education to initial teaching practice marks a pivotal period for ECTs, involving significant identity shifts. Beauchamp and Thomas (2011:7) describe this phase as "a search for agency, for a strong presence within a teaching context," highlighting how agency, the outward expression of identity, enables ECTs to shape and grow their professional selves. Chavez et al. (2023) emphasise that as teachers gain clarity and confidence in their professional identities, their sense of agency strengthens, empowering them to take meaningful actions and make decisions. This interconnected relationship underscores how robust professional identities foster greater agency in teaching.

Teacher agency involves intentional actions to effect change in classrooms, enhancing pupil outcomes and professional growth. It is linked to autonomy, decision-making, and beliefs, helping individuals navigate and influence their experiences (Biesta et al., 2015; Hamid et al., 2014; Keogh et al., 2012). McAlpine and Amundsen (2009:112) state that "agency represents the fact that students, and individuals generally, construct their histories, 're-story' themselves, in terms of personal intentions and the ability to influence in various ways the experiences they have." For ECTs, agency is crucial as they balance personal goals with institutional expectations in complex environments. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) adds that having the power to act (agency) is influenced by history and culture, emphasising that creating something valuable requires the ability to act despite larger influences.

The development of agency among ECTs is gradual and multifaceted. Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) explore the multifaceted nature of agency among ECTs, revealing three main aspects: the recognition of its importance and need for development, instances of perceived lack of agency, and the possession of agency through their experiences. Initially, new teachers often feel like outsiders, seeking resources and support to navigate professional challenges. Over time, they gain comfort and control in their roles, reflecting the evolution of their agency. This process involves navigating multiple boundaries and contexts, underscoring the complexity of agency and the importance of relational agency, where teachers see themselves as integral to community change. This links to the concept developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) called legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), which describes learning as a progressive journey toward becoming a more central participant in professional practices.

Teacher agency is deeply rooted in the concept of a 'personal interpretive framework,' as described by Kelchtermans (2019). This framework consists of the cognitions and beliefs that teachers use to observe, interpret, and react to their professional experiences. For ECTs, agency involves not only the ability to

perform tasks but also the process of making value-laden judgements and sense-making. Teachers constantly interpret their experiences and make decisions based on their personal values and beliefs. Their willingness or unwillingness to act in particular ways is shaped by this interpretive lens, influencing their professional practice and responses to situations.

This interpretive process is further illustrated in Buchanan's (2015) exploration of how teachers engage with new policies and professional discourses. Rather than approaching these elements as "tabulae rasae" (blank slates), teachers bring their "own pre-existing identities" into these engagements (Buchanan, 2015:701). They actively draw on personal histories, beliefs, and experiences to "interpret, learn from, evaluate, and appropriate" new work conditions (Buchanan, 2015:701). This dynamic process reforms and remakes their professional identities, enabling teachers to carve out their "professional agency" and exercise autonomy within workplace constraints. In doing so, agency becomes a means for teachers to actively shape their professional practices while responding to evolving challenges and opportunities.

Interestingly, recent findings indicate that professional agency in the classroom does not necessarily increase with experience (Liyuan et al., 2022). This underscores the need for ongoing support to nurture and enhance teachers' agency, especially for ECTs. Without adequate guidance, the challenges of adapting to the profession may undermine their sense of agency. However, with targeted support, these obstacles can be opportunities to strengthen their professional agency.

Sullivan et al. (2021) highlight a tension ECTs face between external accountability pressures and the development of their professional agency. Performative demands often conflict with internal goals, particularly as ECTs feel pressure to meet high standards and be "classroom ready" from the outset. Nevertheless, ECTs demonstrate significant agency by prioritising relational aspects of teaching, such as fostering positive relationships with students and creating supportive learning environments. These relational priorities, often undervalued in performative measures, highlight the multifaceted nature of teaching. Sullivan et al. (2021) argue for a broader definition of teacher quality, one that recognises ECTs' agency and supports their professional growth in ways that transcend narrow, performative evaluations.

The concept of polyphonic agency, discussed by Heikkilä and Eriksen (2024) and inspired by Bakhtin's (1986) dialogical perspective, highlights the importance of incorporating multiple voices and perspectives in teacher research literacy, acknowledging, and managing the diverse inputs from research, policy, and practice. This approach enables teachers to critically engage with research, policy, and practice while maintaining autonomy and professional judgement. By fostering polyphonic agency, teachers gain a sophisticated understanding of research literacy, empowering them to make contextually informed decisions and integrate findings seamlessly into their professional routines.

Arantes and Buchanan (2023) redefine teacher agency in post-digital classrooms, introducing the concept of "educational data advocates." This framework positions teachers as active agents in critically engaging with and influencing data practices of educational technologies. Data encompasses student performance, behavioural analytics, and predictive tools, traditionally used in commercially driven contexts. Rather than passive users, teachers are empowered to advocate for ethical and equitable data practices, promoting a pedagogical economy centred on fairness. By leveraging their influence, educators can shape policies and practices, ensuring technology supports meaningful and ethical educational outcomes.

Teacher identity formation, central to becoming a teacher, is both complex and challenging. Scholars such as Izadinia (2013) and Nguyen and Loughland (2018) note that aspiring teachers often face tensions between caring for pupils, maintaining classroom control, and managing work-life boundaries. These challenges, coupled with the pressure to align their teaching philosophies with mentor expectations, create emotional strain and insecurity, complicating their professional identity development (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011; Pillen et al., 2013).

Identity development occurs within diverse professional contexts, shaped by interactions with varied participants, pedagogies, and practices (Beijaard, 2019; Steadman, 2021). ECTs who experience autonomy, competence, and meaningful relationships are better equipped to engage positively with these challenges. As noted by Flores and Day (2006), navigating these emotional and intellectual complexities requires continuous re-evaluation of their identities. This ongoing transformation is essential for fostering resilient, effective teachers who can thrive despite professional challenges (Chavez et al., 2023; Hong et al., 2018).

In summary, teacher agency is pivotal for ECTs as they navigate identity formation and professional challenges. Agency, described as the outward expression of identity, empowers ECTs to take meaningful action (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011; Chavez et al., 2023). It involves decision-making, autonomy, and balancing personal goals with institutional demands (McAlpine and Amundsen, 2009). While relational aspects, such as fostering student relationships, demonstrate significant agency, performative pressures often conflict with internal goals (Sullivan et al., 2021). Concepts like polyphonic agency (Heikkilä and Eriksen, 2024) and educational data advocacy (Arantes and Buchanan, 2023) expand the discourse, focusing on critical engagement with research and ethical practices. Despite the complexities of identity development, supportive environments that promote autonomy, competence, and relatedness help ECTs thrive (Flores and Day, 2006; Hong et al., 2018).

In conclusion, the interplay between identity formation and agency is pivotal for ECTs' professional growth, influencing how they navigate challenges and assert autonomy (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011; Chavez et al., 2023). While performative pressures and systemic barriers complicate this process (Sullivan et al., 2021; Woodfine and Warner, 2022), fostering supportive, autonomy-focused environments enhances resilience and effectiveness, enabling ECTs to thrive in complex professional landscapes (Flores and Day, 2006; Arantes and Buchanan, 2023).

2.6 Segment 4: Policy and Contextual Influences on Early Career Teachers
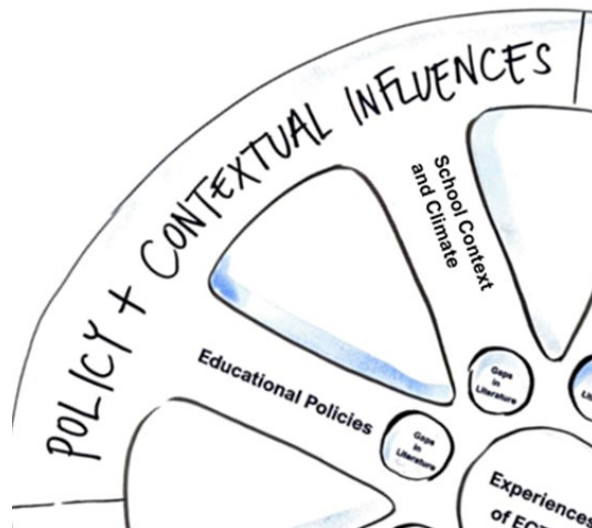
The experiences of ECTs are shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including educational policies and the specific contexts of the schools where they begin their careers (Ellis and Childs, 2023; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019b; Stacey, 2019). Understanding how these elements influence ECTs is crucial for improving teacher retention, job satisfaction, and overall teaching effectiveness (Flores and Day, 2006; Gu et al., 2023; Kraft et al., 2016). This section examines the dual influences of educational policies, particularly those related to initial teacher training (ITT) and the early career framework (ECF), as well as the school contexts and climates that affect ECTs' professional experiences (Cohen et al., 2009; Hordern and Brooks, 2023; Schuck et al., 2012). By exploring these factors, we can better understand the challenges faced by new teachers and identify ways to support them more effectively (Collie et al., 2012; Mutton and Burn, 2024; Ovenden-Hope and Passy, 2020).

Spoke 7- Educational Policies:

When examining the experiences of ECTs transitioning from ITT to their first year of teaching, it is crucial to consider the policies that govern ITT before addressing those specific to ECTs, such as induction policies and the ECF. According to Ellis and Childs (2023), ITT in England is currently in a state of crisis, largely due to decades of policy reforms, with significant changes introduced since 2019. These recent policies have fundamentally reshaped ITT, mandating that all providers adhere to a centrally controlled core curriculum from 2024 onwards, with stringent government oversight on every detail, including reading lists (Department for Education, 2021a). However, Hordern and Brooks (2023) argue that these mandated reading lists predominantly emphasise a narrow, scientific approach to educational research, prioritising large-scale empirical studies, meta-analyses, and articles from psychology and educational psychology journals. Helgetun and Menter (2022) note a broader policy shift in teacher education from an era focused on "measurement" to one dominated by "evidence," where evidence-based practice has become central to policy justification.

Compliance with these policies is enforced through rigorous inspections, with the threat of programme closures for those failing to meet the required standards (Ofsted, 2022). Additionally, the establishment of the National Institute of Teaching (NIoT) as the government's new flagship teacher education institution, despite its lack of prior experience or credentials, has raised concerns about the centralisation of teacher education (Martin, 2022). Ellis and Childs (2023) suggest that this combination of policies has resulted in England having "the most tightly regulated and centrally controlled system of ITT anywhere in the world" (Ellis and Childs, 2023: 2). Steadman (2023a) further argues that these reforms, alongside changes to teacher induction and early career development, have constricted the space for teachers to develop their professional identity, leading to the professionalisation of the role through a narrow curriculum that limits critical thinking and professional autonomy.

The ITT core content framework (ITTCCF), introduced following the recommendations of the Carter Review of ITT (Carter, 2015), reflects the government's vision of a highly controlled and centralised approach to teacher training. Initially published in 2016, the framework was updated in 2019 based on the input of an 'expert advisory group' (DfE, 2019b). However, Mutton and Burn (2024) argue that this update has further entrenched the inspection-led accountability regime. Hordern and Brooks (2023) critically assess the ITTCCF, warning that it is likely to become the de facto standard curriculum, potentially limiting trainee teachers' exposure to diverse educational theories and practices.

The ITTCCF (DFE, 2019b) was designed to align with the content of the ECF (DFE, 2019a), ensuring consistency and a seamless transition between ITT and early career teaching. The 2019 Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy introduced significant changes to the induction process, extending the induction period from one year to two, with the ECF becoming the cornerstone of this extended induction (DFE, 2019d). According to Gu et al. (2023), the ECF has had a generally positive impact on

ECTs, particularly in enhancing their self-efficacy, resilience, job satisfaction, and overall wellbeing. However, the success of the ECF in fostering these outcomes is heavily dependent on the quality of leadership and the professional development culture within schools.

Despite its strengths, the ECF does not address broader systemic issues such as workload, the negative effects of school budget cuts, high-stakes accountability, and the challenges faced by teachers in deprived or isolated schools (Ovenden-Hope and Passy, 2020). Atkinson (2024) questions the effectiveness of the extended induction period, noting that many respondents found the additional year redundant, as it often repeated content from ITT and added to their workload rather than alleviating it. A survey by the National Association of Headteachers (NAHT, 2021) revealed mixed support for the two-year induction, with less than half of school leaders believing that the ECF would have a positive impact on the professional growth of ECTs, despite a majority supporting the extension. One of my respondents, Jeffrey, reflected this sentiment, commenting: "The deputy head (who is my mentor) told me that if it was still the NQT system, she would be passing me off" (Jeffrey, 17/06/23). This highlights the perception among some ECTs that the extended induction may not always offer added value but instead prolongs a process that could otherwise be completed under the previous NQT system.

Moreover, the ECF's structured support, which includes mentoring and regular assessments designed to help ECTs apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings (DfE, 2024a), places significant pressure on ECTs. The Walker et al. (2024) report corroborates these concerns, revealing that the ECF Early Roll-Out did not significantly affect retention rates and highlighted considerable challenges with workload management among ECTs during their induction. Many participants were unable to complete their induction-related activities within the allotted 10% timetable reduction, suggesting a misalignment between the framework's objectives and the practical realities of teaching (Walker et al., 2024).

The ECF aligns closely with the teachers' standards, structuring its guidance around the eight standards that underpin ECTs' professional development and teaching practices. These standards provide a framework for ECTs to measure progress, set expectations for conduct and practice, and foster lifelong learning (DfE, 2024a). However, the performative emphasis within these standards has been criticised for creating significant anxiety, workload, and pressure for ECTs. Quirk-Marku (2024) suggests a more gradual, staged approach to meeting these expectations over five years to alleviate such challenges.

Concerns about the ECF's effectiveness are echoed in research by Murtagh et al. (2022), which critiques its one-size-fits-all approach. The framework is criticised for repeating content from ITT and failing to address the diverse needs of ECTs within their unique school contexts. Mentors reported frustration with the ECF's rigidity, which often necessitated informal, additional support to bridge gaps, particularly in subject-specific teaching. The lack of personalisation and opportunities for collaborative learning

between mentors and mentees leaves the process feeling disconnected from the realities of classroom practice.

In summary, these policies support ECTs' professional learning journey by combining structured development with personal growth. While the ITTCCF and ECF aim to provide a seamless transition into teaching, they have been criticised for their rigid, one-size-fits-all approach and repetitive content (Murtagh et al., 2022). Although the ECF enhances ECTs' resilience and self-efficacy, it often increases workload and fails to address diverse school contexts (Gu et al., 2023; Walker et al., 2024). The forthcoming ITTECF, set to launch in September 2025, merges the ECF and ITTCCF to offer a more integrated and context-responsive framework (DfE, 2024b). As discussed in Chapter 1, my research, conducted during the ECF's implementation, provides valuable insights into its impact on ECTs and informs this transition.

Spoke 8- School Contexts and Climate:

Kutsyuruba et al. (2019b) emphasise the necessity for induction programmes that are responsive to the specific social, political, cultural, and personal contexts in which teachers work. The different environments and cultures within schools significantly influence the experiences of ECTs, impacting their job satisfaction, retention, and professional growth (Flores and Day, 2006; Stacey, 2019). Key contextual factors within schools—such as socio-economic status, leadership, pupil behaviour, and school policies—play a critical role in shaping these experiences (Kutsyuruba et al., 2019b; Stacey, 2019). For example, Tim, a participant in Stacey's (2019) study, noted that "some teachers were better suited to particular schools than others, and that if a teacher was 'wrong' for a particular school, they simply would not 'survive'" (Stacey, 2019: 406). This highlights the importance of aligning teachers with school environments that match their strengths and values to ensure professional longevity and satisfaction (Stacey, 2019; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019a).

Stacey (2019) further argues that research on ECTs often overlooks the broader social and cultural environments in which they work. Studies frequently examine specific factors such as pupil behaviour, mentoring, and leadership but tend to neglect larger structural issues within schools, such as inadequate support systems and adverse working conditions, that may also affect new teachers (Billingsley et al., 2004; Flores and Day, 2006; Hulme et al., 2021; Maready et al., 2021; Schuck et al., 2018; Stacey, 2019). This suggests a need for a more comprehensive approach that integrates these broader contextual factors into our understanding of ECTs' experiences (Cohen et al., 2009; Stacey, 2019).

The significance of school context in influencing both teacher retention and effectiveness are well-documented. Improvements in school leadership, academic expectations, teacher relationships, and school safety are all independently associated with reductions in teacher turnover and improvements in pupil achievement (Cohen et al., 2009; Kraft et al., 2016). A supportive school environment,

characterised by strong leadership, high academic expectations, and a safe, orderly climate, is crucial for fostering both teacher retention and pupil success (Collie et al., 2012; Kraft et al., 2016).

The importance of school climate as a factor in both teacher and pupil outcomes is underscored by extensive research. A positive school climate, defined by a collaborative and supportive atmosphere, is linked to higher job satisfaction, lower stress levels, and greater teaching effectiveness among teachers (Collie et al., 2012; Cohen et al., 2009). Furthermore, teachers in collaborative cultures are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards teaching, while those in negative school contexts may see their initially strong personal identities destabilised, leading to more routine and less creative teaching practices (Flores and Day, 2006; Schuck, 2016).

Cohen et al. (2009) highlight four fundamental elements of school climate: the physical and social-emotional safety, the quality of educational practices, the nature of relationships and collaboration, and the overall structural environment. These elements interact in complex ways to shape the educational experience for both teachers and pupils, highlighting the multifaceted nature of school climate (Cohen et al., 2009; Collie, et al., 2012).

Schools that foster a supportive environment, characterised by collaboration, openness to diverse views, and empowerment, play a critical role in promoting resilience among teachers, contributing to job satisfaction and retention (Schuck, 2018; Kraft et al., 2016). According to Tugade and Fredrickson's (2004) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, environments that encourage positive emotional experiences help build psychological resilience, enabling teachers to better cope with the challenges of the profession. Similarly, Harbin (2021) highlights that schools which empower teachers and nurture leadership identities enhance teachers' emotional resilience, supporting their ability to manage stress and remain committed to their roles. A positive school climate not only fosters resilience but also benefits all stakeholders, including pupils, teachers, administrators, and parents, while a negative climate can pose risks to their wellbeing (Cohen et al., 2009; Collie et al., 2012).

Teachers working in more advantaged areas often find their work more intellectually and emotionally satisfying, whereas those in disadvantaged areas face greater demands and stress, which can impact their job satisfaction and retention (Stacey, 2019; Kraft et al., 2016). This division highlights the importance of considering school context in discussions about teacher quality and classroom readiness, as current policy discourses often fail to fully address these nuanced challenges (Stacey, 2019; Cohen et al., 2009).

In considering school contexts, it is essential to address the concept of 'toxic schools', which can have profound consequences for teacher morale, job satisfaction, and professional growth. Blase and Blase (2002) and Ladd (2011) highlight that toxic environments undermine collaboration, increase stress, and contribute to dissatisfaction. Woodley and McGill (2018) argue that toxic schools can exist across a range of settings—whether high- or low-achieving, urban or rural, affluent or disadvantaged—and are

often marked by low job satisfaction, unclear purpose, poor academic motivation, and hostility between staff, pupils, and leadership. Teachers in these settings may struggle to recognise the toxicity, instead internalising the challenges and questioning their competence, which can be especially destabilising for ECTs.

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping toxic school environments. Woodley and McGill (2018) note that leadership in these settings often fails to address the negative culture, perpetuating conditions that hinder teacher development. Snow et al. (2021) reinforce this by identifying toxic leadership as a significant contributor to stress, burnout, and reduced self-confidence among teachers. Leadership practices such as vague feedback, excessive control, and inadequate support create environments of heightened pressure, where collaboration is limited and teachers often feel isolated (Hargreaves, 2003; Schneider and Bryk, 2002; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). In such contexts, high staff turnover may reflect misaligned goals or a lack of support, while low turnover can sometimes indicate teacher disengagement and a reluctance to seek new opportunities due to feelings of inadequacy (Haberman, 2005; Simon and Johnson, 2015; Smithers and Robinson, 2005; Kelchtermans, 1999).

Furthermore, new teachers in toxic schools are particularly vulnerable. As Woodley and McGill (2018) point out, ECTs often focus on mastering their teaching basics, leaving them ill-prepared to navigate the social and relational complexities of toxic cultures. Without adequate support, ECTs may endure these environments rather than develop professionally (Williams et al., 2001), increasing the risk of emotional strain and attrition. Research highlights the importance of fostering school climates that prioritise psychological wellbeing—encompassing social-emotional safety, support systems, and strong relational networks (Powell et al., 2018; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Cohen et al., 2009).

Although wellbeing is multifaceted, Snow et al. (2021) and Oishi et al. (2019) emphasise the role of psychological richness, which includes openness to diverse experiences and meaningful social connections. Schools that fail to nurture these aspects risk creating environments that are not only professionally challenging but also emotionally draining for teachers. This study does not measure overall wellbeing, participants' mood is tracked using an emoji scale, as discussed in section 4.5a. This approach, informed by research from Davies et al. (2024) and Kaye and Schweiger (2023), provides valuable insight into the specific wellbeing challenges ECTs face in varying school environments.

In summary, school contexts and climate significantly shape ECTs' experiences, influencing their professional growth, retention, and job satisfaction (Flores and Day, 2006; Stacey, 2019). Supportive environments foster collaboration, resilience, and teacher effectiveness, while toxic schools undermine morale, creating isolation and hindering development (Woodley and McGill, 2018; Cohen et al., 2009). Leadership plays a critical role, with effective leaders cultivating positive climates and mitigating challenges linked to workload, behaviour, and socio-economic disparities (Kraft et al., 2016; Harbin,

2021). This section also highlights how negative environments, such as those described by my participant April, impact wellbeing.

In conclusion, the professional journey of ECTS is significantly shaped by both the educational policies that govern their training and induction, and the specific contexts of the schools where they work (Ellis and Childs, 2023; Stacey, 2019; Kraft et al., 2016). While policies like the ITTCCF and the ECF aim to provide structured support and consistent standards, their effectiveness is contingent on implementation and the quality of school leadership (Gu et al., 2023; Hordern and Brooks, 2023; DfE, 2019a; DFE,2019b). Additionally, the school climate, including factors like leadership, socio-economic context, and pupil behaviour, plays a critical role in influencing teacher retention and job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2012; Cohen et al., 2009; Flores and Day, 2006). To foster a resilient and effective teaching workforce, it is essential to address both the policy frameworks and the contextual factors that impact ECTs, ensuring that support systems are responsive to the diverse challenges they face in different educational settings (Ovenden-Hope and Passy, 2020; Quirk-Marku, 2024).

2.7 Integration and Interaction of Spokes

This section integrates the diverse literature on the challenges faced by ECTs, the support systems in place, identity formation, and policy influences, showing how these elements collectively shape the experiences of ECTs. By connecting these various areas, a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted experiences of ECTs emerges, highlighting how they interact to influence professional growth and career trajectories.
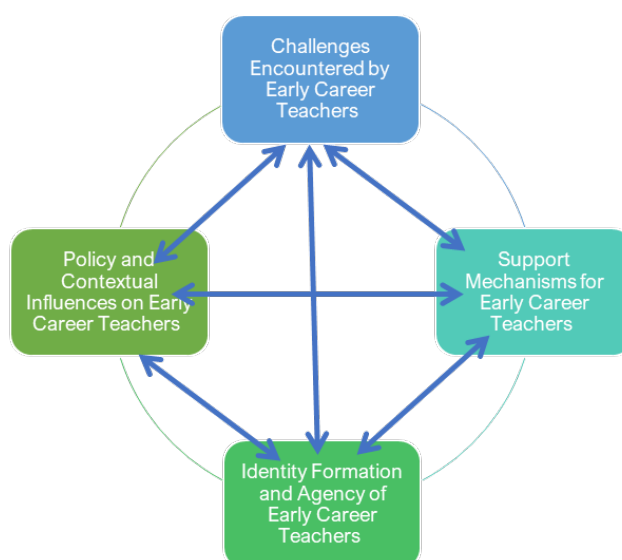
Figure 3- A model of factors influencing ECTs as they become teachers.

The challenges ECTs face, such as classroom management, workload, and time management, are significant stressors that contribute to high attrition rates (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011; Hulme and Wood, 2022; Schuck et al., 2018). Effective support systems like mentoring, induction programmes, and CPD are crucial for helping ECTs manage these challenges. For instance, mentoring offers guidance and emotional support, helping ECTs better handle classroom behaviours and workload (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019a). Structured support through induction and professional development can alleviate some of the pressures associated with teaching demands, reducing stress and attrition (Mena and Clarke, 2021a; Whalen et al., 2019a). Without such support, ECTs are more vulnerable to burnout and early exits from the profession (Schaefer et al., 2021).

The process of identity formation for ECTs is closely tied to the challenges they encounter during their early years. Challenges like maintaining managing behaviour and excessive workloads force ECTs to continuously adapt, reshaping their professional identities (Flores and Day, 2006). Adequate support strengthens this identity, while a lack of support can result in a fragile self-concept as a teacher (Hong et al., 2017). This dynamic, highlights the need for robust support systems to foster resilient professional identities (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2011).

Educational policies like the ECF play a significant role in framing the challenges faced by ECTs. Policies are designed to address common issues like classroom management and workload by providing structured support, including reduced teaching hours (DfE, 2019a). However, inadequate implementation or insufficient resources can undermine these policies, leaving ECTs to struggle with persistent stress and attrition risks (Ovenden-Hope and Passy, 2020). Therefore, effective policy execution is crucial for mitigating these challenges and enhancing ECTs' professional experiences (Hulme and Wood, 2022).

Contextual factors in the teaching environment also significantly influence the challenges ECTs face. These factors include socio-economic status, school leadership quality, pupil behaviour, and institutional policies (Stacey, 2019). For example, ECTs in disadvantaged schools often deal with more stress due to pupil behaviour and insufficient leadership support, leading to higher attrition rates (Schuck et al., 2018). Conversely, schools in more advantaged areas often provide a more intellectually and emotionally supportive environment for teachers, reinforcing the importance of school context in teacher quality and retention (Kraft et al., 2016). Although toxic schools, as noted by Woodley and McGil (2018), may be high- or low-achieving, in affluent or disadvantaged areas, and located in both urban and rural settings.

Support systems also play a critical role in ECT identity formation. Mentoring provides models of professional behaviour, helping ECTs integrate into the school community and develop their teaching strategies (Malderez et al., 2007). Professional development further refines their teaching abilities, boosting confidence and reinforcing a positive professional identity (Sullivan et al., 2021). Emotional and

psychological support from mentors and induction programmes also fosters a sense of belonging and professional identity (Kelchtermans and Vanassche, 2017).

Policies like the ECF mandate structured support systems that are crucial for ECT development. These policies ensure consistent access to mentoring and CPD, which help ECTs navigate the early years of teaching (DfE, 2023a). They aim to reduce workload pressures and create a supportive environment that enables ECTs to thrive (Ovenden-Hope and Passy, 2020). However, the effectiveness of such policies is dependent on their implementation and the availability of resources, further emphasising the importance of strong leadership and institutional support (Hulme et al., 2021).

The success of support systems in helping ECTs overcome challenges is heavily influenced by the school environment. Mentoring and CPD can significantly reduce stress and improve job satisfaction, but the quality of these programmes depends on the resources and commitment of school leadership (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009). Policies like the ECF aim to standardise mentoring and professional development for new teachers, but their success hinges on proper implementation and adequate resourcing (DfE, 2023a). Strong leadership and a supportive school culture are essential to the effectiveness of these initiatives (Hulme and Wood, 2022).

Educational policies not only shape ECT experiences but also influence their identity formation by setting expectations for professional development. Structured support systems under these policies, such as mentoring, provide essential guidance that helps ECTs develop their professional identities (Ovenden-Hope and Passy, 2020). However, successful identity formation is contingent upon the effective implementation of these policies, which varies depending on the school context (Hulme et al., 2021).

In conclusion, ECT experiences are shaped by the interplay of challenges, support systems, identity formation, and educational policies. Effective support systems mitigate challenges like classroom management and workload, while also fostering the development of a strong professional identity. Educational policies, such as the ECF, provide the necessary framework for supporting ECTs, but their success relies on proper execution and resourcing. School context further influences these dynamics, highlighting the need for a holistic approach to supporting ECTs to improve job satisfaction and retention (Schaefer et al., 2021).

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the complex interplay of challenges, support systems, identity formation, and contextual factors that shape the experiences of ECTs. It is evident that the transition into teaching is marked by significant stressors, including classroom management, excessive workload, and time management pressures. Without adequate support, these challenges can lead to attrition, burnout, and stagnation in professional growth. However, structured systems such as mentoring, induction programmes, and continuous professional development have been shown to mitigate these difficulties and enhance resilience, job satisfaction, and retention.

The chapter also highlights the pivotal role of school contexts, including leadership quality, socio-economic conditions, and organisational culture, in influencing ECT experiences. While positive school climates foster collaboration, resilience, and professional effectiveness, toxic environments undermine morale, isolate teachers, and hinder development. Leadership emerges as a critical factor, capable of either fostering supportive conditions or exacerbating existing challenges.

Educational policies, particularly the ECF, offer a structured approach to addressing ECT needs. However, their effectiveness is frequently compromised by rigid implementation, insufficient resources, and failure to account for the diversity of school contexts. These limitations underscore the need for more flexible, context-sensitive approaches that align with the unique challenges faced by ECTs in varied educational settings.

In synthesising the literature, this chapter emphasises the interconnectedness of challenges, support systems, and contexts in shaping ECTs' professional identities and long-term career trajectories. By addressing these factors holistically, the education system can better support new teachers, ensuring their wellbeing, effectiveness, and retention in the profession.

Building on these findings, this study sought to address key questions outlined below that remained underexplored, particularly how ECTs experienced the process of joining and participating in the primary school community of practice (PSCoP). It examined the factors shaping their early career experiences, the significant moments they identified, and how these influenced their professional identities over time. Additionally, the research investigated the emotional dimensions of their journey, exploring how positive and negative mood states impacted their professional experiences and identity development. Finally, the study considered how ECTs perceived different types of value—immediate, potential, applied, realized, and transformative—through their participation in the PSCoP. These questions aimed to provide a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of ECTs, addressing critical gaps in the literature and contributing to improved support and retention strategies.

The key research questions guiding this study are:

1) How do early career teachers (ECTs) experience becoming a member of the primary school community of practice (PSCoP)?

    a) What factors shape the experiences of ECTs as they begin participation in the PSCoP?

    b) What do ECTs identify as significant moments in the PSCoP?

    c) How do ECTs' ideas of their professional identity develop over time?

    d) What experiences lead to positive or negative mood states for ECTs, and how do these emotional responses shape their professional experiences and identity development?

    e) How do ECTs experience and perceive different types of value—immediate, potential, applied, realized, and transformative—through their participation in the PSCoP?

These questions aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing ECTs' professional growth. The study employed a conceptual framework based on the sociocultural concepts of communities of practice (CoP), legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) and the value creation framework (VCF). The following chapter elaborates on this framework, detailing how it informed the research design and provided a lens to analyse ECTs' experiences, trajectories, and the value they derived from participating in school communities.

Chapter 3 – Conceptual Foundations

3.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the conceptual framework I developed for this research, providing a lens to explore the lived experiences of early career teachers (ECTs) as they transition into the profession. By drawing on the concepts of communities of practice (CoP), legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), and the value creation framework (VCF), I examined how ECTs engage with their professional communities, form their identities, and derive meaning and value from their participation. My conceptual framework was essential for analysing how ECTs navigate their roles within schools and how their professional growth is shaped by social interactions, support systems, and evolving practices. This framework aligned directly with my research questions, helping to unpack the complexities of ECTs' integration into the teaching profession.

These three concepts provided an initial conceptual foundation to guide the research. However, as the study progressed, the lived experiences of participants revealed patterns that were not fully anticipated within these frameworks. In response, a new visual model was developed during the data analysis process to more accurately represent the dynamic, non-linear professional journeys of early career teachers. While this chapter introduces the foundational concepts, the resulting model, shaped by the data, will be presented and discussed in Chapter 7.

3.2 An introduction to Communities of Practice

Communities of practice (CoP), as conceptualised by Wenger (1998), refers to groups of individuals who engage collectively in a process of learning within a shared domain of human endeavour. CoP are not merely defined by a common interest but by the members' active involvement in developing and maintaining a shared repertoire of resources, such as experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems. Wenger (1998:98) defines a CoP as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice". In the context of ECTs, CoP are particularly relevant as they often naturally emerge within primary school settings, offering a social framework that supports continuous professional growth. These communities, which can be either organically formed or more formally organised, enable ECTs to interact with experienced colleagues, exchange insights, seek guidance, and collaboratively address challenges. CoP provide a dynamic space where ECTs can learn through participation, fostering professional growth and enhancing their integration into the teaching profession. This collaborative environment can not only enhance ECTs' teaching practices but also facilitates the development of their professional identities.

Understanding CoP helps us to interpret the experiences of ECTs from leaving initial teacher training (ITT) through to their second year of teaching. CoP highlights the essential social interactions and shared practices that underpin ECTs' professional growth. They can provide a supportive environment where ECTs can observe, participate, and gradually take on more responsibilities, thus easing their transition. As ECTs receive continuous feedback and support from their peers and mentors, their self-perceptions of teaching competence evolve. This transformation is integral to understanding the changing perceptions of ECTs as they progress in their teaching careers.

LPP, introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991), explains how newcomers integrate into a community of practice through socially situated learning. This process involves novices engaging in the community's activities and gradually transitioning from peripheral participation to more central roles as they develop competence and legitimacy. Rooted in socio-cultural learning theory, which draws on scholars such as Vygotsky (1978), LPP emphasises that learning occurs through active involvement within a community rather than in isolation. However, this progression has been critiqued for its perceived linearity, which may oversimplify the fluid and non-linear trajectories of participation (Fuller et al., 2005). For ECTs, LPP explains their journey from being new entrants in the teaching profession to hopefully becoming more integral members of the school community. This concept is pivotal in understanding the experiences of ECTs as they transition from ITT to becoming established teachers, focusing on their gradual movement from peripheral to more central roles. LPP facilitates the identification of factors that support ECTs' transition to full participation in their school communities. It also highlights the hurdles and complexities they face during this shift and the strategies they use to overcome these challenges.

Value creation framework (VCF), more recently developed by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020), extends the theory of CoP by focusing on the value generated through participation in social learning contexts and how this value impacts participants. According to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020:43), "participants find value in a social learning space to the extent that their participation is seen as leading to a difference that matters". This framework provides a lens to evaluate how ECTs benefit from their engagement in the school CoP and the impact of this on their professional development. VCF highlights that the value generated can take many forms, from gaining new insights or approaches to fostering important conversations (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020).

In summary, this conceptual framework integrates the concepts of CoP, LPP, and VCF to examine how ECTs engage, learn, and grow within their professional environments. Together, these concepts provided a lens to explore ECTs' transitions into teaching and the value they derive from participation in their school communities. This framework underpinned the analysis and directly informed the research questions guiding this study.

3.3 Exploring Communities of Practice in More Depth

This section examines the concept of CoP, its foundations, and its relevance to understanding the professional journeys of ECTs. It explores how CoP function as dynamic social systems that support learning, collaboration, and professional growth, while also considering their potential limitations and applications in educational settings.

3.3a Communities of Practice (CoP)

The concept of CoP was introduced to explore how learning occurs among practitioners within social environments. Its focus has evolved over time. Lave and Wenger (1991) initially emphasised the dynamics between novices and experts, examining how newcomers develop professional identities. By 1998, the focus shifted to individual growth and progression within a group, moving from peripheral to core membership (Wenger, 1998). In 2002, CoP was adapted as a managerial strategy to improve organisational competitiveness (Wenger et al., 2002). Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) later clarified misconceptions, defining a CoP as 'ongoing learning partnerships that result in shared practice and competence' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020: 31). They introduced the term 'social learning space' for contexts often mislabelled as a CoP, such as networking events or online forums (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020: 32).

Lave and Wenger (1991: 98) define a community of practice as encompassing the relationships among individuals, activities, and their engagement with the world over time, intersecting with other related communities. They argue that a CoP is 'an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 98). Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that understanding a learning community requires examining how practices are reproduced and renegotiated over time, revealing its dynamics, boundaries, and the role of shared meanings in sustaining continuity.

For ECTs, becoming part of CoP within their schools and professional networks is crucial for shaping their professional growth and identity. Through relationships and interactions with colleagues, mentors, and pupils, ECTs adapt to their roles, understand responsibilities, and gain insight into pedagogical practices and school culture. This aligns with Lave and Wenger's (1991) view that CoP help individuals understand their roles and the sociocultural context they are part of, supporting knowledge retention and the process of making sense of their experiences.

Additionally, overlapping, nested and related communities, such as phase specific teaching groups and ECT networks, provide further opportunities for continuous learning and collaboration among ECTs. By examining the processes through which these communities sustain and evolve, such as mentorship programmes, collaborative planning sessions, and year group teaching teams, it is possible to gain insights into challenges faced by ECTs.
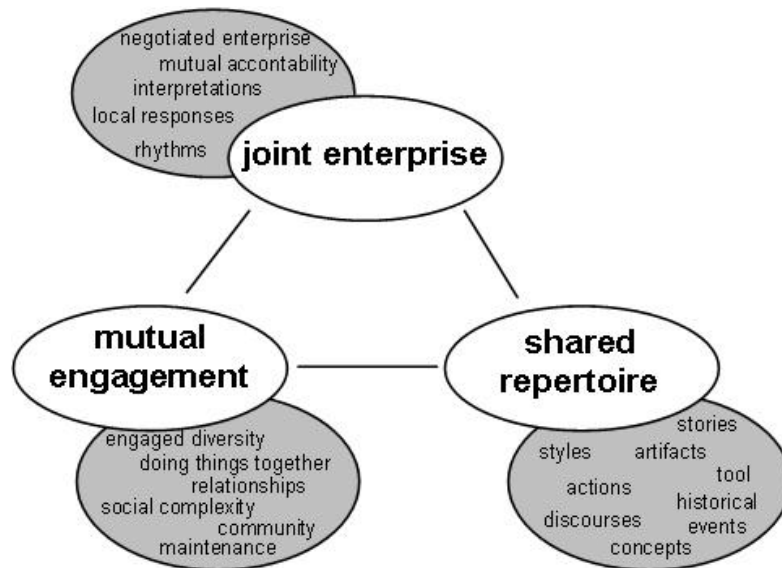
Figure 4- Three operational characteristics of communities of practice. (Wenger 1998: 72)

Wenger and Trayner (2015) identify three core elements of CoP—domain, practice, and community—aligned with operational characteristics: shared repertoire, joint enterprise, and mutual engagement. The domain refers to the shared focus that unites the community. For ECTs, this includes their commitment to teaching, improving outcomes, and contributing to their school, fostering a sense of belonging (Wenger, 1998). This shared domain encourages ECTs to progress from peripheral to more central roles within the school community. Members collaborate, share knowledge, and support one another, building relationships that facilitate collective learning.

Practice encompasses the shared routines, norms, and understandings developed by the community. Wenger (1998: 47) defines practice as 'a set of socially defined ways of doing things in a specific domain.' For ECTs, mastering these practices, such as classroom management techniques or communication strategies, is essential for integration and effectiveness.

Wenger et al. (2002) describe CoP as dynamic systems where learning and participation are closely intertwined. They define CoP as 'groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion...and who deepen their knowledge and expertise...by interacting on an ongoing basis' (Wenger et al., 2002: 4). For ECTs, engaging with peers and mentors supports their professional growth and helps them navigate the complexities of their new roles, fostering the development of their self-perceptions of teaching competence, as well as how others perceive their evolving professional identity.

Mutual engagement for ECTs involves regular interactions that foster a shared understanding of various challenges, such as discussing strategies for managing classroom behaviour. Joint enterprise reflects their collaborative efforts towards common goals, like designing cross-curricular projects that integrate subjects to create effective learning experiences. Shared repertoire includes the collective resources and language they use, such as lesson plans, assessment tools, and common terminology within their school.

The CoP concept offers valuable insights into how ECTs navigate their early teaching years. Being part of a CoP allows ECTs to collaborate with experienced colleagues, share insights, and solve problems collectively, supporting their professional identity development and competency acquisition (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Schaap et al., 2021). Wenger (1998: 214) highlights that 'the success of any practice depends not only on the availability of knowledge but also on the existence of a community capable of creating, refining, communicating, and using it.' This underscores the importance of positive school climates in enhancing CoP effectiveness and ensuring ECT success, as discussed in Chapter 2, Spoke 8.

CoP also facilitate the negotiation of meaning. Wenger (1998: 86) describes them as 'shared histories of learning,' where interactions with peers and mentors enable ECTs to interpret experiences and integrate new knowledge into practice, refining their teaching skills. CoP provide a supportive environment where ECTs receive guidance and feedback from experienced teachers. Mentorship within CoP is vital for building confidence, developing teaching strategies, and addressing challenges (Wenger, 1998: 100). Reflective practice, fostered within CoP, is essential for continuous improvement and professional growth (Wenger, 1998: 162).

Lave and Wenger (1991) also acknowledge limitations of CoP, particularly issues of participation. Marginalisation can occur when newcomers lack legitimacy or access to resources, often due to conflicting relationships with experienced members. Such conflicts can create competitive dynamics, hindering participation and learning. Lave and Wenger (1991: 76) note that 'masters prevent learning by acting...as pedagogical authoritarians,' treating apprentices as novices to be instructed rather than participants. Wenger et al. (2002) expand on this, highlighting how CoP can fail due to imbalances or inflexibility, leading to distrust, excessive ownership, or barriers for newcomers that stifle innovation or critique.

Studies employing the CoP framework highlight its importance in fostering teacher professional growth. For instance, Arastoopour Irgens et al. (2023) explore a teacher-researcher co-design partnership, demonstrating how CoP can bridge gaps between schools and universities, fostering sustainable partnerships for educational innovation. Similarly, Davidson and Hughes (2018) examine a CoP of science teachers within a professional development programme, illustrating how participation enables teachers to co-construct knowledge, negotiate meanings, and share expertise. Their research

introduces the concept of 'spectator novices'—teachers who engage primarily as observers rather than full participants, recognising their temporary detachment from the community due to plans to return to their teaching roles post-programme.

However, there are limitations to these studies. Davidson and Hughes (2018) relied on self-reported data and reflective interviews, limiting their ability to observe teachers' trajectories within the CoP. Additionally, Arastoopour Irgens et al. (2023) focused on a single school context and a specific CoP. My research explores multiple CoP across five different schools. This broader scope allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how different CoP operate and how to support ECTs in various educational settings.

3.3b Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP)

LPP describes how newcomers start with peripheral, less critical tasks and, through observation and participation, gradually take on more central roles within a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This concept is crucial for my research on ECTs, as it provides a framework to examine how ECTs begin their professional journey with simpler tasks and gradually develop competence and confidence to become core participants in their school communities. As illustrated in the model in Appendix J.

Lave and Wenger (1991) use examples from apprenticeships, such as midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers, and even alcoholics, to illustrate learning within communities of practice. They shift from "school-forged theories" to explore "learning-in-practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 61), advocating for the value of learning embedded in everyday activities over structured, didactic methods found in traditional schooling. This perspective is particularly relevant to ECTs as they transition from ITT to practical classroom experience, akin to apprentices who learn through direct involvement in their trade's daily practices. For ECTs, this involves lesson planning, classroom management, collaboration with colleagues, and reflective practices—providing authentic, context-rich learning opportunities not easily replicated in formal education settings. Although in 2024 we have seen the introduction of ITAP (intensive training and practice) and as part of the programme there are 'opportunities for trainees to plan and practise ITAP in a low stakes (possibly simulated) environment.' (DFE, 2023f) This is further discussed in section 2.3.

Lave and Wenger (1991) describe learning as a "situated activity," with its defining feature being "legitimate peripheral participation" (1991: 29). They argue that "learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners" and that mastering knowledge and skills involves a gradual process of moving towards "full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community" (1991: 29). This perspective emphasises that learning is not merely about acquiring abstract knowledge, but about actively engaging with and contributing to the practices of a community. Through this process, newcomers gradually become integrated, transitioning from peripheral participants to more competent

and recognised members, often referred to as "old-timers." This transformation of identity is illustrated in figure 5 below.
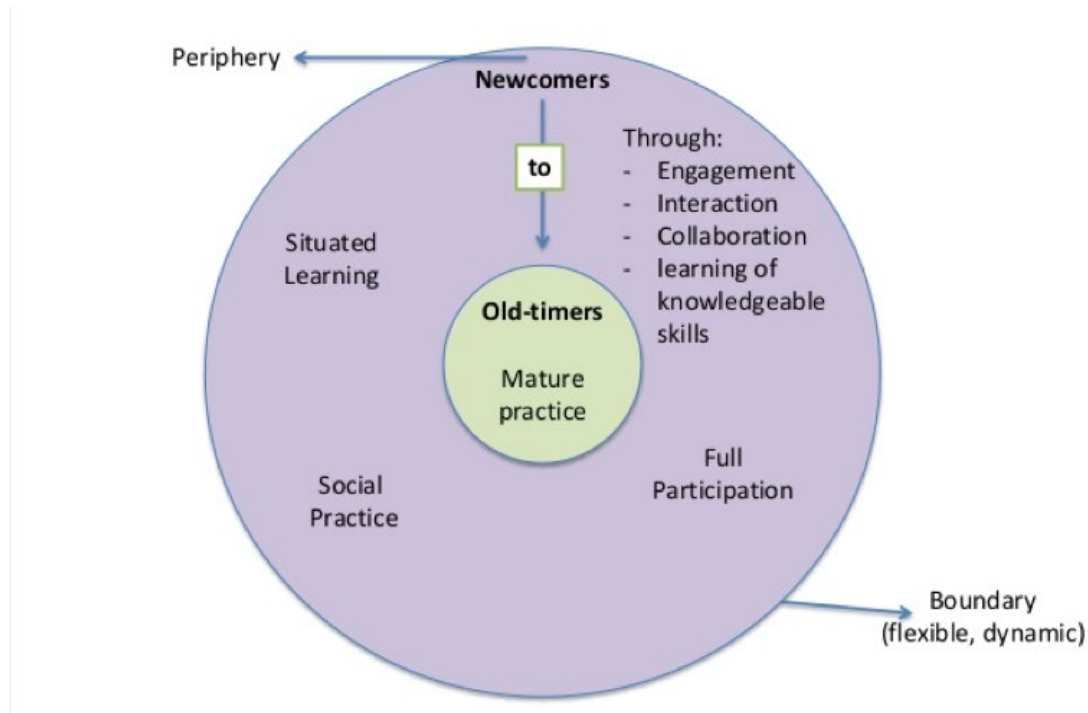
Figure 5 - Diagram showing the process of legitimate peripheral participation from newcomer to old-timer. Legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 56)

Peripheral participation represents the initial phase of involvement in a community of practice (CoP), where individuals engage in simpler tasks at the community's margins. Wenger (1998: 100) describes this stage as "being located in a social world." For ECTs, this means observing experienced colleagues, managing their own classrooms, participating in meetings, and assisting with extracurricular activities. These activities provided an uplift in their mood and understanding of community practices. As shown in Chapter 6, participants like Gladys and Ted progressed from peripheral roles to more central ones by taking on more responsibilities and leadership positions. Figure 9 which you will see further on in this chapter is a visual representation of this process.

As ECTs advance, they actively contribute, applying their skills and engaging more deeply with community activities (Wenger, 1998: 100). Full participation occurs when ECTs become core members of the community, recognised as competent practitioners who contribute to the community's growth and mentor new members. Evidence of this progression is detailed in section 6.5 of my data.

Lave and Wenger (1991: 36) emphasise that there is no fixed periphery or single core within a CoP; it encompasses various positions where newcomers might begin their journey. This is particularly relevant to my research, as some participants had unique trajectories shaped by their prior roles within the same school. For instance, one participant was a teaching assistant at her school before beginning teacher training, while another had been a student teacher at the same school during her training (section 6.2d). Their trajectories varied significantly: while some moved towards more central roles quickly, others appeared to remain static or followed less conventional paths.

A CoP is not centred around a single point of expertise; different members contribute to different aspects of practice, with various activities or sub-groups serving as centres of engagement and learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 36-37). Building on the concept of marginalisation and "spectator novices" by Davidson and Hughes (2018), learning within CoP can follow different trajectories. ECTs may progress from peripheral participation to full membership or take outbound trajectories, leaving the community. Wenger (1998: 154-155) identifies several participation forms: full (insider), non-participation (outsider), peripherality, and marginality, with non-participation sometimes being a conscious choice. Learning trajectories—peripheral, inbound, insider, boundary, and outbound—represent different paths within a CoP. Novices often follow inbound trajectories, gradually moving from the periphery to the core, while others may remain peripheral. Understanding these trajectories is essential for examining ECTs' professional growth and identity formation within their CoP.

In this study, I argue that ECTs' participation in established professional practices is crucial for developing skills, norms, and a sense of belonging. ECTs learn from experienced teachers, taking on board professional standards, and gradually assume more responsibilities, mirroring the learning pathway of Yucatec midwives, where practical knowledge is gained through active engagement (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 68). These social learning processes are vital for ECTs to build their professional identity and competence within a supportive community.

Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasise that activities, tasks, and understandings are shaped by broader systems of relationships that give them meaning. These systems evolve within social communities, where learning involves acquiring skills and reshaping one's identity through social interactions. The ECTs in my research engaged with their professional communities, gained skills and knowledge and reshaped their sense of self in relation to the teaching profession, adopting the community's norms, values, and behaviours (Wenger, 1991).

This concept is crucial for understanding ECTs' professional journeys, highlighting their progression from peripheral participation to full engagement within the teaching community. It has been widely used to explore newcomers' learning processes across various fields. For instance, Orsmond et al. (2022) investigated professional identity formation among medical students, illustrating how students begin with peripheral tasks and gradually take on central roles as their experience grows. Similarly, Killingberg et

al. (2023) offered a longitudinal perspective on graduates transitioning into workplace communities, outlining a three-step process: entering the workplace, manoeuvring at the periphery, and becoming effective operators. These studies provide a valuable framework for analysing ECTs' professional development, offering insights into their career trajectories and experiences. While Killingberg et al.'s (2023) three-step process aligns with some of my findings, my research identifies distinct stages, which are explored in detail in the results and discussion chapters.

Peripheral "Levels" of Participation in the community of scuba divers

Figure 5: Legitimate peripheral participation in the community of scuba divers as movement from a newly certified diver to an "oldtimer" (after a figure by Carlock (Carlock, 1990)).
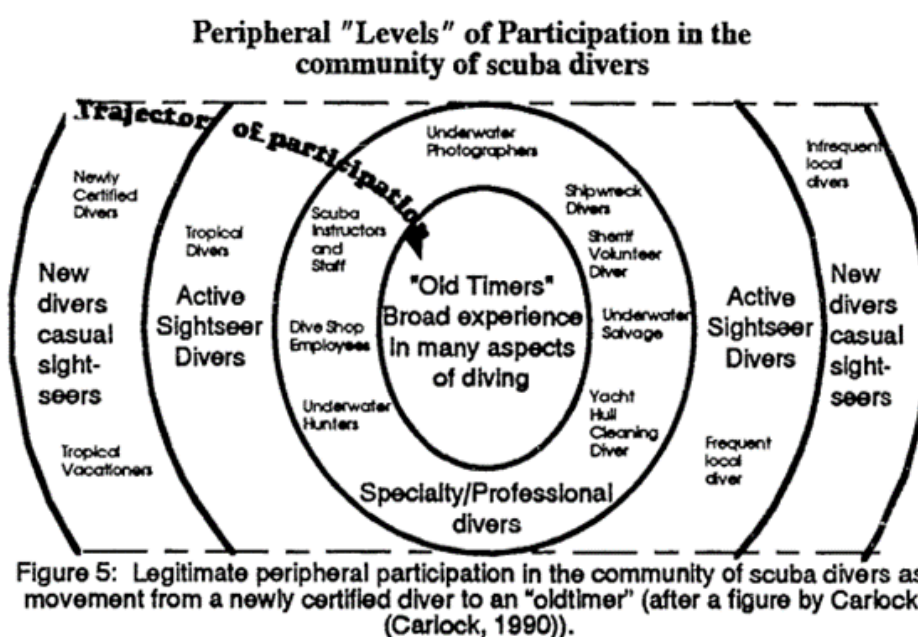
Figure 6 - Legitimate peripheral participation in the community of scuba divers (Lagache 1993)

I found relevance in the diagram from Lagache's (1993) research on scuba divers, which employs the concept of LPP to explain participation trends in recreational diving. While this diagram initially provided a helpful conceptual reference point, particularly in thinking about how participation might be visualised, it did not directly inform the structure of my study at the time. Instead, it became one of several inspirations that later influenced the development of my own model. That model, which is presented and discussed in Chapter 7, emerged during data analysis as a way of making sense of the emotional, professional, and participatory patterns evident in the lived experiences of ECTs. A more detailed version of it is included in Appendix J, where it illustrates how various practices might be seen at different levels of engagement within a community of practice (CoP), as well as the non-linear nature of professional growth, reflected metaphorically in the inclusion of slides, ladders, and stairs.

3.3c Value Creation Framework (VCF)

VCF emerges from the broader CoP framework. As Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020:43) state, "Participants find value in a social space to the extent that their participation is seen as leading to a difference that matters". Recognising the need to evaluate the impact of these communities, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) introduced VCF to systematically assess and understand the value generated through participation in these social learning spaces.

There is a huge debate around the concept of value that I do not have scope to fully address here. The notion of value is intricate and multifaceted, attracting interest but frequently leading to conceptual ambiguity among philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists. This ambiguity stems from its varying interpretations, whether narrow or broad, which have subsequently led to the creation of numerous value theory typologies over the past few decades (Kluckhohn, 1951; Gorsuch and Rokeach; Schwartz, 1992; Sills, 1968).

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) perspective on learning as value creation aligns with the concept of finding meaning in life. This approach represents a significant departure from traditional views, which often focus on acquiring knowledge and skills as commodities. Instead, VCF emphasises the importance of learners' experiences and their desire to make a meaningful difference. This shift transforms learning from a static process to a dynamic, living experience, highlighting personal development and the impact on one's life and community (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020:48).

Value creation is described as a dynamic and staged process, evolving through phases where various types of value are added at each stage. In a social learning environment, this highlights that value is not static but evolves and diversifies through continuous development and interaction. For ECTs, this concept underscores the significance of valuing each stage of their professional journey, including initial interactions that build foundational knowledge and relationships, even if they do not immediately produce tangible outcomes. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020:54) outline that "value created through social learning can be positive or negative". For instance, a new teaching strategy learned during professional development may seem promising and innovative. In practice, it might prove highly effective in engaging pupils, thereby adding significant value. Conversely, the same strategy might be inapplicable in a specific classroom context, leading to frustration and no noticeable improvement in pupil outcomes.

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) introduce four learning modes as essential mechanisms through which value is created within social learning spaces. These modes support the development of agency by structuring ways for individuals to engage with communities, explore ideas, align actions with shared goals, and reflect on learning processes. This is particularly relevant to my research as ECTs navigate their professional growth within CoP, providing insights into how ECTs engage, align, and reflect within their professional environments to enhance their development and integration.
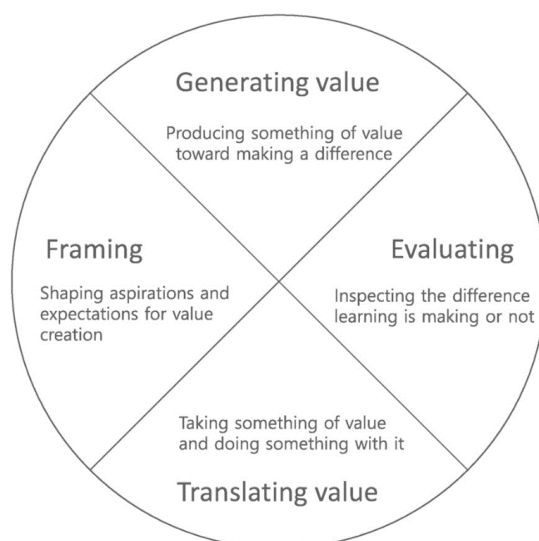
Figure 7- 'Four learning modes inherent in social spaces. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020, P. 63)

Participation in a CoP generates valuable resources, insights, and relationships through knowledge sharing, collaborative problem-solving, and networking. ECTs derive value by engaging in professional discussions, exchanging teaching strategies, and fostering supportive relationships with colleagues and mentors. For example, an ECT might join a collaborative lesson planning session, gaining fresh ideas and constructive feedback that enhance their teaching practice (see section 6.4a).

Assessing the outcomes and benefits of community participation involves evaluating its impact on both individuals and the wider community. My research explores how ECTs perceive the benefits of their involvement in CoP, including its influence on their teaching efficacy, pupil engagement, and overall job satisfaction. For instance, an ECT might reflect on how mentoring improved their classroom management skills while providing positive emotional reinforcement in their teaching role—a theme closely examined in section 6.4b.

Converting potential and applied value into tangible outcomes, implementing theoretical knowledge in real-world settings. I examined how ECTs translate the knowledge and skills acquired from CoP into their daily teaching practices. This includes noting how new strategies learned from peers are applied in the classroom. For instance, an ECT might implement a peer-recommended formative assessment technique that leads to improved pupils understanding and performance. In section 6.3b the participants reported on the impact their developing practice was having on their pupils.

Establishing the context and boundaries for community operations, defining goals, norms, and expectations guiding activities and interactions. My research explored how ECTs understand and contribute to the framing of their CoP. This involves examining how they align with the community's goals, adopt its norms, and influence its practices. For example, an ECT might introduce innovative teaching strategies that align with the school's educational goals, thereby contributing to the community's practice and enhancing overall teaching effectiveness, as identified in section 6.3b.
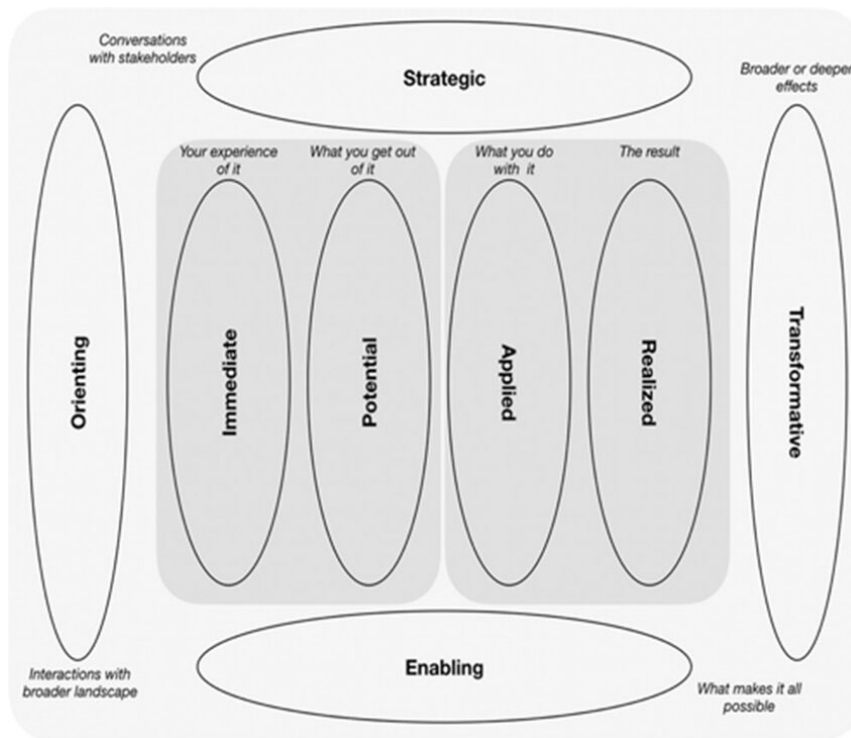
Figure 8- Value- creation cycles in the framework. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020, p75)

My research on ECTs examined how their participation in communities of practice generates different types of value. Using Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2020, Ch. 2) framework, value is categorised into eight cycles: immediate, potential, applied, realized, strategic, enabling, orienting, and transformative (see Figure 8). For the purpose of my study, I focused on five key cycles: immediate, potential, applied, realized, and transformative value:

- **Immediate Value**: This arises from direct benefits gained through interactions, such as advice, support, or feedback from colleagues during collaborative activities.
- **Potential Value**: This reflects the knowledge and relationships built for future use, such as learning new teaching strategies during training sessions or professional development workshops.
- **Applied Value**: This involves the practical implementation of acquired knowledge and skills, for example, applying classroom management techniques learned from peers or mentors.
- **Realized Value**: This captures the tangible outcomes of applied knowledge, such as improved pupil engagement, enhanced lesson effectiveness, or greater classroom confidence.
- **Transformative Value**: This represents profound changes in mindsets, professional identities, or teaching practices, illustrating the long-term impact of participation in social learning spaces on ECTs' growth and development.

While I do not aim to create detailed value creation stories as other studies have, insights from the VCF offer valuable perspectives on the types of value generated within communities of practice. Previous research (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020; Dingyloudi and Strijbos, 2015; Clarke et al., 2021) has shown how understanding personal, social, and professional values can enhance participation and development within professional communities. By integrating these insights, my research builds on existing studies to explore the nuanced ways in which ECTs experience and generate value within their communities of practice, a theme examined in section 7.2, question 5.

Integrating these perspectives allows me to deepen the analysis of ECTs' trajectories as they progress from peripheral to central participation within their CoP. This approach not only complements my focus on CoP and LPP but also contributes to the field by revealing how value creation processes influence ECTs' professional growth, identity formation, and integration into the teaching profession.

3.4 Critiques and Limitations of CoP, LPP, and VCF

A significant critique of CoP is its assumption of homogeneity within communities, often overlooking diversity and potential conflicts among members. Roberts (2006) notes that CoP literature typically depicts communities as cohesive and unified, which can obscure the complex, fluid, and sometimes contentious interactions within them. This idealisation neglects the reality that members may have different goals, levels of engagement, and experiences, leading to variations in participation and learning outcomes. For ECTs, this critique is particularly relevant, as the teaching profession encompasses diverse perspectives and practices that influence the learning and integration process. In response to this critique, my research design and analysis specifically accounted for such diversity by examining individual ECT experiences in detail, considering their unique interactions within school communities, and highlighting the varying levels of engagement and learning pathways that emerge.

Cox (2005) critiques CoP for its insufficient focus on power dynamics, arguing that the framework often fails to acknowledge how power relations shape participation and knowledge sharing within communities. Similarly, Contu and Willmott (2003) highlight that both CoP and Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of LPP overlook how hierarchical structures and social inequalities can hinder an individual's progression from peripheral to full participation. These critiques are particularly relevant for understanding the experiences of ECTs, as power imbalances within school communities can significantly impact their opportunities for contribution and professional growth. For instance, ECTs may find it difficult to gain recognition or move toward full participation if their input is undervalued due to their novice status.

In response to these critiques, my research design explicitly accounted for power dynamics within school communities by examining how institutional hierarchies influence ECTs' participation, sense of belonging, and professional growth. By doing so, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how power structures shape ECTs' experiences and interactions within their communities of practice. In section 6.3 you will hear about the power relations that had an impact on Sylvia's professional growth.

Moreover, the value creation framework (VCF) tends to focus on positive outcomes, overlooking negative experiences and outcomes that can arise in social learning contexts. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) emphasise the potential for social learning spaces to generate various types of value but are aware that they often do not fully address the complexities and challenges participants might face. For ECTs, understanding both positive and negative aspects of their professional journey is vital for a holistic view of their development. For instance, an ECT might gain valuable insights from a collaborative project but also encounter frustration and conflict, which are equally important to acknowledge.

To address this critique, my research design integrated an exploration of both positive and negative experiences, allowing participants to use an emoji-based scale to express the mood to their significant moments (Appendix H). This approach helps track the fluctuations and complexities of their journey, acknowledging that while ECTs may gain value from collaborations and mentorship, they may also encounter frustration, conflict, or disappointment—experiences that are equally essential in shaping their professional identity. By capturing this broader spectrum of experiences, the study offers a more nuanced view of how ECTs navigate their early careers, reflecting the full complexity of their learning journey.

One significant critique of LPP is its overemphasis on the social context at the expense of individual cognitive processes. Engeström (1999) highlights this by noting that while LPP focuses on social interactions, it tends to underplay the individual's role and agency in learning. This critique suggests that a more holistic understanding of educational dynamics must integrate both social and individual cognitive processes. In the context of ECTs, recognising individual agency is crucial as teachers navigate their unique paths to professional competence and identity formation. For instance, an ECT might independently seek out additional professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge, highlighting the importance of individual agency.

In response, my research explored how ECTs exercise agency within their school communities. By examining both their participation in social learning and their individual efforts, such as seeking out additional professional development or independently reflecting on their practice, I aim to capture the full scope of their professional growth. This approach ensures that individual cognitive processes, like

decision-making, goal-setting, and self-directed learning, are accounted for alongside social interactions, providing a balanced view of how ECTs navigate the challenges of their early careers. This holistic approach not only acknowledges the influence of social structures but also highlights the proactive roles ECTs play in shaping their own professional trajectories, as illustrated in section 6.3 where Gladys discusses what she has taught herself and Sylvia discussing seeking out further professional development, shown in section 6.3b.

Another critique highlights the lack of clarity in defining key concepts like "participation" and "practice". Handley et al. (2006) point out that these terms are sometimes used inconsistently, leading to confusion. They clarify that "practice" relates to the routines, behaviours, and activities that are visible within a community, whereas "participation" goes beyond just being present or doing tasks. Participation involves actively engaging with the community in ways that affect relationships, learning, and identity formation. It is about becoming a part of the community on a deeper level, influencing and being influenced by others, which shapes how individuals see themselves as professionals. This distinction is crucial for understanding how individuals progress from peripheral to full participation in a community of practice. In my research, I adopted these definitions, recognising practice as the observable actions and participation as the meaningful involvement that contributes to professional identity formation, ensuring a coherent application of CoP in examining ECTs' experiences.

Fuller et al. (2005) highlight the lack of clarity surrounding other key concepts within LPP, particularly the terms "legitimate" and "peripheral" participation. They argue that this vagueness poses challenges when applying these concepts in empirical research. For example, the definition of "legitimate" participation can vary significantly depending on the educational setting, making consistent application of LPP difficult. In my research, legitimate participation refers to any participation that is recognised as valuable within the community, even at a basic level. It signifies how ECTs engage in activities acknowledged by their community, though what is considered "legitimate" may differ across schools. Peripheral participation pertains to the newcomer's initial role, involving less central and simpler tasks, reflecting their early stage in the community. It is termed peripheral because they have not yet become full participants. Fuller et al. (2005) challenge the assumption that all newcomers follow a linear trajectory toward full participation at the same pace, with some never fully integrating. I was mindful of this, and it is an observation that my data in section 6.5 supports.

Another critique centres on the applicability of LPP to formal educational settings. Hodkinson et al. (2008) argue that LPP, developed primarily from studies of informal learning environments, may not fully capture the structured nature of formal educational systems. In formal settings, learning is often more regimented and less fluid than in the communities of practice LPP describes. This is particularly relevant for ECTs, who must navigate the teaching standards, assessment systems, and institutional policies that shape their learning experiences. For example, ECTs are often required to adhere to specific curricula and assessment criteria, which can limit the flexibility and spontaneity of their learning experiences compared to more informal learning contexts. Therefore, it is essential for me to be aware of how

institutional requirements and structures shape the breadth and depth of ECTs' learning experiences, as they can either facilitate or impede their professional growth.

Given that I am not using the VCF framework as my primary approach, I must adapt its application to my research on the value created in the experiences of ECTs. One critique of the VCF framework is its complexity; the various cycles of value, such as immediate, potential, applied, realized, and transformative, can be difficult to systematically evaluate. This complexity poses challenges in assessing the impact of participation due to the multifaceted nature of these value cycles, especially in diverse educational settings. For my research, this means adopting more nuanced and flexible methods to capture the different types of value in ECTs' experiences. For example, while immediate value for an ECT might be reflected in their initial satisfaction with a professional development workshop, realized value might emerge later as they apply new strategies and observe improvements in their teaching practice. This study, by tracking participants over time, can thus identify and illustrate this developmental process.

Lastly, the context-specific nature of VCF limits the generalisability of its findings. Clarke et al. (2021) argue that the value created through participation in social learning spaces is often highly dependent on the specific context and conditions in which the learning occurs. This context-specificity can make it challenging to apply the insights gained from one setting to another, limiting the broader applicability of the framework. For ECTs, this implies that strategies and support mechanisms effective in one educational setting may not necessarily translate to another. For example, a mentoring program that works well in a suburban school might not be as effective in an urban school with different challenges and resources. I adopted a more nuanced approach by acknowledging the variability in educational settings.

To explore the ideas within my conceptual framework, I utilised a blend of qualitative methods, combining in-depth interviews and mobile ethnography. This approach allowed me to examine how ECTs perceive their agency and navigate social interactions within their CoP. Through mobile ethnography, ECTs provided real-time reflections on significant moments, such as feedback from mentors, colleagues, and parents, highlighting how these interactions shaped their teaching practices and contributed to their professional growth. I also explored the dynamics of power and hierarchy within school environments, investigating how these structures impact the ECTs' transition from peripheral participants to more central roles within their communities. This comprehensive methodology offered deeper insights into the professional identities and developmental trajectories of ECTs, enhancing the understanding of their experiences within CoP.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented my conceptual framework drawing sociocultural concepts of of CoP LPP, and VCF, which together provide a framework for understanding the professional growth and identity formation of ECTs. CoP highlights the importance of social participation and collective learning, LPP explains the gradual incorporation of newcomers into a professional community, and VCF enables an evaluation of the types of value generated through participation in social learning environments. These frameworks were instrumental in addressing the research questions, offering insights into the dynamics of participation, identity formation, and the benefits that ECTs gain from their professional interactions.

My conceptual framework not only shaped my approach to analysing the lived experiences of ECTs but also informed the research methodology, which is detailed in Chapter 4. By employing qualitative methods such as mobile ethnography and semi-structured interviews, this research aimed to capture the real-life, in-situ experiences of ECTs. These methods aligned with my conceptual framework discussed in this chapter by enabling a deeper exploration of how ECTs engage with their professional communities, navigate social interactions, and develop their professional identities. The combination of these conceptual lenses ensures that the analysis comprehensively addressed the complexities of ECTs' journeys from ITT towards becoming more established in their schools.

While these concepts provided a valuable theoretical foundation, the lived experiences of the participants revealed trajectories that extended beyond the boundaries of existing models. As the research progressed, patterns emerged in the data that suggested a need for a more context-sensitive, non-linear representation of ECT development. In response, a new visual model was developed during the analysis phase, grounded in the data but informed by the sociocultural ideas presented here. This emergent model, shaped by the participants' real-time narratives and emotional responses, is presented and discussed in Chapter 7, where it serves as an interpretive tool to explore how theory and lived experience intersect in practice.

Chapter 4 – Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter details the research methodology used to explore the lived experiences of early career teachers (ECTs) as they transitioned from initial teacher training (ITT) to their first year as qualified primary school teachers. The study investigates how ECTs engaged with their school communities, developed professional identities, and adapted to the evolving responsibilities of their roles. Guided by my conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3—incorporating sociocultural concepts communities of practice (CoP), legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), and the value creation framework (VCF)—this research provides a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing ECTs' professional growth and integration.

The research employs a qualitative approach, combining mobile ethnography with semi-structured interviews to capture both real-time and reflective insights. This approach enabled the documentation of participants' professional and emotional journeys as they navigated their first year of teaching. Mobile ethnography, facilitated by the Indeemo (2017) platform, empowered participants to share immediate reflections on key experiences, such as feedback from mentors and classroom challenges, while minimising researcher interference. The use of a five-point emoji-based mood tracker added depth to the data by capturing participants' emotional states during significant moments.

The chapter also outlines the research design, participant sampling, data collection, and analytical strategies employed to address the research questions. Ethical considerations and measures to ensure trustworthiness and rigour are discussed. These methodological choices ensured alignment with the conceptual framework, enabling a robust analysis of ECTs' integration into school communities, their identity development, and the value they derived from their participation.

This methodological framework provides a comprehensive lens for exploring the complexities of ECTs' experiences, revealing the interplay between professional challenges, emotional dimensions, and developmental trajectories. By combining innovative data collection methods with established theoretical perspectives, this chapter sets the stage for the subsequent analysis of the findings.

4.2 Research Design

This study was grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasises understanding ECTs' subjective experiences. Interpretivism explores how individuals construct their realities and make sense of their experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Schwandt, 2000), including their mood states and responses to key moments. This paradigm aligned with the study's aim to examine the personal and social dimensions of ECTs' transitions from ITT to their first year of teaching, prioritising the meanings and interpretations they attached to their journeys (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Creswell and Poth, 2018).

An interpretivist lens was particularly suitable for educational research, where teachers' subjective experiences offer deep insights into their professional growth and identity formation.

A qualitative approach was chosen to capture the rich, nuanced details of ECTs' lived experiences. This approach facilitated a detailed understanding of their interactions, emotional responses, and engagements within their professional communities (Creswell, 2018; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Mobile ethnography and semi-structured interviews provided complementary methods for documenting participants' professional journeys, enabling the study to explore both real-time and reflective perspectives (Pink, 2015; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019).

The research questions focus on how ECTs experienced their integration into the primary school community of practice (PSCoP). Key areas of inquiry included the factors shaping their transitions, the significant moments they identified, and how their professional identities evolved. The study also investigated how ECTs experienced and perceived different types of value—immediate, potential, applied, realized, and transformative—through their engagement with the school community.

To capture authentic, real-time data, the study employed mobile ethnography using the Indeemo (2017) app. Participants documented significant moments in their professional journeys through photographs, videos, audio recordings, and text entries. An emoji-based mood tracker captured their emotional responses to these moments, adding a unique layer of insight. Further details on this method are provided in Section 4.5a and Appendix B.

Mobile ethnography minimised researcher influence by granting participants autonomy to document their experiences on their own terms (Kontopoulou and Fox, 2015). This approach respects privacy while capturing nuanced, in-situ data. As Briggs (2023) notes, mobile ethnography empowers participants by allowing them to decide when and how to contribute, ensuring the collection of authentic and ethically sensitive data.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews conducted at the start of term two and the end of the final term allowed participants to reflect more deeply on their experiences and the emotional significance of key moments, enriching the contextual data. Mobile ethnography, as Silverman (2021) notes, enables data collection without requiring the researcher's direct presence, allowing for more authentic and immediate insights. This method was particularly suited to exploring the lived experiences of ECTs, as it empowered participants to document significant moments in their own time and space, fostering autonomy and reducing potential bias. By facilitating the continuous and simultaneous recording of participants' experiences across two teaching terms, mobile ethnography captured both fleeting reflections and enduring developments, providing a deeper understanding of their professional journeys. The inclusion of an emoji-based mood tracker further added depth, capturing emotional responses to key moments and offering nuanced insights into how ECTs navigated their first year of teaching. Together, these

methods allowed for an innovative, holistic approach to examining ECTs' professional growth and integration.

4.3 Researcher Positionality

From an epistemological standpoint, I believe that knowledge is shaped through social interactions and is context dependent. This belief aligned with the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasises the importance of understanding the meanings individuals assign to their experiences (Schwandt, 1994; Creswell and Poth, 2018). In the context of this study, this epistemology facilitated an exploration of how ECTs' understandings were influenced by interactions with colleagues, pupils, and the wider school community.

My ontological stance rejects the notion of a single, objective reality, instead viewing reality as multiple and constructed through human experiences and social contexts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). This perspective was essential for examining the diverse experiences of ECTs within the unique contexts of their school environments. For example, participants experienced their roles differently depending on factors such as school culture, mentor relationships, and personal beliefs. Recognising reality as fluid and socially constructed allowed me to account for these variations and better understand how ECTs navigated their teaching environments.

In this study, significant moments shared by participants via the Indeemo (2017) app—including photos, audio, video, and text entries—offered valuable insights into their professional journeys during their final two terms as ECTs. My positionality, shaped by extensive experience in primary teaching and pre-service teacher education, influenced the analysis by allowing me to interpret the participants' experiences through my conceptual framework. Specifically, I examined the data for instances of learning within professional communities, identifying moments of peripheral participation that contributed to their professional growth and assessing the value they derived from these interactions.

The use of the Indeemo (2017) app underscored the study's commitment to capturing participants' lived experiences through an interpretivist lens, prioritising their perspectives and reflections on professional growth. This approach was complemented by two interviews with each participant: one conducted online at the start of their final two terms to reflect on their first term, and another conducted face-to-face at the end of their ECT year to discuss their overall journey and app contributions. These interviews provided deeper context and allowed participants to reflect on their emotional and professional growth, aligning with my interpretivist stance that values collaborative and reflective practices in teacher education.

4.4 Participants and Sampling

This study involved five ECTs, comprising three females and two males. All participants graduated in July 2022 from either the Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Primary Education or the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in Primary Education. At the time of the study, they were in their first year of teaching in primary schools. Further details about the participants are provided in Section 5.2.

Participants were selected based on their recent graduation and willingness to take part in the study. Invitations were sent to 2022 graduates of the BA and PGCE Primary Education programmes at a specific university, inviting interested individuals to contact the researcher. The sole inclusion criteria required that participants had graduated in 2022 from the specified programmes and had started their first teaching positions in September of that year. This ensured that all participants shared relevant characteristics, specifically targeting those who were beginning their teaching careers in primary education.

A non-probability sampling approach, specifically criterion sampling, was used to recruit participants. This method selects individuals who meet predefined criteria relevant to the research focus (Vehovar et al., 2016) and is effective in qualitative studies seeking detailed insights from specific groups. Criterion sampling ensured that participants met the study's focus on the initial year of teaching, providing a shared context for exploration.

The sample size of five participants was considered sufficient to provide an in-depth exploration of the ECTs' experiences. Only five volunteered. While small, this sample size is consistent with qualitative research guidelines, which prioritise depth and richness of data over breadth (Kuzel, 1992; Creswell, 2018). All five participants agreed to take part in two interviews and use the mobile ethnography app, Indeemo (2017), to document their experiences. The first interview was conducted online in January 2023, focusing on reflections on their first term of teaching (September 2022 – December 2022). The second interview, conducted face-to-face in July 2023, explored their overall journey during their first year of teaching and the experiences shared through the app. From January 2023 to July 2023, covering their second and third terms of teaching, participants uploaded photos, videos, text, and audio recordings to share their daily teaching experiences.

4.5 Data Collection Methods and procedures

4.5a Mobile ethnography platform
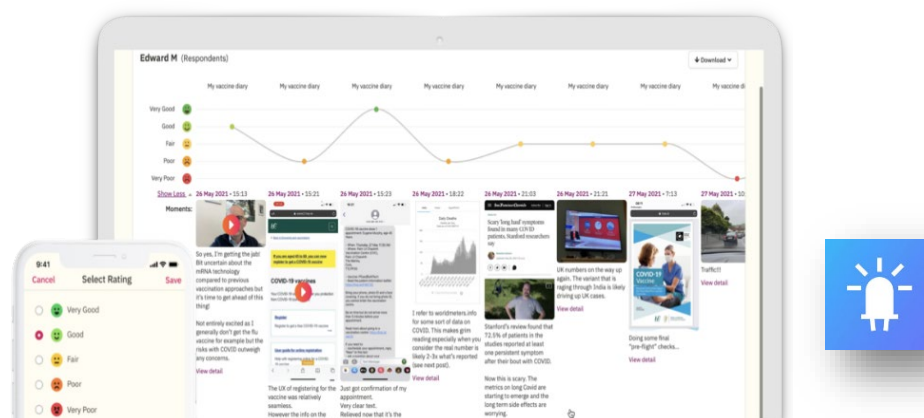
Figure 9 - Illustrates the use of Indeemo (2017) to capture the lived experiences of participants having a Covid vaccination. Scan to view the Indeemo (2017) company video.

This study used a mobile ethnography tool called 'Indeemo (2017)'. As outlined by Read (2019:2), Indeemo (2017) is 'a platform for mobile ethnography... created on a "Pinterest-style" platform, affording the researcher and participant a visually rich, social-networking style experience.' Using this mobile application, participants uploaded photographs, videos, audio recordings, and text to capture and record significant moments. The app was downloaded onto the participants' mobile devices and opened whenever they chose to share a moment. Participants had the freedom to decide how to best represent each moment, framed through a series of tasks outlined below and in Appendix B. They could select photographs, videos, audio recordings, or text, depending on how they wanted to capture their experiences. They also placed a marker on a mood scale to indicate how they felt about each shared experience (described further in Figure 12 below).

Throughout the study, participants were asked to complete various tasks, beginning with a short video introducing themselves and their experiences to date, providing insights into their personal histories and their potential impact. Over the course of the research, they documented significant moments from their first year of teaching, defining for themselves what constituted a "significant moment." Video and text guidance were provided to develop a shared understanding of this concept, as detailed further in this chapter and in Appendix B. These tasks were designed to relate to similar activities participants had completed during their university training.

To enable data triangulation, semi-structured interviews with the ECTs were conducted at the start of Term 2 and the end of Term 3. These interviews provided an opportunity to discuss the data and gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences.

When participants opened the *Indeemo (2017)* app, they were greeted by a welcome video from myself, as shown in Figure 10. The app presented participants with three tasks, each accompanied by a video explanation and a text description. When accessing the task list on their mobile phones, participants were introduced to the project and its requirements. Further details about these tasks and the accompanying materials are provided in Appendix B.
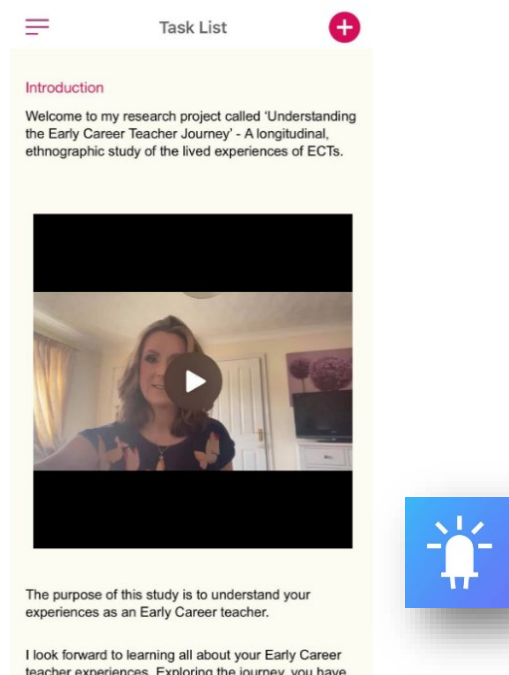
Figure 100 - Screen shot from the Indeemo (2017) app. Scan to view the introduction video.

The participants clicked the plus icon on their mobile screen and chose the task they were about to complete and the type of media they were uploading as shown in figure 11.
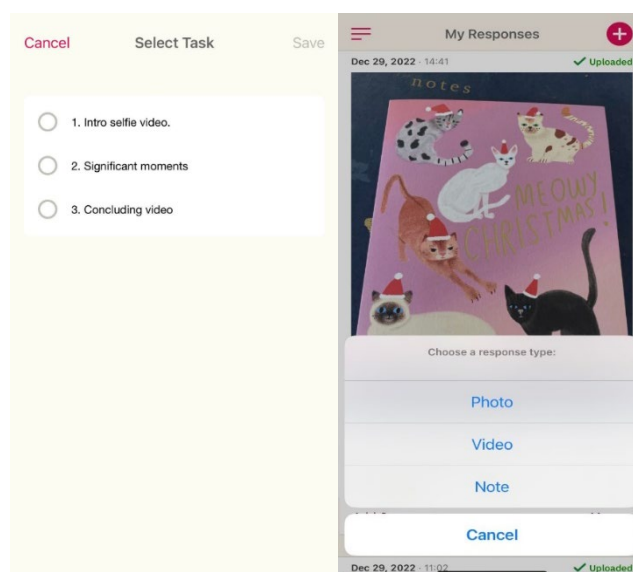
Figure 111- Screen shot from the Indeemo (2017) app of task selection screen and type of media selection.

Participants in this study used a 5-point emoji-based scale within the *Indeemo (2017)* platform to quantify their emotional responses to significant moments, as shown in Figure 12. This method, ranging from very happy to very unhappy, provided a nuanced measure of their emotional states shortly after key experiences and offered additional insight into their reflections. Appendix G and Appendix H present the data gathered from this 5-point emoji-based scale. Research supports the use of emoji-based tools for assessing psychosocial domains like mental health and wellbeing (Davies et al., 2024). However, as Kaye and Schweiger (2023) note, the reliability of these measures can vary based on individual differences, such as emotional stability and extraversion.

The emoji-based scale in this study primarily captured mood, offering a broader understanding of participants' ongoing affective states rather than immediate emotional reactions. Research indicates that emojis are better suited for tracking mood, which is a more enduring state than short-lived emotions (Kaye and Schweiger, 2023; Davies et al., 2024). In this context, the scale reflects participants' overall mood during significant moments, such as satisfaction or frustration, providing valuable insight into how their professional experiences impacted their emotional wellbeing. This approach aligns with the study's focus on tracking the evolving mood of ECTs throughout their first year. Although other studies using Indeemo (2017) have utilised the 5-point scale function, I was unable to find any that analysed the data collected through this feature.

Figure 12- Indeemo (2017) emoji rating scale.

Figure 13 -Example of an emotional journey map for one of my participants created in this way:

Task 1: Introduction Video

The first task required participants to create and upload an introduction video. This task was designed to capture ECTs' reflections on their experiences during their first term of teaching, guided by a set of structured questions (see Appendix B2 for details). Participants were instructed to address specific prompts within their videos.

The purpose of this task was to gather qualitative data on the initial experiences of ECTs. Given that the first term is often particularly challenging for new teachers, this reflective activity allowed participants to look back on their experiences, providing valuable insights into their challenges, achievements, and perceptions of their training's effectiveness. This reflection helped to contextualise their professional journey through the demanding early stages of their teaching careers.

Figure 14- Task 1 introduction video . Scan to view the video.

Task 2: Significant moments

Task 2, titled "Significant Moments," spanned the duration of the study, encouraging participants to document their experiences as they happen or as close to the event as possible throughout the second and third terms of their first teaching year. Participants were asked to complete this task weekly, with a minimum of one entry per week, but they were free to upload as many entries as they wished.

The task invited participants to reflect on and document any moments they considered significant. These did not need to be major events; they could include any experiences that stood out to them, similar to reflective exercises completed during their university training (see Appendix B for further details). Entries could address various activities and themes, such as daily tasks (e.g., marking, assessing, planning, playground duty, and collaboration with colleagues), teaching skills (e.g., time management, organisation, communication, teamwork, and relationships), or classroom experiences (e.g., lesson incidents, behaviour management, observations, and children's reactions). Participants could also share entries about school events, including trips, assemblies, productions, and parents' evenings, as well as overarching themes like workload and resilience.

Participants were encouraged to upload entries in formats of their choice, including photos, notes, videos, or voice recordings. A provided template guided their reflections, prompting them to describe the significant moment, explain why it stood out, reflect on its impact on their role as a teacher, and consider their feelings during and after the moment (see Appendix B).

By documenting significant moments regularly, participants provided a rich, nuanced account of their journey, capturing the challenges and triumphs of their early teaching careers. This ongoing reflection offered valuable insights into the daily realities and emotional experiences of ECTs.

Figure 15- *Task 2 video. Scan to view the video.*

I acknowledge that narratives reflect unique, personal perspectives rather than universal truths, shaped by memory, reflection, and individual interpretation. In this thesis, the stories shared by ECTs are considered "narrative truths," significant to the tellers, even if memory has altered or exaggerated details over time (Sandelowski, 1991; McAdams and McLean, 2013). Narrative research prioritises the personal meanings embedded within stories over their objective historical accuracy (Polkinghorne, 2007; Spence, 2008). While these narratives may not be entirely factual, they provide authentic insights into ECTs' lived experiences, offering valuable reflections on their challenges and growth during their first year of teaching (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber, 1998).

Task 3: Concluding Video

Task 3 aimed to enable participants to reflect on and summarise their first year as ECTs, offering insights into their overall experiences, challenges, and successes. This task provided comprehensive and personal reflections, helping to understand their journey through their first year of teaching.

Participants were asked to record a 1–3-minute landscape selfie video answering specific questions, detailed in Appendix B. The questions encouraged them to discuss both positive and negative aspects of their year, including memorable moments, successful strategies, and challenges encountered. They also reflected on the adequacy of their initial training and identified any training needs that emerged during the year.

In addition to their verbal responses, participants used the Indeemo (2017) rating scale to quantify their overall feelings about their first year. This measurable dimension added depth to their reflections, providing further insight into their emotional and professional journeys.

By completing this concluding video, participants contributed valuable qualitative data, offering a holistic view of the early career teaching experience and identifying areas for improvement in teacher training and support.

Figure 166- Concluding task 3 video. Scan to view the video.

4.5b Semi- structured interviews

In-person interviews are widely regarded as the gold standard in qualitative research due to their ability to capture rich interactions, including non-verbal cues and the ease of building rapport (Shahvaroughi et al., 2022). These interviews often elicit more detailed and nuanced responses (Irvine, 2011). However, they can be costly and time-consuming, requiring travel and complex scheduling (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014; Weller, 2015). Conversely, video call interviews offer logistical advantages such as reduced costs, increased flexibility, and the ability to engage with geographically dispersed participants (Sullivan, 2012; Janghorban et al., 2014). Despite these benefits, video calls may face challenges in rapport-building and capturing non-verbal cues, and they are prone to technical issues (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014; Weller, 2015). Interestingly, resolving technical difficulties during video calls can enhance rapport by fostering a shared experience between interviewer and participant (Krouwell et al., 2019). Ultimately, while in-person interviews provide a richer data collection environment, video calls are a practical alternative when time and budget constraints are a concern. I therefore chose to do the first interview online and the second interview face to face.

This study utilised one-on-one semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of ECTs during their first year of teaching. The first of these was online and the final interview was conducted face to face. These interviews were transcribed and analysed to gain insights into their professional journeys and challenges.

Semi-structured interviews are characterised by their flexibility, using a prepared guide with open-ended questions but allowing for spontaneous conversation. As Roulston (2010) explains, interviewers adapt their questions based on participants' responses, probing further when necessary, enabling a deeper exploration of ECTs' experiences and enriching the data collected. This method aligned with Roulston's (2010) concept of the postmodern interview, which emphasises reflexivity and the researcher's awareness of their own subjectivities. My background in primary education allowed me to engage

empathetically with participants, recognising how my perspective might influence the data collection process.

Combining semi-structured interviews with an interpretivist perspective proved particularly effective in capturing the nuances of ECTs' professional growth. Open-ended questions about significant moments, challenges, and successes provided insights into how ECTs construct their professional identities and interpret their experiences.

The literature review and conceptual framework informed the development of interview questions, aligning them with the core research objectives. The initial interviews were conducted a few weeks into the second term of participants' first year, recorded via Teams, and subsequently uploaded to the Indeemo (2017) platform. The semi-structured questions below were designed to elicit insights into participants' experiences, challenges, and reflections at this stage of their teaching journey:

Questions:

- How are you finding the process?
- What do you think your data is telling me about what it is like to be an ECT so far?
- What have been your high and low moments?
- How have you changed since your introduction video?
- What do you think I will see over the following weeks?

Before the second interview, I reviewed the data uploaded by participants during their second and third terms of teaching, which included photos, audio recordings, videos, and texts shared via the Indeemo (2017) app. You can see an example of the notes made about the uploads in Appendix D. This review allowed me to tailor questions to specific moments and experiences they had shared, providing a deeper understanding of their professional journeys. For these interviews, I met the participants face-to-face. I recorded the meetings using Teams and uploaded them to Indeemo (2017). The questions in this section varied but I went to the interview with the guiding questions outlined in Appendix C.

4.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a flexible qualitative research method used to identify, analyse, and report themes within datasets (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Boyatzis (1998) compared it to a translator, facilitating communication between researchers using qualitative and quantitative methods. Thematic analysis enables exploration of diverse participant viewpoints, revealing similarities, differences, and unexpected insights (King, 2004). Additionally, it helps to systematically summarises large datasets, ensuring clarity and organisation in the final report (King, 2004). However, its flexibility can sometimes result in inconsistencies and a lack of coherence when developing themes (Holloway and Todres, 2003).

Nowell et al. (2017) argue that thematic analysis is not a linear six-phased method but an iterative and reflective process. Researchers must continually revisit and refine themes to ensure accuracy and depth. This iterative nature was particularly important in my study, as data collection spanned several months. Reassessing the themes multiple times ensured they accurately reflected the evolving nuances of participants' experiences, offering a comprehensive understanding of ECTs' professional journeys.

As thematic analysis gained popularity, Braun and Clarke (2023) identified recurring issues in its application. They critiqued its misrepresentation as a rigid, standardised method and highlighted "positivism creep," where elements like objectivity and reliability were mistakenly applied to reflexive thematic analysis, which prioritises subjectivity and researcher interpretation (Braun and Clarke, 2023:2). In response, Braun and Clarke (2023) issued updated guidance encouraging flexibility and reflexivity to better align with the method's theoretical foundations.

This study followed Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis framework, embracing its reflective and interpretive stance. By integrating the iterative and reflexive elements of this approach, the analysis provided nuanced insights into ECTs' lived experiences, ensuring the themes were both meaningful and aligned with the study's interpretivist paradigm.

The data collected through the Indeemo (2017) app, and two interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, an interpretative process emphasising flexibility and reflexivity (Braun and Clarke, 2023). This approach was informed by my conceptual framework, which integrates communities of practice (CoP), legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), and the value creation framework (VCF). These theories guided the identification of themes while ensuring sensitivity to context and recognising the researcher's interpretative role.

While the initial research questions helped shape the overall direction of the study, as the analysis progressed it became clear that the conceptual framework provided a more powerful and coherent lens for interpreting the data. As a result, the research questions became more peripheral to the process, serving as a starting point rather than a fixed analytical structure.

LPP (Lave and Wenger, 1991) underpins themes such as ECTs' progression from observation to active participation and the significance of mentorship in school integration. CoP (Wenger, 1998) connects to themes of collaborative learning, shared practices, and professional identity formation. VCF (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2020) highlights the immediate and potential value of ECTs' experiences, including gains in confidence, classroom management, and reflections on long-term growth.

In the initial phase, I familiarised myself with the dataset by repeatedly engaging with videos, texts, audio recordings, and photographs to identify initial meanings and patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2023). This process, outlined in Appendix D.1, allowed for a systematic exploration of ECTs' experiences. I then generated initial codes, such as relationships, collaboration, wellbeing, and workload, ensuring a detailed examination of recurring themes (Appendix D.2). At this stage, I remained open to emerging insights, guided but not constrained by my conceptual framework.

Next, I organised these codes into broader themes by grouping data extracts related to key concepts like workload or collaboration (Appendix D.3). Reviewing themes involved refining and ensuring coherence by revisiting the raw data to confirm alignment with participants' experiences (Appendix D.4). This iterative process resulted in five overarching themes: personal growth, school involvement, collaboration, community investment, and taking on responsibilities (Appendix D.5). These themes illustrate ECTs' progression from peripheral to central participation, as conceptualised in LPP, and highlight the role of social participation in professional growth, aligning with CoP.

Defining and naming themes required detailed analysis, articulating each theme's essence and supporting findings with vivid extracts (Appendix D.5). This analysis informed the results chapter, "ECTs Stories of Becoming a Teacher," structured around four key categories:

1. Approaching the periphery: Joining the school community (Section 6.2).
2. From Periphery to progress: Personal and professional growth (Section 6.3).
3. Collective participation: Collaborating and working with others (Section 6.4).
4. Active participation: Supporting and investing in the school community (Section 6.5).

Finally, producing the report involved synthesising the themes into a coherent and compelling narrative that authentically reflected the participants' experiences throughout their first year of teaching. This process was enriched by the diverse forms of data collected, providing a comprehensive account of their professional journeys (Braun and Clarke, 2006). While presenting the findings, I integrated insights from the 5-point emoji scale to support the analysis, adding depth to the discussion in the final chapter.

The Indeemo (2017) platform played a crucial role in organising and analysing the wide range of data, including videos, texts, photographs, and interviews, functioning similarly to NVivo by facilitating the organisation of data by participant. This structure enabled a detailed and nuanced examination of individual experiences, ensuring a thorough and systematic approach to coding and thematic analysis.

4.7 Trustworthiness and Rigour

This research ensures trustworthiness and rigour by adhering to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility is established through multiple strategies to ensure the findings accurately represent participants' experiences. Triangulation, using various data sources, methods, and theoretical perspectives, helps cross-check and validate findings (Denzin, 2012). Comparing data from interviews and mobile ethnography ensures consistency. Continuous data collection via mobile ethnography provides detailed insights into ECTs' experiences, enhancing the depth of the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Prolonged engagement with participants builds trust and deepens contextual understanding, reducing bias. Member checking, where participants validate the findings during interviews, further enhances credibility by ensuring interpretations reflect their lived experiences (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

Transferability was achieved through 'thick description' (Geertz, 1975), offering detailed accounts of ECTs' professional growth and identity formation, enabling readers to assess the relevance to other contexts. Dependability was supported by maintaining an audit trail, documenting research activities and decisions transparently (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Regular code-recoding reviewed and refined coding schemes to ensure consistency and reliability (Miles et al., 2020).

Confirmability concerns the extent to which the findings can be corroborated by others. It requires demonstrating that the findings are clearly derived from the data and not influenced by researcher bias. Reflexivity, where the researcher continually reflects on their biases and the impact on the study, is crucial here (Finlay, 2002). An audit trail also supports confirmability by documenting methodological decisions transparently (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Triangulation further enhances confirmability by using multiple methods and sources to verify findings (Denzin, 2012).

In summary, this study integrates triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checking, thick description, audit trails, code-recoding, and reflexivity to ensure trustworthiness and rigour. These strategies provide a robust framework for understanding ECTs' experiences.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a cornerstone of educational research, ensuring the protection, respect, and rights of all participants. This study adhered to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines (2024) to uphold participants' dignity and autonomy, minimise potential harm, and ensure transparency throughout the research process.

As a lecturer on the course from which the participants graduated in 2022, I recognised a potential power imbalance due to my academic role. However, none of the participants were directly taught by me or part of my personal tutor group, mitigating potential concerns about undue influence.

Informed Consent

Participants received detailed information sheets and consent forms outlining the study's objectives, their roles, and their rights, including the voluntary nature of their participation. They were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions, such as affecting their professional standing or relationship with the researcher (BERA, 2024). This ensured participants could make informed and autonomous decisions. Copies of the information sheet and consent form are included in Appendices D and E.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

To safeguard participant confidentiality and anonymity, all data were anonymised, and pseudonyms were assigned. Digital data were securely stored on UK-based servers with restricted access, and physical documents were digitised and securely destroyed. In compliance with data protection regulations, the data will be retained for three years before permanent deletion. These measures, aligned with BERA (2024) guidelines, were clearly communicated to participants to ensure transparency and trust.

Given the use of the mobile ethnography app Indeemo (2017), additional precautions were taken to ensure data security. The university's data protection team reviewed the platform's security measures, verifying its compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Indeemo (2017) was confirmed to store data securely on UK-based servers, providing participants with further reassurance regarding the safety of their data.

Ethical Oversight

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board (IRB) following a thorough review of the study's ethical implications. This approval ensured the research met high ethical standards and respected participants' rights and dignity, consistent with BERA (2024) principles.

Reflexive Ethical Practice

Ethical considerations were revisited throughout the study, reflecting the dynamic and context-dependent nature of ethical practice in research. For example, all data were anonymised during transcription, and identifiable features in videos, photographs, or audio recordings were carefully obscured to enhance participant privacy. Continuous communication with participants ensured their comfort and agreement with how their data were handled.

By combining robust ethical protocols, such as informed consent, stringent data protection measures, and reflexive practice, this study maintained a strong ethical foundation. These measures ensured the research respected participants' autonomy and dignity while producing valuable insights into their experiences as ECTs.

4.9 Limitations

In this methodology chapter, I discuss the limitations of my study, guided by Thomson's (2024) recommendation to address these issues early in the research process. Thomson suggests that doing so prevents the limitations from being seen merely as shortcomings, thereby maintaining the integrity of the study's contributions.

The research provides valuable insights into the experiences of ECTs, yet several factors limit the interpretation and generalisability of the findings. A primary concern is researcher bias. Despite my efforts to remain objective through reflexivity and an audit trail, my extensive involvement in data collection and analysis could influence interpretations (Finlay, 2002; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Additionally, as a lecturer with a background in primary education, my position may affect how I interact with participants and interpret data. Although I have used multiple data sources and maintained ongoing engagement with participants to reduce this bias, the potential for subjective influence remains (Schwandt, 1994).

Moreover, the qualitative approach of the study, while providing detailed insights, also restricts the generalisability of the findings. The use of mobile ethnography and semi-structured interviews means that the results are specific to the studied settings and may not apply elsewhere, as qualitative research typically prioritises depth over breadth (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). The focus on a particular cohort of ECTs from one university might not encompass the diverse experiences of ECTs in different geographical or institutional settings (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Furthermore, the specific timeframe of the study may not adequately capture the longitudinal challenges and growth experienced by ECTs, thus limiting a broader understanding of their professional growth and identity formation (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Self-reported data through the Indeemo app and interviews may introduce biases such as social desirability or selective memory, potentially affecting the accuracy of the reported experiences (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). Furthermore, in discussing the limitations of this study's methodology, it is crucial to consider the unique challenges faced by potentially autistic and neurodivergent participants. These individuals often experience alexithymia, complicating their ability to identify and describe emotions; a condition more prevalent among neurodivergent populations (Bird

and Cook, 2013; Kapp et al., 2013). Consequently, traditional self-report tools such as emoji or numeric scales might not fully capture the complexity of their emotional experiences.

Moreover, neurodivergent individuals may express emotions in ways that differ from neurotypical patterns, which could lead to misinterpretations when using standard emotional expression scales (Cage and Troxell-Whitman, 2019). This underscores the need for alternative methods that are better suited to the diverse ways neurodivergent individuals express emotions, such as employing visual aids, descriptive prompts, and multimodal tools to provide richer and more nuanced data (Heasman and Gillespie, 2019). Additionally, considering the social contexts in which emotions are experienced and reported is crucial, as neurodivergent individuals may interpret these contexts differently, affecting their emotional responses (Milton and Sims, 2016). While participants had the opportunity to add textual or video explanations alongside the emoji responses, future research should more thoroughly consider the unique challenges faced by potentially autistic and neurodivergent participants.

Another limitation of this study concerns the nature of narrative truth. As Sandelowski (1991) explains, narratives do not aim to provide universal or objective truths but reflect the personal truths of the storyteller, shaped by memory, reflection, and interpretation. These "narrative truths" are significant for the teller, even if they may be exaggerated or creatively altered (Fitzpatrick, 2015). As McAdams and McLean (2013) note, while we often admonish children for "telling tales," Adults also construct and adapt their own narratives over time. The stories shared by ECTs in this study are shaped by their personal experiences and the meanings they attach to those events, offering valuable insights into their professional and emotional journeys.

However, this subjective nature limits the generalisability of the findings. The goal of the research is not to verify the accuracy of events but to explore the meaning participants ascribe to them (Polkinghorne, 2007). Therefore, the stories presented in this study are best understood as subjective interpretations, reflective of the participants' unique perspectives, rather than objective accounts. While these stories offer rich insights, they should be viewed within the specific context of this study and not as universal truths about all ECTs.

Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful insights into the experiences of ECTs. In response to the identified limitations, I have implemented several strategies to strengthen the reliability and relevance of the findings. Active reflexivity and a comprehensive audit trail have been maintained to counteract potential biases from my involvement and ensure transparency. To address the inherent limitations of qualitative methods, I have offered 'thick descriptions' to improve the transferability of the data, enabling readers to assess its relevance to other contexts. Efforts have also been made to diversify the sample where feasible and to meticulously document the specific contexts of the study to enhance understanding. Additionally, the use of multiple data sources and continuous participant engagement further strengthens the credibility and confirmability of the research. These measures collectively

enhance the integrity of the study, making it a valuable contribution to understanding the developmental journeys of ECTs, while also guiding future research in this field.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological approaches employed to explore ECTs' experiences as they transition from ITT to fully qualified teachers. Using mobile ethnography via the Indeemo (2017) app and semi-structured interviews, the study captures ECTs' lived experiences, framed within the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3, which draws on concepts of CoP, LPP and VCF. Mobile ethnography enabled ECTs to document key moments, while interviews provided deeper reflections at critical stages. Additionally, the inclusion of a five-point emoji-based scale offered insights into participants' mood states, enriching the understanding of their professional journeys. These methods aimed to minimise researcher influence and prioritise authentic data collection.

Thematic analysis identified four key themes: approaching the periphery, periphery to progress, collective participation, and active participation. These themes reflect my conceptual framework's emphasis on ECTs' progression from peripheral to more central roles within their professional communities, forming the structure of the results chapter.

To ensure rigour, strategies such as triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checking, and reflexivity were employed, enhancing the study's credibility and validity. Ethical protocols, including informed consent, confidentiality, and secure data management, were rigorously adhered to, with approval from the institutional review board.

Overall, the methodologies employed in this study provide an in-depth and nuanced understanding of ECTs' transitions into professional communities, their identity development, and the value derived from their early teaching experiences, as analysed through the lens of the conceptual framework.

Chapter 5- Unique Pathways: Exploring the Individual Journeys of ECTs

5.1 Introduction

In this short chapter, I delve into the personal narratives of five early career teachers (ECTs) who are central to this study. Their accounts, gathered between January and July 2023, include responses from two semi-structured interviews and real-time mood tracking using an emoji-based scale. This comprehensive presentation of their stories offers a detailed view of each participant's unique professional and emotional journey. By focusing on individual experiences, this chapter captures the diversity of challenges and significant moments, setting the stage for a thematic presentation of the data in the next chapter.

5.2 Meet the Participants: Early Career Teachers' Profiles

Recognising the distinct trajectories and varied backgrounds of each ECT, I present an overview of the participants in Table 3. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms and AI-generated avatars are used in place of real identities. While the avatars cannot fully convey the participants' emotions, they provide an additional layer of context, enabling readers to connect with the individual stories behind the data. An augmented reality application, detailed in Appendix A, offers readers access to further information, fostering a deeper connection to the participants and their unique journeys.

Participant-pseudonyms and AI avatar	Age	Pathway	Number of uploads to Indeemo (2017)	Number of Interviews	Types of uploads for significant moments	Background information	Additional responsibilities
Gladys	20-29	BA Primary Education QTS	57	2	37 photos 12 text 1 video	Employed at the school she completed a placement in. Teaching in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS.)	School Governor, RE subject leader, supported a PGCE student, Mentoring new staff in her 2nd year.
Sylvia	40-49	PGCE Primary	32	2	7 photos 1 text 19 videos	Worked as a TA in the school she is employed in before doing her PGCE. A mother to three children. Teaching in EYFS. Was a mature student.	Applied to do a master's degree, mentoring new staff in her 2nd year, holding staff meetings. Leading PSHE development for Nursery.

April	30-39	BA Primary Education QTS	23	2	7 photos 12 text 1 video	Mother of two. School underwent a change in management mid-year and is currently under special measures an OFSTED inspection category (DFE 2023c) Teaching in Key Stage 2. Former mature student.	Not shared
Jeffrey	20-29	PGCE Primary	48	2	15 photos 26 text	Teaching in Key stage 2.	Not shared
Ted	20-29	BA Primary Education QTS	15	2	11 videos	Teaching in Key stage 2. The school falls under the *OFSTED category 'requires improvement.'* (DfE 2023c)	Computer lead, after school club with other year groups,

Table 2: Participant information overview table

5.3 The Early Career Teachers: A Snapshot of Their Journeys.

The following section provides concise summaries of each participant's journey, as documented through interviews and posts on Indeemo (2017). These narratives were constructed by me as the researcher, based on a need to bring forward the individual stories that might otherwise be lost when data is later grouped thematically. I wanted to offer a more human view of each participant's experience and provide a sense of what their lives were like during the research period. These accounts were developed by drawing together key moments from the mobile ethnography entries, supported by data from pre and post interviews where participants reflected on and made sense of their own journeys. This allowed for triangulation and added depth to each narrative.

Creating these stories helped me to better understand what the data was telling me and provided an opportunity to highlight the varied forms of data shared across participants. For example, some used video and voice notes more frequently, while others favoured written reflections or the emoji mood tracker. Including the journey maps (Appendix G) and emoji scale responses (Appendix H) supports these accounts and offers further insight into each participant's emotional and professional trajectory. These personalised narratives form a foundation for the cross-case thematic analysis that follows in Chapter 6.

Gladys's ECT Journey

Gladys began her first year of teaching in a nursery class, describing how she faced several challenges along the way. She navigated the complexities of managing relationships with parents, structuring conversations effectively, and attending ECT training that felt irrelevant to her nursery setting. Additionally, she faced uncertainty around how to respond during the teacher strike, managed a demanding workload, and adapted to changes in the classroom structure.

Despite these obstacles, Gladys described numerous positive moments that she felt had shaped her development. She found immense satisfaction in witnessing her children's progress, observing their engagement in learning activities, and noting their developmental milestones. Positive feedback from both colleagues and parents provided an uplift in their mood as indicated on her emoji scale responses. Gladys said that she had embraced the opportunity to take on more responsibility, becoming a staff governor and leading a subject, which she indicated provided her with an uplift in her mood. She also found excitement in developing creative ideas to support the children's learning and said that she took pride in organising her workload effectively.

Reflecting on her training, Gladys felt well-prepared for her first year, particularly since she completed her placement at the same school where she now teaches. She highlighted the importance of being proactive, flexible, and open to new experiences, emphasising how building strong relationships with staff, parents, and pupils played a crucial role in her success and growth.

Throughout her journey, Gladys experienced growing feelings of satisfaction (as reflected in her mood journey map) and gradually established herself within the school community. She transitioned from a peripheral role to a more central position by taking on responsibilities such as serving as a staff governor and supporting trainee teachers. Additionally, she expressed ambitions for future career progression, eager to embrace new challenges and responsibilities. Gladys's experiences highlight both the complexities and rewards of being an ECT.
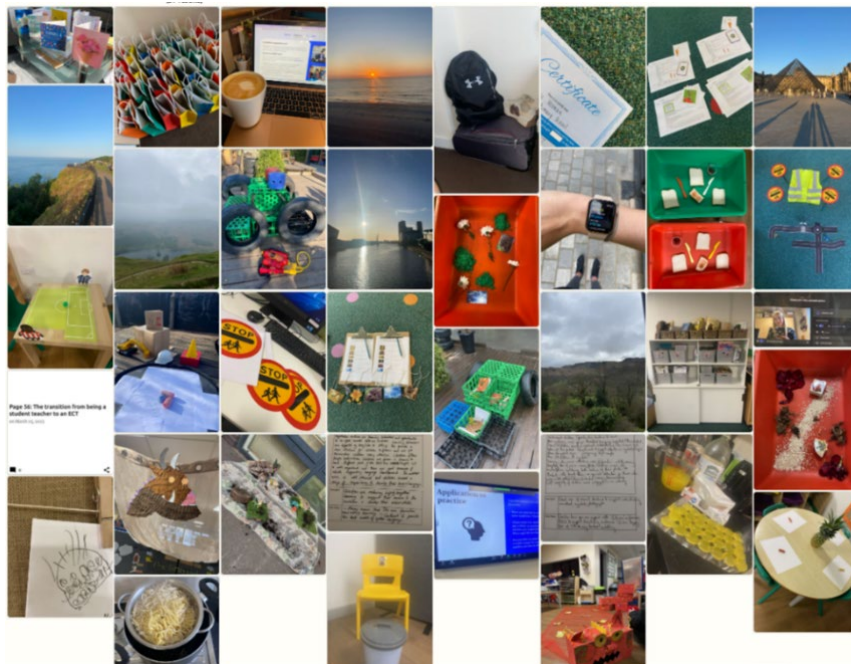
Figure 188- Photographs shared by Glady's.

Sylvia's Journey
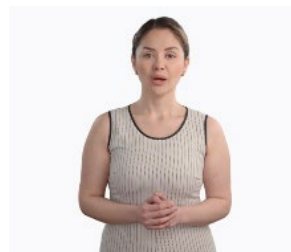
Sylvia embarked on her educational journey by transitioning from a teaching assistant position to becoming a nursery teacher within the same school after completing a PGCE. Despite feeling that her role had not significantly changed except for more administrative tasks, she described tackling various challenges intrinsic to her new role, including team management, administrative demands, and balancing her professional commitments with her personal life.

Throughout her first year, Sylvia experienced both positive and negative moments that shaped her development. The aspects that provided an uplift in her mood included witnessing children's progress, observing them settle in and exhibit good learning behaviours, and engaging in creative activities like making classroom resources. A highlight of the year was organising and leading a successful school trip, which was presented as a significant moment and marked with a positive mood response. However, Sylvia described considerable challenges. Managing relationships with teaching assistants and staff members with differing mindsets proved difficult, adding to her stress and workload. She frequently mentioned feeling overwhelmed by endless to-do lists and the high expectations she placed on herself to accomplish everything, which consistently resulted in negative mood responses. Additionally, navigating the complexities of school politics further compounded her difficulties, reflecting the multifaceted and demanding nature of an ECT's role.

Despite these challenges, Sylvia remained committed to her role and sought to improve her teaching practice as indicated by her taking on more responsibilities and seeking to be further challenged. She took on additional responsibilities, such as leading staff meetings and implementing new teaching methods, and continuously enhanced her skills through further training and research. Her initiative to cultivate meaningful relationships with colleagues, parents, and pupils was a central facet of her professional journey, highlighting her dedication to creating a supportive educational environment.

Towards the end of her first year, Sylvia said that she felt a sense of stagnation and desired more challenges and progression, prompting her to enrol on a master's degree in education to further her knowledge and skills. Moving into her second year, Sylvia noted that she aimed to focus on achieving a better work-life balance and prioritising her health, recognising the importance of self-care in sustaining her passion and effectiveness as a teacher. Overall, Sylvia's first year was a challenging, yet her uploads also showed a period of growth, filled with both rewarding experiences and significant learning opportunities. Her journey underscores the resilience and adaptability required of early career teachers and highlights the importance of both continued professional development and maintaining personal wellbeing .

Figure 199- Sylvia's Journey map. scan to view. You can also view the journey map in Appendix G.
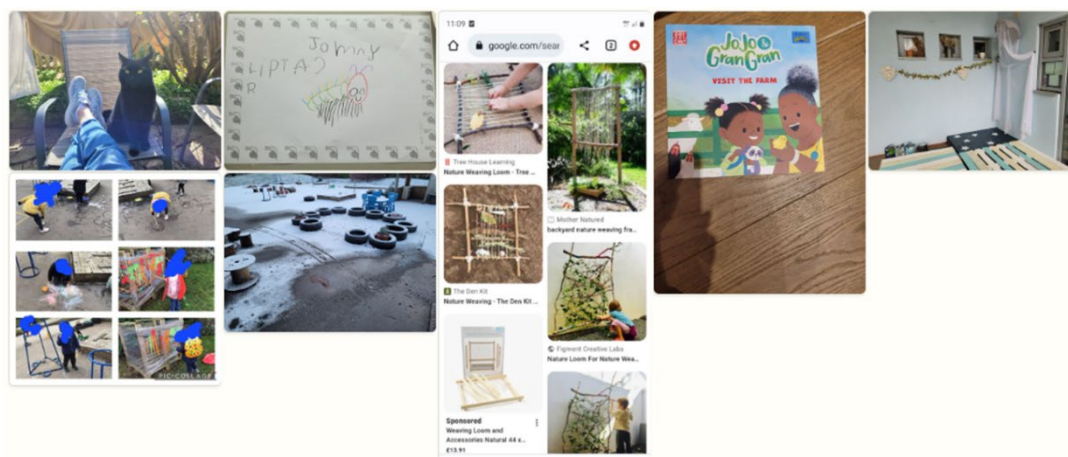
Figure 200 - Photographs shared by Sylvia.

April's Journey

April began her teaching career with optimism, feeling well-prepared after getting to know the staff before the children returned. However, soon after starting her new role she posted reflections on facing significant difficulties with a challenging Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and struggling to balance her workload and home life. This was marked by an increase in negative mood responses on her journey map. Initially, she described the school environment as 'toxic' and often felt like giving up, but her motivation to stay came from the children. April faced resistance from staff who were reluctant to engage with newcomers due to frequent turnover and distrust, which created an isolating work environment for her. Support from other teachers and her new ECT mentor, who started after the change in the SLT, helped her navigate these challenges, and she said that her experience improved significantly after a change in management during the second term. There was a clear rise in the mood indicated on the mood tracker following this and in Appendix G.

With the new management in place, April felt listened to, and that her contributions were valued. She appreciated collaborating with others to rewrite the curriculum, making it more streamlined and accessible for pupils. Enjoyable school trips and a funfair organised by the new leadership for children and staff became highlights, contrasting with the previous management approach. This positive shift provided an uplift in her mood and made her more optimistic about her second year.

April said that she took pride in developing strong relationships with her class, managing their behaviour, and understanding their needs, including those with trauma and difficult home lives. Although she found it challenging to keep up with school policies and the heavy workload, she valued the strategies she had learned at university. Significant moments included a successful school trip, a positive parent-teacher evening, and a successful Advent celebration. However, she also described encountering difficulties, such as making a safeguarding disclosure about a colleague and dealing with a difficult geography observation under the original SLT, where feedback was delayed and focused more on areas for development than her strengths.

Looking ahead to her second year, April felt more confident and eager to engage in further Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and to take on subject leadership. She reflected on her successes and challenges, said that she continually sought feedback, and looked for ways to improve her practice. Her journey underscores the highs and lows faced by new teachers, highlighting the importance of supportive management and a positive school environment.
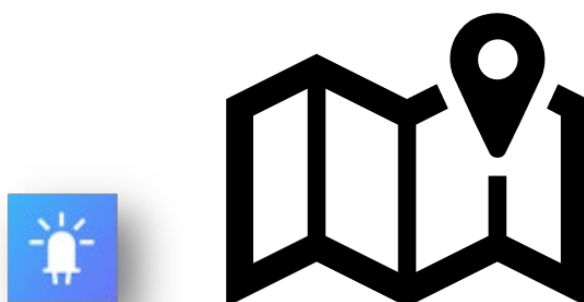
Figure 21- April's Journey map. Scan to view. You can also view the journey map in Appendix G.
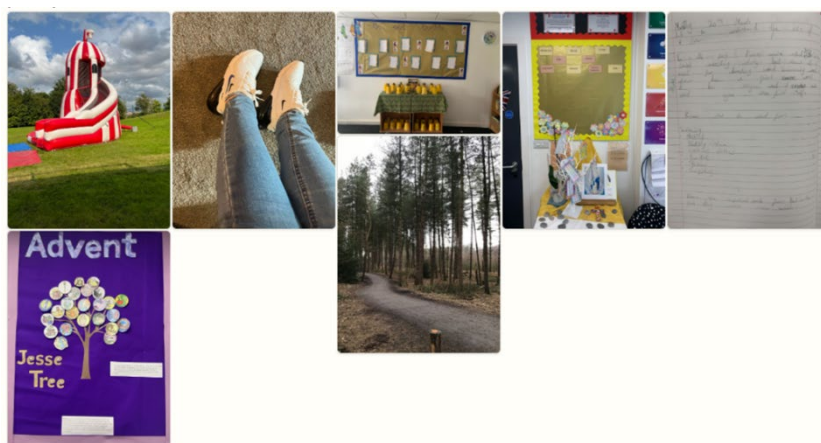
Figure 22- Photographs shared by April.

Jeffrey's Journey

Jeffrey said that he found the transition from being a student teacher to a full-time teacher challenging, particularly in areas such as behaviour management, workload, assessments, data, and English moderation. He struggled with handling Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs) for children with SEN and said he felt nervous during his first parents' evening, especially after receiving a message from a parent dissatisfied with the support their child was receiving. Budget cuts further compounded his difficulties when his teaching assistant was reassigned, adding to his workload.

Despite these challenges, Jeffrey said that he found great support in his mentor, who was also the other Year Four teacher. This mentorship was crucial, offering him guidance, support, and practical strategies to manage his classroom effectively. These moments were marked by positive emoji responses on the mood tracker. However, there were moments when Jeffrey felt unsupported, as some of his requests for assistance went unanswered. Nevertheless, the school's emphasis on mental health for both staff and pupils provided a positive aspect in an otherwise demanding environment.

Jeffrey's successes were highlighted in key moments, such as receiving excellent feedback from a classroom observation, which was celebrated by his peers. He took pride in seeing his pupils' progress, particularly in areas like handwriting improvement and engagement during lessons. One of his most rewarding experiences came from delivering a successful science experiment lesson and receiving a card from a pupil, listing everything they had learned and thanking him for his teaching. He indicated that these moments reinforced his passion for teaching, even though he occasionally felt more like a social worker than a teacher. Behaviour management remained an ongoing challenge, but he was effectively supported by his mentor, and we can witness the impact of his practice developing. These moments were indicated with a dip on his mood tracker. However, the gratitude and progress of his pupils kept him motivated. He said that he especially valued getting to know his pupils better during the more relaxed final weeks of term before Christmas.

As the year progressed, Jeffrey's emotional responses indicated growing feelings of satisfaction as he became more established in his role. Being offered a permanent position at the school further reinforced these feelings, making him feel valued and appreciated. He began taking on more responsibilities, such as planning for additional subjects and running after-school clubs. Reflecting on his journey, Jeffrey recognised the importance of setting boundaries, being consistent with behaviour management from

the outset, and balancing his workload. He learned that striving for perfection was not always necessary and that taking time for rest and self-care can ultimately make him a better teacher.

In summary, Jeffrey's first year of teaching was a journey of learning, development, and adaptation. Despite the challenges, he found joy in teaching, built strong relationships with his pupils, and developed effective strategies for managing both his classroom and workload.


Figure 23- Jeffrey's Journey Map. Scan to view. You can also view the journey map in Appendix G.

Figure 244- Photographs shared by Jeffrey.

Ted's Journey

Ted said that he initially felt overwhelmed at the start of the year, finding the first term particularly challenging due to the workload and the demands of planning and preparing lessons. However, as time passed, he felt he had gained a better understanding of his responsibilities and gradually improved his organisational skills. He was excited by the autonomy and independence that came with having his own class, which motivated him despite the initial difficulties.

Significant moments during Ted's first year included witnessing improvements in his pupils' work and receiving positive feedback from the headteacher, which made him feel valued and involved. Marked by positive responses on his mood tracker. The headteacher's engagement was a notable positive, boosting Ted's morale. At the start, Ted noted that the Headteacher would often walk past him without acknowledgment or engagement, which he found emotionally discouraging, as reflected in his emoji scale responses. Additionally, Ted said that being offered the role of computing lead and the opportunity to teach Year Six the following year were highlights that validated his efforts and contributions.

However, Ted also indicated that he had faced several challenges. He struggled with assessment and grading, and managing a disruptive pupil added to his stress levels. Changes in scheduling and disagreements with the senior leadership team further compounded his frustration. These difficulties highlight the impact of leadership decisions on his role. This was evident with his mood tracker recordings. Despite these challenges, Ted said that he enjoyed the collaborative aspect of teamwork, though he often questioned whether the school was the right fit for him. While he loved teaching, he sometimes found the school environment at odds with his professional aspirations.

As the year progressed, Ted said that he became more involved in the school community and gained a clearer understanding of his role as a teacher. By the end of his first year, he felt more confident and secure in his position. He was entrusted with additional responsibilities, including a leadership role, and felt increasingly valued and supported by the school's leadership team. Ted's first year was marked by development and adaptation, balancing significant challenges with notable achievements and a growing sense of professional fulfilment.

Figure 25- Ted's Journey Map. Scan to view. You can also view the journey map in Appendix G.

Ted chose only to share video uploads.

5.4 Conclusion

The individual narratives presented in this chapter provide a detailed account of the diverse experiences of five ECTs during their first year of teaching. These accounts reveal the complexities of their professional journeys, highlighting moments of success, emotional challenges, and the varying contextual factors that influenced their progression.

While this chapter has focused on the unique trajectories of these participants, it also highlights patterns that resonate across their experiences, including moments of growth, challenges in integration, and shifts in professional identity. These findings serve as a foundation for the stage-based exploration of ECT development presented in Chapter 6.

Building on these personal accounts, Chapter 6 presents the data through a stage-based framework that captures how ECTs transition through distinct phases in their professional journeys. These stages include Approaching the Periphery: Joining the School Community (Section 6.2), From Periphery to Progress: Personal and Professional Growth (Section 6.3), Collective Participation: Collaborating and Working with Others (Section 6.4), and Active Participation: Supporting and Investing in the School Community (Section 6.5). By presenting the data in this structured manner, Chapter 6 provides a detailed account of the shared patterns and transitions that characterise ECT experiences.

The thematic analysis and critical reflection on these findings are reserved for Chapter 7, where the data will be examined in depth to draw conclusions about ECTs' integration into their school communities and their professional identity development.

Chapter 6- ECTs Stories of Becoming a Teacher.

6.1 Introduction

Building on the individual narratives presented in Chapter 5, this chapter shifts focus to a structured presentation of shared experiences among the early career teachers (ECTs). Guided by my conceptual framework, which incorporates concepts of communities of practice (CoP), legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), and the value creation framework (VCF), the data is organised into sections that reflect key stages in the participants' journeys. This structure highlights the trajectories of their progression from initial teacher training (ITT) to becoming active members of their school communities, showcasing both shared challenges and achievements.

The data is presented through the lens of these trajectories, illustrating the participants' movement from peripheral roles to more central positions within their school communities and the value they created through their participation. The inclusion of the emoji scale adds an emotional layer, capturing real-time responses that provide further insight into how they navigated the complexities of their roles.

The organisation of this chapter is guided by the structure outlined in Chapter 4 (Section 4.6), which explains how the data has been aligned with my conceptual framework. This chapter focuses on presenting the data collected from various sources, including interviews, uploads of significant moments, and mood tracking, without analysing or interpreting it. The discussion and critical reflection on these findings are reserved for Chapter 7.

To provide clarity on the data sources included in this chapter, Table 4 details the key data types: the first interview (I1), introductory selfie video (T1ISV), significant moments (T2SM), concluding video (T3CV), and the second interview (I2). Task 2 entries, uploaded between January and July 2023, are also included, with additional details about these tasks available in Appendix B.

Upload category	Time of year	Key
First Interview	January	(I1)
Task 1: Intro selfie video	January	(T1ISV)
Task 2: Significant moments	Jan-July	(T2SM)
Task 3: Concluding video	July	(T3CV)
Second interview	July	(I2)

Table 3: Data Key Table.

6.2 Approaching the periphery: Joining the school community

This section examines the participants' transition from initial teacher training (ITT) to their early experiences as ECTs, focusing on their initial standing in the teaching profession. Participants completed approximately 120 days of in-school placements during their training, which varied by course: PGCE trainees had placements in two schools across two primary age phases, while BA students experienced placements in three schools and age phases. Some participants also undertook supplementary school experiences or professional development during their training.

In their narratives, participants reflected on both the supportive and challenging aspects of these experiences, highlighting beneficial elements of their university education and areas where additional preparation could have been helpful. They also discussed proactive steps taken over the summer to prepare for their roles, emphasising how these efforts helped them integrate into their school communities. This section draws on initial interviews and reflections to explore how these early steps shaped their entry into teaching and their navigation of the complexities of joining the school community.

6.2a Peripheral engagement: Navigating Early Professional Challenges

The participants journey maps and uploads illustrate that the ECT's journey is often characterised by a mix of moods and a sense of uncertainty, as evidenced in Appendix G and I. Participants recalled their first steps into the teaching profession, highlighting the overwhelming challenges they faced. Ted, for instance, described his initial experiences in September as being marked by a sense of feeling "a bit unsure on everything" and "very overwhelmed" as the school year began. He mentioned the pressure of "lots of new things to learn" and numerous tasks that "needed doing quickly," describing the start of the year as feeling like "everything was back-to-back" (T3CV), illustrating the intense pace and immediate demands placed on him as a new teacher.

Similarly, Sylvia's recollections underscored the difficulties of this early phase. She described September as "a bit bleak," acknowledging the inherent challenges in the first few months, where her "workload did increase significantly," resulting in "50-60-hour weeks" (I1). Ted also reflected on the long hours during the first term, noting that he "never thought [he] was going to come off [his] laptop," starting work at 7 a.m., leaving at 6 p.m., and "still working at 10" (I2).

Figure 266- Video of extracts from Ted and Sylvia. Scan to view.

April highlighted the ongoing struggle to find balance amidst the demands of work and personal life. Reflecting on her journey, she admitted, "I really struggle to find a balance between work workload, and home life, and it's something that I'm still really working on" (T2SM, 28.02.23). These reflections from ECTs illustrate the intense, often overwhelming nature of the first few months in the profession, marked by long hours, heavy workloads, and the constant challenge of finding balance. This moment was rated low on the emoji mood scale, indicating a negative mood, as shown in Figure 27.

Figure 277- April's Journey Map 26th January 2023 - 15th March 2023.

Jeffrey provided insight into the significant increase in responsibilities that ECTs face when starting their first job. He highlighted the stark contrast between the experiences of a student teacher and those of a fully qualified teacher. As a student teacher, he noted, "you're teaching quite a lot, and you have to mark the bits you're teaching." However, once fully qualified, the responsibilities expand dramatically: "you're teaching everything, you're marking everything, you're planning everything." This, Jeffrey explains, represents "a big step up" (T1ISV).

Figure 288- Video of extract from Jeffery. Scan to view.

These reflections highlighted the complex landscape ECTs navigate as they find their place within the school community. April, for example, shared the emotional rollercoaster she experienced daily. She confessed, "I've wanted to give up nearly every day," but then described how her feelings shifted when "all the children come in and they talk to me." After the children leave, however, she found herself "back in that place" where she doubted her ability to continue in the profession (T2SM). These accounts reveal the emotional and professional challenges ECTs face as they adjust to their new roles. This emotional journey is illustrated in April's journey map below and supported by the video upload.
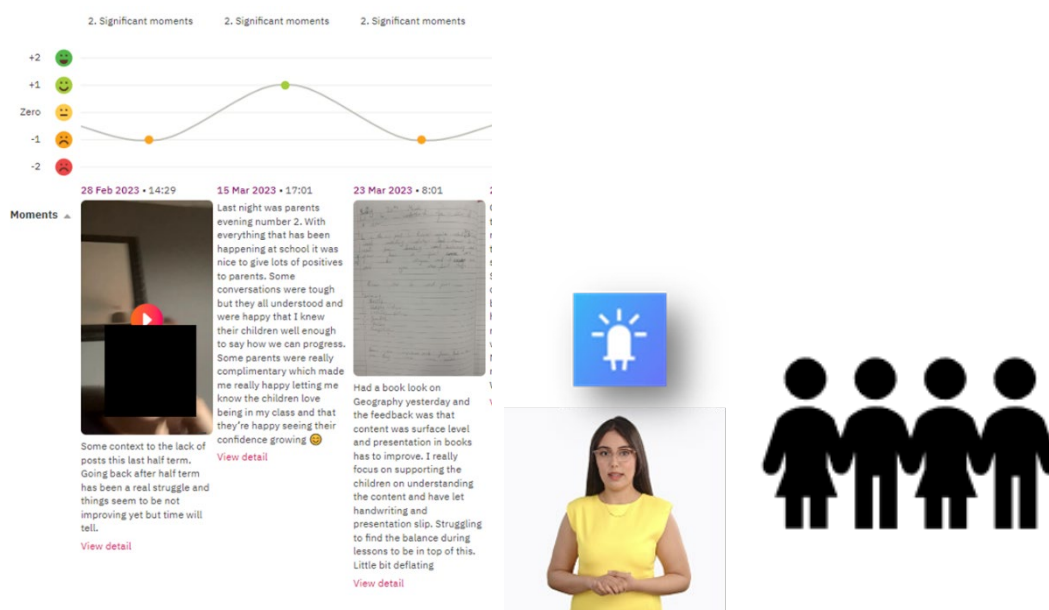
Figure 299- Video entry by April 28th February 2023. Scan to view.

Despite these challenges, ECTs also experienced positive aspects in their new roles. Ted, for instance, appreciated the autonomy his teaching position provided. He mentioned how much he "loved having [his] own class" and the sense of independence that came with it. He enjoyed "being able to plan [his] own days" and structuring his work around timetables and meetings, which made him feel "really independent" (T1ISV). Ted's reflections highlighted the rewarding aspects of having the freedom to manage his own classroom and daily activities.

These reflections provide a detailed picture of the multifaceted experiences of ECTs during their initial days in the profession. The early phase was marked by uncertainty, intense workloads, and the challenge of balancing professional responsibilities with personal life. Participants described the significant leap in responsibilities from their time as student teachers, often accompanied by feelings of self-doubt and insecurity. However, despite these challenges, moments of fulfilment also emerged. Ted, for example, appreciated the autonomy and independence of managing his own classroom, highlighting the rewarding aspects of planning and structuring his work. These insights illustrate the complexity of the early career journey, characterised by both difficulties and personal growth. Appendix G provides the participants' journey maps, capturing this mix of moods throughout their first year.

6.2b Foundations and Gaps: The impact of University Training

Participants highlighted various skills acquired through their initial teacher training at university, including organisational abilities, reflective practices, lesson planning, and managing children's behaviour, as well as navigating relationships with adults. They emphasised the importance of linking theory to practice, particularly through their placement experiences, while also recognising areas where further training was needed, such as the opportunity to work more independently.

Gladys, for example, valued the organisational skills she developed, describing them as "invaluable," particularly for managing classroom demands. She also credited her university experience with helping her navigate adult relationships, explaining that "managing adults is something [she] would have struggled with" without this preparation (T1ISV). Similarly, April appreciated the support she received in behaviour management, noting that university helped her understand "different behaviour management strategies" and "the different needs of children" (T1ISV).

Jeffrey attributed his strength in planning to the training he received during his university experience, noting that "one of [his] strengths in the role is planning," which he believes "comes from placement," where he "planned everything from scratch and spent a lot of time on it" he used the university "planning proforma" that ensured he considered the various elements "like the success criteria" (T1ISV). Ted, too, acknowledged the structured approach to planning taught at university, adding that the coverage of pedagogies was "very in-depth" (T1ISV). However, both noted the differences in planning as ECTs: Ted remarked, "there are sometimes no written records of lesson plans," while Jeffrey observed that "now we use schemes of work" (T1ISV).

Participants also highlighted the integration of theory and practice during their training. Jeffrey praised the way "theories behind it all about pedagogy" were combined with practical experience, which he found effective (T1ISV). Sylvia noted that her studies equipped her to support colleagues, stating, "I've studied dyslexia at uni, and others come to me with questions" (I1). April reflected on applying theoretical knowledge to specific needs, particularly with children experiencing trauma, where "the theory side of things from the course at university" was particularly useful (T1ISV).

Reflective practice was another area where participants felt well-prepared. Ted described the "reflective cycle" instilled during university as "really useful" for his ongoing development (T1ISV). April echoed this, stating, "University really prepares you for that reflection" (T3CV).

Teaching placements played a pivotal role in participants' learning. Jeffrey highlighted the value of extended placements, stating, "On the placement, you get a really good feeling of what it is actually like to be a teacher," and credits these experiences with teaching him essential skills such as lesson planning, sequencing, and "behaviour management especially" (T3CV). In contrast, Ted noted some limitations during his placements, remarking that "certain things were quite hard to cover" and that his "class mentor never really wanted [him] to plan a unit of work by [himself]" (T1ISV). This relates to the discussion in section 2.4 regarding mentoring, where the lack of autonomy granted by mentors can impede their professional growth.

Figure 300 - A video of extracts from each of the five ECTs. Scan to view.

These insights reveal that ECTs perceived that university training provided a foundation in educational theory, practical skills, and reflective practices, while their experiences of placements varied based on the level of responsibility and autonomy given to trainee teachers.

6.2c Bridging the Gap: Additional Training Needs

Participants reflected on the additional support they felt could have better prepared them during their university training for the realities of teaching. Sylvia noted that while her PGCE provided "a nice step" into teaching (T1ISV), the transition became more challenging when she began her ECT position in

Nursery, having focused primarily on Key Stage 1 and 2 during her training. She reflected, "I think it's been more challenging because I did the 5 to 11-year-old route" (T1ISV). Emphasising the need for alignment between training and future roles, she stated, "You need to think about the training you have and what you focus on while you are there, as this will have an impact when you leave university" (I2).

Gladys identified working with parents as one of the most challenging aspects of her first term as a teacher. She felt unprepared for difficult conversations and the need to justify her decisions, challenges that were compounded by the lack of interaction with parents during her training due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She suggested that "a little bit more work to do with structuring those conversations with parents might have been quite useful," noting that during the pandemic, she "really didn't get much interaction with parents," which was limited to "a few phone calls" (T1ISV).

Figure 31- Timeline for April, 28th February 2023.

April reflected on the limitations of university training, pointing out that it cannot prepare teachers for every situation, particularly because each school environment is unique. Finding herself in a "toxic school" (T2SM) she explained, "The problems I faced, I don't think there's anything that anybody can do to prepare you for the challenges of a difficult SLT and things like that." She emphasised the importance of awareness and learning from others' experiences, suggesting that "having people in to share their experience" would help new teachers understand that "it is normal to be in different circumstances with different people," but also that "it's normal to go and find a new position if you need to." She also encouraged new teachers to "speak up because you do have a voice" (T3CV). This is something I address in section 7.4, when I consider the implications of this research.

These reflections underscore the need for more personalised training that addresses specific challenges new teachers might encounter in various school environments. I address this in my final chapter. This aligns with the discussion in Chapter 2 section 2.6, Spoke 7, highlighting the changes to the ECF and forthcoming implementation of the ITTECF. Additional support in areas such as age-specific teaching, effective communication with parents, and managing difficult work environments could better equip ECTs for the realities they are likely to face in their early teaching careers.

6.2d Familiar Territory: Benefits and Challenges of School Familiarity

Familiarity with the school environment played a significant role in easing the transition into ECTs roles for some participants. However, it also brought unique challenges in reshaping perceptions and establishing their professional identities. This section explores how participants' prior connections and early engagement with their schools influenced their experiences as new teachers.

For Gladys, continuity proved advantageous as she began teaching in the same school, year group, and even the same classroom where she completed her university placement. She reflected, "I think my training prepared me really well for my first year of teaching," particularly because she was in a familiar environment "with the same phase leader" she had worked with as a student. This continuity made her "feel a real part of the school" and eased her adjustment since she "already knew a lot of people" (T3CV).

Sylvia echoed this sentiment, finding comfort in returning to a familiar classroom setting. She described how being "in the classroom that [she] worked in for four years" provided a sense of familiarity with "surroundings and routines" (T1ISV). Gladys further illustrated how her placement experience helped mitigate specific challenges that can be overwhelming for new teachers. She describes how knowing "how the photocopier works," whom to approach for help, and understanding the day-to-day logistics "were really nicely solved in a neat little package" because of her previous experience at the school (T1ISV).

Figure 32- Glady's video, scan to view.

Participants also highlighted the importance of engaging with their schools before formally starting their roles. Gladys recalled volunteering to support school activities, stating, "We went camping for three nights in the Yorkshire Dales... and I just knew that I wanted to work there" (T1ISV). Similarly, Sylvia described her involvement in school activities before formally starting her role in September, such as hosting meetings for new parents, conducting stay-and-play sessions, and going on home visits, which helped her transition into the mindset of becoming a teacher (T1ISV). April, too, emphasised the benefits of early preparation, spending time in her school during the summer to prepare her classroom and

familiarise herself with policies. She said this allowed her to "meet the staff and get to know some of them before the children came in" (T1ISV).

Gladys extended her commitment beyond her placement, staying on for several weeks after it was supposed to end, which allowed her to feel integrated into the school community. She noted, "I didn't feel like a student at all. I completely felt part of the school" (T1ISV).
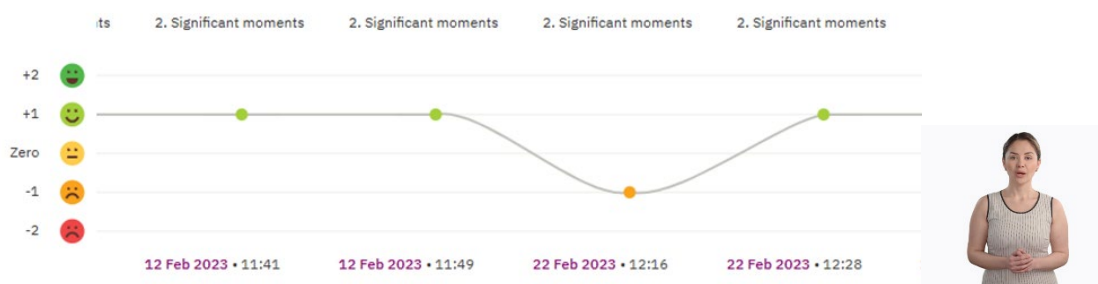
Figure 33- Timeline for Sylvia 12th February to 22nd February.

Despite its benefits, familiarity also presented challenges, particularly in reshaping how colleagues and parents viewed Sylvia in her new role. Initially, she worried that "people are just going to see me as a trainee, as the student still" (T2SM). She sensed that some parents viewed her through the lens of her past role as a teaching assistant, mentioning, "I felt like some of them, even now, they're coming in going, 'Oh yeah, and you, you're new but I knew you from working with my child when you were a teaching assistant'" (T1ISV).

Sylvia also navigated complex dynamics with teaching assistants, many of whom she had been friends within her previous role. She admitted, "I was very heavily in my friendship group with the teaching assistants still here in reception," which made it difficult to shift perceptions and assert her new position (I2). Early in her ECT journey, she felt "stuck still being that TA from previous years" (I1)

However, with time, Sylvia's perception began to shift as she reflected: "I feel much more like a teacher now... I have been treated as the teacher, although I have a lot of mentor input. With the observations every week, you do still feel like the student." She went on to conclude: "At the beginning of the year, I was very... People are just going to see me as a trainee, as the student still. But I haven't been treated as such, I have been treated as the teacher." (I1).

It is interesting to note that during this period, Sylvia chose to record her mood and reflections multiple times within a single day. This suggests the intensity of her experience at that point in her journey and

highlights how she used the Indeemo (2017) platform to capture significant emotional shifts as they unfolded in real time. Below is the section of her journey at this point:
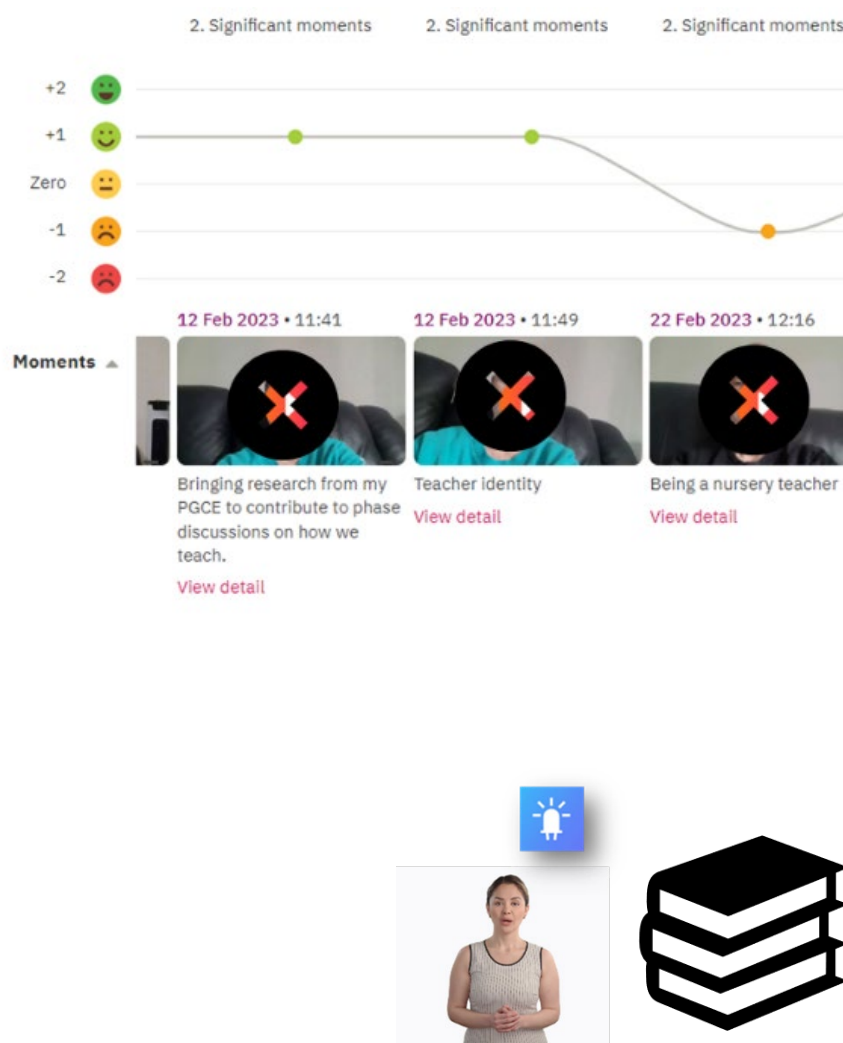
Figure 34- Sylvia's Journey Map 12th February - 27th February. Video by Sylvia 12th February. Scan the book icon to View.

Participants' reflections highlight the dual role of familiarity in their transitions into teaching. For some, prior connections with their schools provided a supportive foundation, easing logistical challenges and fostering a sense of belonging. For others, familiarity complicated the process of establishing their professional identity, requiring time and effort to reshape perceptions. These experiences underscore the significance of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) in the teaching profession, where familiarity can act as both a facilitator and a barrier to growth and integration.

6.3 From Periphery to Progress: Personal and professional growth

This section examines the participants' personal and professional growth as they became more integrated into their school communities. Throughout their first year as ECTs, participants reported increasing competence and belonging, reflected in their narratives and emoji scale markers. Key moments, such as successful lesson observations, improved behaviour management, and positive feedback from senior colleagues, boosted their confidence and satisfaction. Tangible milestones, including permanent job offers and effective pupil support, underscored their growing capability.

Participants also highlighted challenges they overcame, such as managing difficult behaviour and fostering supportive relationships, illustrating their development within the teaching environment. Their progress aligns with the concept of LPP, as they moved from peripheral to more central roles by taking on additional responsibilities, engaging in training, and supporting colleagues. Looking ahead to their second year, they emphasised the value of continuous professional development and their commitment to further growth as teachers.

6.3a Gaining Ground: Developing Competence and Professional Identity

Throughout their first year of teaching, each participant reflected on their professional growth, often describing a journey from initial uncertainty to a stronger sense of competence and confidence. Gladys, for example, highlighted her transformation, explaining: "I feel a really central part of the school. I now feel like I'm a member of staff that people come to ask me things." She reflected on how far she had come, adding: "When I started, I was asking everybody things left, right and centre." (T3CV). This shift underscored her growing sense of competence and deeper integration into the school community.

Ted also experienced growth in his sense of competence due to his proactive involvement in the school. By suggesting and implementing changes, running trips independently, and adjusting practices like how school assemblies are structured, and team points are given, he became more engaged in shaping school policies and activities. Reflecting on this, he said, "It's helped me feel like I'm in the centre of that school community and that I've been able to help staff members, my colleagues, as well as the children, and then ultimately helping the parents as well" (T3CV). Ted's developing sense of belonging and effect at school demonstrated his increased competence and involvement.

Sylvia also reflected on her journey from uncertainty to increased confidence in her role, explaining: "I was just wobbly at the start, but it develops, and now I'm quite confident in my position." She continued, noting: "I think it shows progression and to feeling more comfortable with the identity of a teacher because... I felt quite overwhelmed in the first term." She concluded: "I feel much more like a teacher now." (I2). This shows how her sense of self and professional identity changed as she went through her first year.

Sylvia further summarised her journey stating, "I think that through the journey you become more confident in who you are in your role, and you feel more capable and more... you see yourself becoming more successful and more able." She added: "And to be the teacher that you want to be" (I1). This statement captured the essence of her development as she gained a stronger sense of competence and a clearer sense of her professional identity.

April shared a similar sentiment, reflecting on how her first year ended positively: "I finished the year off really enjoying myself and doing everything, and I do feel more confident going into September as a second year" (T3CV). This comment highlighted her increased enjoyment and sense of competence in her teaching role over the academic year.

Echoing this sentiment, Ted reflected on his growth, saying, "I've definitely learned a lot and I feel like I've definitely changed as the year has gone through" (T3CV). His words underscore his recognition of the personal and professional development he experienced throughout the year.
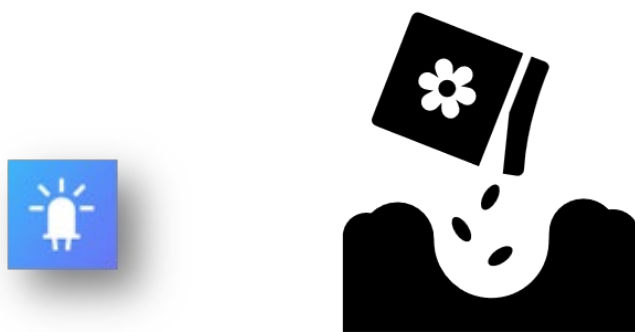
Figure 35- Extracts from Gladys, Ted, Sylvia and April. Video by Sylvia 12th February. Scan the icon to View.

Participants' journey maps captured the emotional fluctuations accompanying their growth. For instance, Jeffrey expressed overall satisfaction with his development, stating, "I'm really happy with how I'm progressing as an ECT, I'm really enjoying teaching despite the many challenges that are thrown at me on a daily basis" (T2SM). His positive outlook and adaptability in the face of daily challenges emphasised his development and enjoyment in the profession. However, his journey map (Figure 36) also reveals contrasting emotions recorded on the same day (10th March), illustrating the varied and sometimes conflicting feelings he experienced within short timeframes. It is particularly notable that some participants chose to record their mood and reflections multiple times on a single day, highlighting moments of emotional intensity or rapid change. This variability underscores the value of immediate and continuous data collection in capturing the dynamic nature of ECTs' emotional journeys. Similar patterns of fluctuating emotions were evident in the experiences of other participants (Appendix G).
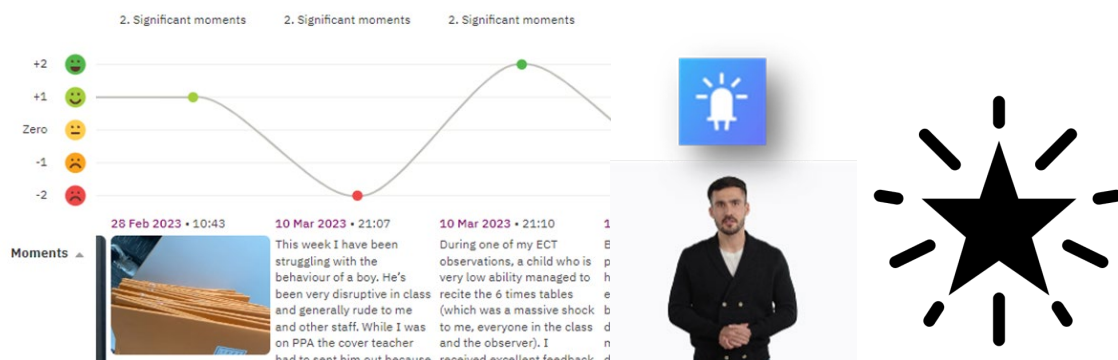
Figure 366 Jeffrey's Journey Map 10th March 2023. Scan the symbol of a person to see a more detailed view of this section of the timeline.

April described a pivotal moment during Advent, when her pupils enthusiastically shared their learning with staff: "It was one of those moments where I felt I might actually know what I'm doing!" (T2SM).
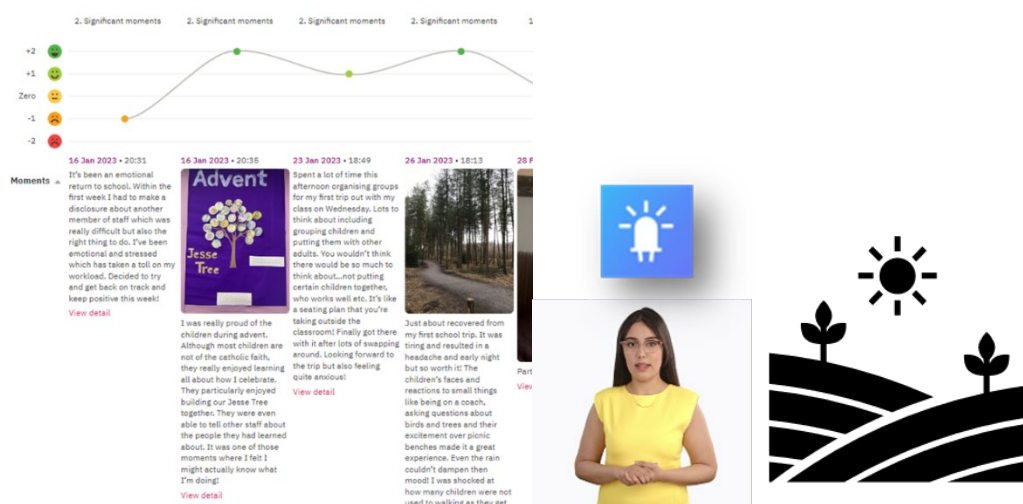
Figure 377- April's Journey Map 16th January 2023. Scan the landscape symbol to see a more detailed view of the journey map.

Later in the term, she commented on her growing confidence, particularly in interactions with parents: "I think I'm getting more of an idea of what's expected from me as a teacher. "She reflected on a key moment, saying: "The parents' evening was probably one of the things that I was most scared of. But the second one that I did, I was more confident."(T2SM).
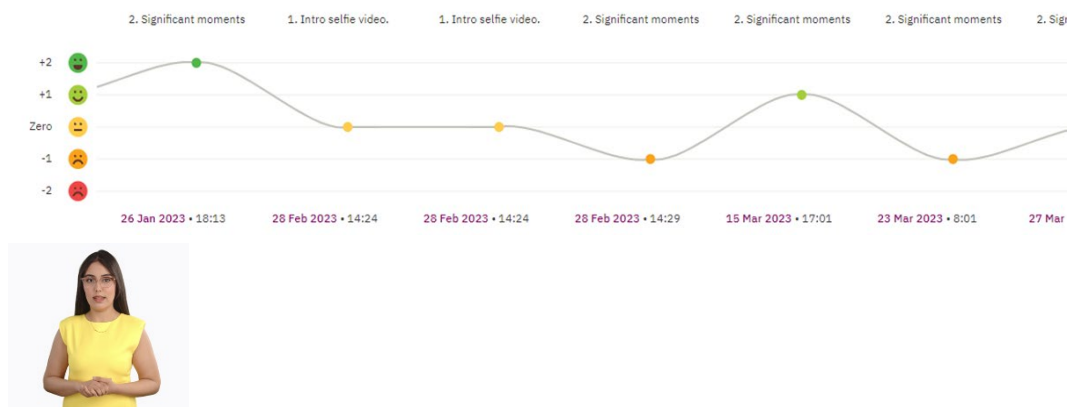
Figure 38- April's Journey Map 26th January -23rd March 2023.

Sylvia further developed her competence by taking on additional responsibilities, such as leading a staff meeting after receiving training on physical development. She shared: "Being put in that position where it's me running the staff meeting, and passing on information that I have to other teachers that are very established sort of gave me a little bit of a confidence boost" (I2). This experience underscored her growing ability to support colleagues and engage in professional development.

The participants' reflections illustrate a journey of personal and professional growth, marked by increasing competence and a clearer professional identity. Through key moments like successful lessons, positive feedback, and tackling challenges, they built confidence and embraced new responsibilities. While journey maps and emoji scales revealed emotional fluctuations, their narratives highlighted resilience and significant milestones.

6.3b Evolving Practice: Developing Skills and Noticing Impact

Throughout their first year, participants reflected on their evolving ability to support and enhance pupils' learning. Gladys highlighted the challenges of working with children with high needs, noting how she proactively conducted research to develop new strategies: "I've learned a lot about teaching children with high needs and I've taught myself a lot... I felt like I was back in uni again, doing a bit more research and things like that" (T3CV). This reflection highlighted her proactive approach to professional development and her commitment to improving her practice and a commitment to the school community. This idea seems to conflict with LPPs focus on social interactions, as opposed to the individual's role and agency in learning but was something that I explored in section 3.4.

Gladys also shared her broader growth as a teacher, stating: "I've learned a lot about myself. I've learned a lot about the children and how they learn. I've learned a lot about being in nursery, and the nurturing kind of role that it is as a teacher" (T3CV).
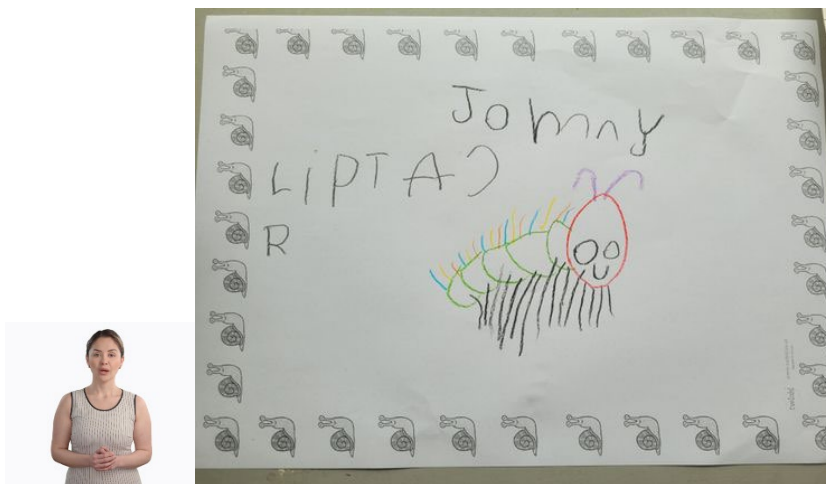
Figure 38-Sylvia's upload 21st May 2023.

Participants observed tangible impacts in their classrooms as their practice developed. Sylvia celebrated her pupils' progress, sharing a photograph of their work and remarking: "Amazing progress seen for each individual; I can definitely say all children have progressed. It is wonderful to see" (T2SM). After reading a quote on social media about the dual nature of teaching as both challenging and rewarding, Jeffrey reflected on this balance, noting, "I'm really starting to see these rewards as a teacher and the impact I'm having on these children's lives" (T2SM). This realisation marked a positive turning point in his journey, as he began to recognise the meaningful differences he was making. On 26th May, he submitted three reflections in a single day—each broadly positive, but one slightly more tempered— highlighting both his engagement with the process and the subtle emotional shifts that can occur even within a 'good' day. This illustrates how real-time data capture can reveal the layered and dynamic nature of early teaching experiences.
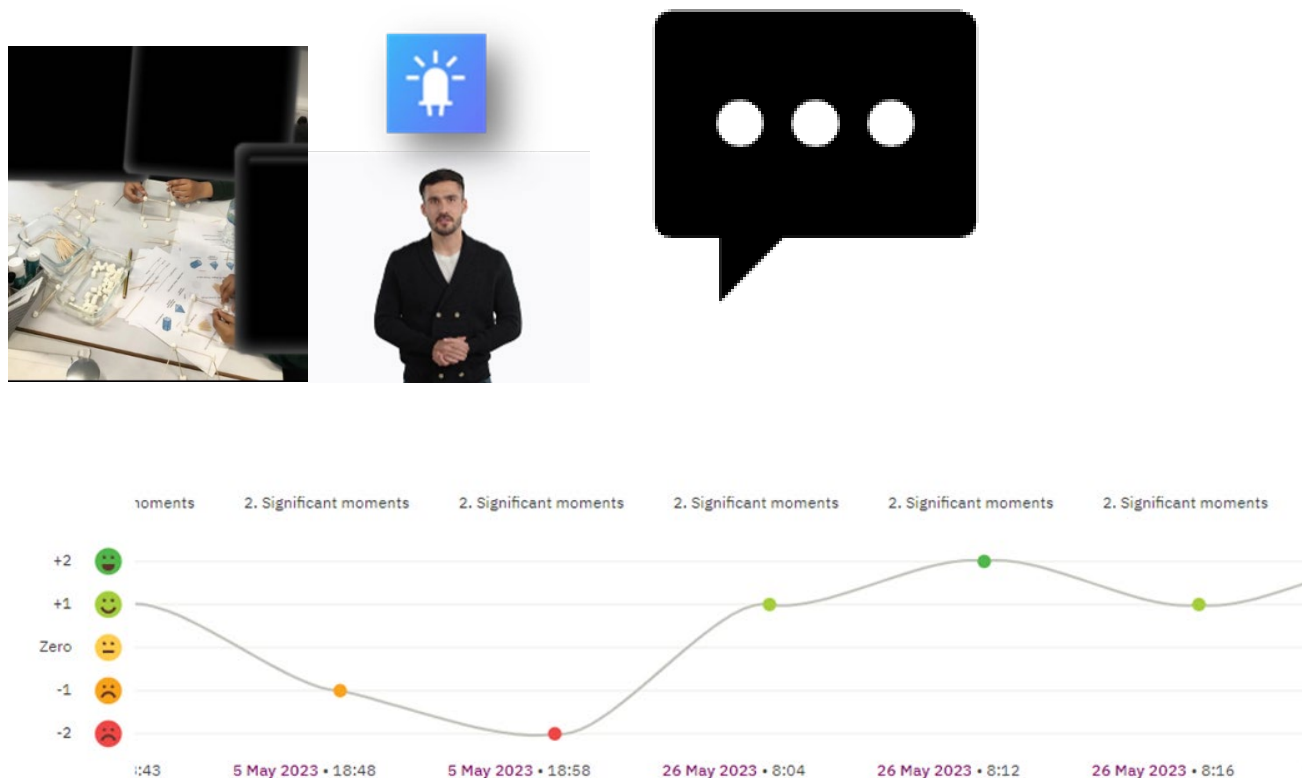
Figure 390 -Jeffrey's video 26th May and timeline 5th May to 26th May 2023. Scan to view the speech bubble symbol to listen to an anonymised video of this moment.

Ted recounted a moment when he noticed the impact he was having on his children's learning: "The children said they understood what they were learning and it all made sense to them then. So that was a really uplifting and nice moment that I had this week" (T2SM). This moment of clarity illustrates Ted's effectiveness in fostering pupil understanding and engagement. This is illustrated below in figure 35 and was marked with +2 on the emoji scale.
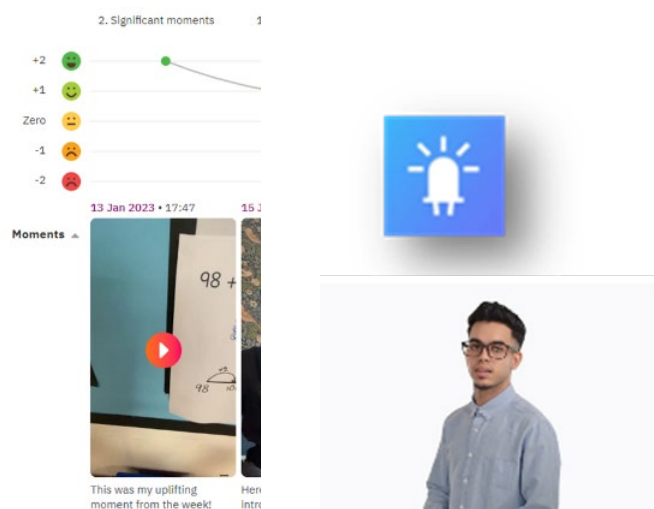
Figure 40- Ted's Journey Map and Video upload, 13th January 2023. Scan to view the section of the timeline to see the anonymised video.

Moreover, Ted observed improvements in pupil focus and the quality of their work, noting, "The children have been much more focused. The work's been such a high quality" (T2SM). He attributed these changes to the additional effort he put into the smallest details, such as timing, supported by his planning which he believes made a significant difference, despite realising it contradicted what he had said at the start about "having to plan too much when you're at university" (T2SM). This moment created an uplift on his mood tracker (figure 39) a contrast from his previous upload about a stressful day when his schedule was disrupted by the headteacher.
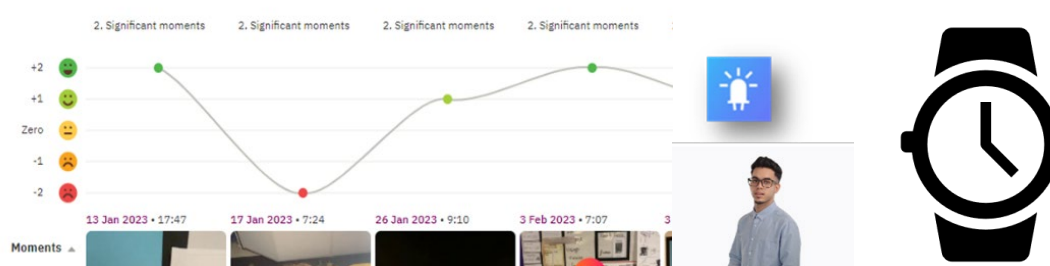
Figure 412- Ted's Journey Map 13th January to 3rd February 2023. Video 26th January 2023. Scan the watch symbol to view an anonymised video of this moment.

April echoed similar thoughts, sharing the positive feedback she received from parents: "Some parents were really complimentary, which made me really happy, letting me know the children love being in my class and that they're happy seeing their confidence growing" (T2SM). This acknowledgment from parents validated her efforts in creating a positive learning environment. It is interesting to note that April chose to share three reflections on 4th May, suggesting a particularly meaningful day and a strong desire to capture and document these affirming moments as they unfolded.

Figure 42- April's Journey Map and upload for the 15th of March. Scan the flower symbol to see a closer view of the 15th of March upload.

Ted highlighted the importance of feedback from colleagues, mentioning how another teacher and the Monitoring and Intervention Team (MIT) acknowledged the improvements in pupil work: "All the books look a lot better, and all the works massively improved. It's really nice to get that feedback from people so much higher than me," he explained, referring to the headteacher and the MIT team (T2SM). This feedback served as a powerful validation of his teaching impact and his development as a new teacher.

Figure 43-Ted's Journey Map and video 3rd February 2023. Scan the target symbol to view the anonymised video upload.

Jeffrey also emphasised the importance of feedback and the acknowledgment of others. He shared how his mentor, the deputy head, reassured him: "If it was still the NQT system, she would be passing me off." This recognition had a significant impact, as Jeffrey admitted, "Sometimes I don't believe in myself enough and don't think I'm a very good teacher" (T2SM). This recognition from his mentor provided an uplift in his mood (as indicated on his emotional map) reinforcing his sense of capability.
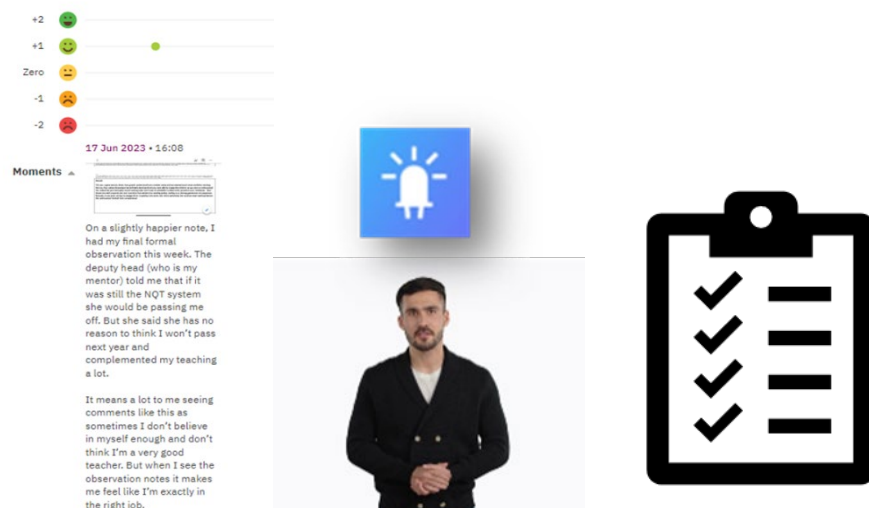
Figure 44- Jeffrey's Journey Map 17th June 2023. Scan the checklist symbol to view this section of the timeline in detail.
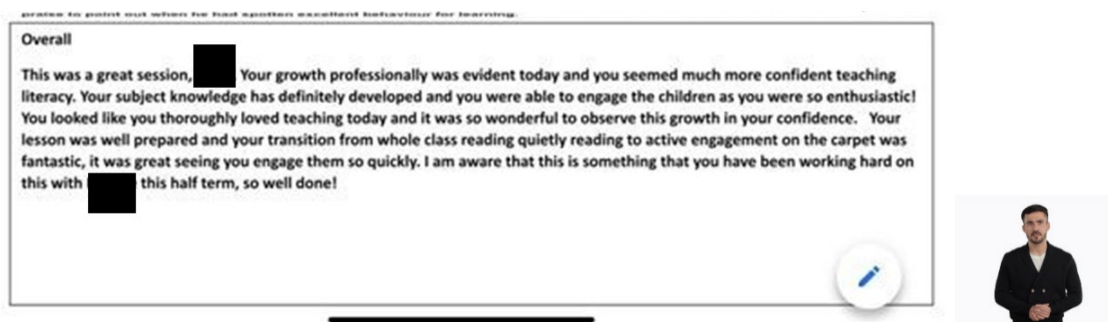
Figure 456- Jeffrey's upload 17th June 2023. Lesson observation feedback.

In addition to academic progress, participants noted improvements in managing classroom behaviour. Jeffrey reflected on his journey, saying: "I'm starting to feel a lot more in control of behaviour in my classroom." He acknowledged that, despite the challenges "I feel like I have gotten to know the children on a deeper level, and I know how to manage each child individually" (T2SM). Earlier in the year, Jeffrey had struggled with behaviour management, as reflected in an earlier post when he sought advice from his mentor. His mentor suggested various strategies, which Jeffrey began implementing. This shift reflects his growing competence and ability to manage classroom dynamics more effectively. Interestingly, he chose to record more than once on this day, highlighting how important this development felt to him and offering a layered view of his growing confidence.

Figure 47- Jeffrey's Journey Map 26th May 2023.

Looking ahead to the next school year, Jeffrey expressed his readiness to take on a new challenging class: "Their behaviour is a lot more rowdy and boisterous than my current class, but I am up for the challenge, and it will only make me a better teacher in the long run!" (T2SM). This statement illustrated his openness to further learning and development.

Figure 468- Jeffrey's Journey Map 26th June to 11th July 2023.

Participants also highlighted their development in building relationships. Sylvia expressed pride in forming strong connections with her pupils: "Parts of my role this year, I felt most successful in teaching, is building relationships with the children. I know the children, know how to assess them, and how to develop them" (T3CV). Gladys discussed her progress in collaborating effectively with both parents and staff, despite facing challenges: "I've learned how to work with a variety of different staff... I've formed really strong friendships this year." She acknowledged the difficulties, saying: "There's also members of staff I didn't get on as well with. But we found a way to work professionally. I made sure that everything was always in the best interest of the children." (T3CV).

Working with parents was initially challenging for Gladys, but she noted significant growth in her approach over time: "Working with parents is what I've probably found the most challenging... mainly because I overthink." She reflected on her progress, saying: "Now that I've had a lot of different conversations with parents, I'm confident, and I stand there and I'm strong-willed in what I'm saying." She concluded: "I feel a lot better working with those parents." (T1ISV).

Figure 479- Extracts from Gladys and Sylvia about relationships. Scan the icon to view.

These reflections demonstrate the ECTs' recognition of their personal and professional growth, as well as pride in their pupils' progress. Feedback from pupils, colleagues, and parents affirmed their teaching impact and reinforced their commitment to continuous improvement. The participants' development aligns with Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2020) value creation framework, which provides insight into how ECTs derive meaning and value from their interactions within school communities, further explored in Chapter 7.

6.3c Commitment to Growth: Advancing Skills and Responsibilities

The participants demonstrated a strong commitment to continual growth in their teaching careers, emphasising the importance of ongoing personal and professional development. This dedication was evident in their willingness to take on additional roles and responsibilities. Reflecting on her plans for her second year, Gladys highlighted the importance of continued professional development stating that "staying in Nursery will allow me to draw and improve my knowledge and pedagogy from this year and share this with my partner teacher who is new to nursery" (T2SM). Her statement reflected not only her commitment to enhancing her own expertise but also her desire to support her colleague's development, showcasing her competence and commitment to mentorship and fostering a collaborative learning environment.
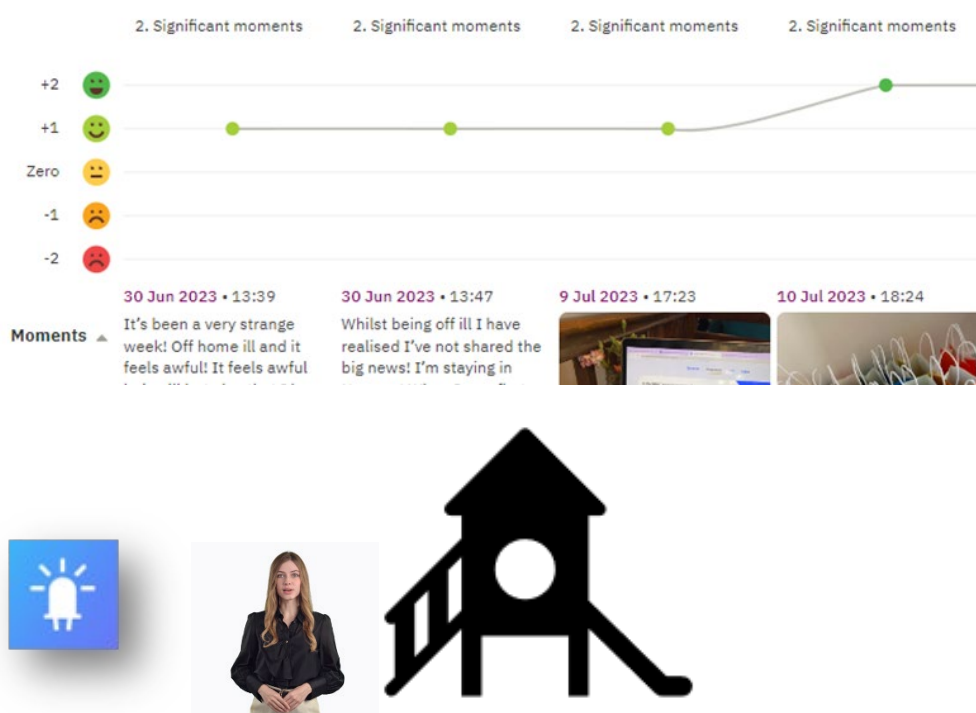
Figure 480- Glady's Journey Map 30th June to 10th July 2023. Glady's upload 30th June. Scan the playground equipment symbol to view the full text upload.

Jeffrey also expressed the intention to improve his practice in the coming year, stating simply, "I just feel like next year I'm just going to do it properly" (I2). This straightforward declaration underscores his determination to refine his teaching approach and achieve a higher standard of professional performance.

April, also looked ahead to her next year of teaching, sharing her enthusiasm for further development: "I'm just looking forward to being with my new class and getting even more confidence, taking part in some more CPD, taking on my own subject" (I2). Her focus on building confidence, engaging in continuous professional development (CPD), and taking on new responsibilities reflects her proactive approach to her professional growth.

In her video upload, Sylvia exemplified a proactive attitude toward her development, expressing a positive outlook on taking on more challenges: "I've taken on more responsibility at school because I asked to be given more, sort of, to be stretched." She detailed her new responsibilities, sharing: "I'm organising a school trip... and this week sorted out homework, developed the physical development interventions." Looking ahead, she added: "I will be heading up a new PHSE scheme in the early years with my mentor in September. So, I'll be heading up the nursery side of that."(T2SM). Her willingness to take on diverse responsibilities highlights her eagerness to expand her role and contribute to her school's initiatives.
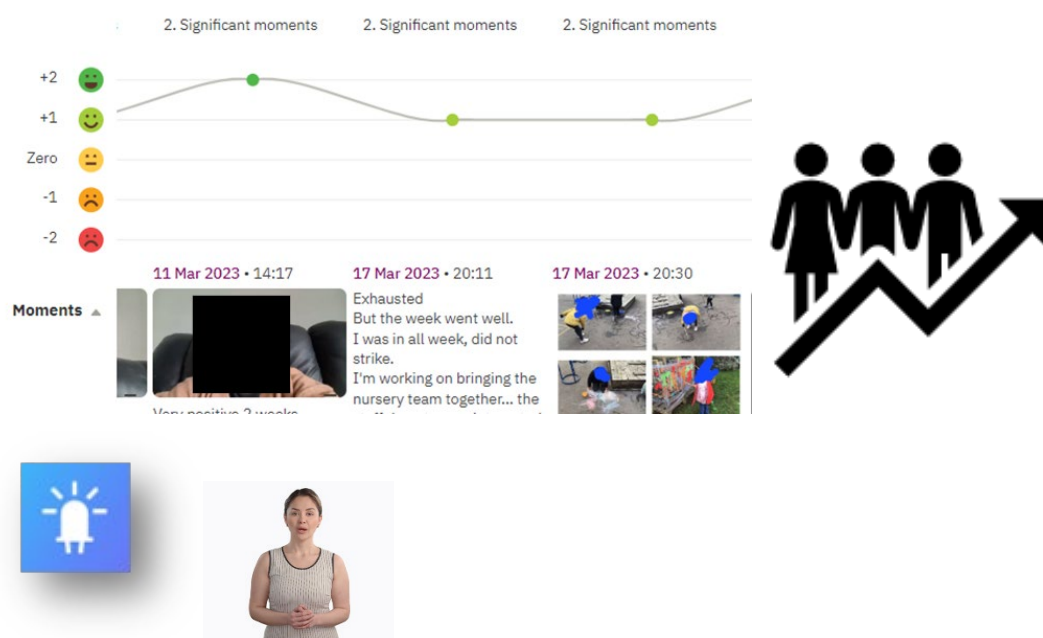
Figure 49- Sylvia's Journey Map 11th to 17th March 2023 and Video upload 11th March 2023. Scan the graph icon to view her anonymised video upload.

Despite her proactive approach, Sylvia faced challenges with her partner teacher, who tended to "just steam ahead and do everything," leaving Sylvia feeling "a little bit railroaded." She believed their working relationship should be more collaborative, stating, "You should be asking me this first, and we should be working on this together." While her partner's actions were meant to "make my life easier," Sylvia felt they "took away my progression." To assert her capabilities, Sylvia had to convince her partner, saying, "You can let me do these things as well," and expressed her readiness to take on more: "Just point me in the right direction and I'll take it on." She recognised the importance of being "confident enough to just ask" and encouraged a more balanced approach, suggesting, "Tell me what I can do... split it, you know, make sure we're both doing the same" (I1). This experience highlighted Sylvia's commitment to fostering a more equitable and collaborative working environment.

Figure 502- Extract from Sylvia. Scan to view.

Sylvia's ambition extended beyond the classroom, as she decided to pursue a master's degree to further her knowledge and skills. Similarly, Ted sought progression by engaging with his school leadership to take on subject leadership responsibilities earlier than planned. He explained: "I've spoken to the head about starting that subject leadership a bit earlier." He continued: "He's said he's going to give me some time out of class to sort out computing cupboards and look at the curriculum and go to some training. " (I2). His initiative demonstrated a clear focus on contributing to his school's academic framework while continuing his professional growth.

Overall, the participants' reflections and plans underscore their commitment to ongoing personal and professional development. Their proactive approaches—seeking additional responsibilities, mentoring peers, pursuing further education, and engaging with school leadership—demonstrate their dedication to continuous improvement and growth in their teaching careers.

6.4 Collective Participation: Collaborating and working with others

This section examines the collaborative dimension of learning and how ECTs integrate into their professional communities. It highlights their progression from peripheral roles to becoming integral contributors within their schools communities. Through active collaboration with colleagues, mentors, and parents, the participants navigated complex professional dynamics, gaining confidence and developing their teaching practices. Their narratives illuminate the challenges and rewards of collective participation, demonstrating how collaboration fosters both personal growth and a sense of belonging within the school community.

6.4a Guiding the Journey: The Role of Mentors

Mentorship plays a crucial role in the LPP process, where experienced teachers help ECTs transition from peripheral roles to more central, autonomous positions within the school community. This section explores how mentorship, along with guidance from colleagues and school leadership, facilitated this transition for participants, highlighting both positive and challenging experiences.

Jeffrey described feeling fortunate in his school environment, stating, "I feel like I've really hit the jackpot with that school because the staff are really friendly, the children are lovely, management is really supportive" (T1ISV). Such a welcoming atmosphere was crucial for his integration into the school community. Similarly, April noted significant improvements in her mentor meetings after a change in school leadership, sharing, "Our new temporary team have spent lots of time listening to us all in school and putting things in place to support us." She continued: "My ECT meetings have improved so much already, and I am being given so much more support!" (T2SM). There was a noticeable uplift in her mood tracker from this point, shown below and in more detail in Appendix G.

2. Significant moments

+2
+1
Zero
-1
-2

Moments

4 May 2023 • 17:37
It's been a whirlwind since going back to school. Our new temporary team have spent lots of time listening to us all in school and putting things in place to support us. My ECT meetings have improved so much already and I am being given so much more support! The children are really happy which I think is a reflection of how much more relaxed and happy we as staff are 😊

Figure 513- April's Journey Map 4th May 2023.

Jeffrey highlighted the importance of hands-on mentorship during his first year as an ECT. While he had observed assessment processes during his placements, he noted that "when it actually comes to you doing it, it's a lot... a lot different to just watching someone else making those decisions" (I1). His mentor, who was also the other Year Four teacher, provided consistent support by "sitting down with [him] and doing it with [him] every time," guiding him through the complexities of moderations, assessments, and other teaching responsibilities (I1).

Jeffrey also recounted a particularly challenging moment when he was required to complete Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) for children with special educational needs (SEN), stating, "I didn't even know what an EHCP was at that point" (I1). His mentor once again stepped in to explain the process, ensuring he felt supported. Additionally, when he struggled with "the children first coming in, and it was just a bit hectic," Jeffrey sought advice from his mentor. He shared: "She actually let me watch her... what she does when the children come in." Jeffrey continued: "I was able to observe her and take notes and then kind of copy what she does to try and create a calm atmosphere" (T1ISV). His experience highlights the crucial role of a mentor in providing practical, hands-on support and guidance, especially during the early days of teaching when everything can feel overwhelming.

Despite positive experiences, Jeffrey's mentorship support was not always consistent. One notable instance involved a request for help with lesson planning that went unfulfilled. He shared, "I mentioned to my mentor that I'm struggling with the new planning and I'm not sure what to do," but added, "this never happened (supposedly because she forgot, or she was busy)" (T2SM, 05.05.23). With the lesson deadline looming, Jeffrey voiced his concern: "The lesson that I'm supposed to be planning is first thing back next week" (T2SM). Attempts to seek advice from other colleagues also proved unsuccessful, leaving him feeling overlooked: "I have emailed other colleagues asking for advice and support and I was left ignored" (T2SM). Determined to manage independently, Jeffrey spent part of his weekend preparing for the lesson, though he admitted his disappointment: "I am a little bit disappointed that after I have asked for support, I am not being given it" (T2SM). His journey map below reflects this challenging experience.
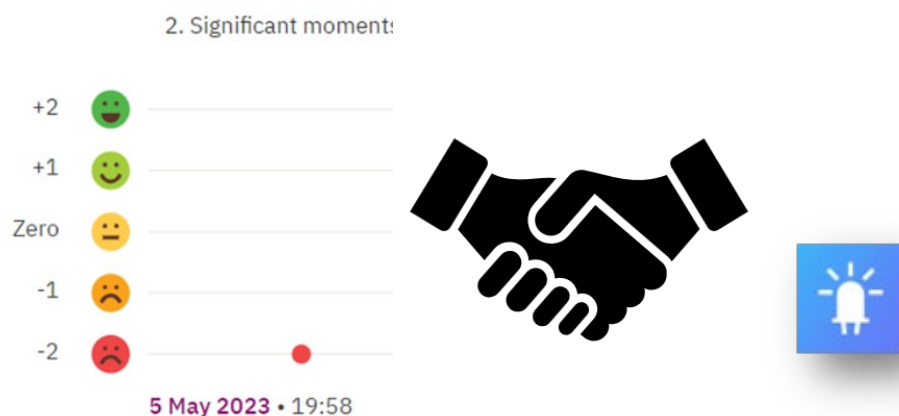
Figure 52- Jeffrey's journey map 5th May 2023 and video extract. Scan hand icon to view.

April, too, highlighted how mentorship positively impacted her practice, particularly in implementing interventions discussed with the SENCO: "I implemented some of the interventions I had discussed with the SENCO straight away and the parent advised the child was now happy at school and thanked me for my efforts to make this happen" (T2SM). This example of guided participation, where a more knowledgeable colleague actively engages with a new teacher, demonstrates the effectiveness of mentorship in fostering professional growth.

Figure 53- April's Journey Map 24th June to 7th July 2023.

Feedback and recognition from senior leadership also play a vital role in supporting ECTs. Jeffrey shared an example of receiving positive feedback: "I received excellent feedback on my observation, and she has fed back to SLT to 'celebrate my achievements'" (T2SM). Such recognition provides an uplift in their mood (as indicated on the mood journey map) of new teachers and acknowledges their progress. On this particular day, Jeffrey submitted three entries, one showing his lowest possible mood rating and another reflecting his highest, highlighting the emotional intensity and rapid shifts that can occur within a single school day. The mood map below is another example of how their mood can fluctuate across the day.
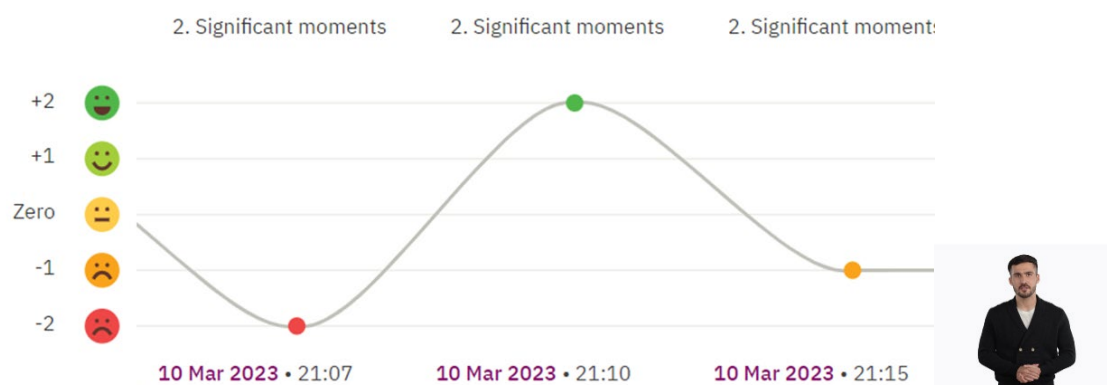
Figure 54- Jeffrey's Journey Map 10th March 2023.

Similarly, Ted appreciated feedback from colleagues and leadership, sharing that his work on improving English books was praised: "All the books look a lot better... it's really nice to get that feedback" (T2SM). Positive interactions, such as a conversation with his headteacher, reassured Ted that mistakes were part of the learning process: "The headteacher said to me, 'It's OK to have moments like that; you're an ECT in your first year'" (T1ISV).
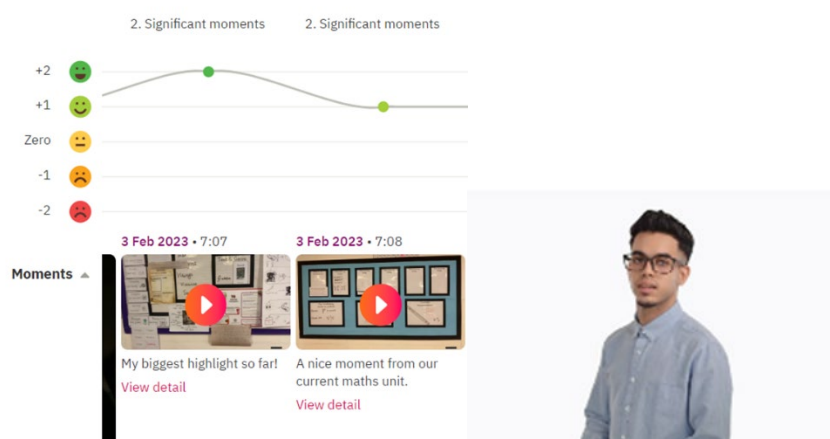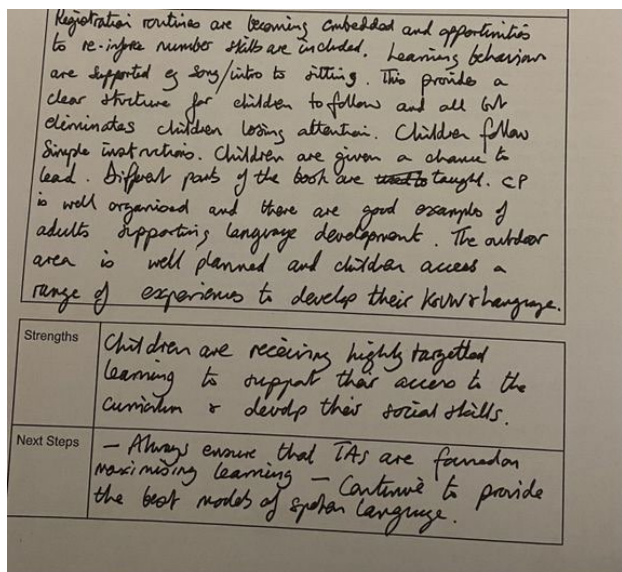
Figure 557- Ted's Journey Map 3rd February 2023.

Gladys echoed the significance of detailed feedback, noting how her headteacher's comments on a session and continuous provision guided her practice: "The use of spoken language across the support staff is one of the initiatives the school is highly promoting... I will more consciously support this in the classroom when needed" (T2SM).

Figure 568-Glady's upload 8th February 2023. Feedback from the headteacher.

Mentorship and a supportive school environment are vital for ECTs, and their absence can have significant negative effects, as seen in April's experience in a toxic school. Reflecting on her surprise, she stated, "I can't say that I was warned about toxic schools. I never thought I'd work in one." She continued: "I especially didn't think this would be the one... But it's only once you're in the school that you really find out how it is" (T2SM). This realisation highlights the difficulty of assessing a school's true environment until one is fully immersed in it. April discovered a stark contrast between initial impressions and reality, noting that staff were hesitant to engage with newcomers due to high turnover and distrust, stating, "it sounds really silly, but they also weren't sure if you were a spy there" (I2).
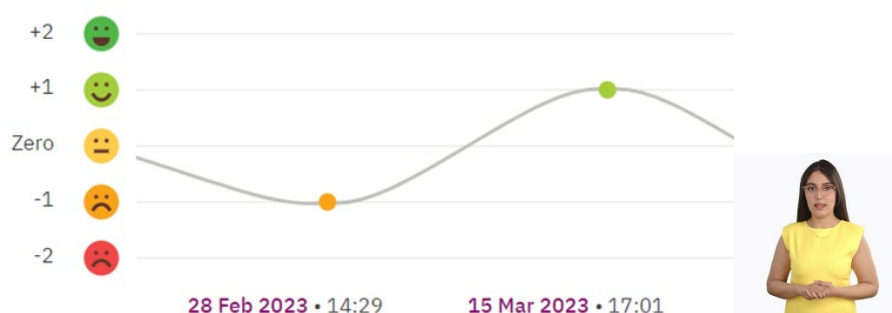
Figure 579- April's Journey Map 28th February 2023 and video upload. Scan to view.

April found that feedback, a crucial aspect of professional development, was often negative and unhelpful under the old senior leadership team (SLT). She described her geography observation feedback as "Lots of areas for development and a small number of strengths... Little bit deflating"

(T2SM). This lack of positive reinforcement was demoralising and reflected in her journey map, which showed a decline in confidence between March 27th and 28th.
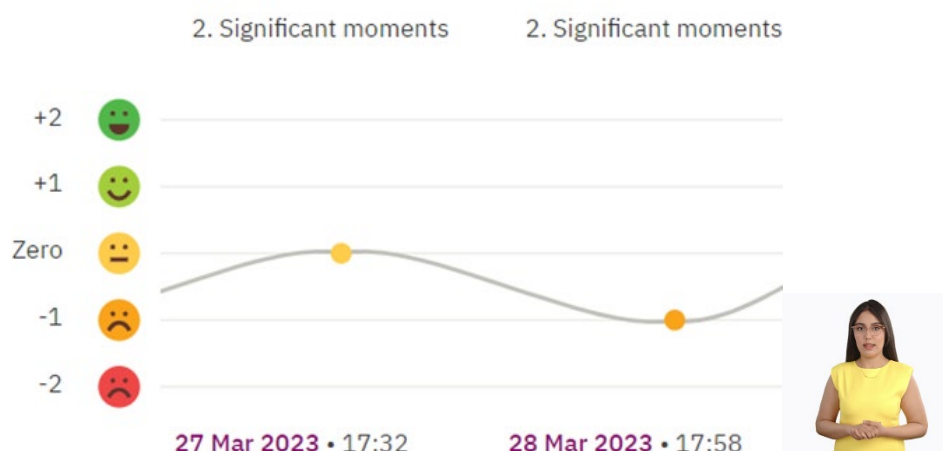
Figure 580- April's Journey Map 27th and 28th March 2023.

Repeated, unsupported feedback left April frustrated. She noted, "I've explained before that I've struggled to know how to use a TA effectively, but as this is the second time it has come up in an observation, it's seen as an area of concern" (T2SM). Despite her efforts, she felt overwhelmed: "I just don't want to let them down... the kids are my main priority... But at the same time, I'm new. So, I do need that support and I've never been in year three before" (I1).

Conflicting advice added to her challenges, making it hard to decide whose guidance to follow: "It's hard to get that judgement right of who should I be listening to?" She added: "But I'm hoping that will change with good management" (I1). This issue was compounded, as briefly shared in section 6.5a, by the lack of senior leadership team (SLT) support, which intensified her emotional strain. At times, she felt close to giving up but found temporary relief when interacting with her pupils, only for doubts to return once the school day ended. These moments illustrate the emotional toll of inconsistent support and leadership on her professional wellbeing. (T2SM).
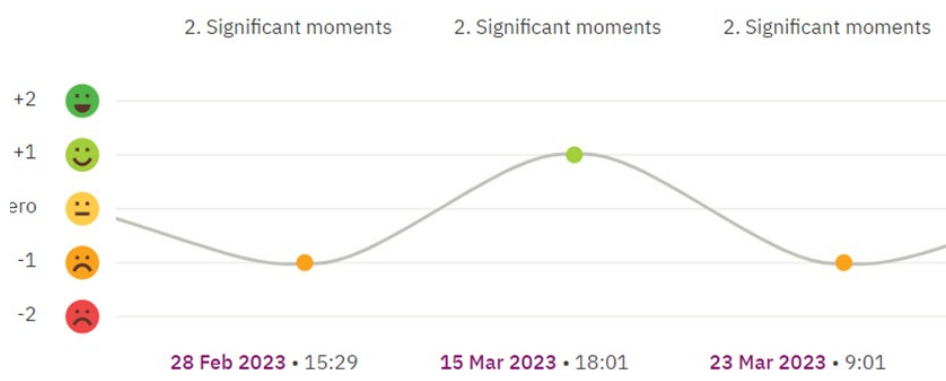
Figure 591- April's Journey Map28th February to 23rd March 2023.

The lack of a supportive environment worsened April's stress, impacting her wellbeing and responsibilities. She admitted, "I don't think there's anything that anybody can do to prepare you for the challenges of a difficult SLT" (T3CV), highlighting the significant influence of leadership and school culture on ECTs. Despite these challenges, she found solace in coworker support, sharing, "The year 4 and year 2 teachers... we've got our own little work nest, but they've been really supportive, and we've all sort of supported each other through difficult times" (I2).

April's situation improved dramatically with the arrival of a new SLT on May 4th, as shown in her journey map. The supportive approach of the new leadership transformed her professional environment and outlook, emphasizing the critical role of effective leadership in fostering ECT development. Her journey illustrates how the presence—or absence—of nurturing mentorship and leadership can profoundly impact the integration and growth of new teachers.
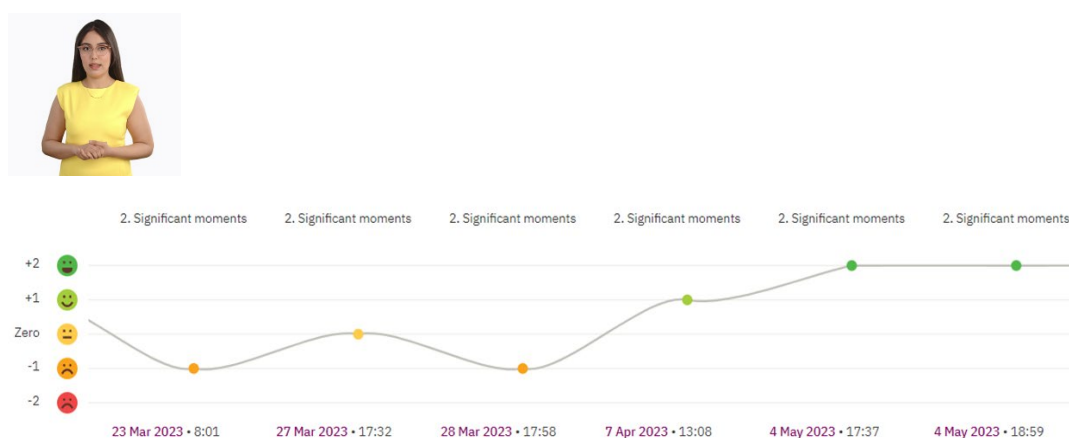
Figure 602- April's Journey Map 23rd March to 4th May 2023.

4 May 2023 · 18:37

It's been a whirlwind since going back to school. Our new temporary team have spent lots of time listening to us all in school and putting things in place to support us. My ECT meetings have improved so much already and I am being given so much more support! The children are really happy which I think is a reflection of how much more relaxed and happy we as staff are 😁

Rating: 🙂 +2

Figure 613- April's text upload 4th May 2023.
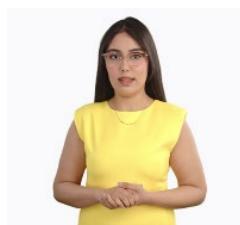
Figure 624- April's Journey Map 2023. Scan to view.

6.4b Learning Together: The Value of Peer Collaboration

Peer collaboration is crucial for integrating ECTs into the teaching community, offering a platform to share experiences, exchange practical advice, and learn from one another. This collaborative environment fosters social learning and professional growth, aligning with the concept of CoP. Building meaningful relationships with colleagues enhances teachers' confidence and willingness to seek help. Gladys highlighted this, stating, "I think one thing I've done really well this year is form really good relationships with lots of different people across the school." She continued: "And because I kind of knew all the people that I needed to, I was able, and I felt comfortable and confident to get help whenever I needed to..." (T3CV).

Sylvia echoed this sentiment, emphasising the necessity of being integrated into the school community and relying on her team: "You can't just stay in your classroom and just be in your own bubble. You've got to be part of that community... it was just a lot of asking... You do rely heavily on your team" (I2). This highlighted the significance of a collaborative culture in fostering a sense of belonging and support among ECTs.

Sylvia and Gladys both benefited from collaborative learning in their ECT programmes. For Gladys, her school's use of the Bright Futures Teach First scheme offered valuable connection points with fellow ECTs. "Every half term, we have two online sessions… It's great meeting as a hub of ECTs within our school as well as chatting with other ECTs online from other schools," (T2SM) she shared. Although some tools were less relevant for EYFS due to the broad scope of the programme, breakout rooms organised by key stage made the sessions particularly useful, providing space for reflective practice and relevant discussion. Sylvia found similar support within the Changing Lives in Collaboration (CLIC) Trust group, which fostered her progression through structured peer observations. "I was struggling with SEN, how to be inclusive, you know, to make them part of the class." She continued: "They all came to observe a lesson… They were all given the teacher standards to mark against and see if they could suggest any improvements" (I2). This feedback refined her approach, though both programmes added to their workload.
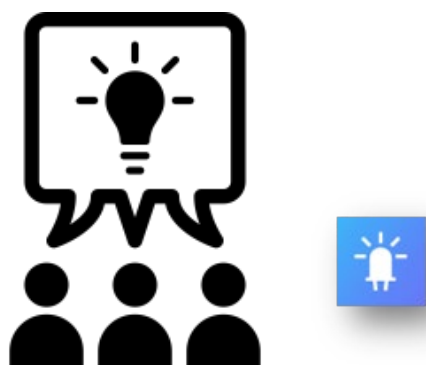
Figure 63- Sylvia and Gladys talk about collaborative learning opportunities. Scan to view the video.

Professional conversations with peers also deepened understanding and clarified teaching strategies. April reflected, "There have been lots of professional, informative conversations that are really helping me to see the learning journey and deepening my subject knowledge at the same time" (T2SM). These discussions broadened perspectives and enhanced practice.
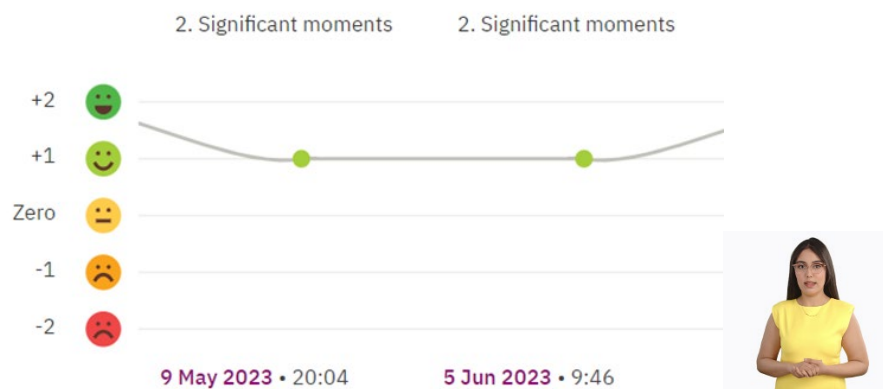
Figure 64- April's Journey Map 9th May.

Emotional support from peers further eased the pressures of teaching. April shared, "It feels nice being listened to and that any contribution I make is valued. Still finding things overwhelming but trying to take small steps in changing my mindset" (T2SM, 9.5.23). Such support fosters a positive working environment for ECTs.

Practical peer support, especially in areas like assessment, was also invaluable. Sylvia described receiving detailed guidance: "For the assessments, they brought in a professional who advises us on how to assess, ensuring that we are evaluating at the right level." She added: "I had a comprehensive three-hour session with her, where we meticulously examined the progress of three children, ensuring I placed them where they need to be" (I2). This bolstered her confidence and competence.

Creating an inclusive and supportive environment is essential for all teachers. Gladys valued the collaborative nature of her nursery setting, noting, "I think for me in being a nursery, working with so many adults, that was definitely invaluable" (T1ISV). Similarly, April appreciated the support from class teachers: "I had amazing support at the school from other class teachers, other people, not so much as an ECT" (T2SM).
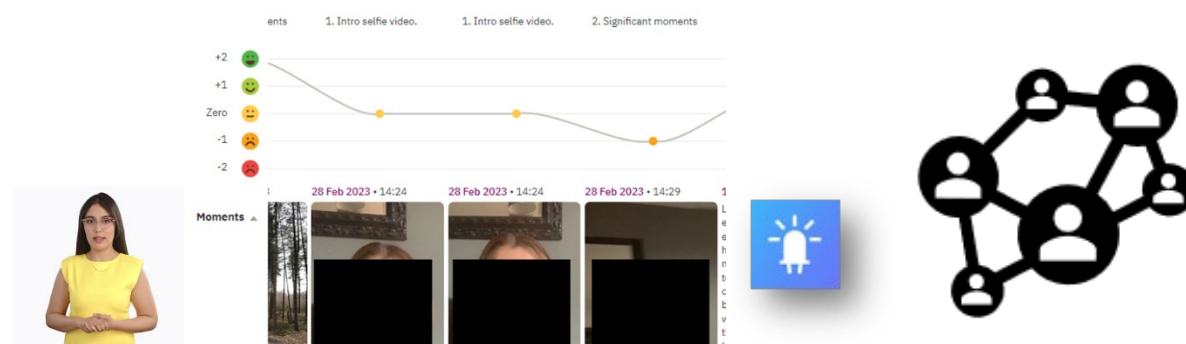
Figure 65- April's video 28th February 2023. Scan to view.

These experiences highlight the vital role of peer collaboration in ECT professional development. Through building relationships, observing and learning from colleagues, engaging in professional conversations, and receiving emotional and practical support, ECTs transition from peripheral participants toward becoming core members of the teaching profession. This peer support fosters confidence, competence, and a sense of belonging, key elements of social learning described by LPP within the broader framework of CoP.

6.4c Navigating Collaboration: Challenges in Peer Dynamics

While peer collaboration and support are fundamental to the professional growth of ECTs, there are inherent challenges that can impact the effectiveness of these interactions. Despite the many benefits of collaboration, such as sharing experiences and mutual support, ECTs often encountered obstacles that could hinder their growth.

Gladys faced challenges in collaboration due to an "imbalance" in teaching approaches with a fellow teacher (T3CV). This disparity led to difficulties when their classes were merged into a joint provision, making her feel uneasy about relying on another staff member. Gladys explained that these collaborative efforts sometimes "hindered [her] children's learning," demonstrating how such dynamics can directly affect pupil outcomes (T3CV). She admitted hesitating to address the issue with her phase leader, feeling "a bit silly" for raising concerns. However, she recognised the need for confidence in handling "difficult conversations" to prioritise her pupils' needs over maintaining professional harmony (T3CV). Her experience highlighted the tension between fostering relationships and advocating for pupils' best interests.
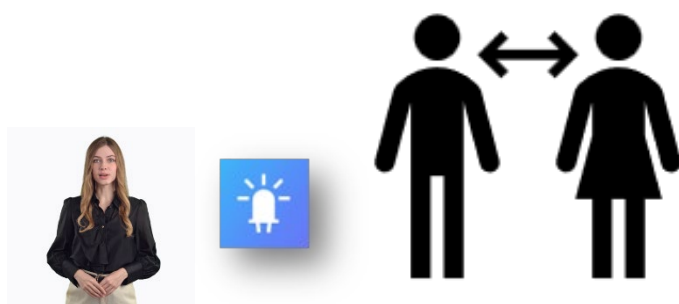
Figure 66- Glady's concluding video. Scan to view.

Sylvia highlighted the complexities of working with multiple staff members, noting that while having two teaching assistants provided "extra pairs of hands," it also brought challenges: "Two different personalities... you've got to make sure that they understand everything... Things change all the time"

(T2SM). While additional staff offered support, it required increased coordination and communication, which could be burdensome and occasionally counterproductive.
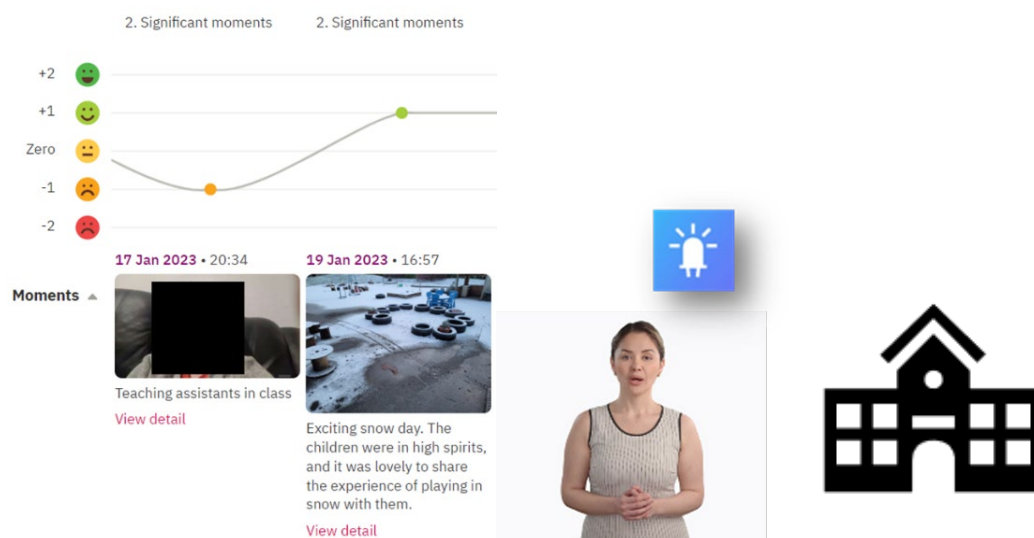
Figure 679- Sylvia's video 17th January 2023. Scan to view.

Sylvia voiced frustration with the lack of collaboration in decision-making, stating, "It should be a partnership... We should be working on this together. I have a lot of things I'd like to implement, but [they] are quite set in their ways, which is actually taking away my progression" (I1). This underscores the challenge of fostering a genuinely collaborative environment where all voices are valued, as overlooked input and stifled ideas can hinder growth and agency.

Ted also reflected on the challenges of peer collaboration, emphasising the need for self-advocacy. "Although people are there to look out for you, it's your wellbeing, and it's your responsibility to speak up if you need something" (T2SM). His comment highlights the balance between seeking support and taking personal responsibility for progress.

Figure 68- Ted's video 17th January 2023. Scan to view.

In summary, peer collaboration is crucial for ECT integration and growth but comes with challenges. Balancing support with autonomy, maintaining effective communication and coordination, and creating inclusive environments where contributions are valued are essential to overcoming these obstacles.

6.4d Parent-Teacher Relationships: Opportunities and Challenges

Collaborating with parents is a vital aspect of ECTs' professional development. Within the framework of LPP and CoP, engaging with parents can helps new teachers transition from peripheral to more central roles in the school community. The following examples illustrate strategies and challenges ECTs face when working with parents, emphasising the importance of honest communication and positive reinforcement in building trust and fostering a collaborative environment to support pupil development.

Hello, I have a few questions regarding ▉▉▉ and the times tables check. I understand that you decided it best for ▉▉▉ not to complete the test due to his working levels, however I understand that this test is a compulsory test that every child should complete in Year 4. Is ▉▉▉ on the SEN register and is this a reason that he did not complete it? If this is the case then is he receiving any interventions, because to my knowledge nothing of this has been discussed with me in the past.
As you will understand I am very concerned about ▉▉▉s education and I am just very surprised to find out that he is below in this way. I understand that he is below working level, but I do not want it to affect his education in the future or his SATS.

Figure 691- Jeffrey's upload 11th July 2023. Message from a parent.

Jeffrey highlighted the importance of open, honest communication with parents. Discussing his approach to an upcoming meeting, he shared, "I have got a meeting with the parent next week and I will be honest with her about the situation. He added: "I'll give her some tips of what she can do at home with him to help him make more progress" (T2SM). Providing practical advice strengthens school-home relationships and ensures consistent support for the child's progress. Interestingly, on this day, Jeffrey submitted three separate reflections, with mood ratings ranging from +2 to -1. This fluctuation offers further insight into the emotional complexity of his role and the value of capturing experiences in real time.
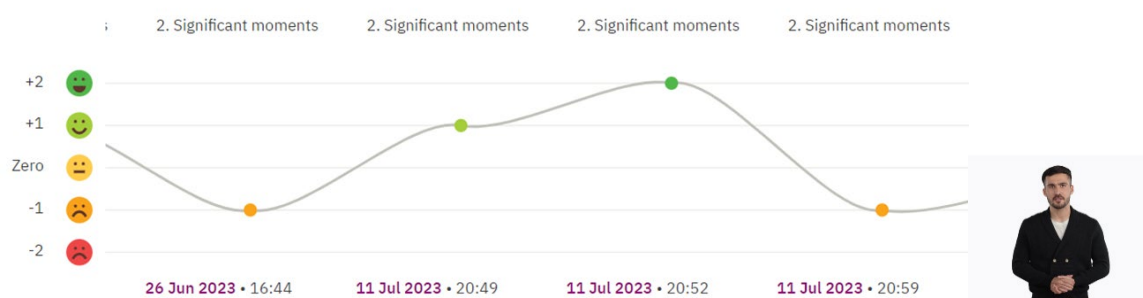
Figure 702- Jeffrey's upload 11th July 2023. Message from a parent.

April reflected on a recent parents' evening and the positive feedback she received: "Some parents were really complimentary which made me really happy letting me know the children love being in my class and that they're happy seeing their confidence growing" (T2SM). Such positive reinforcement from parents can be uplifting for ECTs, reinforcing their confidence and affirming the impact of their teaching methods on pupil wellbeing and development.
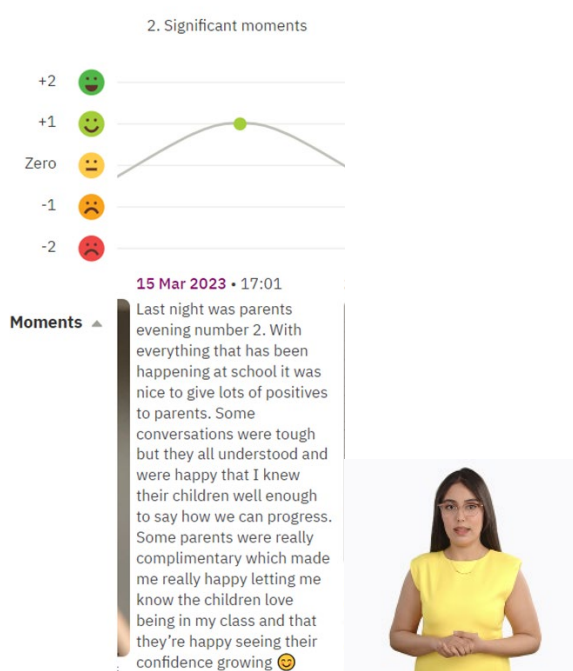
Figure 71- April's upload 15th March 2023. Parents evening.

However, ECTs also face challenges in managing parents' expectations and perceptions. Gladys recounted her experience of dealing with parental concerns and her proactive approach to resolving conflicts through education: "Parents were complaining then ringing the school and saying that we weren't safeguarding their children, and it was really about re-educating the parents, and we started

doing some parent workshops. Then really, it's now come down the other side" (I2). This proactive approach fostered mutual understanding and cooperation.

Sylvia faced challenges in redefining her professional identity with parents who knew her as a teaching assistant. She noted, "One of the barriers is parents, because I don't think they like the idea... a lot of the families know me as a TA" (I1). Despite this, Sylvia actively engaged parents through workshops, meetings, and stay-and-play sessions. Reflecting on a physical development workshop, she said, "It went well, and the parents just had a little play with their children in the nursery setting after that... it was successful" (T2SM).
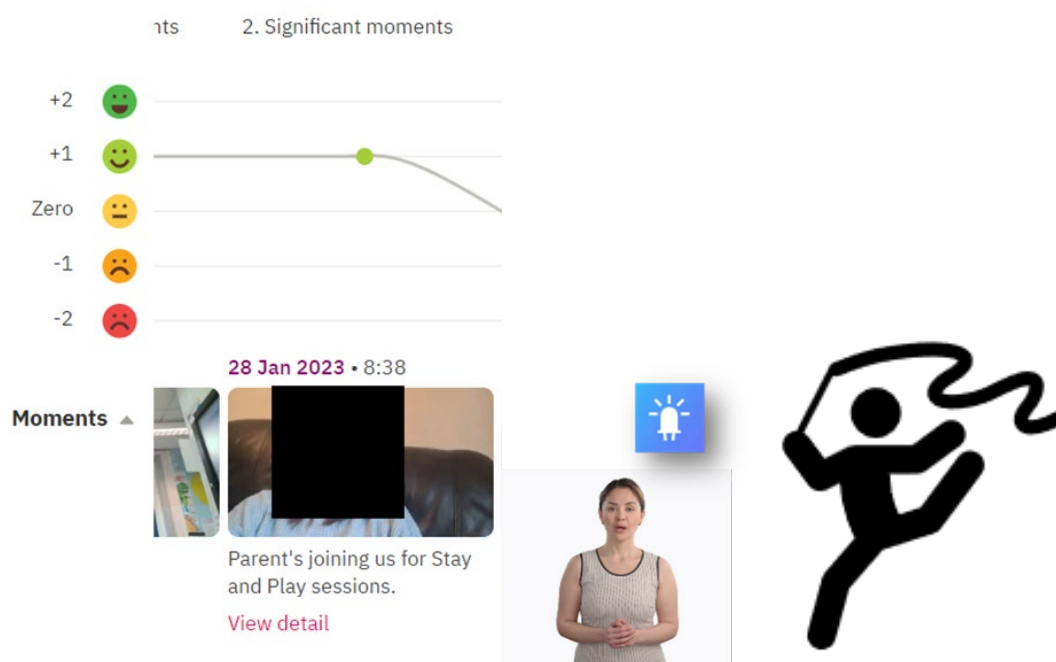
Figure 724- Sylvia's upload 28th January and video. Workshop with parents. Scan to view.

Towards the end of the academic year, Sylvia reflected on meeting new parents, expressing a mix of emotions about the experience: "So Monday is a stay and play for the new children for September, the week after we've got a parents meeting for the new parents." She continued: "it's quite nice, but it's also quite daunting because I sit there in front of a room of, you know, parents of 32 children and so it's quite a lot of adults and presenting information to them" (T2SM). Her reflection highlights the dual challenge of engaging parents while managing personal confidence as an ECT.

2. Significant moments

10 Jun 2023 • 16:17

Week 1 summer 2
View detail
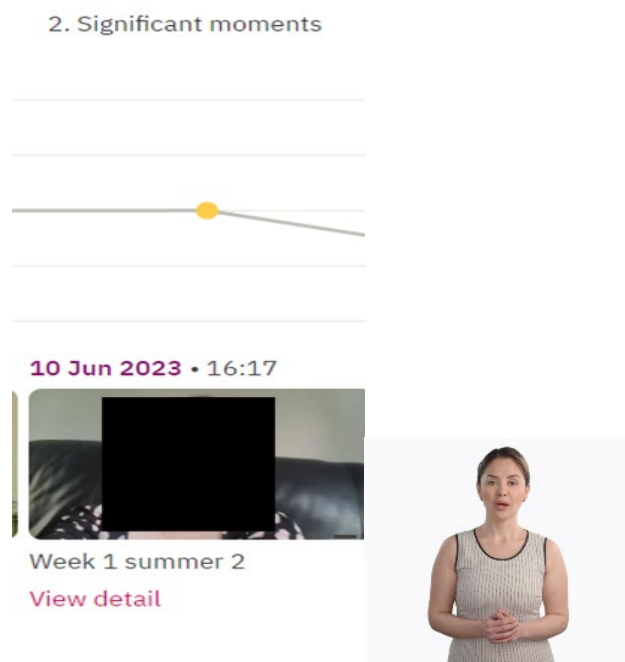
Figure 73- Sylvia's upload 10th June and video. Stay and play session with parents.

By collaborating with parents, ECTs enhance their professional growth and strengthen the school's community of practice. These interactions allow teachers to share knowledge, build trust, and become key contributors to the collaborative effort of supporting pupil development. Through communication, relationship-building, and proactive engagement, ECTs not only develop their skills but also establish themselves as integral members of the educational community.

6.4e The Two-Way Street: Building Reciprocal Relationships

The integration of ECTs into the school community of practice is marked by a reciprocal nature of learning and support. While ECTs benefit from the established structures and mentorship within the school, they also contribute significantly to the development of their colleagues and the overall school environment. This dynamic reflects their growing competence and increasing centrality in the community, illustrating their progression toward full participation.

Gladys emphasised the importance of fostering connections with various stakeholders within the school community, highlighting the mutual benefits of these relationships: "I think it's just making those connections with the whole school, the caretaker, everybody, because you're all part of it together and the more you do for them, the more they do for you..." (I2). Her statement underscored the idea that

reciprocal relationships within the school enhance the collective functioning of the community. By supporting others, ECTs also receive support, facilitating a culture of collaboration.

Sylvia's journey reflected her growing confidence and transition from a novice to a valued resource for her peers. Initially doubting her contributions, she gained self-assurance as she recognised the value of her expertise: "I have got useful information which I can share as well... I'm not just the new teacher that has nothing to share" (I1). Her growing confidence led colleagues to seek her advice, particularly on topics like dyslexia, drawing on her recent university studies. She shared that one teacher frequently asked for her input, saying, "Because you're more current in education... just out of uni, would you advise me on this?" (T2SM). Sylvia reflected on how this recognition made her feel, noting that being sought after for her knowledge was "quite nice" and helped her feel more like a teacher. She explained, "My teacher identity is improving, and I have more confidence in my own ability and knowledge" (T2SM).

Sylvia's mentor recognised her specialised knowledge, integrating her into the school's professional development efforts. This responsibility marked her shift from a newcomer to a central participant within the community of practice. She shared, "I had some training in sports in fine and gross motors, and my mentor said, 'can you pass it on to the rest.' So, I did a staff meeting and passed on all the information" (I2), highlighting her growing influence within the school community.

Figure 74- Extracts from Gladys and Sylvia. Scan to view.

April's experience with curriculum development further underscores the collaborative nature of the school environment. Working with her colleagues, she contributed to creating a more streamlined and accessible curriculum: "We've started to rewrite some of our curriculum to help streamline and make it more accessible to our pupils. So far it has been a positive experience with the whole team involved" (T2SM).
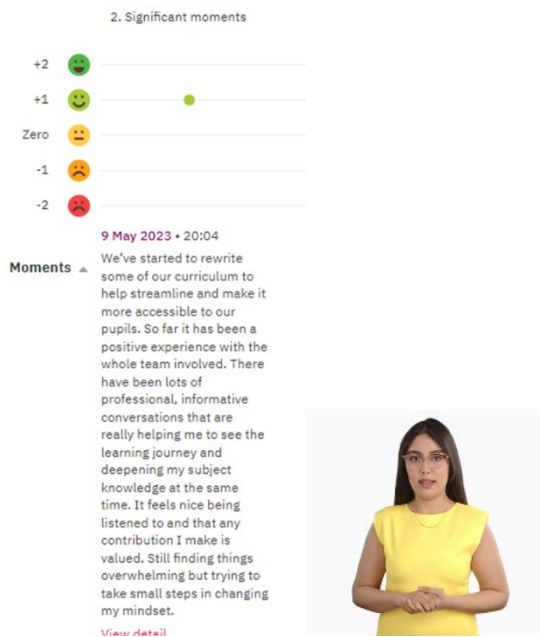
Figure 75- April's text upload. 9th May 2023.

Ted also reflected on the benefits of collaboration, expressing his satisfaction with being part of a professional team: "I've loved working as part of a team with other professionals" (T1ISV). His positive experience underscored the value of a supportive and collaborative work environment in fostering professional growth.

These examples demonstrate how ECTs, through their active participation and contributions, support their colleagues and enhance the school's community of practice. Their engagement could indicate a growing sense of competence and a shift toward full participation, reinforcing the reciprocal nature of learning and development within the school. By sharing their knowledge and skills, ECTs not only advance their own professional growth but also contribute to the growth and cohesion of the entire school community.

The participants' experiences highlight the importance of collective participation in ECT professional growth. Collaborating with mentors, peers, and parents helped them navigate their roles, build professional relationships, and refine their teaching practices. However, balancing collaboration with autonomy and managing diverse dynamics underscore the complexities of this process. Ultimately, these reciprocal relationships not only supported the ECTs' growth but also enriched the school environment, emphasising the value of collaboration in shaping confident and capable teachers.

6.5 Active Participation: Supporting and Investing in the School Community

This section highlights participants' proactive roles in their school communities, showcasing their journey toward becoming more central team members. Through their stories, ECTs demonstrate how they actively contribute, take on greater responsibilities, and shape their schools through their actions. By investing in their communities, they not only influence the school's development but also grow into integral contributors. This progression reflects Lave and Wenger's (2011) concept of LPP, where newcomers start with simple tasks and gradually take on more complex roles as they gain experience and competence, evolving into active and influential members of their school communities.

6.5a Taking Root: Transitioning to the Heart of the School Community

The transition of ECTs from newcomers to more central members within the school community is a key aspect of their professional growth. According to Lave and Wenger (2011), central figures within a community of practice, or 'old-timers,' are experienced members who serve as role models and facilitators of learning, helping newcomers engage in meaningful activities and adapt to the evolving practices of the community. Evidence of this transition can be seen in the experiences of ECTs as they progress through their first year in the school.

Gladys described her progression, noting, "At the start of the year, it was very much like you're an ECT, and I do think people have kind of forgotten that now." She reflected further: "I feel a really central part of the school. I now feel like I'm a member of staff that people come to ask me things" (T3CV). Similarly, Ted shared, "It's helped me feel like I'm in the centre of that school community and that I've been able to help staff members, my colleagues, as well as the children." He added: "And then ultimately helping the parents as well" (T3CV). These experiences highlight their growing integration and influence within their schools.

Experienced teachers, or 'old-timers,' possess extensive practical knowledge of the school's culture, policies, and educational practices. They mentor new teachers, guiding them in areas such as classroom management, curriculum planning, and instructional strategies. This mentorship is crucial for helping newcomers navigate the complexities of teaching. Gladys, now embracing a mentoring role, reflected on her responsibilities: "Staying in Nursery will allow me to draw on and improve my knowledge and pedagogy from this year and share this with my partner teacher who is new to nursery" (T2SM).

Caption & Comments   Tags   Notes   ✕

30 Jun 2023 · 14:47

Whilst being off ill I have realised I've not shared the big news! I'm staying in Nursery! When I was first told this I was quite disappointed. From slt discussions I was expected to move and was looking forward to changing key stages for future progression opportunities. However, I do love eyfs so much so upon my initial surprise I am now pleased to be staying. I will be working with a new partner teacher which I am looking forward to and there are going to be big changes next year. We are building a specific adapted continuous provision space for eyfs chn with send to meet their needs. This means a complete classroom revamp! I love do my current classroom but with a year of wear and tear, I'm looking forward to ripping it all out and starting again! Staying in Nursery will allow me to draw and and improve my knowledge and pedagogy from this year and share this with my partner teacher who is new to nursery. I will also be taking on the subject of re (a year early!). Staying in a year group where I am familiar with curriculum, expectations and how it runs will allow me to focus my time on this new task. I have decided to re right our current lesson plans and school vision and have agreed this with our curriculum lead and head teacher the new directions I will be taking religious education in our school. So there is definitely lots to keep my busy! I'm excited to start in September, having the new cohort of children and starting that learning process where most important through exploration, developing themselves as humans and forming their all important and unique personalities!

Rating: 🙂 +1

Figure 76- Glady's text upload 30th June 2023.

She also guided a PGCE student during a two-week placement: "I really enjoyed working with her today, getting to know her experience and planning what needs to be done over the next two weeks" (T2SM).

27 Feb 2023 · 19:22

The first day back has been fantastic, it's been lovely to see the children again get back into the swing of everything and the routine and head into our new topics. In addition to this, for the next two weeks I have been given a PGCE student for their two week EYFS placement. I really enjoyed working with her today getting to know her experience and planning what needs to be done over the next two weeks. It will be a lovely opportunity at this point in my ECT year to be able to support this student alongside my phase leader necessary. Being in this position myself two years ago as a student in nursery in the school on my BA2 placement I feel I can offer a lot of insight and support.

Rating: 🙂 +1
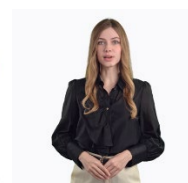
Figure 77- Glady's text upload 27th February 2023.

Sylvia also highlighted her evolving role as a mentor, recognising the unique position she would hold in the upcoming term. As the only teacher with nursery experience, she explained that she would be guiding a new colleague and "showing the next teacher all the ropes." Reflecting on this opportunity, she described it as exciting to "feel like I'm in an advantageous position because I have knowledge," a contrast to earlier feelings of being "the one that's less knowledgeable" (T2SM). Her journey map from this period is also an example of subtle mood shifts within a single day.
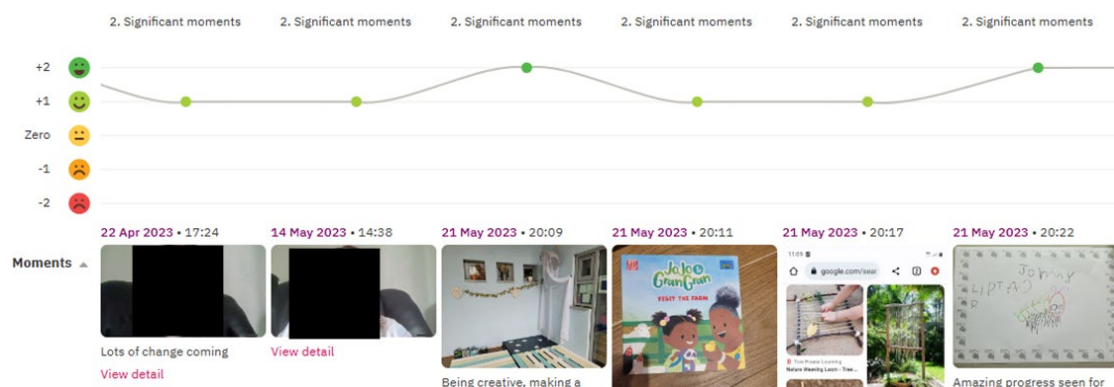
Figure 780- Sylvia's journey map 22nd April to 21st May 2023.

Ted also describes guiding a new teaching assistant in his classroom: "I knew everything I wanted of him, and I could tell him straight away... And I set up folders and timetables... So, he loved it, that giving him such a clear thing of what I wanted doing" (I2). These examples illustrated how ECTs began to adopt roles that involve mentoring and supporting others, signifying their transition to more central figures within the school.

As they continued to grow, participants took on additional responsibilities and leadership roles. Sylvia engaged in various initiatives, noting, "I just, I felt like if I give back to the community, you know, I was involved in anything I could be involved in and then you know they take you on as part of the team more" (I2). Ted started an after-school forest school club, saying, "It's been nice to get involved with the wider community and make use of the school grounds and facilities" (T2SM).
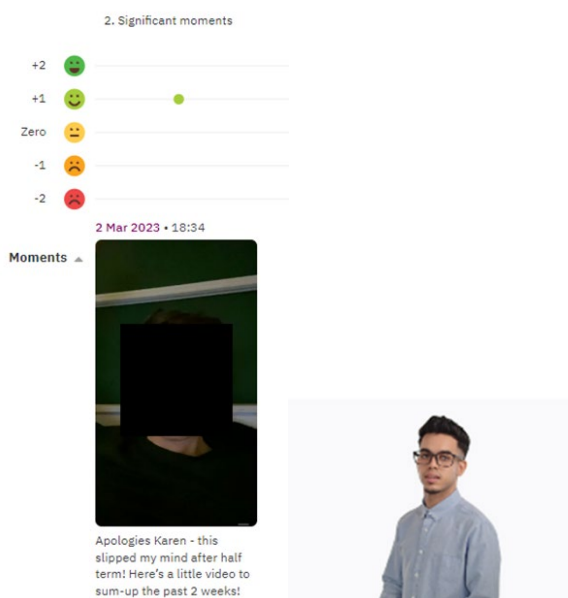
Figure 791- Ted's Journey Map and video upload 2nd March 2023. Scan to view.

Gladys, Ted, and Sylvia all discussed taking on leadership roles. Gladys reflected on her new positions as a staff governor and the Religious Education (RE) subject lead: "Today it has been confirmed that I am the new staff governor!" (TS2M). "I will be taking on the subject of RE (a year early!). "She explained her plans: "I have decided to rewrite our current lesson plans and school vision and have agreed this with our curriculum lead and head teacher, the new directions I will be taking religious education in our school" (T2SM).
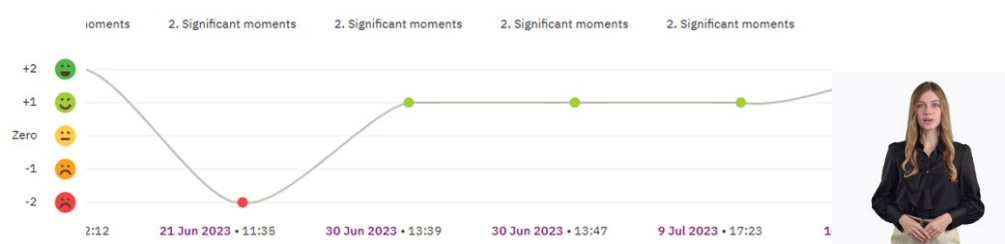
Figure 802- Glady's journey map 21st June 2023 to 9th July 2023.

Sylvia also described taking on leadership roles: "I did some training on physical development and, as asked by the head, disseminated it to the rest of the Early Years team." She added: "My mentor was really good... She sent me observation notes about it and said that she's sending it also to the head and to the leader of PE" (T2SM). She found fulfilment in her role, stating, "I'm quite happy that something that I put a lot of effort into has gone down well and sort of fought the fear of holding a staff meeting." Adding: "It was nice to be in that position where I could actually contribute" (T2SM). Ted also reflected on the impact of being entrusted with responsibilities: "When you've been given responsibility, you feel like you're part of something with everyone else... It helps you just communicate and become part of the whole school community" (I2).
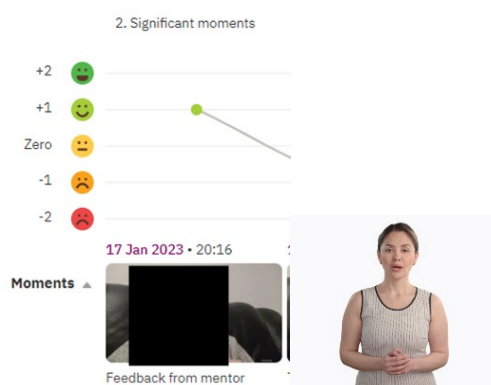
Figure 813- Sylvia Journey Map and video upload 17th January 2023. Scan to view.

Looking ahead, Ted expressed excitement about his upcoming roles, sharing that he had been offered the position of computing lead for the next year. He also looked forward to teaching Year 6, explaining: "I'll get to move up with my class." Reflecting on this opportunity, he added, "I feel like it's showing that the school trusts me a little bit to give me a Year 6 class." (T2SM).
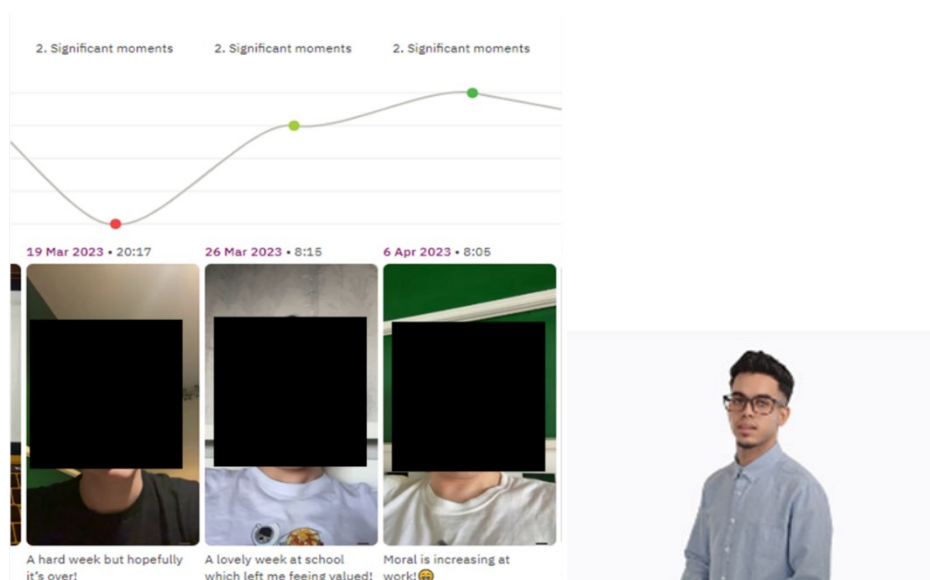
Figure 824- Ted's Journey Map 19th march - 6th April 2023.

Figure 835- Extracts from Glady's, Ted and Sylvia. Scan to view.

This section illustrates ECTs' progression from peripheral participants to more central members of their school communities, reflecting Lave and Wenger's (2011) CoP framework. Through mentoring, leadership, and active participation, ECTs grew into vital contributors who shaped their schools' development. These experiences highlight the dynamic process of becoming integral members of a community of practice, as individuals evolve from learners to leaders, sharing their expertise and fostering collective growth. This journey is further illustrated in the diagrams in Appendix J.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the developmental trajectories of five ECTs during their first year in the profession, using data from semi-structured interviews and real-time reflections collected through Indeemo (2017) between January and July 2023. While the chapter is structured to illustrate their progression from peripheral to more central roles within their school communities, their journeys were not linear. Instead, they were marked by fluctuating emotions, evolving roles, and the dynamic formation of professional identities. These complexities are reflected in their journey maps (Appendix G), which highlight the interplay between key moments and mood changes.

School leadership and mentorship were pivotal in shaping ECTs' professional growth. In Jeffrey's and April's cases, supportive leadership provided the guidance and feedback necessary for them to build confidence and progress from peripheral to more central roles. Conversely, April's earlier experience in a school with poor leadership and inadequate mentorship created significant barriers, hindering her professional growth and leaving her feeling isolated. This contrast highlights the critical role of effective leadership and mentorship in overcoming early-career challenges, directly influencing ECTs' growth, wellbeing, and sense of belonging within their school communities.

The reciprocal nature of participation within school communities was also evident. As ECTs transitioned into more central roles, they began contributing to the professional development of their colleagues, mentoring newer staff, and taking on leadership responsibilities. The examples above illustrate how newcomers can evolve into integral contributors, reflecting the dynamic process of LPP within CoP.

Importantly, although the research questions provided a clear starting point for the study, it became evident during the analysis that the conceptual framework, particularly the principles of CoP, LPP, and VCF, began to take on a more central role in shaping interpretation. Rather than answering the questions in a linear or isolated way, I found myself returning to them through the lens of the framework, allowing the data to speak more fluidly to concepts of participation, identity, and value. These theoretical ideas became increasingly prominent and helped structure the narrative of ECTs' journeys as revealed through the real-time reflections. The structure of this chapter was therefore designed to reflect a journey of increasing participation, while also allowing themes to emerge in dialogue with the framework.

Chapter 7 will build on this interpretive process by introducing the data-informed visual model that emerged during analysis. It will critically examine the findings through the lens of the conceptual framework, explicitly revisiting the research questions to draw conclusions about ECTs' integration into their school communities and the development of their professional identities.

Chapter 7- Reflecting on the journey: Discussing the stories of ECTs.

7.1 Introduction

"I've wanted to give up nearly every day, but as soon as all the children come in and they talk to me, then I change my mind again. And then after they've gone, I'm back in that place where I don't think I can do this job" (April, T2SM).

This raw and honest reflection encapsulates the emotional highs and lows experienced by early career teachers (ECTs) as they navigate the complex transition into the profession. This moment highlights the pressing need for research that examines not just the practical challenges of early career teaching, but also the emotional dimensions that underpin professional growth and identity development.

This chapter provides a reflective discussion on the findings, illustrating how the five ECTs navigated the complex, non-linear progression from peripheral participants to more active and central members of their school communities. Unlike retrospective studies offering static snapshots (Flores and Day, 2006), this research draws on mobile ethnography, interviews, and real-time mood tracking to capture immediate, evolving experiences.

The findings reveal that mentorship, school leadership, and positive relationships play a pivotal role in shaping both professional resilience and identity. Positive experiences, such as pupil progress or mentor validation, bolstered participants' confidence and sense of belonging. In contrast, unsupportive leadership, excessive workload, and restrictive feedback challenged their emotional resilience, highlighting the unpredictable nature of professional growth.

Key themes explored in this chapter include emotional resilience, mentorship, peer collaboration, and the dynamic balance between growth, challenge, and support. By foregrounding the role of emotions, relationships, and reflective practice, the discussion illustrates how these factors interact to shape ECTs' professional integration and emerging teacher identities.

7.1a Developing the Model: A Visual Representation of ECT Journeys

As the data analysis progressed, it became increasingly clear that the experiences of the early career teachers (ECTs) in this study could not be easily captured using a linear or pre-existing framework. Although my conceptual framework, drawing on Communities of Practice (CoP), Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP), and the Value Creation Framework (VCF), initially shaped the structure of the research, it was the data itself that began to lead the way.

The research questions provided a valuable starting point, but as I worked closely with the participants' stories, reflections, and emotional trajectories, themes of participation, identity, and value creation became more prominent. In many ways, the conceptual framework moved into the foreground, while the research questions became more peripheral to the process. The participants' real-time reflections, captured through mobile ethnography, revealed recurring patterns, particularly in how they described moments of support, challenge, confidence, and change.

Through this iterative engagement, I began sketching ideas and movements I was seeing in the data. What emerged was a visual model that reflects the shifting and non-linear nature of the participants' journeys. While informed by the theoretical ideas of CoP, LPP, and VCF, the model was not imposed from theory, it developed through the data. It draws loosely on Lagache's (1993) framework, introduced in Chapter 3, and incorporates stages of professional growth, the types of value experienced at each stage, and the emotional complexity of progressing through the first year of teaching.

Much like a game of snakes and ladders, the model illustrates how ECTs moved forward, slipped back, looped around, and redefined themselves through evolving relationships and changing contexts. It became a way to make sense of how they shifted from peripheral to more central roles in their school communities, often in unpredictable ways. This visualisation serves as a conceptual tool for interpreting the findings in this chapter and provides structure to the discussion that follows. A more detailed version of the model is included in Appendix J.

Figure 86- My conceptual framework model designed by Karen Tuzylak and illustrated by Katie Ruby (2024). A more detailed diagram is available in Appendix J. Scan to view further information.

7.2 Journeys Unfolded: How do early career teachers (ECTs) experience becoming a member of the primary school community of practice (PSCoP)?

Each of the following sections addresses one of the sub-questions underpinning the main research aim, explored through the lens of the conceptual framework. These sub-questions examine:

- The external factors shaping ECTs' experiences.
- The significant moments that define their participation.
- The development of their professional identity over time.
- The experiences that influence their emotional responses and shape their professional journeys.
- How ECTs perceive and experience different types of value—immediate, potential, applied, realized, and transformative—through their participation in the school community.

Through these dimensions, this discussion provides a holistic understanding of how ECTs navigate the challenges and opportunities of transitioning from peripheral participants to more central and integrated members of their school communities. The analysis highlights the dynamic and non-linear nature of their progression, shaped by a complex interplay of individual, social, and institutional factors.

7.2a What factors shape the experiences of early career teachers (ECTs) as they begin the transition from peripheral to central participation in the school community?

The early teaching years present a critical yet challenging period for ECTs as they navigate classroom management, workload demands, and the development of professional identity. Flores and Day (2006) emphasise how identity formation arises from the interplay of personal experiences, emotional challenges, and school contexts. Similarly, Kelchtermans (2009) characterises this stage as marked by "survival" and emotional labour. Participants echoed these views, describing their early careers as "overwhelming and bleak," highlighting the need for tailored support that addresses the complexities of diverse school environments.

Familiarity with school contexts, often gained through prior placements or roles as teaching assistants, facilitated smoother transitions for some ECTs. Feiman-Nemser (2001a) underscores how well-structured placements foster familiarity with routines, teaching practices, and professional relationships, contributing to confidence. Gladys and Sylvia described how returning to familiar schools enabled them to acclimatise quickly. However, Sylvia's transition revealed complexities: redefining her professional

identity within a familiar setting as she shifted from a teaching assistant to a qualified teacher required careful negotiation of relationships and expectations.

University training provided foundational skills in lesson planning, behaviour management, and reflective practice, preparing ECTs for initial challenges. However, mentorship quality varied. Ted found overly prescriptive guidance restrictive, stifling his confidence and autonomy. Feiman-Nemser (2001) critiques mentorship that emphasises rigid advice over professional agency, aligning with Oates and Bignell (2022), who argue for balanced mentoring partnerships between universities and schools. Effective mentors were pivotal in supporting resilience and growth by combining practical advice with emotional support.

ECTs' professional journeys were non-linear, marked by simultaneous challenges and successes. Sylvia's experience, leading a staff meeting while struggling with classroom management, illustrated the dynamic, iterative nature of growth. This contrasts with Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation as a linear trajectory, aligning more closely with Beauchamp and Thomas's (2011) view of identity as evolving through ongoing challenges and support.

Supportive school leadership and positive cultures significantly shaped ECTs' experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and professional growth (Flores and Day, 2006; Hulme and Wood, 2022). Conversely, unsupportive environments exacerbated stress and delayed progression. April's experience of poor communication and staff turnover exemplified how toxic school cultures undermine confidence and agency (Woodley and McGill, 2018). Ted and Sylvia similarly faced restrictive mentoring and unsupportive colleagues, underscoring the detrimental impact of unsupportive environments.

Peer networks were instrumental in supporting ECTs' professional development and emotional wellbeing. Participants valued teamwork, shared expertise, and peer observations as sources of practical learning and resilience. Gladys described how a collaborative team enabled her to share challenges and seek advice, while Jeffrey adapted strategies after observing a colleague. These experiences align with Wenger's (1998) communities of practice framework, which highlights the value of shared learning and participation in professional identity development.

Conclusion

The transition from peripheral to central participation for ECTs is shaped by a dynamic interplay of familiarity, mentorship, leadership, and peer collaboration. Prior experiences eased transitions but sometimes necessitated role redefinition. High-quality mentorship balanced guidance with autonomy, while supportive leadership and cultures facilitated smoother integration. Conversely, unsupportive environments delayed confidence and growth. Peer relationships emerged as vital for emotional resilience and shared learning. These findings underscore the need for responsive, context-specific

support structures to address the multifaceted challenges faced by ECTs and enable successful transitions into the school community.

7.2b What do early career teachers (ECTs) feel are significant moments during their transition from peripheral to a more centralised position in the community of practice?

This section explores key moments that ECTs identify as critical to their professional growth. These moments, marked by validation, reflection, and emotional resilience, reveal how success and challenges shape the transition into central roles.

Recognition from mentors, school leaders, and peers played a pivotal role in reinforcing ECTs' confidence and professional identity. Jeffrey described how praise following a successful lesson observation validated his abilities and boosted his confidence. Similarly, Sylvia found leading a staff development session and receiving positive feedback from her headteacher enhanced her sense of belonging and professional contribution. These findings align with Flores and Day (2006), who argue that professional identity is strengthened through recognition within specific contexts.

Parental validation also contributed to ECTs' sense of worth. April shared how positive feedback during parents' evening affirmed her role, while Sylvia's experience of leading workshops for parents strengthened her connection to the school community. Although less explored in existing research, these moments highlight the importance of external affirmation (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Challenging moments also emerged as significant drivers of growth. April's experience of receiving dismissive feedback initially caused frustration but ultimately led to reflection and improved practice. Sylvia similarly described moments of professional struggle, such as feeling undermined during staff meetings, which prompted her to seek advice and adapt her approach. These experiences align with Sutherland et al. (2010), who highlight reflection as a transformative process that enables teachers to reframe challenges as opportunities for learning.

The ability to navigate emotional lows, such as workload pressures and classroom struggles, was essential to sustaining ECTs' commitment. Ted described how peer support helped him manage feelings of isolation and rebuild his confidence. April, similarly, reflected on the importance of emotional resilience in overcoming challenges. Bagdžiūnienė et al. (2023) define emotional resilience as the capacity to adapt under pressure, a critical attribute for ECTs facing professional uncertainty.

Conclusion

Significant moments in ECTs' transitions include experiences of validation, challenges prompting reflection, and emotional resilience. Validation reinforced confidence and belonging, while reflective learning enabled ECTs to transform challenges into growth opportunities. Emotional resilience was key to sustaining commitment and navigating adversity. These moments collectively highlight the dynamic and non-linear nature of ECTs' journeys toward central roles in school communities.

7.2c How do ECTs' ideas of their professional identity develop over time in the community of practice?

The development of ECTs' professional identity is an evolving process shaped by participation, feedback, and emotional engagement. Drawing on Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), this section illustrates how ECTs gradually move from observing colleagues to contributing as valued members of the community.

While LPP suggests a steady trajectory, participants' experiences reflect a more fluid process of success, challenge, and adaptation. For instance, Sylvia described successfully leading a staff workshop as a turning point in her confidence, but she simultaneously faced self-doubt triggered by critical feedback. Such moments demonstrate that identity formation involves ongoing negotiation, aligning with Beauchamp and Thomas's (2011) view of identity as dynamic and responsive to professional experiences.

Feedback, both positive and critical, emerged as a key driver of identity development. Jeffrey described how mentor praise during a lesson observation reinforced his professional confidence, whereas April's vague feedback initially caused strain before prompting reflective growth. Tait (2008) highlights the importance of reflective feedback in fostering professional competence and self-efficacy.

Emotions played a central role in shaping identity. Positive experiences, such as validation from colleagues and parents, strengthened confidence and belonging. Conversely, challenges, such as struggles with classroom management, required emotional resilience to maintain professional commitment. Zembylas (2003) and Bagdžiūnienė et al. (2023) emphasise that emotional resilience enables teachers to navigate adversity while sustaining their development.

As ECTs progressed, their identities shifted from novice to contributor. Sylvia described leading parent workshops as transformative, marking her transition to an active, valued team member. Similarly, Gladys

found mentoring new colleagues to be a defining experience that consolidated her professional identity. These findings align with Wenger's (1998) assertion that participation in meaningful roles fosters identity development.

Conclusion

ECTs' professional identities develop through non-linear experiences of participation, feedback, and emotional resilience. Positive validation builds confidence, while reflective learning transforms challenges into opportunities for growth. Over time, participation in increasingly significant roles enables ECTs to transition from peripheral observers to valued contributors within their school communities.

7.2d What experiences lead to positive or negative mood states for early career teachers (ECTs), and how do these emotional responses shape their professional experiences and identity development?

This section explores how emotional responses to professional experiences influence ECTs' growth and identity development. Positive experiences often stemmed from validation and achievement, while negative experiences arose from challenges such as workload or unsupportive environments.

Moments of success and recognition were significant sources of positive emotions, reinforcing confidence and professional motivation. Jeffrey described how mentor praise during a lesson observation affirmed his competence, while Ted found implementing an effective behaviour strategy deeply rewarding. These experiences align with Tugade and Fredrickson's (2004) assertion that positive emotions build psychological resources, enhancing resilience and adaptability.

Conversely, negative emotions were often linked to excessive workloads, critical feedback, or unsupportive school cultures. April described feeling overwhelmed during high-pressure periods without adequate support, which affected her confidence. Similarly, Ted's frustration with inconsistent leadership exacerbated his classroom challenges. Day and Gu (2014) highlight the detrimental impact of unsupportive environments on resilience and professional wellbeing.

Resilience emerged as a critical mediator in helping ECTs navigate negative experiences. April, for instance, found that improved leadership support helped her regain confidence and reconnect with her purpose. Reflective practices also enabled participants to reframe challenges as learning opportunities. Jeffrey described how peer discussions helped him adapt strategies and rebuild confidence, aligning with Zembylas (2003), who emphasises the role of reflection in transforming emotional adversity into growth.

Emotional highs and lows directly shaped participants' professional identities. Positive experiences reinforced their sense of belonging and competence, while challenges, when paired with resilience and reflection, facilitated deeper growth. These findings align with Wenger's (1998) social learning theory, which posits that emotional engagement and reflective participation are central to identity development.

Conclusion

Positive emotional experiences, such as validation and success, reinforced confidence and motivation, while negative emotions stemming from challenges tested resilience. Reflective engagement and emotional resilience were key to transforming adversity into growth, sustaining ECTs' professional commitment and identity development. Schools must prioritise supportive environments, constructive feedback, and reflective opportunities to help ECTs navigate these emotional dynamics effectively.

7.2e How do early career teachers (ECTs) experience and perceive different types of value—immediate, potential, applied, realized, and transformative—through their participation in the school community?

The value creation framework (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) provides a lens for understanding how ECTs derive meaning from their participation in school communities. Participants' experiences demonstrate how different types of value—immediate, potential, applied, realized, and transformative—interact to support professional growth and identity development.

Immediate value often emerged from emotional support, validation, and positive feedback. Praise from mentors, colleagues, or school leaders provided immediate affirmation of participants' abilities and early contributions. For example, Sylvia described receiving recognition during a lesson observation as a significant emotional uplift that reinforced her confidence. Jeffrey similarly highlighted mentor praise as pivotal in alleviating self-doubt and solidifying his sense of competence. These findings align with Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002), who emphasise recognition as a critical factor in fostering teacher efficacy, particularly during the early career phase.

Participants recognised potential value in opportunities for professional development and mentorship that promised long-term benefits. Sylvia described attending training on physical development as forward-looking, with potential to inform her future contributions to staff development. April similarly valued strategies shared by her SENCO, anticipating their long-term relevance. Wang and Odell (2002) argue that professional development acts as an investment, equipping teachers to adapt and grow within evolving school contexts.

Applied value emerged when participants translated knowledge or feedback into tangible classroom improvements. Jeffrey, for instance, implemented mentor-advised strategies for classroom

management, resulting in noticeable behavioural improvements. Such experiences highlight the importance of bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application, aligning with Schuck et al. (2012), who argue that meaningful professional growth occurs when strategies are effectively applied to real-world contexts.

Realized value occurred when participants observed clear, positive outcomes from their efforts, reinforcing their sense of accomplishment and professional contribution. Ted described receiving praise for organising a successful school assembly as validating his leadership skills, while Jeffrey derived satisfaction from observing pupil progress. These experiences align with Coldron and Smith (1999), who stress the importance of tangible successes in affirming teachers' professional identities and competence.

Transformative value marked significant moments of professional growth, where participants experienced fundamental shifts in their confidence, roles, and self-concept. Sylvia described leading staff training as transformative, representing her transition from a novice to a valued team member. Ted's experience of taking on leadership roles, such as computing lead, similarly reflected a deeper sense of professional identity and agency. These findings support Beauchamp and Thomas's (2009) view that professional identity evolves through meaningful participation and reflective practice, consolidating earlier forms of value into deeper growth.

Conclusion

ECTs experience multiple, interconnected types of value throughout their professional journeys. Immediate value, rooted in emotional support and recognition, lays the groundwork for confidence and motivation. Potential value anticipates long-term growth, while applied value bridges learning with practice. Realized value reinforces competence through observable outcomes, and transformative value signifies shifts in professional identity and confidence.

As I worked with the data, I began to notice that the process of creating value did not only reflect professional progress — in some cases, it appeared to support or reinforce it. For example, positive feedback or a successful lesson often seemed to help participants feel more confident and capable, occasionally prompting them to take on new responsibilities or see themselves more firmly as teachers. This observation led me to reflect on the possibility that value creation might, in some circumstances, help drive movement toward more central participation within a community of practice.

After sharing a visual representation of my model with Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner via email, they kindly responded: "Capturing ideas in a visual format is always good! It's interesting to have value creation be the vehicle for moving towards central participation. It remains to be seen how value does that and whether more value is generated on the trajectory." Their comment suggested that they found the idea interesting, particularly the notion that the process of creating value through emotional support,

applied learning, or recognition might act as a mechanism for movement from peripheral to more central participation within a professional community. This framing offered a potentially novel contribution to thinking about how engagement deepens over time. At the same time, their response highlighted the need for caution. It is not yet clear how value creation contributes to this shift, nor whether value continues to accumulate along the way. While my data suggest a possible interaction between value creation and increasing participation, this should be approached as an interpretive insight, not a definitive claim.

These findings align with Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2020) framework and offer a data-informed contribution to ongoing conversations about how different forms of value interact with teacher identity, resilience, and professional growth. Further research is needed to explore the nature and directionality of this relationship in more depth.

7.3 Contributions to knowledge

This section outlines the key contributions of this research to understanding early career teachers' (ECTs) professional journeys. Positioned within the context of recent educational policy developments and grounded in innovative methodological approaches, this study advances knowledge by offering new insights into ECTs' day-to-day experiences. By capturing real-time, lived realities, it provides a dynamic and nuanced perspective on how ECTs navigate professional challenges, successes, and the evolving demands of their roles.

The study builds on existing literature surrounding workload, mentorship, and school culture (Schaefer et al., 2021; Hulme and Wood, 2021) but moves beyond retrospective approaches by employing mobile ethnography to document participants' experiences as they unfold. This real-time data collection highlights subtle yet significant aspects of ECTs' emotional and professional trajectories, which are often missed in traditional research methods. Moreover, by examining the implementation of the early career framework (ECF), the study identifies critical gaps between policy design and the lived realities of ECTs, particularly regarding mentorship quality, workload pressures, and school-level variations in support.

How does my research add to existing understanding?
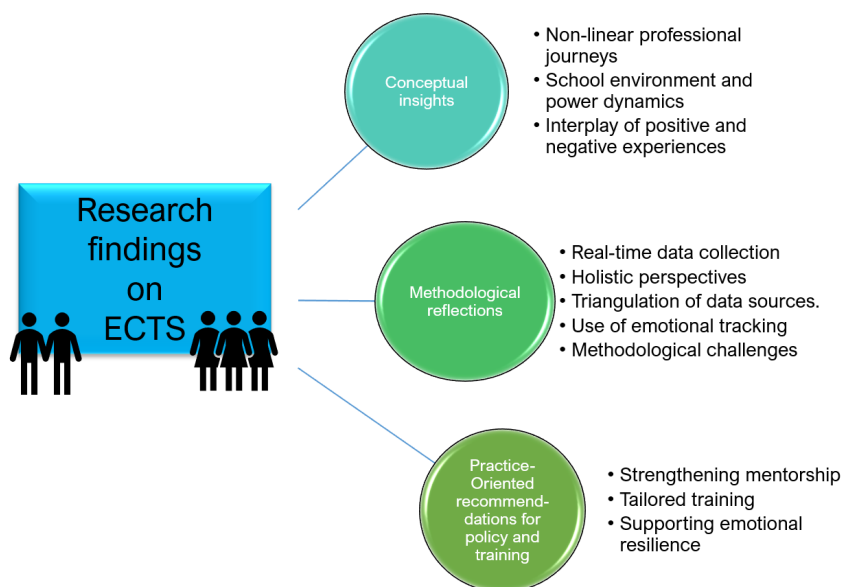
Figure 84-Diagram illustrating the structure of the 'Contributions to knowledge' section.

7.3a Conceptual insights

Grounded in my conceptual framework, which draws on Wenger's (1998) concepts of communities of practice (CoP) and legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), as well as Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2020) value creation framework (VCF), this research provides a nuanced understanding of early career teachers' (ECTs) professional journeys. While small in scale, this research contributes meaningful insights into the complexities of ECTs' development within school communities, extending these frameworks in a number of important ways.

Firstly, this research builds on Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) by revealing the non-linear and dynamic nature of ECTs' professional trajectories. LPP suggests a steady, gradual transition from peripheral to central roles through increased engagement in shared practices. However, the findings highlight that ECTs' progress is rarely linear; instead, it fluctuates between periods of leading, learning, and seeking support. Factors such as workload, leadership support, feedback, and emotional resilience shape these transitions, resulting in professional growth occurring in waves rather than as a predictable ascent. Participants described taking on leadership responsibilities—such as leading workshops or subject areas—while simultaneously depending on mentors for guidance in areas like behaviour management or lesson planning. These findings provide a more nuanced application of LPP, illustrating that early career professional trajectories are iterative, requiring flexible and sustained support.

Secondly, this study explores how hierarchical structures within schools can present barriers to ECTs' progression toward more central participation. While CoP theory emphasises participation in shared practices as a pathway to development, the findings reveal the disruptive impact of school power dynamics, such as leadership expectations, limited access to decision-making, and inconsistent recognition of contributions. Participants reported experiencing tension between their positioning as 'learners' and their desire for professional autonomy. For some, leadership structures limited opportunities for progression, while for others, supportive leaders played a pivotal role in recognising their agency and fostering their development. These findings add a contextualised understanding of how institutional hierarchies can enable or constrain ECTs' integration, emphasising the importance of equity and fair access to professional growth opportunities.

Finally, this research extends Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner's (2020) value creation framework (VCF), which predominantly highlights the positive value derived from participation, such as applied, realised, and transformative value. While these positive experiences were significant, this study also underscores the importance of negative experiences—including moments of self-doubt, professional struggle, and inadequate support—in shaping professional identity and emotional resilience. The findings show that challenges, such as overwhelming workloads or unhelpful feedback, often served as turning points for critical reflection and adaptive responses. For instance, some ECTs reframed professional struggles as opportunities for learning and growth, while others identified peer collaboration and mentorship as critical for alleviating emotional strain.

A significant contribution of this research lies in amplifying the voices of ECTs, particularly in sharing experiences of toxic or unsupportive school environments. April's reflections highlight the importance of normalising such stories, advocating for the need to empower teachers to speak up, reflect critically, and make decisions about their professional paths. Her emphasis on "having a voice" and understanding that it is "normal to find a new position if you need to" aligns with Woodley and McGill's (2018) work, which documents the experiences of teachers navigating toxic school cultures.

This research extends these insights by demonstrating how such experiences, while challenging, serve as opportunities for critical reflection and the development of emotional resilience. By including narratives like April's, this study contributes to a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of hearing teachers' stories—both positive and negative—as integral to understanding professional identity formation and the realities of early career teaching.

By acknowledging the interplay between positive and negative experiences, this research contributes to a more holistic understanding of value creation. It highlights how moments of challenge can foster reflective practice, emotional resilience, and professional development, which are essential for ECTs' progression. The innovative use of a 5-point emoji-based mood tracker provided real-time insights into participants' emotional and social experiences, capturing the immediate emotional fluctuations that

shaped their professional journeys. These findings underscore the significance of emotional resilience and reflective practices in enabling ECTs to navigate adversity and grow within their school communities.

In addition to extending these theoretical frameworks, a further conceptual insight emerged through the process of data analysis itself. Although this study was initially structured around clearly defined research questions, it was the conceptual framework, particularly the principles of CoP, LPP, and VCF, that increasingly guided the interpretive process. As I became immersed in the emotional and narrative data, I found myself drawing more directly on the framework to make sense of the patterns that emerged, while the research questions began to recede in prominence. This shift led to the development of a visual model, introduced earlier in this chapter, which was not part of the original design but evolved in response to the data. Informed by theory but grounded in the lived experiences of participants, the model offers a conceptual synthesis that reflects the non-linear, looping, and emotionally charged nature of early career teaching. Rather than presenting a universal trajectory, the model is intended as a flexible tool for interpreting the complex and often unpredictable ways that ECTs navigate their professional growth

While the scale of this research limits its generalisability, its methodological and conceptual contributions provide valuable insights into the fluid, contextual, and emotional nature of ECTs' professional development. By building on and extending established frameworks, this study offers a foundation for further research and practical interventions aimed at supporting early career teachers more effectively.

7.3b Methodological reflections

This study's use of mobile ethnography, facilitated through the platform Indeemo (2017), enabled the collection of real-time data, capturing subtle emotional and professional dynamics often overlooked in retrospective research. By allowing participants to share their experiences through video, text, audio, photos, and mood tracking, the study preserved the authenticity and immediacy of reflections as they unfolded. This real-time perspective offered unique insights into the day-to-day realities of ECTs, contributing to a deeper understanding of their professional and emotional trajectories.

A key strength of this methodological approach lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive and contextualised view of ECTs' experiences. By integrating reflections from multiple contexts—such as in-school professional moments and personal reflections beyond formal teaching settings—the study captures the intersection between professional growth, emotional wellbeing, and personal circumstances. This dual focus allowed for a richer and more nuanced understanding of how different factors shape ECTs' development.

The study's use of diverse data sources, including real-time uploads, emoji-based mood tracking, and semi-structured interviews, further strengthens its methodological contribution. Real-time uploads offered immediate, in-situ accounts of participants' emotional states and critical incidents, while the 5-point emoji-based mood tracker provided a visual and quantifiable representation of emotional fluctuations. This tool allowed clear connections to be drawn between specific professional events and participants' emotional responses, adding a layer of insight rarely explored in educational research. Semi-structured interviews complemented these data sources by enabling participants to reflect on and contextualise their real-time contributions, providing longer-term perspectives with the benefit of hindsight.

By triangulating qualitative (video/audio uploads, interviews) and quantitative (mood tracker) data, the study created a layered and nuanced understanding of ECTs' professional journeys. Combining the immediacy of real-time data with reflective narratives enhanced the reliability and richness of the findings, addressing the limitations of single method approaches that rely solely on either retrospective accounts or real-time insights.

Although tools like Indeemo (2017) have been applied in other studies (e.g., Todd, 2021; Klotz, 2024; Ariell, 2023), this research represents an early example of systematically analysing emoji-based mood tracker data within an educational context. This integration of qualitative and quantitative dimensions provides a novel methodological contribution, offering insights into the emotional ebbs and flows that accompany significant professional moments. It demonstrates how emotional experiences are closely intertwined with professional growth and identity formation.

This study highlights the surprising effectiveness of reflective tools, such as mobile apps and blogging, in supporting ECTs' emotional wellbeing and professional growth. Participants found that documenting their experiences—through text, audio, video, or images—provided a valuable space for reflection and emotional release. Sylvia described the app as "kind of like therapy," while Ted noted it allowed him to "get everything out" immediately after work, preventing challenges from spilling into his personal time. For April, it became a personal diary, helping her recognise moments of struggle and growth, while Jeffrey found it prompted deeper reflection on his weekly experiences and emotions.

Gladys' experience with blogging further demonstrates the value of reflective practices. Initially created during her teacher training, her blog provided a space to critically reflect on her progression. While she paused during the demanding early stages of being an ECT, she credited this study with inspiring her to return to the routine, highlighting how it helped her reconnect with her professional growth.

These findings align with Willis et al. (2023), who emphasise the benefits of digital tools and reflective practices in fostering self-awareness, reducing isolation, and enhancing teachers' agency. By enabling ECTs to process challenges, celebrate successes, and track their evolving identities, reflective tools— whether apps, blogs, or journals—offer an accessible and surprisingly effective means of supporting professional and emotional development during the challenging early years of teaching.

Despite its strengths, the mobile ethnographic approach posed certain challenges. Participant fatigue emerged as a concern, particularly during periods of heavy workload, leading to occasional inconsistencies in the frequency of uploads. Additionally, the autonomy granted to participants in deciding what to share sometimes resulted in gaps where critical events or perspectives may have been missed. While reminders and prompts were used to sustain engagement, participant-driven data collection inevitably relied on their willingness and capacity to contribute.

Furthermore, reliance on technology, while generally effective, presented potential limitations. Variations in participants' technological proficiency and access influenced the consistency and quality of data submissions. These challenges underscore the importance of designing flexible and participant-friendly data collection processes, particularly in studies involving individuals with demanding workloads.

Conclusion

This study's methodological contribution lies in its innovative use of mobile ethnography and emoji-based mood tracking to capture the lived realities of ECTs in real time. By triangulating diverse data sources, it provides a richer and more dynamic understanding of ECTs' professional and emotional trajectories. While challenges such as participant fatigue and technological limitations were identified, the study highlights the potential of real-time methods to generate authentic, nuanced insights into teacher development. These reflections offer practical recommendations for future research, ensuring that mobile ethnographic approaches continue to evolve as a robust and flexible tool for exploring the complexities of professional experiences.

7.3c Practice-oriented recommendations for policy and training

This research makes a significant contribution to knowledge by advancing understanding of the critical areas where mentorship, training design, and emotional resilience intersect with early career teachers' (ECTs) lived experiences. Positioned within the evolving policy landscape, including the early career framework (ECF) and the initial teacher training and early career framework (ITTECF), this study extends existing literature and theoretical frameworks while offering fresh empirical insights.

This study contributes to knowledge by illuminating the complexities and inconsistencies in mentorship quality and their direct impact on ECTs' professional confidence, emotional resilience, and retention. While previous research (Hobson et al., 2009; Aspfors and Fransson, 2015) highlights the significance of mentorship, this study provides real-time evidence of how mentoring relationships vary in practice. The findings demonstrate that high-quality mentorship—characterised by tailored feedback, trust, and emotional support—accelerates ECTs' progression into their professional communities. Conversely, inconsistent mentorship, exacerbated by workload pressures, hinders growth and leaves ECTs feeling isolated.

The research also contributes to the understanding of how context-specific factors shape ECTs' professional development, building on Flores and Day's (2006) argument that teacher growth is heavily influenced by school culture, leadership, and external pressures. The findings reveal that generic training programmes often fail to account for the nuanced challenges faced by ECTs in diverse educational contexts, such as high-poverty schools or environments with high staff turnover.

This study advances Wenger's (1998) *communities of practice* framework by demonstrating how collaborative, contextualised learning, such as peer planning, structured observations, and reflective discussions, facilitates professional competence, confidence, and belonging. It highlights the importance of incremental responsibilities, such as subject leadership or small-scale projects, as pathways for ECTs to build agency and gradually transition to more central roles within their school communities.

The findings also contribute to emerging discussions surrounding the ITTECF's Intensive Training and Practice (ITAP) initiative, emphasising the need to embed structured reflective opportunities within such programmes to maximise their impact.

This research makes an important contribution to knowledge by positioning emotional resilience as foundational to ECTs' professional success and identity formation. While prior studies (Day and Gu, 2014; Aguilar, 2018) have established the value of resilience, this study provides new insights into how reflective practices—such as journaling, mood tracking, and real-time self-assessment—serve as tools for fostering emotional awareness and adaptability.

The findings underscore how emotional highs, such as recognition and pupil progress, reinforce self-efficacy, while emotional lows, including workload pressures and unsupportive leadership, present critical points for growth. This study extends the discourse on emotional resilience by demonstrating its role in reframing challenges as opportunities for reflection and learning, further linking emotional wellbeing to professional identity formation.

This research contributes to the policy-practice gap by offering empirical evidence on how national frameworks, such as the ECF, are implemented—or fall short—in real-world contexts. It highlights discrepancies between policy intentions and their translation into meaningful support for ECTs, particularly in the areas of mentorship quality, workload management, and emotional wellbeing.

By grounding these findings in real-time accounts of ECTs' experiences, this study enriches our understanding of how policy frameworks can be adapted to better align with the realities of early career teaching. The research demonstrates that policies must account for institutional capacity, leadership culture, and school-specific needs to deliver sustainable, high-quality support for ECTs.

Conclusion

This research advances understanding of ECTs' professional journeys by offering conceptual, methodological, and practical contributions. By extending key theoretical frameworks and employing innovative real-time methods, it provides a richer and more dynamic account of ECTs' experiences, capturing the interplay of mentorship, emotional resilience, and school culture. These insights lay a foundation for future research and inform policies and practices aimed at supporting early career teachers more effectively.

7.4 Implications

The findings of this research have possible implications for schools, teacher training programmes, and the implementation of policies aimed at supporting ECTs. These insights underscore the importance of enhancing mentorship, fostering collaborative professional environments, and creating tailored training and development opportunities to support ECTs' professional growth, resilience, and identity formation. This section offers recommendations for translating frameworks such as the early career framework (ECF) and the forthcoming Initial Teacher Training and early career framework (ITTECF) into practice, addressing the gaps between policy design and lived experiences.

High-quality mentorship emerged as critical for ECTs' professional confidence and emotional resilience, yet this study highlights significant variability in mentoring experiences. While participants like Jeffrey thrived under tailored guidance, April's disengaged mentorship resulted in feelings of isolation and self-doubt. These findings reinforce critiques of inconsistent mentoring (Hobson et al., 2009; Ovenden-Hope and Passy, 2020), exacerbated by workload pressures that sideline mentor responsibilities.

To address this, mentors require evidence-informed training that equips them to balance constructive feedback with emotional support and to respond flexibly to the individual needs of mentees. Schools must prioritise protected mentoring time and workload adjustments to ensure mentoring is meaningful

and sustained. The ITTECF's introduction of diagnostic tools (DfE, 2023) offers an opportunity to provide more targeted, responsive mentoring that aligns with ECTs' evolving challenges.

By implementing these measures, schools and policymakers can bridge the gap between policy design and practice, ensuring mentorship delivers consistent, high-quality support that fosters ECTs' confidence, growth, and resilience.

Collaborative professional environments play a vital role in supporting ECTs' professional growth, confidence, and emotional resilience. Participants, such as Gladys and Jeffrey, highlighted peer collaboration as essential for building competence, sharing strategies, and navigating challenges. This study extends Wenger's (1998) communities of practice framework by showing how peer support acts as both a professional learning tool and an emotional anchor during moments of uncertainty.

Structured Peer Collaboration: Schools should formalise opportunities for peer observations, shared planning, and reflective discussions. Jeffrey's experience observing colleagues' classroom strategies demonstrated the value of experiential learning (Schuck et al., 2012). However, such opportunities remain inconsistent and dependent on school contexts, limiting their accessibility.

The Role of Online Communities: Online communities of practice offer a flexible and scalable solution to these limitations, enabling collaboration across geographical and institutional boundaries (Kirschner and Lai, 2007). These teacher-driven digital spaces foster resource sharing, reflective dialogue, and sustained professional learning. Macià and García (2016) highlight the ability of online networks to facilitate informal peer-led learning and emotional support, which are particularly valuable for ECTs. As noted by Woodley and McGill (2018), reconnecting with professional values and accessing external support networks—such as those found on social media—can provide ECTs with a renewed sense of agency and emotional resilience, particularly in challenging school environments.

Expanding Online Professional Networks: Platforms like LinkedIn, alumni networks, and private group forums can provide accessible spaces for ECTs to develop supportive relationships, share challenges, and celebrate successes. Enhancing existing initiatives—such as the School of Education's LinkedIn groups—can strengthen professional connections and extend support beyond initial training. This aligns with Willis et al. (2023), who emphasise the role of digital networks in fostering teacher agency, emotional resilience, and professional growth. However, as Hulme et al. (2024) note, excessive workload remains a significant barrier to teachers engaging fully in professional networks.

Reflective Tools for Collaboration: Digital tools, such as blogs and mood-tracking apps, offer further opportunities for reflection and progression. Gladys' experience with blogging during her training exemplifies how reflective writing can promote critical self-awareness and track growth over time. Kirschner and Lai (2007) argue that structured reflection within online communities enhances teacher learning by promoting deeper engagement and collective knowledge construction.

By integrating structured peer collaboration, online communities, and reflective tools into mentoring and CPD frameworks, schools and training providers can create dynamic, supportive professional environments. These approaches address inconsistencies in collaboration by offering teacher-driven, flexible solutions that empower ECTs. As demonstrated by Kirschner and Lai (2007), Macià and García (2016), and Willis et al. (2023), such communities foster professional development, emotional wellbeing, and long-term retention, enabling ECTs to thrive in their roles.

This research highlights that one-size-fits-all training approaches often fail to address the diverse realities of schools, particularly in disadvantaged settings or those experiencing high staff turnover. Participants such as Sylvia and April described how generic training content did not fully prepare them for the complexities of their school environments, such as managing behaviour, addressing SEND needs, or coping with limited resources.

Teacher training programmes must focus on equipping ECTs with adaptable skills and strategies that prepare them to respond effectively across a range of contexts. For example, practical training on managing behaviour in challenging environments, supporting SEND pupils, and working with limited resources can help teachers feel better prepared for the realities of their roles.

Additionally, programmes like Intensive Training and Practice (ITAP) offer structured, expert-led opportunities for ECTs to refine core teaching practices, ensuring their skills are embedded and transferable across varied contexts.

Emotional resilience emerged as a cornerstone of ECTs' ability to navigate challenges such as workload pressures, unsupportive leadership, and critical feedback. Participants like Ted and April demonstrated how reflective practices, peer support, and leadership engagement enabled them to manage emotional strain and sustain their professional commitment. These findings align with Day and Gu's (2014) assertion that resilience underpins professional sustainability and growth.

To foster emotional resilience, schools and training programmes should prioritise structured reflective practices, such as journaling, mood tracking, and regular mentor check-ins. These tools help ECTs process challenges, identify patterns in their experiences, and recognise growth over time. Additionally, embedding emotional wellbeing workshops into induction programmes—covering stress management, work-life balance, and coping strategies—can equip teachers with practical tools to manage emotional demands.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering supportive school cultures where ECTs feel safe to share challenges and reflect on setbacks constructively. Positive leadership interventions, such as ensuring tailored mentoring and workload management, enable ECTs to reframe difficulties as opportunities for growth. The ITTECF underscores the need for schools to reduce workload pressures and ensure high-quality mentoring, both of which are critical for supporting ECTs' emotional wellbeing and professional

development. By embedding these practices into school structures, leadership can strengthen emotional resilience as an integral component of ECTs' early career progression, complementing the ITTECF's emphasis on workload management and behaviour strategies.

The findings highlight persistent gaps between policy frameworks, such as the ECF, and their practical implementation in schools. Variability in mentorship quality, inconsistent collaborative opportunities, and insufficient emotional support remain significant barriers to the delivery of effective support for ECTs. While the forthcoming ITTECF introduces promising developments—such as diagnostic tools and Intensive Training and Practice (ITAP)—continuous evaluation and flexibility are essential to ensure these initiatives align with the lived realities of ECTs.

Schools and training providers must conduct regular evaluations of ITTECF initiatives to monitor their impact, identify gaps, and adapt to diverse school contexts. This is particularly critical in settings with resource constraints or high staff turnover, where a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to succeed.

Reflective tools—such as mobile apps, digital journals, and mood trackers—offer valuable mechanisms for bridging gaps in emotional and professional support. Participants in this study described how these tools created safe spaces for self-reflection, progress tracking, and emotional release, enabling them to reframe challenges and build resilience. Integrating such tools into mentoring and training frameworks can strengthen emotional wellbeing, enhance self-awareness, and provide consistent opportunities for growth.

By addressing these policy-practice gaps through continuous evaluation, tailored implementation, and the integration of reflective tools, schools and policymakers can create adaptable, supportive environments that empower ECTs to thrive in their professional journeys.

Conclusion

This research highlights key implications for improving the implementation of policies such as the ITTECF and supporting ECTs through their professional journeys. High-quality mentorship, collaborative environments, context-sensitive training, and emotional resilience strategies are essential for addressing the multifaceted challenges ECTs face. By leveraging reflective tools and online networks, schools can provide sustainable, flexible support that aligns policy frameworks with the lived experiences of teachers, fostering long-term confidence, resilience, and retention in the profession.

7.5 Directions for Future Research

This research highlights the non-linear and dynamic nature of early career teachers' (ECTs) professional growth, revealing how they navigate fluctuating roles as they transition from peripheral to central members of their school communities. While this study provides valuable insights into ECTs' experiences, further research is needed to address remaining gaps and expand understanding.

Longitudinal Perspectives on Professional Growth

Future studies could adopt longitudinal designs to follow ECTs beyond the induction phase, offering deeper insights into how professional identities evolve over time. Such research could examine how sustained participation in communities of practice (CoP) shapes career trajectories, teaching practices, and retention. Additionally, exploring the influence of external factors—such as leadership transitions, school culture changes, and policy shifts—would shed light on the complexities of ECTs' professional journeys (Flores and Day, 2006; Wenger, 1998).

Mentorship: Broadening Perspectives

While this study emphasises the centrality of mentorship, future research could include the voices of mentors to provide a fuller picture of these relationships. Understanding mentors' perspectives would help identify the challenges they face, the support they require, and the strategies they use to balance ECT development with their own professional demands. Comparative studies of peer mentoring, formal mentorship models, and hybrid approaches across diverse contexts could offer further clarity on their respective impacts on ECTs' growth and emotional resilience.

Digital Platforms and Technological Innovation

The increasing reliance on technology in education presents opportunities to investigate how digital platforms—such as online forums, virtual mentorship spaces, and mood-tracking tools—support ECTs' professional development and emotional wellbeing. This study's use of mobile ethnography and the 5-point emoji mood tracker highlights the potential of real-time digital tools for capturing reflective and emotional experiences. Future research could refine these tools, explore their use across different educational contexts, and assess their long-term impact on participant reflection, resilience, and retention.

The Value of Video Data in Research

The unexpected volume and depth of video data in this study highlight the potential of video recordings as a powerful research tool. Future research could leverage transcription and analysis approaches, such as Jefferson's (2004) focus on speech intricacies and Mondada's (2018) emphasis on non-verbal communication, to capture the richness of social interactions, participant behaviours, and emotional nuances. By incorporating video recordings systematically, researchers can uncover deeper layers of meaning, offering more comprehensive insights into ECTs' experiences and interactions.

School Leadership Practices

More research is needed to identify specific leadership practices that best support ECTs. Investigating the impact of transformational versus transactional leadership styles on ECT development, job satisfaction, and retention could provide actionable insights (Alrowwad et al., 2020). Additionally, exploring how leaders foster inclusive, collaborative school cultures that empower ECTs to take on incremental responsibilities and receive meaningful feedback would inform both leadership training and policy development (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Day et al., 2016).

Innovations in Initial Teacher Training (ITT)

This study identified gaps in ITT, particularly around preparing trainees for age-specific teaching strategies, effective parental communication, and navigating challenging school environments. Future research could evaluate how ITT programmes incorporate these elements and assess their impact on readiness for early career teaching. Role-play scenarios simulating parental interactions, shadowing opportunities, and structured collaborative learning could align with Flores and Day's (2006) emphasis on practical, situational learning. Additionally, embedding CoP principles into ITT curricula may better prepare trainees for reflective, collaborative practices within school communities.

Conclusion

This study highlights key directions for future research to build on its findings and address remaining gaps. Incorporating mentors' voices, exploring digital innovations, leveraging video data, and refining ITT programmes can deepen understanding of ECTs' experiences. Longitudinal and methodological advancements will enable researchers to offer actionable insights, strengthening educational communities, improving teacher retention, and supporting new teachers' professional and emotional growth.

7.6 Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore: *How do early career teachers (ECTs) experience becoming a member of the primary school community of practice?* In addressing this central research question, the study has illuminated the complex and evolving experiences of ECTs as they navigate their formative years in the profession. The findings reveal that ECTs often begin with uncertainty and self- doubt, particularly as they grapple with mastering classroom management, balancing workloads, and establishing professional relationships. However, pivotal moments—such as small successes, meaningful feedback, and professional recognition—act as catalysts for confidence and satisfaction, contributing to the consolidation of their professional identities over time. Real-time data collection, including participants' mood journey maps, demonstrated how these cumulative successes, while seemingly minor, played a significant role in shaping their professional growth.

The study highlights the critical role of supportive school environments, high-quality mentorship, and collaborative peer networks in enabling ECTs to progress from peripheral participants to more central roles within their communities of practice. Conversely, toxic school cultures, inadequate leadership, and inconsistent mentorship were shown to impede this progression. Yet, the resilience demonstrated by ECTs in overcoming adversity underscores the importance of positive interventions—such as effective leadership and peer collaboration—in helping them reframe challenges as opportunities for learning and growth.

A key strength of this research lies in its longitudinal, real-time methodological approach, which moves beyond static, retrospective accounts. By capturing participants' immediate emotional responses and lived experiences, this study provides a dynamic and nuanced understanding of how professional identities are shaped. The findings reveal that ECTs' development is inherently non-linear, marked by fluctuations between progress, struggle, and reflection. This process highlights the interplay between real-time events and sustained support structures, which together influence ECTs' confidence, resilience, and sense of belonging.

My conceptual framework, drawing on elements of communities of practice, concepts of legitimate peripheral participation, and the value creation framework, provided a comprehensive lens through which to analyse the professional journeys of ECTs CoP illuminated how ECTs transitioned from peripheral participants to central members of their school communities. For example, ECTs who initially took on smaller roles were able to gradually assume more complex responsibilities such as leading training meetings, reflecting the progression described by CoP framework. LPP further illustrated this progression by showing how newcomers, initially engaged in less demanding roles, gained confidence and legitimacy over time, eventually becoming fully integrated into the school community, as demonstrated in section 6.5.

The VCF added depth to this understanding by illustrating how ECTs derived different types of value such as immediate, potential, applied, realized, and transformative from their interactions with colleagues, mentors, and pupils For instance, moments of immediate value emerged through positive feedback, while applied and realized value resulted from successful implementation of strategies and visible pupil progress. Transformative value encapsulated shifts in professional identity and confidence over time.

By integrating these frameworks, this study clarifies the interconnectedness of social participation, identity formation, and value creation, addressing a significant gap in literature. It reveals the importance of real-time emotional and professional experiences in shaping teacher identity, moving beyond traditional retrospective studies.

In doing so, this research contributes valuable insights for both policy and practice, particularly in aligning support mechanisms, such as mentorship, collaboration, and reflective tools, with the lived realities of ECTs. It also advances the theoretical understanding of how ECTs transition from novices to valued members of their professional communities, offering a foundation for further research and practical interventions that can better support teachers in their early careers.

7.7 Engagement with Indeemo (2017)

Since undertaking this research, my engagement with the Indeemo (2017) platform has led to several significant developments. Indeemo (2017), typically used in commercial and consumer insight research, had not previously been applied extensively in academic educational contexts, particularly not in teacher education. Through this study, I demonstrated the platform's potential to support emotionally rich, real time, participant led research.

During the research phase, I began a dialogue with Indeemo's (2017) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and team, sharing insights from both my own use of the platform and the experiences of my participants. I was invited to test new features that were not yet publicly available and provide detailed feedback and new ideas to support the ongoing development of the app. This input directly contributed to improvements that make Indeemo (2017) more suitable for academic research, including the ability to incorporate external interview videos alongside participant entries, in app video editing options, and more flexible ways to use prompts to support qualitative research over time. My collaboration helped shape the platform for use in educational and social research fields.

As a result of this collaboration, I have been invited to present my work at the Social Research Association Annual Conference 2025, where I will co present with Indeemo's (2017) CEO. This reflects the wider methodological impact of my thesis, which not only introduced mobile ethnography into teacher education research but also contributed to the development of digital research tools for future academic inquiry.

7.7 Final thought

The journey of each early career teacher (ECT) is a rich tapestry of aspirations, challenges, and incremental growth. This path is rarely straightforward, marked by moments of progress, uncertainty, and self-doubt as ECTs navigate their evolving roles within the school community. It is in these very moments that teachers engage in a process of becoming; a deeply personal transformation shaped by the interplay of their experiences, values, and reflections (Senyshyn, 1999). Through these challenges, supported by effective mentorship, collaborative networks, and their own growing resilience, ECTs begin to consolidate their professional identities and take meaningful steps toward thriving in their roles. Each small success, no matter how modest, contributes to their long-term growth, leaving an indelible mark on the lives of their pupils, colleagues, and the wider profession.

April's reflection encapsulates the emotional depth of this journey: "I've wanted to give up nearly every day, but as soon as the children come in and talk to me, I change my mind again." Her words highlight both the emotional complexity, and the resilience required of new teachers, serving as a powerful reminder of the profound impact ECTs have, not just on their own careers but on the children they inspire daily.

This research has deepened my understanding of the multifaceted experiences of ECTs and, in turn, transformed my approach as a lecturer and tutor to trainee teachers. I now see my role as not only imparting knowledge but also cultivating supportive and reflective spaces where trainees can build resilience, collaborate, and grow. By fostering communities of practice, both face-to-face and online, I aim to empower new teachers to share strategies, seek support, and embrace challenges as learning opportunities.

Reflecting on my own early career as a newly qualified teacher (NQT), I recall the same mix of enthusiasm, uncertainty, and self-doubt that shaped the participants in this study. Without the structured support that is now evolving through policies like the ITTECF, I often struggled to balance challenges with confidence. Those formative experiences fuel my current passion for ITT, reminding me of the importance of guiding new teachers through their uncertainties while celebrating their successes and helping them see setbacks as opportunities for growth.

The findings also highlight the enduring value of strong support systems, mentorship, peer collaboration, school leadership, and positive school cultures, that scaffold ECTs' journeys. Equally, this study reveals the potential of reflective tools, such as blogs, social media platforms, and mood-tracking apps, to complement traditional support frameworks. These tools offer accessible spaces for reflection, connection, and emotional release, reducing isolation and providing innovative pathways for growth. However, as educators and policymakers, we must ensure that these tools enhance, rather than replace, the vital human relationships that lie at the heart of teacher development.

Although this research set out to explore ECTs' experiences through established sociocultural frameworks, it became clear that their stories demanded more than just theoretical application. The emergent model presented in this study captures both the conceptual influences and the grounded realities of professional life—shaped by emotion, context, and everyday meaning-making. In moving beyond fixed trajectories, the model offers a flexible tool for understanding how ECTs grow, falter, and move forward, often in unexpected ways. It reminds us that teaching is not a linear ascent but a deeply human process of becoming.

As this thesis concludes, I am filled with a sense of hope and optimism. The journeys shared by the ECTs in this study remind us of the transformative power of perseverance, reflection, and community. In capturing their lived realities as they happen, this research underscores the importance of listening to, supporting, and empowering new teachers as they move from moments of uncertainty to moments of

impact. The support we provide today ripples outward, shaping not only their futures but the lives of countless pupils for years to come. It is a privilege to play even a small role in helping early career teachers find their place in the profession, one moment at a time.

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Mobile applications

HaloAR (2021) *HaloAR* (Version 1.0) [Mobile app]. App Store/Google Play Store. Available at: https://haloar.app/ (Accessed: 26 August 2024).

Indeemo (2017) *Indeemo* [Mobile app]. Available at: https://indeemo.com/ (Accessed: 26 August 2024).

Appendix A- Augmented reality function instructions

Halo AR is a mobile app available for free, enabling users to merge digital content with the physical world through augmented reality.

HaloAR (2021) *HaloAR* (Version 1.0) [Mobile app]. App Store/Google Play Store. Available at: https://haloar.app/ (Accessed: 26 August 2024).

Step 1 : Scan the image below

Step 2: Click open
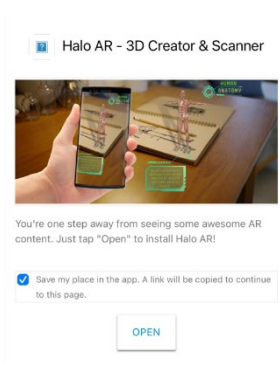
Step 3: Click the download cloud icon to download the app.

Step 4: Once the App is downloaded click open

Step 5: Click 'Allow Paste'.
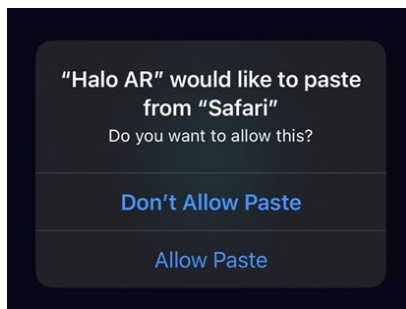
Step 6: Click 'I'm Ready'
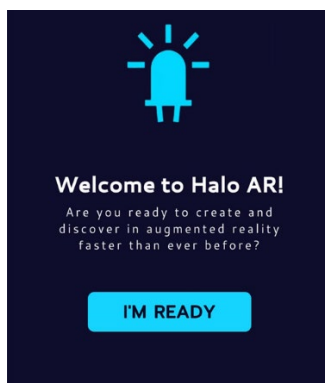
Step 7: Click skip or scroll through the images using the dots

Step 8: Click continue followed by allow so that you will be able to use your camera
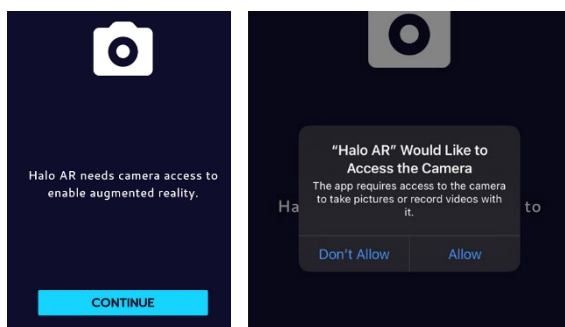
Click 9: It is not essential to enable this so you can click 'Skip for now'.
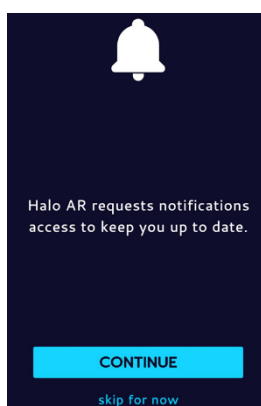
Step 10: Click 'Get Started'.
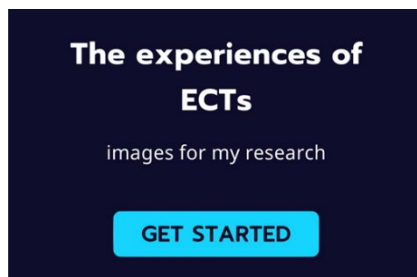
Step 11: Look for this icon throughout the thesis and open the HaloAR (2021) application your phone, then select scan. Move your camera over the area. If prompted to do so select 'The experiences of ECTs' as shown in the image below. To manage the AR feature, use the eye icon in the top right corner of the screen; this will prevent it from disappearing or stop it from reappearing if it remains on-screen.


Step 12: You will then see something like this as the augmented reality AR feature appears. In this case it is a video of a participants journey map.
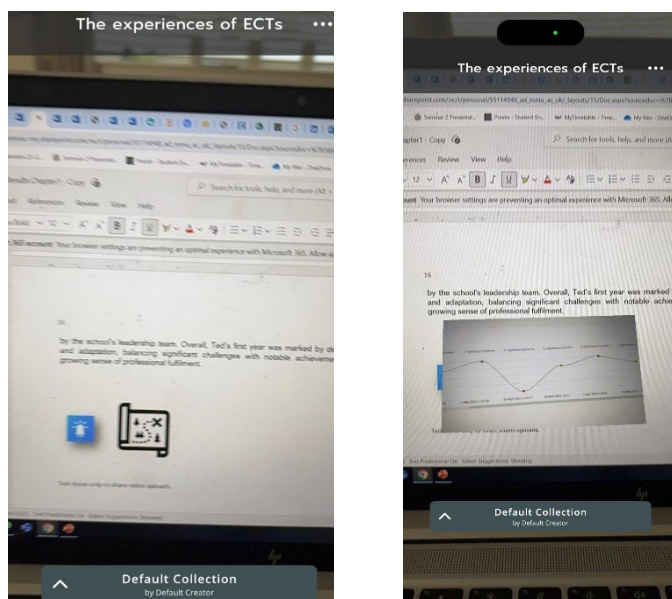
Should you have issues accessing the content please reload the application and scan the page again. There are also hyperlinks available to the same information in Appendix K.

Appendix B- Respondent Task List.

B.1 Introduction as it will be viewed on the respondent's phones.

9:41

Task List

Introduction

Welcome to my research project called 'Understanding the Early Career Teacher Journey' - A longitudinal, ethnographic study of the lived experiences of ECTs.

The purpose of this study is to understand your experiences as an Early Career teacher.

I look forward to learning all about your Early Career teacher experiences. Exploring the journey, you have taken from the start of your career to the end of your first ECT year.

This will involve completing just 3 tasks between January and July. This will involve you:

1. Submitting an introduction video at the start of the project.
2. Capturing significant moments throughout your journey from January to the end of July.
3. Submitting a concluding video at the end of the project.

I look forward to receiving your responses- please expect comments and questions in Indeemo from me over the course of the project.

I value your honest and candid input. Please don't be shy- feel free to share every little detail.

If you have any questions, please reach out to me here:

K.Tuzylak-Maguire@mmu.ac.uk

This is an exciting opportunity. Have fun!

Tips

Your tasks have been scheduled to appear at a particular date and time. To complete each task, please ensure that you:

Enable push notifications for the Indeemo app to ensure you receive all Task notifications.
Check this Task List daily for new Tasks.

Once you have read and understood each Task and are ready to respond, simply tap on the + button on this screen, choose the type of response that each task specifies (video, photo, or note), and follow the prompts on each screen. When recording videos, please ensure:

That your device is always in landscape mode
That you are in a position with good lighting
That there is minimal background noise (if possible)

B2: Intro selfie video instructions for participants

The purpose of this task is to help me to get to know you a bit better.

Find a private place and when you are ready, record a 1-3 minute, landscape selfie video to introduce yourself and answer the following questions...

1. Tell me about yourself? What is your current job?
2. Can you tell me about your first term of teaching? Are there any key moments this term that stand out to you?
3. How well did your training prepare you for your first term in school? What aspects of your role have you managed well this term?
4. What aspects of your role have you found challenging this term? Was there any training you would have benefited from before you started in school?

TIP: Videos can be max 3 minutes long however please feel free to upload as many 3 minute long videos as you need to.

Please use the Indeemo rating scale to quantify your feelings towards your first term in teaching.

B: 3 Significant moments

This tasks runs from the start to the end of the project. You are asked to complete this task as often as you feel you want to. But please upload at least one entry per week.

I want to hear your experiences throughout the next two terms in school.

Each week consider any significant moments. As you remember from your time at university, when you completed similar tasks, these do not need to be huge events.

It could be:
- A daily task you do as a teacher, marking, assessing, planning, playground duty, working with other staff, etc
- Related to skills teachers need: time management, organizational skills, teamwork, communication, relationships.
- Something that happened in a lesson, behaviour management, an observation you had, a child's reaction to something.
- Events or activities: School trips, assemblies, productions, parents' evenings etc
- Or overarching themes such as: workload, resilience
- The list is endless.

I want you to feel free to share anything that you feel captures your ECT experience.

You can choose to upload a photo, note, video, voice recording (this can be done by facing the camera down when recording a video) please **use the following to support your response, you may decide not to respond to every question:**

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

	1. Description	What happened?
	2. Feelings	What were you thinking and feelings?
	3. Evaluation	What was good and bad about the experience?
	4. Analysis	What sense can you make of the situation?
	5. Conclusion	What else could you have done?
	6. Action Plan	If it arose again, what would you do?

Please give us as much information as you can, no detail is too small!

With each response, please use the Indeemo (2017) rating scale to quantify your feelings toward the moment you are sharing.

Required Response: At least 1 response per week.

B:4 Concluding video

The purpose of this task is to help me to get to know you a bit better and summarise your first year as an ECT.

Find a private place and when you are ready, record a 1-3 minute, landscape selfie video and answer the following questions.

1. Can you tell me about your first year of teaching?
2. How well did your training prepare you for your first year in school? What aspects of your role have you manged well this year?
3. What aspects of your role have you found challenging this year? Was there any training you would have benefited from before you started in school?

With each response, please use the Indeemo (2017) rating scale to quantify your feelings towards your first year in teaching overall.

# Appendix C- Example interview questions.

The questions varied but I went to the interview with these guiding questions:

- How have you found using the Indeemo app?
- What do you think your data is telling me about you and your journey?
- What events or moments have stood out this year for you?
- One thing I picked up on was.... can you tell me a bit more?
- How have you changed since we spoke in January?
- Are there any key things that stand out to you this last half term?
- How do you and others view you as a teacher?
- Can you tell me more about this that you shared? You said... can you tell me more? How did that make you feel?
- Is there anything else you would like to share that you think you've not the opportunity to?
- Is there any advice you would give yourself now you are at the end of your first year?

# Appendix D- Example data analysis for Gladys

D.1 - Initial stage familiarised me with the data. Example from Glady's data. These are the initial notes I created as the participants uploaded their responses.
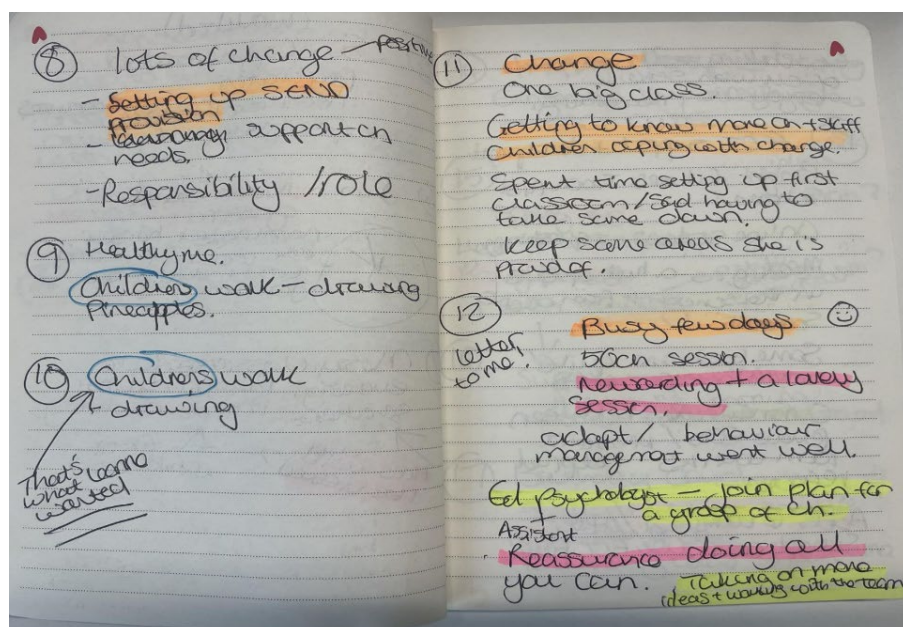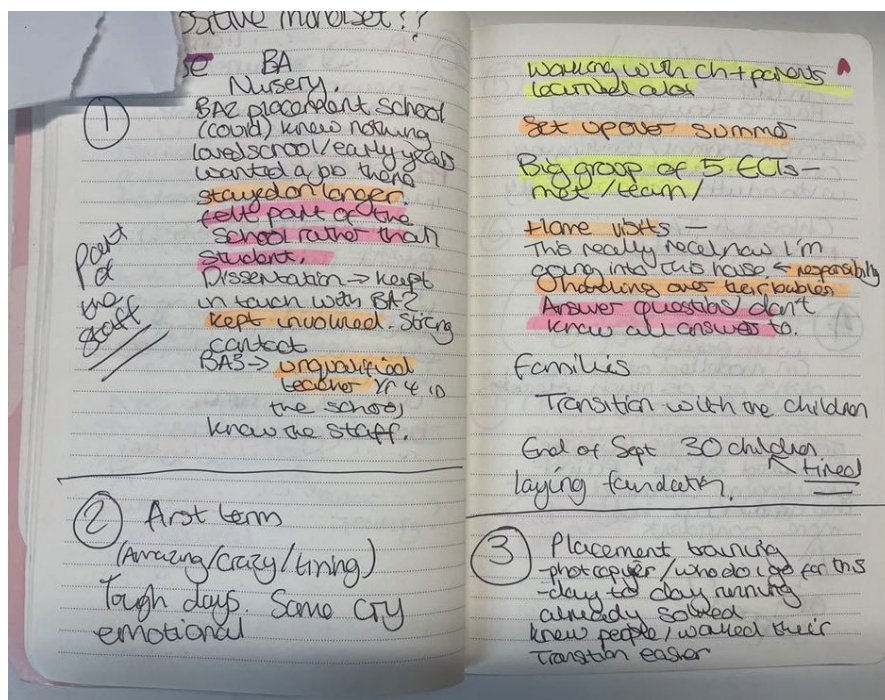
Working with group
of ch with SEN
enjoyable + rewarding.

(13) ECT support + development

Bright futures Teach first
scheme.

Online sessions - questioning

Meeting as a hub of ECTs
in the school + from other
schools

Some tools are quite
irrelevant for EYFS

Communication between
fellow ECTs / breakout
room works helpful
reflection.

Adds to workload /after
school can't use ECT time.

(14) Prepping resources Saturday
Excited to try something new
- dice cubes. ← where
ideas
come
from?

(15)
Spring obs.
Head + assistant head
Really placed
PECs training. ← Picture exchange communication?

(16) ↓
Supportive staff - TAs
maximise learning
takes feedback on board

(17) Birthday card.
Staff + children made
it a special day.
Birthday card. Snack time

---

(18) Outdoor provision
Small world set up.
↗
where?
ideas? what supports
her?

(19) Half term - changing
reading area to
a Gruffalo's cave
excited
children

(20) PGCE student for
2 weeks EYFS placement
Role
position: Working with her + planning
Able to support this student
along with phase leader.
feels she can offer a lot of
insight + support

(21) Created a blog
as a student teacher,
tracking her journey
↑ getting back to it.
shared her second post.
as an ECT
Transition.

(22) Gruffalo provision area.
creating woods.
children.

(23) Topic recycling
activity. Stimulate
role play - model language.

(24) Delivering an online
lecture from the transition
of being a student teacher
to an ECT. follow up q + A.
critically reflective of her journey
+ share with others

(25) Organising unit - finally got around to it.

(26) Strikes - not striking
Interesting conversations amongst staff + friends about chosen.
felt she had to justify herself.

(27) Easter. wellbeing balance.
Lates / mixed emotions. Took on to church/ prepped for it by doing numerous walks around school grounds
Exciting characters with those keed about concert later progression.
find provision tricky with your partner teacher working differently

(28) Easter.   Work life balance
Didn't take laptop.
first time fully switched off.
lovely refresh to start again
strong not seeing the ch.
Balance the wanted went to school. get things ready.
Have a 'normal week'.

Refresh

(29) Prep provision over break.
So weekend catch up with friends.
Treasure hunt activity.

(30) PPA - feeling ahead + organised
Re-using the road
Preparing provision activities

/.

(31) Super busy. V they are getting themselves central
- Offered to go on the year residential.
- Planning trip
- learning to drive minibus
- parents evening - positive feedback.
- next year, asked to move keystage.
- talk about career plan
- impression she will move

(32) Pushing on provision -
Is improving outside area
If not in outside area not all members of staff have the same focus on learning outside

(33) Fund motor todo.
Supporting children / relucant kon develop vital skill.
children

(34) Excited for provision
- excellent student teacher working with them taking on planning.
- provision is down to her full control
- considering sensory needs

(35) People who help us visit from lollipop lady
Good having a visitor.

(36) Threw a garden party.
School parade
making jam sandwiches

(42) Made it to half term.
Devon visit family
switch off catch up

→ work life
Balance.

(43) Paris — first holiday
with Bf

full switch off
not done 4 weeks without
switching off
Rest ready to go back

(44) Wonderful first day
miss'd'chldrn
Pay where you really
enjoy teaching / lots of engaging
exhausted   activities

(45) Yr 5 residential next
week / old class
Thinking about minibus
test nervous

(46) Minibus license.

(47) Year 5 residential
amazing memories with
them.

(48) Residential
— drove minibus
— played on beach / swam etc.
— evening activities
— Talent show
— ch impersonated teachers
— exhausted
— not slept.
— get back final push.

How do
the ch's
see her?

---

(49) Feeling guilty
Phoned in sick.

feel should open my laptop
+ do planning
want to go in knew
need to rest

30th June onwards
— see
  yourself
— support need / have
— ro lost
  resp

D.2 - Generating initial codes.

Indeemo (2017) Response Number	Detailed Summary	Related Themes
1	Gladys discusses the challenges she faced with her partner teacher and relying on another staff member, as well as difficulties with handling delicate conversations with parents. She suggests that training on coping strategies and handling difficult parent situations would be useful.	Legitimate peripheral participation, Handling difficult conversations, Coping strategies, Growth and development, relationships, relationships
2	Gladys reflects on how her training prepared her well for her first year of teaching, particularly because she was teaching in the same school and year group as her placement. She also highlights the importance of forming good relationships with staff members across the school.	Legitimate peripheral participation, Forming relationships
3	Gladys reflects on her emotional first year of teaching and the relationships she formed with the children and parents. She also discusses what she has learned about teaching and being a nursery teacher.	Emotional experiences, wellbeing, Forming relationships, Growth and development
4	Gladys shares that her first year of teaching was fantastic and that she thoroughly enjoyed it. She also discusses how she prepared end of year gifts for her students.	Enjoyment of teaching, pupils, investment in the community , wellbeing, impact
5	Gladys shares that she is packing end of year gifts for her students and reflects on how much she will miss them and the learning they shared.	Pupils, Emotional attachment investment in the community, Growth and development
6	Gladys shares that she is applying for the NPQ leading teaching and hopes to be accepted.	Professional development Growth and development
7	Gladys reflects on how she will be staying in nursery and working with a new partner teacher. She also discusses how she has learned a lot about teaching children with high needs and has created her own mini resource in their provision.	Teaching children with high needs, Resource creation, investment in the community, collaboration, development, relationships
8	Gladys reflects on how she feels guilty for being off sick and not being able to work, but knows that she needs to rest to recover.	Balancing work and rest, wellbeing
9	Gladys shares that she feels guilty for being off sick and not being able to work, but knows that she needs to rest to recover.	Balancing work and rest, wellbeing

10	Gladys reflects on how she had a fabulous time on a residential trip with her old year 4 class and how she enjoyed driving the mini bus.	Residential trips, Driving Taking on more responsibilities, engaging in community activities, Growth and development, relationships
11	Gladys shares that she is excited to join her old year 5 class on their Monday-Friday adventure.	Residential trips engaging in community activities
12	Gladys shares that she passed her minibus test and is excited to take the children on trips and experiences.	Driving, Trips Taking on more responsibilities, relationships, engaging in community activities, Growth and development
13	Gladys shares that she is excited to join her old year 5 class on their residential trip and reflects on how busy she has been preparing for it.	Residential trips, Preparation, relationships, Taking on more responsibilities, engaging in community activities, Growth and development
14	Gladys reflects on how she had a wonderful first day back and how she enjoyed teaching her math lesson and communication and language session.	Enjoyment of teaching, Lesson highlights , impact, pupils
15	Gladys shares that she enjoyed spending time in Paris and how it was a lovely reset before going back to work.	Rest and relaxation, wellbeing. Work-life balance
16	Gladys shares that she enjoyed spending time in Devon and how it was a lovely reset before going back to work.	Rest and relaxation, wellbeing. Work-life balance
17	Gladys reflects on how she spent her Easter break writing reports and how it was a tough task but also a lovely reflection on the year so far.	Report writing, Reflection, pupils, workload
18	Gladys shares that she enjoyed hiking in the lakes and how it was a great reset during the OFSTED window.	Rest and relaxation, OFSTED, wellbeing
19	Gladys shares that the children enjoyed learning about the fire service and how it was great to have a visitor come in and speak to them.	Visitors, Learning about the fire service, investing in the community, collaboration
20	Gladys shares how she is trying to prioritise me time and how she enjoyed going for a run and a sunset stroll instead of working on her laptop.	Balancing work and rest, wellbeing
21	Gladys reflects on how busy the demands of the job can be and how she is trying to balance it with a good fitness routine and social life.	Balancing work and rest, Fitness routine, wellbeing
22	Gladys shares how the children enjoyed learning about the Kings Coronation and how she threw a garden party for all of the nursery children.	Learning , Investing in the children and community, engaging in school activities , impact

23	Gladys shares how the children enjoyed learning about people who help us and how they had a fantastic visit from their local lollipop lady.	Learning about people who help us, Visitors, collaborating, pupils,
24	Gladys shares how she is improving their outside area and how she is enjoying having control over the provision.	Improving the outside area, Provision control, contributing to the COP, agency,
25	Gladys shares how the children enjoyed playing football to develop their fine motor skills and how it was helpful for some of the more reluctant children.	Fine motor skills, Reluctant children, Commitment to the children , impact
26	Gladys shares how she is pushing to improve their outside area and how it can be challenging to get all staff members to focus on the learning outside.	Improving the outside area, Learning outside , contributing Growth and development, collaboration.
27	Gladys shares how she is excited to progress quickly and how she has asked to move key stages for future progression opportunities.	Professional development, Progression Growth and development, more responsibilities
28	Gladys shares how she enjoyed making lollipop people sticks and how she is looking forward to teaching the children how to cross the road correctly.	Making lollipop people sticks, Teaching road safety, investment in the children and community, engagement, impact
29	Gladys shares how she is excited to try using coloured ice for the children to use to mark make on their writing table.	Mark making, Coloured ice, engagement, children
30	Gladys shares how she enjoyed a relaxing Easter break and how it was the first time she fully switched off from work since starting.	Rest and relaxation investment in the children and community, wellbeing, Work-life balance
31	Gladys reflects on how she faced challenges with handling delicate conversations with parents and how training on structuring those conversations might have been useful.	Handling difficult conversations, Coping strategies, support, growth and development, relationships
32	Gladys shares how she decided not to strike and how it was interesting to have conversations with staff and parents about her decision.	Strikes, Decision making, relationships
33	Gladys shares how she finally got around to organising her unit.	Organisation, contributing, assisting, investment in the school, growth and development
34	Gladys shares how she enjoyed delivering an online lecture and how it was great to critically reflect on her journey so far.	Professional development, Reflection Growth and development, taking on more responsibilities
35	Gladys shares how the children enjoyed collecting and sorting rubbish to fill their own recycling truck and how it was a great way to stimulate lots of role-play and model language through their topic work.	Learning, engagement, commitment to the community, children

36	Gladys shares how the children enjoyed exploring their deep dark wood messy play trays and creating their own woods and role playing with Gruffalo puppets.	Engagement, Messy play commitment to the community, impact
37	Gladys shares how she neglected posting on her blog but is excited to share her second post of the week and get back into the routine.	Blogging, Reflection Growth and development, assisting others, contributing to the COP, network, social media
38	Gladys shares how she is excited to support a PGCE student for their two week EYFS placement and how it will be a lovely opportunity to be able to support this student alongside her phase leader.	Supporting PGCE students, Professional development, Growth and development, contributing to the COP, taking on more responsibilities
39	Gladys shares how she changed her reading area into the Gruffalo's cave and how she is excited to start their new topic.	commitment to the community, Growth and development, children, learning environment
40	Gladys shares how they are enjoying learning about dinosaurs and how their small world set up is great for extending language and encouraging all children to explore outside.	Dinosaurs, Small world commitment to the community, impact, engagement, children
41	Celebrating her birthday.	Part of the community, Valued, relationships
42	Gladys shares how she had a spring observation and how she received positive feedback from both the headteacher and assistant head.	Observations, Feedback, Growth and development,
43	Gladys shares how she had a spring observation and how she received positive feedback from the assistant head.	Observations, Feedback Growth and development,
44	Gladys shares how she is prepping for provision by making coloured ice for the children to use to mark make on their writing table.	Provision preparation, Mark making, contributing, investment in the children/ community
45	Gladys shares how she is part of the Bright Futures Teach First scheme and how they had an online session on questioning.	Professional development, Online sessions Growth and development,
46	Gladys shares how she has been preparing for her move into a quiet room and coordinating all of the planning and teaching for all of the children with SEN across EYFS.	SEN, Quiet room Growth and development, contributing to the community, taking on more responsibilities
47	Gladys shares how they are removing the partitions to make one larger classroom and spreading out the areas of provision and staff between the one. She reflects on the advantages and challenges of this change.	Classroom changes, Provision control , Collaborating
48	Gladys shares how she was impressed with the closed 2D shapes used to represent the different parts of a pineapple.	Expressive art and design, investing in the children, learning, impact

49	Gladys shares how they are learning about healthy eating and how they did observational drawings of various fruits and vegetables.	Engagement, impact, learning, investing in the children
50	Gladys shares how she is moving out of mainstream and setting up a provision for their children with SEND and how she is excited to start this new chapter.	SEND, Provision control investing in the children, contributing to the COP, taking on more responsibility
51	Gladys shares how she stayed after staff meeting to assemble their dragon, drums, shakers and lanterns that they have been making for Chinese New Year.	Chinese New Year, relationships, collaboration, Assembly investing in the children, engaging in community activities
52	Gladys shares how she was confirmed as the new staff governor and how she is excited to start this new journey.	Staff governor, Professional development contributing to the COP, taking on more responsibility
53	Gladys shares how she spent her Sunday afternoon prepping for school by restocking the prize box, buying fruit and vegetables, and cooking noodles for messy play.	School prep, Messy play, investing in the children/ community, impact, engagement, learning
54	Gladys reflects on how she found working with parents to be the most challenging thing in her first term and how training on structuring those conversations might have been useful.	Handling difficult conversations, Coping strategies, support, growth and development, reflection, parents, relationships,
55	Gladys reflects on how her training prepared her well for her first year of teaching, particularly because she was teaching in the same school and year group as her placement. She also highlights the importance of forming good relationships with staff members across the school.	Legitimate peripheral participation, Forming relationships, collaboration
56	Gladys reflects on how her first term of teaching was emotional and how she had to adapt to the day-to-day running of the classroom. She also discusses how she had to get to know 30 more children and how it was a strange start to the year.	Emotional experiences, Getting to know children, Growth and development, investment in the children and COP, wellbeing
57	Gladys shares how she ended up as a nursery teacher in her placement school and how it was a strange story. She also discusses how she felt part of the school and how she was leading the class for lots of different things.	Placement school, Leading the class, Community of practice, relationships

Table 4: Generating initial codes table.

D.3 - Organising into potential themes.

Key Theme	Detailed Analysis and Example quotes and links to the response
Working with others/ team work/ collaboration	"Working with parents is what I've probably found the most challenging." (Response 54) "I have found those quite challenging, mainly because I overthink and now that I've had a lot of different conversations with parents, I'm confident and I stand there and I'm strong willed in what I'm saying and I feel a lot better working with those parents." (Response 54) **Quotes and links to the responses that show Gladys working collaboratively with others:** Response 1: "We are both very different types of teachers and we ended up merging our classes together to form a joint provision and I found that really difficult having to rely on another member of staff, but there were effects and benefits and sometimes hinders my children's learning." Response 2: "Because I had formed, I think one thing I've done really well this year is form really good relationships with lots of different people across the school. And because I kind of knew all the people that I needed to, I was able and I felt comfortable and confident to get help whenever I needed to." Response 3: "I've learned how to work with a variety of different staff, staff that I got on with really well. I've formed really strong friendships this year and there's also members of staff I didn't get on as well. But we found a way to work professionally. I made sure that everything was always in the best interest of the children." Response 7: "Staying in a year group where I am familiar with curriculum, expectations and how it runs will allow me to focus my time on this new task." Response 13: "I really enjoyed working with her today getting to know her experience and planning what needs to be done over the next two weeks. It will be a lovely opportunity at this point in my ECT year to be able to support this student alongside my phase leader necessary." Response 38: "I really enjoyed working with her today getting to know her experience and planning what needs to be done over the next two weeks. It will be a lovely opportunity at this point in my ECT year to be able to support this student alongside my phase leader necessary." Response 47: "Getting to know 30 more children, the other staff getting to know my 30 children, the logistics, some of our children with SEN might find it hard to cope with the change." Response 50: "I am really looking forward to this exciting chapter and getting learning right for these children and their needs. This change will be until Easter where my partner teacher and I will swap." Response 57: "I was working with staff and children that I didn't know. We went camping for three nights for the Yorkshire Dales, which was a fantastic experience. I

	was doing other bits and bobs around the school and I just knew that I wanted to work there."
	Quotes and links to responses showing that it is difficult working with others: Response 1: "I found that really difficult having to rely on another member of staff, but there were effects and benefits and sometimes hinders my children's learning." Response 54: "Working with parents is what I've probably found the most challenging." Response 47: "Getting to know 30 more children, the other staff getting to know my 30 children, the logistics, some of our children with SEN might find it hard to cope with the change." Response 50: "Being only in my third week taking over the teaching for children with SEND across EYFS I was really pleased and look forward to hopefully attending some PECs training." Response 56: "It is emotional. You're working with these children and things happen on a day-to-day basis and you're working with parents and all these new experiences." Response 57: "It was great to have a visitor come in and speak to the children."
Preparation from training	"The skills I learned in university organization at the time. When I was doing lots of reflections and organizing my files and my teaching experience file and it was a really big job to set up and making sure all those organization skills that you learn in uni invaluable." (Response 55) "My ability to work with other adults. I'm in a nursery class with a high percentage of high needs children, so I have myself and 4 TAs that I work with in my class. So managing adults is something that I think I would have been a lot more wary and struggled with if I didn't have that experience at uni working with adults collaboratively at UNI or throughout the placement." (Response 55)
Significant moments throughout the year	"I generally cannot believe that it is over. This year has absolutely flown by, and I cannot believe that I will not be teaching this class next year." (Response 4) "I think my training prepared me really well for my first year of teaching, particularly because I'm teaching not just in the same school, but the same year group, the same classroom, the same phase leader and I had when I was a student there." (Response 2) "I'm staying in Nursery!" (Response 7)
Classroom and provision preparation	"Enjoyed a Sunday of hiking in the lakes. 20km ticked off. It was lovely to get outside and re set for the week. In our ofsted window and being due at any point, times like these are a great reset." (Response 18) "Packed and ready for residential! Really excited to join year 5 (my old class from last years year 4) on their Monday-Friday adventure." (Response 11) "Starting the week well! Definitely trying to prioritise some me time better around lots of bits and bobs going on!" (Response 20)
Observations and feedback	"Today I had my spring observation. This was by our headteacher and one of the assistant heads who is the phase leader for one of our SEN resources." (Response 42) "Today I had my spring observation. This was by our headteacher and one of the assistant heads who is the phase leader for one of our SEN resources." (Response 43)
Changes and transitions	"More change! It has been decided, that myself and my partner teachers nursery classes will join, removing the partitions to make one larger classroom and spreading out of the areas of provision and staff between the one." (Response 47) "Due to the

	high numbers of children with SEND in our EYFS, during group teaching time, I am moving out of mainstream and setting up a provision for our children with SEND." (Response 50)
Personal and professional growth	"A very busy PPA this morning! Feeling great and organised for the week to come." (Response 28) "For my ECT support and development, my school uses Bright Futures Teach First scheme." (Response 45) "Today it has been confirmed that I am the new staff governor!" (Response 52) "I have my minibus license! Been a busy day today including my minibus test really glad to get this sorted to be able to take the children for a lot of trips and experiences." (Response 11)
Commitment to the school/ Taking on more responsibility	- Response 38: "For the next two weeks I have been given a PGCE student for their two week EYFS placement. I really enjoyed working with her today getting to know her experience and planning what needs to be done over the next two weeks." - Response 52: "Today it has been confirmed that I am the new staff governor! With a new vacancy open, I decided to nominate myself for the role." - Response 12: "Been a busy day today including my minibus test really glad to get this sorted to be able to take the children for a lot of trips and experiences." - Response 7: "Staying in Nursery will allow me to draw and and improve my knowledge and pedagogy from this year and share this with my partner teacher who is new to nursery. I will also be taking on the subject of re (a year early!)." Response 50: "Due to the high numbers of children with SEND in our EYFS, during group teaching time, I am moving out of mainstream and setting up a provision for our children with SEND. I am really looking forward to this exciting chapter and getting learning right for these children and their needs." Response 43:"Being only in my third week taking over the teaching for children with SEND across EYFS I was really pleased and look forward to hopefully attending some PECs training." Response 47:"We are building a specific adapted continuous provision space for eyfs chn with send to meet their needs. This means a complete classroom revamp! I love do my current classroom but with a year of wear and tear, I'm looking forward to ripping it all out and starting again!" Response 7: "I will also be taking on the subject of re (a year early!). Staying in a year group where I am familiar with curriculum, expectations and how it runs will allow me to focus my time on this new task. I have decided to re right our current lesson plans and school vision and have agreed this with our curriculum lead and head teacher the new directions I will be taking religious education in our school."

Table 5: Organising into potential themes table.

D.4 - Refining and ensuring coherence among the themes.

Personal Growth and Development	Involvement in the School Community and Activities	Assisting and Collaborating with Others	Investment in the School Community	Contributing to the Community and Taking on More Responsibilities
"I've learned a lot about myself. I've learned a lot about the children and how they learn. I've learned a lot about being a nursery, the nature and the nurturing kind of role that it is as a teacher." Response 2 - "I definitely would say it. Working with parents is what I've probably found the most challenging." (Response 54) - "I think for me in being a nursery working with so many adults, that was definitely invaluable." (Response 55) - "It was really strange start to the year... And then that last week of September it was the 1st morning and all thirty children were in at the same time." (Response 56) - "I knew that I really wanted to get a job there because it was the COVID." (Response 57) Links to growth and development: - Learning how to work with parents (Response 54) - Developing skills in working with adults (Response 55)	"I formed really good relationships with lots of different people across the school. And because I kind of knew all the people that I needed to, I was able and I felt comfortable and confident to get help whenever I needed to." Response 2	"I learned a lot of them and reflectively at the end of the year it started to go the other way, asking me whether we could do things and like in the new approach that I brought to earlier. And I think where I formed those relationships really early on when I started, everybody felt comfortable and confident to do that."- Response 2 Response 1: "I found that really difficult having to rely on another member of staff, but there were effects and benefits and sometimes hinders my children's learning." Response 2: "Because I had formed, I think one thing I've done really well this year is form really good relationships with lots of different people across the school. And because I kind of knew all the people that I needed to, I was able and I felt comfortable and confident to get help whenever I needed to." Response 38: "I really enjoyed working with her today getting to know her experience and planning what needs to be done over the next two weeks. It will be a lovely	"I feel a really central part of the school. I now feel like I'm a member of staff that people come to to ask me things, which is crazy because when I started I was asking everybody things left, right and center." Response 2	"I have decided to re write our current lesson plans and school vision and have agreed this with our curriculum lead and head teacher the new directions I will be taking religious education in our school." Response 7 - Response 38: "For the next two weeks I have been given a PGCE student for their two week EYFS placement. I really enjoyed working with her today getting to know her experience and planning what needs to be done over the next two weeks." - Response 52: "Today it has been confirmed that I am the new staff governor! With a new vacancy open, I decided to nominate myself for the role." - Response 12: "Been a busy day today including my minibus test really glad to get this sorted to be able to take the children for a lot of trips and experiences." - Response 7: "Staying in Nursery will allow me to draw and and improve my knowledge and pedagogy from this year and share this with my partner teacher who is new to nursery. I will also be taking on the subject of re (a year early!)."

- Adapting to a new class and routine (Response 56) - Pursuing a desired job opportunity (Response 57)		opportunity at this point in my ECT year to be able to support this student alongside my phase leader necessary." Response 42: "It was great meeting as a hub of ECT's within our school as well as chatting with other ECT's online from other schools."		Response 50: "Due to the high numbers of children with SEND in our EYFS, during group teaching time, I am moving out of mainstream and setting up a provision for our children with SEND. I am really looking forward to this exciting chapter and getting learning right for these children and their needs." Response 43:"Being only in my third week taking over the teaching for children with SEND across EYFS I was really pleased and look forward to hopefully attending some PECs training." Response 47:"We are building a specific adapted continuous provision space for eyfs chn with send to meet their needs. This means a complete classroom revamp! I love do my current classroom but with a year of wear and tear, I'm looking forward to ripping it all out and starting again!" Response 7: "I will also be taking on the subject of re (a year early!). Staying in a year group where I am familiar with curriculum, expectations and how it runs will allow me to focus my time on this new task. I have decided to re right our current lesson plans and school vision and have agreed this with our curriculum lead and head teacher the new directions I will be taking religious education in our school."

Table 6: Refining and ensuring coherence among the themes table.

Links to LPP and CoP:

Gladys's experiences as a new teacher align with the theory of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice. She mentions the importance of forming strong relationships with colleagues and being able to rely on them for support, which is a key aspect of communities of practice. Additionally, her experience of working with different adults and managing them effectively is an example of legitimate peripheral participation, where she was able to learn from more experienced colleagues and gradually take on more responsibility. Gladys also mentions the challenges of working with parents, which can be seen as a barrier to participation in the community of practice of teaching. However, she notes that with time and experience, she has become more confident in these interactions. Overall, Gladys's experiences highlight the importance of building relationships and learning from others in the teaching profession.

Evidence that Gladys has moved to a more central position in the community of practice includes:

- In response 1, Gladys mentions that she found it difficult to rely on another member of staff and had to have difficult conversations with parents, but now feels more confident in these areas. This suggests that she has taken on more responsibility and is more involved in the day-to-day operations of the school.

- In response 2, Gladys mentions that she has formed strong relationships with many different people across the school, including teaching assistants and parents. This suggests that she is more integrated into the school community and has a wider network of connections.

- In response 3, Gladys mentions that she feels like a member of staff that people come to for help and advice, which suggests that she has become a more central figure in the school community.

- In response 7, Gladys mentions that she has taken on the subject of RE a year early and has agreed with the curriculum lead and head teacher on the new directions she will be taking religious education in the school. This suggests that she is taking on more responsibility and is becoming more involved in shaping the curriculum.

- In response 27, Gladys mentions that she has asked to move key stages to support her development and progression, which suggests that she is taking an active role in shaping her career path and is becoming more central to the decision-making process in the school.

- In response 52, Gladys mentions that she has been appointed as the new staff governor, which suggests that she is becoming more involved in the governance and leadership of the school.

D.5- Gladys's journey to from peripheral participation to more central engagement

Approaching the periphery: Joining the school community

Impact of University Training:

Gladys reflects on the importance of the skills she acquired during her university training, which she found invaluable in her initial steps as an early career teacher (ECT). She particularly emphasises the organisational skills and the ability to manage relationships with adults, which were critical during her transition to teaching.

"The skills I learned in university such as organising my time... All those organisation skills that you learn in uni are invaluable." (T1ISV)

"Managing adults is something... I would have struggled with if I didn't have that experience at Uni." (T1ISV)

Challenges with Parental Interactions:

Gladys identifies working with parents as one of the most challenging aspects of her first term. She discusses feeling overwhelmed by difficult conversations and the need to justify her decisions, particularly as her interactions with parents were limited during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have affected her preparedness in this area.

"I think maybe a little bit more work to do with structuring those conversations with parents might have been quite useful. During the COVID pandemic, I really didn't get much interaction with parents, a few phone calls but generally a lot less than I feel like you probably would have without the pandemic." (T1ISV)

Familiarity with the School Environment:

Gladys highlights the advantage of familiarity due to her university placement at the same school and in the same year group where she now teaches. This continuity helped her feel more integrated and less overwhelmed by the logistical and procedural aspects of the school environment.

"I think my training prepared me really well for my first year of teaching, particularly because I'm teaching not just in the same school, but the same year group, the same classroom, with the same phase leader, that I had when I was a student there... I feel a real part of the school and I think that helps because I was here as a student as well, so I already knew a lot of people." (T3CV)

Preparation and Engagement Before Starting:

Gladys describes her proactive engagement with the school community before officially starting her role. Her efforts included staying beyond the official end of her placement period and participating in various school activities, which she felt were crucial for her smooth transition from a student to a full-time teacher.

"The placement was meant to finish the end of June, but I stayed on for three to four weeks right until the end of the summer term and it was that extra bit of time where I really, I didn't feel like a student at all. I completely felt part of the school." (T1ISV)

On the value of university training:

"The skills I learned in university such as organising my time... All those organisation skills that you learn in uni are invaluable." (T1ISV)

"Managing adults is something... I would have struggled with if I didn't have that experience at Uni." (T1ISV)

On challenges with parent interactions:

"I think maybe a little bit more work to do with structuring those conversations with parents might have been quite useful. During the COVID pandemic, I really didn't get much interaction with parents, a few phone calls but generally a lot less than I feel like you probably would have without the pandemic." (T1ISV)

On familiarity with the school environment:

"I think my training prepared me really well for my first year of teaching, particularly because I'm teaching not just in the same school, but the same year group, the same classroom, with the same phase leader, that I had when I was a student there... I feel a real part of the school and I think that helps because I was here as a student as well, so I already knew a lot of people." (T3CV)

On proactive preparation and engagement:

"The placement was meant to finish the end of June, but I stayed on for three to four weeks right until the end of the summer term and it was that extra bit of time where I really, I didn't feel like a student at all. I completely felt part of the school." (T1ISV)

These points and quotes illustrate Gladys's initial experiences as she approached the periphery of the school community. They reflect her proactive steps to integrate herself, the advantages she gained from her familiarity with the school environment, and the areas where she felt further training would have

been beneficial. Gladys's narrative underscores the complex, multifaceted nature of transitioning from university to full-time teaching, highlighting both the challenges and supports that shaped her early career journey.

From Periphery to progress: Personal and professional development

Developing a sense of competence:

Gladys reflects on her growth in feelings of competence over her first year as an early career teacher (ECT). She describes a significant transformation from initially relying on others for guidance to becoming a central, knowledgeable member of the school community whom others approach for help.

"I feel a really central part of the school. I now feel like I'm a member of staff that people come to ask me things, which is crazy because when I started, I was asking everybody things left, right and centre." (T3CV)

This quote highlights her development from uncertainty to becoming a confident and integral member of the school community, showing her increased competence and self-assurance.

Developing Practice and Noticing Impact:

Gladys discusses the challenges she faced, particularly in working with high-needs children, and how these challenges led her to engage in further learning and self-improvement. Her reflections show a proactive approach to professional development, involving self-directed research and a commitment to meeting her pupils' needs.

"I've learned a lot about teaching children with high needs and I've taught myself a lot and I've kind of felt like I was back in uni again doing a bit more research and things like that." (T3CV)

She also mentions her growth in understanding the unique role of a nursery teacher, emphasising the nurturing aspect and the specific skills required in early years education.

"I've learned a lot about myself. I've learned a lot about the children and how they learn. I've learned a lot about being in nursery, and the nurturing kind of role that it is as a teacher." (T3CV)

These reflections illustrate Gladys's dedication to improving her practice and her recognition of the impact of her efforts on her pupils.

Building and Managing Relationships:

Gladys shares her experiences of working with a variety of staff and managing relationships professionally, even when there were challenges. Her ability to navigate these relationships demonstrates her maturity and professionalism, prioritising the best interests of the children.

"I've learned how to work with a variety of different staff... I've formed really strong friendships this year and there's also members of staff I didn't get on as well with. But we found a way to work professionally. I made sure that everything was always in the best interest of the children." (T3CV)

She also reflects on her development in working with parents, acknowledging that while initially challenging, her competence in handling parental interactions has grown significantly.

"Working with parents is what I've probably found the most challenging... mainly because I overthink and now that I've had a lot of different conversations with parents, I'm confident and I stand there and I'm strong-willed in what I'm saying and I feel a lot better working with those parents." (T1ISV)

These insights underscore her ability to build and maintain professional relationships, a critical component of her role as a teacher.

Continual Professional Development:

Gladys demonstrates a clear understanding of the importance of ongoing development. She expresses her commitment to further improving her skills and sharing her knowledge with her colleagues, particularly a new teacher in the nursery.

"Staying in Nursery will allow me to draw and improve my knowledge and pedagogy from this year and share this with my partner teacher who is new to nursery." (T2SM) (30.06.23)

This statement reflects her dedication to continuous improvement and her role as a mentor within the school community.

On developing a sense of competence:

"I feel a really central part of the school. I now feel like I'm a member of staff that people come to ask me things, which is crazy because when I started, I was asking everybody things left, right and centre." (T3CV)

On developing practice and noticing impact:

"I've learned a lot about teaching children with high needs and I've taught myself a lot and I've kind of felt like I was back in uni again doing a bit more research and things like that." (T3CV)

"I've learned a lot about myself. I've learned a lot about the children and how they learn. I've learned a lot about being in nursery, and the nurturing kind of role that it is as a teacher." (T3CV)

On building and managing relationships:

"I've learned how to work with a variety of different staff... I've formed really strong friendships this year and there's also members of staff I didn't get on as well with. But we found a way to work professionally. I made sure that everything was always in the best interest of the children." (T3CV)

"Working with parents is what I've probably found the most challenging... mainly because I overthink and now that I've had a lot of different conversations with parents, I'm confident and I stand there and I'm strong-willed in what I'm saying and I feel a lot better working with those parents." (T1ISV)

On continual professional development:

"Staying in Nursery will allow me to draw and improve my knowledge and pedagogy from this year and share this with my partner teacher who is new to nursery." (T2SM) (30.06.23)

These points and quotes illustrate Gladys's journey from the periphery to becoming a more central and confident figure within her school community. Her reflections show a clear trajectory of growth, both personally and professionally, as she navigates the challenges and opportunities of her first year of teaching. Gladys's narrative highlights her commitment to continuous development, both in her own practice and in supporting her colleagues, demonstrating her evolving role as a mentor and leader in the school.

Collective participation: Collaborating and working with others

Building Relationships Across the School:

Gladys highlights the importance of forming strong relationships with various members of the school community. She reflects on how these connections have helped her feel more at ease and confident when seeking assistance, emphasising the value of integrating into the wider school community beyond just her immediate team.

"I think one thing I've done really well this year is form really good relationships with lots of different people across the school. And because I kind of knew all the people that I needed to, I was able and I felt comfortable and confident to get help whenever I needed to..." (T3CV)

Challenges in Collaborative Efforts:

Gladys acknowledges that while relying on colleagues can provide essential support, it can also pose challenges, particularly in maintaining her autonomy as a teacher. She discusses the balance between the benefits of collaboration and the potential drawbacks, such as the impact on her pupils' learning, highlighting the complexities of working in a team-based teaching environment.

"I found that really difficult having to rely on another member of staff, but there were benefits and sometimes hindrances on my children's learning." (T3CV)

Engagement with Parents:

Gladys describes her proactive approach to engaging with parents, particularly in managing and reshaping their expectations. This strategy involves educating parents through workshops, which helps foster better understanding and cooperation between the school and home, especially regarding safeguarding concerns.

"Parents were complaining then ringing the school and saying that we weren't safeguarding their children, and it was really about re-educating the parents and we started doing some parent workshops. Then really, it's now come down the other side." (I2)

Importance of Reciprocal Relationships:

Gladys points out the significance of mutual support within the school community. She stresses that building connections with everyone, from teaching assistants to the caretaker, is vital for a cohesive and supportive work environment. This reciprocity enhances the overall functionality and morale of the school.

"I think it's just making those connections with the whole school, the caretaker, everybody, because you're all part of it together and the more you do for them, the more they do for you..." (I2)

On forming relationships within the school:

"I think one thing I've done really well this year is form really good relationships with lots of different people across the school. And because I kind of knew all the people that I needed to, I was able and I felt comfortable and confident to get help whenever I needed to..." (T3CV)

On challenges of collaboration:

"I found that really difficult having to rely on another member of staff, but there were benefits and sometimes hindrances on my children's learning." (T3CV)

On engaging with parents:

"Parents were complaining then ringing the school and saying that we weren't safeguarding their children, and it was really about re-educating the parents and we started doing some parent workshops. Then really, it's now come down the other side." (I2)

On reciprocal relationships within the school:

"I think it's just making those connections with the whole school, the caretaker, everybody, because you're all part of it together and the more you do for them, the more they do for you..." (I2)

These points and quotes illustrate Gladys's experiences and reflections on collaborative participation within the school community, highlighting both the benefits and challenges of her engagement with colleagues, parents, and other stakeholders.

Active participation: Supporting and investing in the school community

Transitioning from Newcomer to Central Figure:

Gladys reflects on her journey from being seen as a new early career teacher (ECT) to becoming a central part of the school community. She describes how her role and the perception of her by colleagues have evolved, indicating her growing confidence and integration into the school.

"At the start of the year, it was very much like you're an ECT and I do think people have kind of forgotten that now... I feel a really central part of the school. I now feel like I'm a member of staff that people come to ask me things." (T3CV)

Mentoring and Supporting Other Educators:

Gladys discusses her new role as a mentor, highlighting her responsibilities in supporting both new teachers and students. She is involved in mentoring a partner teacher who is new to nursery, which demonstrates her role as an 'old-timer' who helps others integrate and develop within the community.

"Staying in Nursery will allow me to draw on and improve my knowledge and pedagogy from this year and share this with my partner teacher who is new to nursery." (T2SM) (30.06.23)

Gladys also takes on a mentoring role with a PGCE student, further illustrating her willingness to guide and nurture the next generation of educators. This involvement indicates her growing leadership role and her commitment to supporting new entrants into the profession.

"For the next two weeks I have been given a PGCE student for their two-week EYFS placement. I really enjoyed working with her today, getting to know her experience and planning what needs to be done over the next two weeks." (T2SM) (27.2.23)

Leadership and School Development:

Gladys takes on additional leadership roles, such as becoming a staff governor and taking the lead on the Religious Education (RE) curriculum. These roles show her proactive engagement in the school's development and her influence in shaping school policies and practices.

"Today it has been confirmed that I am the new staff governor!... I have decided to rewrite our current lesson plans and school vision and have agreed this with our curriculum lead and head teacher the new directions I will be taking religious education in our school." (T2SM) (30.06.23)

On her transformation from newcomer to a central figure:

"At the start of the year, it was very much like you're an ECT and I do think people have kind of forgotten that now... I feel a really central part of the school. I now feel like I'm a member of staff that people come to ask me things." (T3CV)

On mentoring other teachers and students:

"Staying in Nursery will allow me to draw on and improve my knowledge and pedagogy from this year and share this with my partner teacher who is new to nursery." (T2SM) (30.06.23)

"For the next two weeks I have been given a PGCE student for their two-week EYFS placement. I really enjoyed working with her today, getting to know her experience and planning what needs to be done over the next two weeks." (T2SM) (27.2.23)

On taking leadership roles within the school:

"Today it has been confirmed that I am the new staff governor!... I have decided to rewrite our current lesson plans and school vision and have agreed this with our curriculum lead and head teacher the new directions I will be taking religious education in our school." (T2SM) (30.06.23)

These points and quotes illustrate Gladys's active participation and growing influence within the school community. Her journey from a newcomer to a central figure aligns with Lave and Wenger's theory of legitimate peripheral participation, demonstrating how she has moved from the periphery to become a key contributor, mentor, and leader within her school.

Summary

Gladys is a first-year early career teacher (ECT) working in a nursery class. Reflecting on her first term of teaching, she describes the experience as amazing, crazy, and tiring. She feels her training prepared her well for the challenges of her first year, particularly because she completed her placement in the same school where she now teaches. This familiarity with the school's environment, expectations, and procedures helped her transition more smoothly into her new role. Gladys highlights the importance of organisational skills and the ability to collaborate effectively with other adults, skills she developed during her training.

One of the most challenging aspects of her first term has been working with parents, especially when it comes to having difficult conversations. Gladys believes more support and training on how to structure these conversations would have been beneficial. She also shares some significant moments from her first term, such as going on a residential trip with her class, preparing for the Chinese New Year parade, and staying in the nursery to help set up a provision for children with special educational needs. She is also excited about her new role as a staff governor and is looking forward to attending her first meeting in February.

Gladys's experiences relate to the theory of legitimate peripheral participation, as she began her journey as a student teacher in the same school where she now works as an ECT. This continuity allowed her to become integrated more quickly and effectively into the school community, benefiting from the relationships and knowledge she had already established. She highlights the importance of building strong relationships with colleagues and parents, a key component of legitimate peripheral participation, as it allows new teachers to learn from those who are more experienced and knowledgeable. She also reflects on the value of her university training in developing organisational skills and the ability to work collaboratively, both of which are crucial for successful participation in a school setting.

Overall, Gladys's first-year experiences highlight some of the common challenges faced by new teachers, particularly in managing relationships with parents and coordinating with a large number of adults in the classroom. She underscores the importance of the organisational and collaboration skills she learned during her training and placement. Her positive experience with her placement school, along with the strong relationships she built there, were instrumental in securing her current role. To better support new teachers, there could be more emphasis on training and resources to handle difficult conversations with parents and strategies to cope with the emotional demands of the job. Additionally, providing opportunities for new teachers to work closely with experienced colleagues and build strong professional relationships can greatly ease their transition into the teaching profession.

Appendix E- Participant information sheet.

Manchester Metropolitan University

Participant Information Sheet: Early Career Teacher

As It Happens: The Lived Journey of Early Career Teachers in Their First Year of Teaching

Invitation to research

My name is Karen Tuzylak-Maguire, and I am part of the Faculty of Health and Education at Manchester Metropolitan University. This research project is part of a Doctorate in Education, and I will be supervised by a team which includes Prof Cathy Lewin and Dr Corinne Woodfine. I would like to invite you to participate in this project, which explores the experiences of early career teachers.

My research project looks at the experiences of early career teachers teaching in the UK, who have graduated in 2022 from Manchester Metropolitan University. The project tries to understand these experiences by capturing data along the journey through your first four terms of teaching.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a 2022 graduate from the Primary Education PGCE or BA Primary Education degree at Manchester Metropolitan University. I am contacting you because you might have an interest in this project and fall within this group of potential participants. The aim of this study is to investigate the experiences of early career teachers. You will need to be a teacher working in a UK school from September 2022 to participate.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to participate, you must understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. You can also ask the myself any questions if there is anything unclear or if you would like more information. This can be done by emailing me at **k.tuzylak-maguire@mmu.ac.uk**

Do I have to take part?

You are under no obligation to take part in this study. If, after reading this information sheet and asking any additional questions, you do not feel comfortable taking part in the study you do not have to. If you do decide to take part you are free to withdraw from the study at any point, without having to give a reason. If you do withdraw from the study you are free to take any personal data with you, on written request to myself via email at K.tuzylak-maguire@mmu.ac.uk, and this will not be included when the research is reported. If you decide not to take part or withdraw from the study, this will not affect your relationship with any of the staff at the Manchester Metropolitan University.

What will I be asked to do?

The study consists of using an online platform called 'Indeemo' to capture your experiences over two terms of teaching. You will also participate in three semi-structured interviews at the start, in the middle and at the end of the data collection phase. The online platform focuses on gathering information about your experiences and you will be asked to complete two tasks, the second repeated throughout the data collection period. You will begin by uploading a video to introduce yourself, then throughout the year you will spend no more than 30 minutes a week uploading either photographs, videos, text, or audio recordings for significant moments. This could be related to activities that you feel have worked well in your classroom or related to something you found particularly challenging or anything that you feel is important for your continuing development as a teacher. The experiences that you document could be positive and/or negative. Indeemo (2017) is a simple mobile app to use as it is similar to current online social media platforms such as Instagram and Pinterest that you may be familiar with. However he difference being that the information will only be shared with myself.

Further information and videos can be accessed here: **https://indeemo.com/mobile-ethnography-platform**

The first interview will take place at the beginning of your second term of teaching to reflect on your experiences so far. The follow-up interviews at the halfway point and at the end will explore the general themes that emerge from the information that you have uploaded. The follow-up interviews are designed as a conversational interview conducted via MS Teams, at a time convenient to you. If you agree to participate in the project you will be sharing photographs, videos, text and audio recordings. Please note that have complete control over what and when you upload information. All I ask is that you spend up to 30 minutes at some point during each week you are teaching to capture a significant moment.

Are there any risks if I participate?

There is a risk of being identifiable as a participant in this study, although all data collected will be anonymised. This risk will be reduced by ensuring that any data presented will not identify

you in any way (for example, school names will not be revealed). I will select quotes carefully to ensure there are no identifying factors. Rather than give details about specific events, reporting about these events more generally. This will include general comments about broad themes rather than detailed specific events.

Participation in the study might generate negative feelings that are evoked by self-reflection and self-evaluation for participants. To mitigate this risk, I will undertake debriefings with participants including researcher-participant discussions /debriefing after the three interviews. However, if for any reason, while participating in this study, you experience discomfort, you can withdraw from the study. You can also be directed to your school's wellbeing services.

Are there any advantages if I participate?

There are no direct advantages or rewards for individuals but there is an opportunity to discuss and reflect on your experiences as an early career teacher. Furthermore, participating in this research will allow you to think back on and learn from your experiences constructing new knowledge and applying that knowledge in the future.

Informed consent

You can only take part in the study if you understand what I am asking you to do and why I am doing it. You will also need to provide written consent by completing a form. I will also talk through this form before the first interview and before you start using 'Indeemo' to make sure that you are happy to continue. If not, you will be able to withdraw before the first interview starts.

If I wish to use any images/visual data that you collect through 'Indeemo' then I will seek consent for this separately.

What information about me will you collect and why?

When you agree to participate in this research, I will collect from you personally identifiable information such as your name and your contact details.

I will record the three interviews via Microsoft Teams, but I will not share any images with anyone else. I will keep the recording of the interview until I have checked the transcription, and I will then delete it.

I will collect the data from 'Indeemo' at the end of the summer term, 2023. If any personal data has been inadvertently captured (eg an image of a pupil) I will anonymise it.

The data I collect from the interviews and 'Indeemo' will enable me to explore how you have experienced your first year of teaching as an ECT.

How will my information be stored and how will you look after it?

You will be given a unique identifier. Your name will only be kept on your consent form and the list of unique identifiers. All interview transcripts will be pseudo anonymised. Data from 'Indeemo' will be anonymised at the end of the data collection period. For example, images of faces will be blurred if necessary. You will not be identifiable in any published outputs as pseudonyms will be used and any identifying information removed.

We will only retain your personal data for as long as is necessary to achieve the research purpose, which we estimate to be 10 years after the completion of the research project in January 2025. Your personal information such as your name will be kept separately, in a securely encrypted database, from the contents of your actual participation. All of the digital material will be kept encrypted on the 'Indeemo server' before being transferred to the secure university server. The interview transcript will only contain the identifier that you choose to use. The consent sheet will be kept on the university server. The data protection team at Manchester Met will work with 'Indeemo' to ensure their systems are secure and meet university standards.

How will you use my information?

The information that you provide will be used for analysis to help us to learn more about the experiences of early career teachers. Any presentations of the results, including the thesis will be anonymised so that any identifiable information is removed.

Will my data be sent anywhere else, or shared with other people or organisations?

Your data will be stored on a university approved server and the 'Indeemo' server until it is transferred over. This will be accessed by myself and my supervisory team. Any data shared outside of this will be anonymised to remove any identifiable features.

The photographs, audio and/or video recordings that you may choose to upload during this research will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

When will you destroy my information?

After the period mentioned above, your personal data will be destroyed as follows: digital data will follow the Her Majesty's Government Infosec Standard 5 Enhanced UK; physical paper data will be Micro Cross Cut shredded. For further information about use of your personal data and your data protection rights please see the University's Data Protection Pages - **https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/data-protection/**.

Pseudo anonymised data will be kept for 10 years after the end of the project (January 2025). The list of unique identifiers will be destroyed at the end of the project to reduce the risk of you being identifiable if there is a data leak. Consent forms will be digitised (the originals will be destroyed) and kept until the anonymised data are deleted in accordance with current university procedures.

Data Protection Law

Data protection legislation requires that we state the 'legal basis' for processing information about you. In the case of research, this is 'a task in the public interest.' If we use more sensitive information about you, such as information about your health, religion, or ethnicity (called 'special category' information), our basis lies in research in the public interest. Manchester Metropolitan is the Controller for this information and is responsible for looking after your data and using it in line with the requirements of the data protection legislation applicable in the UK.

This project also includes the use of filming and/or photography. Please refer to the additional consent form for further information about this aspect of the project, including our lawful basis for using your data in this way.

You have the right to make choices about your information under the data protection legislation, such as the right of access and the right to object, although in some circumstances these rights are not absolute. If you have any questions, or would like to exercise these rights, please contact the researcher or the University Data Protection Officer using the details below.

You can stop being a part of the study at any time, without giving a reason. You can ask us to delete your data at any time, but it might not always be possible. If you ask us to delete information before January 2024, we will make sure this is done. If you ask us to delete data after this point, we might not be able to. If your data is anonymised, we will not be able to withdraw it, because we will not know which data is yours.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

As this research study is a part of my Postgraduate Doctorate in Education, it will be submitted to Manchester Metropolitan University for review. You will be able to access the final thesis. This then may lead to me writing a paper for a journal. The results could be useful for supporting improvements to our courses so may be disseminated to staff,

Who has reviewed this research project?

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty Research Ethics & Governance Committee (FREGC) of Manchester Metropolitan University.

Who do I contact if I have concerns about this study or I wish to complain?

Prof Cathy Lewin, Principal supervisor c.lewin@mmu.ac.uk Tel: 0161 247 5191. Faculty of Health and Education, Manchester Metropolitan University, Brooks Building, 53 Bonsall Street, Manchester, M15 6GX.

Dr Corinne Woodfine, Supervisor and line manager **c.woodfine@mmu.ac.uk** Tel: 0161 247 5584. Faculty of Health and Education, Manchester Metropolitan University, Brooks Building, 53 Bonsall Street, Manchester, M15 6GX.

If you do not feel that this is sufficient you can also contact, depending on your concern:

Head of Research Ethics and Governance: Dr Claire Fox, FOHEethics@mmu.ac.uk Faculty Head of Research Ethics and Governance for the Faculty of Health and Education, Manchester Metropolitan University, Brooks Building, 53 Bonsall Street, Manchester, M15 6GX.

Manchester Metropolitan Data Protection Officer: dataprotection@mmu.ac.uk

Tel: 0161 247 3331 Legal Services, All Saints Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6BH.

UK Information Commissioner's Office

You have the right to complain directly to the Information Commissioner's Office if you would like to complain about how we process your personal data:

https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/

THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT

Version: 2.0   Date: 19/12/2022

 Ethical approval number (EthOS): 466237

Appendix F- Participant Consent Form

Manchester Metropolitan University

CONSENT FORM

As It Happens: The Lived Journey of Early Career Teachers in Their First Year of Teaching

Participant Identification Number:

	Please tick your chosen answer	YES	NO
1	I confirm that I have read the participant information sheet version 2.0, date 19/12/2022 for the above study.	x	☐
2	I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	x	☐
3	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.	x	☐
4	I agree to participate in the project to the extent of the activities described to me in the above participant information sheet.	x	☐
5	I agree to my participation being audio recorded for analysis. No audio clips will be published without my express consent (additional media release form).	x	☐
6	I agree to my participation being video recorded for analysis. No video clips will be published without my express consent (additional media release form).	x	☐
7	I agree to still photographs being taken during my participation for analysis. No photographs will be published without my express consent (additional media release form).	x	☐
8	I understand and agree that data collected during the project will be shared with Karen Tuzylak-Maguire and the supervisory team.	x	☐
9	I understand and agree that my words may be quoted anonymously in research outputs.	x	☐
10	I wish to be informed of the outcomes of this research. I can be contacted at: _____	x	☐

Name of participant   Signature

Name of person   Date   Signature
taking consent

Karen Tuzylak-Maguire

EthOS ID: 45237, version 1.0, 31/10/22

Appendix G- Participant journey maps.

Glady's journey map part 1
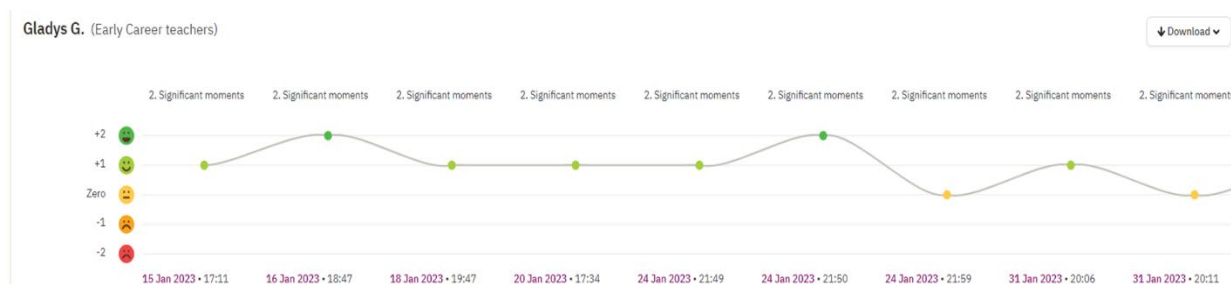
Glady's journey map part 2

Glady's Journey map part 3

Glady's Journey map part 4
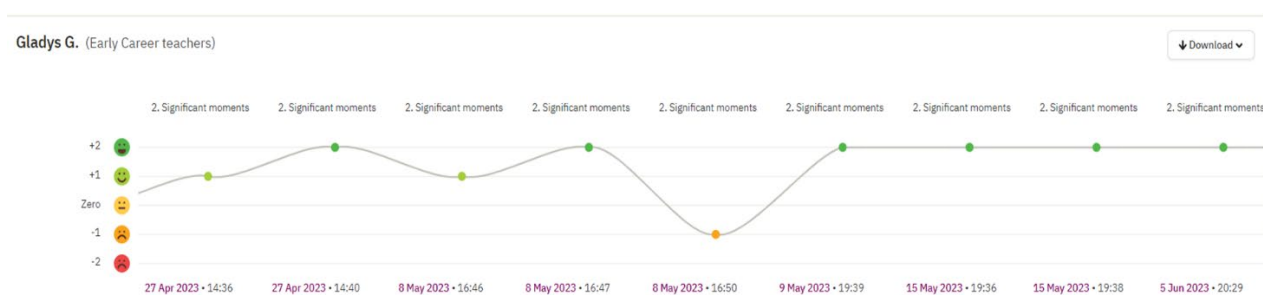
Glady's journey map part 5

Glady's journey map part 6
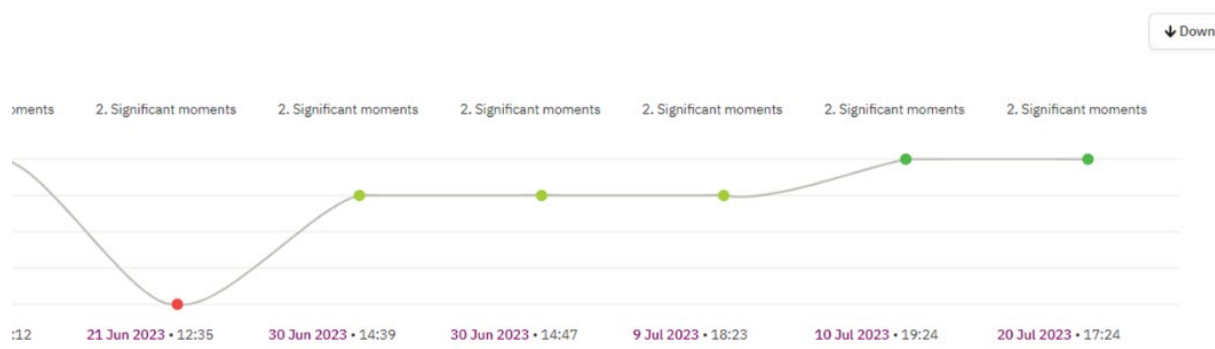
Sylvia's journey map part 1

Sylvia's journey map part 2
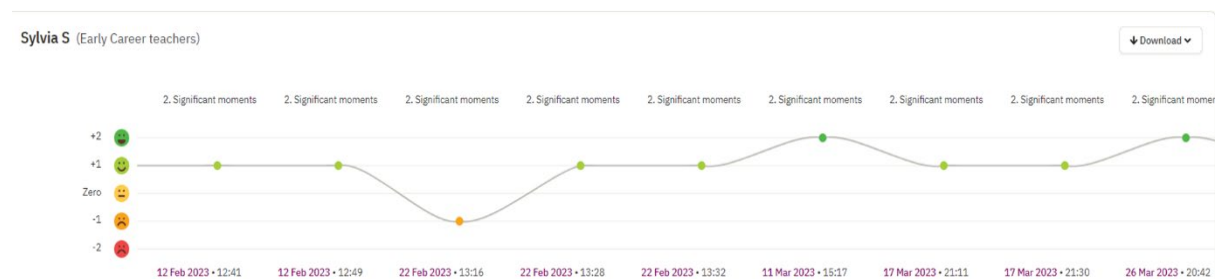
Sylvia's journey map part 3

Sylvia's journey map part 4

April's journey map part 1
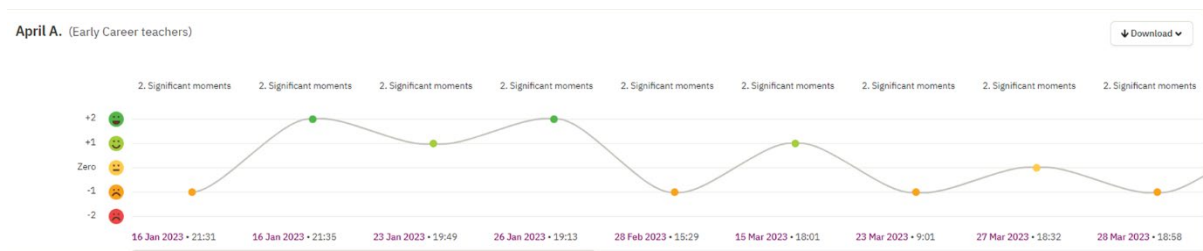
April's journey map part 2
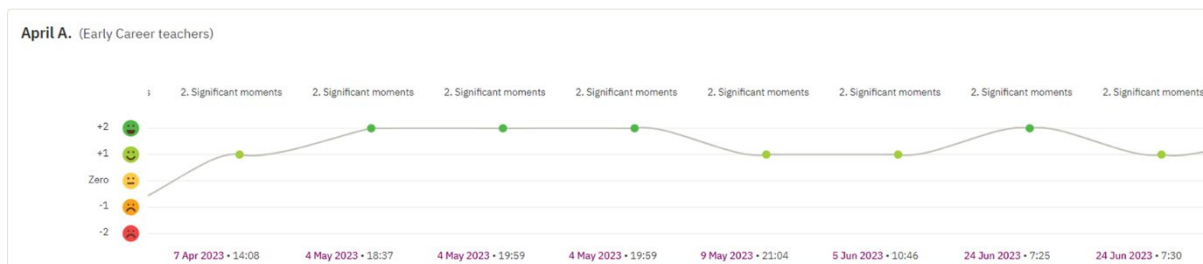
April's journey map part 3
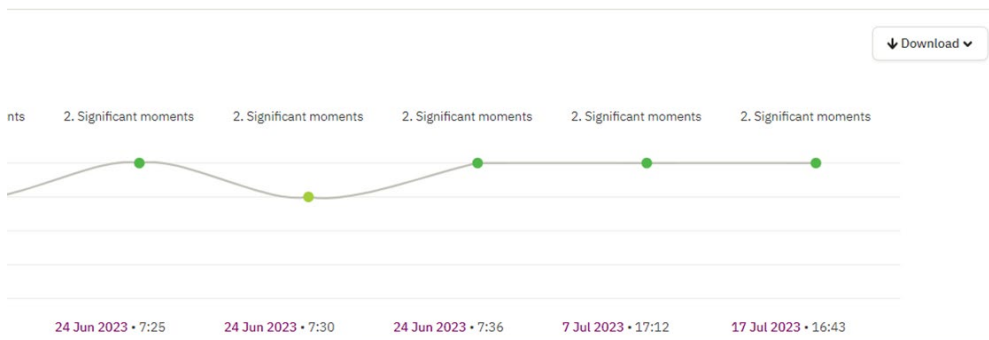
Jeffrey's journey map part 1

Jeffery's journey map part 2

Jeffery's journey map part 3

Jeffrey's journey map part 4

Jeffrey's journey map part 5

Jeffrey J. (Early Career teachers)

Ted's journey map part 1

Ted T. (Early Career teachers)

Ted's Journey map part 2

Appendix H- Emoji Tracker responses

Percentage of moments marked by each scale on the emoji tracker.

| Emoji Scale +2 | Emoji Scale +1 | Emoji Scale 0 | Emoji Scale -1 | Emoji Scale -2 |

Key

Glady's Key Moments (Mood Tracker Responses)

- Emoji scale 2
- Emoji scale 1
- Emoji Scale 0
- Emoji Scale -1
- Emoji Scale -2

2%   2%
10%
52%
34%

Sylvia's Key Moments (Mood Tracker Responses)

- Emoji scale 2
- Emoji scale 1
- Emoji Scale 0
- Emoji Scale -1
- Emoji Scale -2

0%
19%   18%
7%
56%

April's Key Moments (Mood Tracker Responses)

0%
21%
0%
47%
32%

- Emoji scale 2
- Emoji scale 1
- Emoji Scale 0
- Emoji Scale -1
- Emoji Scale -2

Jeffrey's Key Moments (Mood Tracker Responses)

7%
15%
24%
10%
44%

- Emoji scale 2
- Emoji scale 1
- Emoji Scale 0
- Emoji Scale -1
- Emoji Scale -2

Ted's Key Moments (Mood Tracker Responses)

0%
18%
0%
36%
46%

- Emoji scale 2
- Emoji scale 1
- Emoji Scale 0
- Emoji Scale -1
- Emoji Scale -2

Appendix I- Emoji Tracker and Associated Key Moments Visual Chart.

+2 😀
Being appreciated — Having fun with the children — School trips — Being praised for their work — Having time to relax and getaway — Being listened to — Seeing progress in the children's learning

+1 🙂
Positive parents' evening/ workshops — Effective lessons — Creating Resources — Preparing learning spaces

Catching up on work

Zero 😐
ECT Development — A new child arriving — Going back to school after a break — Children finding the work more challenging

-1 🙁
Lack of funding — Lack of resources to support the children — Working late — Behaviour management — Not being challenged — Unsupportive feedback

-2 ☹️
Lack of support — Feeling guilty for being off sick — Not being listened to — Workload — Management making last minute changes

Appendix J- Model to illustrate the trajectories of ECTs.

More central participation:
-Training others
-Supporting others upwards
-Helping others grow
-Leading meetings and training
-Developing and sharing school targets

Transitioning to school:
-Having discussions with mentors and other teachers
-Being observed and observing others
-Teaching
-Being supported to move up the ladder

The community of practice creates value:
-Immediate value
-Potential value
-Applied value
-Realized Value

Value

Value

Value

Value

This diagram illustrates the trajectories of Early Career teachers as they transition from Initial Teacher Training into school. The ECTs can move up and down between layers.

Increasing participation:
-Teaching
-Being observed
-Working with others
-Sharing ideas
-Collaborating
-Networking
-Building up their teacher tool kit further

From Initial teacher training into school:
-Students working together
-Developing their knowledge and understanding
-Going into school

Value

Value

Layered Growth: Early Career Teachers' Journey from Peripheral to more Central Participation.
Designed by Karen Tuzylak. Illustrated by Katie Ruby.

Appendix K- Augmented Reality Features

If you are unable to access the augmented reality features, please use the hyperlinks below or view the images for the additional content.
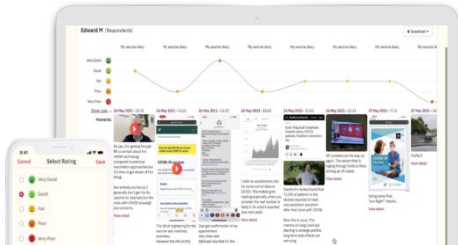
Indeemo (2017) video. https://youtu.be/NAViC2wnY-o?si=F5e_IG1KrmhEkkJR

Introduction video. https://youtu.be/y29WyYAZskY?si=lCH7oUF3lS9xrk3u

Task 1 video. https://youtu.be/CVsHqw7acHA?si=LoN97qoqjfE7GvX2

Task 2 video. https://youtu.be/Y2srTPbyzv8?si=3g5u8vQFrvTbvMCe

Task 3 video. https://youtu.be/rpUdFDdTeU8

Glady's Journey map. https://youtu.be/V_Pl3FYXMmY

Sylvia's Journey map. https://youtu.be/y2yfkJ4ZuIA

April's Journey map: https://youtu.be/1HkyllHK8T8

Jeffrey's Journey map: https://youtu.be/SbpaPuw0ZOs

Ted's Journey map: https://youtu.be/OidN7jBXjSY

Video of extracts from Ted and Sylvia. https://youtu.be/jsjWwfqg854

Video of extract from Jeffery. https://youtu.be/GJxi9j-GPYg

Video Entry by April 28th February 2023: https://youtu.be/nENqsF150cI

A video of extracts from each of the five ECTs. https://youtu.be/bOFVxGHtSPI

Glady's video. https://youtu.be/M_fVDKFWKVE

Video by Sylvia 12th February: https://youtu.be/iq4tacxh4yQ

Extracts from Gladys, Ted, Sylvia and April. https://youtu.be/-ro88A3ghX0

Jeffrey's Journey Map 10th March 2023. Image below:

Jeffrey J. (Early Career teachers)

2. Significant moments   2. Significant moments   2. Significant moments

+2 😄
+1 🙂
Zero 😐
-1 🙁
-2 😣

Moments ▲

28 Feb 2023 • 11:43

Today is a strange day. Children are off school due to the strikes so I am spending the day catching up on marking and planning 😆

View detail

10 Mar 2023 • 22:07

This week I have been struggling with the behaviour of a boy. He's been very disruptive in class and generally rude to me and other staff. While I was on PPA the cover teacher had to sent him out because of disruptive behaviour. I went to my mentor for some supper and advice on what to do with the student. She suggested that I implement a behaviour chart with the student with his specific targets and rewards and sanctions. I ended up spending the majority of my PPA planning this behaviour chart which I will implement next week. But I had no time to do actual planning in my PPA.

View detail

10 Mar 2023 • 22:10

During one of my ECT observations, a child who is very low ability managed to recite the 6 times tables (which was a massive shock to me, everyone in the class and the observer). I received excellent feedback on my observation and she has fed back to SLT to "celebrated my achievements". Overall I'm really happy with how I'm progressing as an ECT, I'm really enjoying teaching despite the many challenges that are thrown at me on a daily basis.

View detail

April's journey map 16th January. Image below:

16 Jan 2023 • 20:31

It's been an emotional return to school. Within the first week I had to make a disclosure about another member of staff which was really difficult but also the right thing to do. I've been emotional and stressed which has taken a toll on my workload. Decided to try and get back on track and keep positive this week!

View detail

16 Jan 2023 • 20:35

I was really proud of the children during advent. Although most children are not of the catholic faith, they really enjoyed learning all about how I celebrate. They particularly enjoyed building our Jesse Tree together. They were even able to tell other staff about the people they had learned about. It was one of those moments where I felt I might actually know what I'm doing!

View detail

23 Jan 2023 • 18:49

Spent a lot of time this afternoon organising groups for my first trip out with my class on Wednesday. Lots to think about including grouping children and putting them with other adults. You wouldn't think there would be so much to think about...not putting certain children together, who works well etc. It's like a seating plan that you're taking outside the classroom! Finally got there with it after lots of swapping around. Looking forward to the trip but also feeling quite anxious!

View detail

26 Jan 2023 • 18:13

Just about recovered from my first school trip. It was tiring and resulted in a headache and early night but so worth it! The children's faces and reactions to small things like being on a coach, asking questions about birds and trees and their excitement over picnic benches made it a great experience. Even the rain couldn't dampen then mood! I was shocked at how many children were not used to walking as they get driven and even carried (7 year olds!!) everywhere. I'd like to believe they were all a little more willing and independent by the end of the day 🙂

View detail

28 Feb 2

Part 1

View det

Jeffery's video 26th May. https://youtu.be/WCZDYDoZ6vA

Ted's video upload 13th January. https://youtu.be/SK2DS-1ha04

Ted's video 26th January. https://youtu.be/W01FhHAcxfs

April's upload 15th March. Image below:

2. Significant moments

+2 😀
+1 🙂 ●
Zero 😐
-1 🙁
-2 😞

Moments ▲

15 Mar 2023 • 17:01

Last night was parents evening number 2. With everything that has been happening at school it was nice to give lots of positives to parents. Some conversations were tough but they all understood and were happy that I knew their children well enough to say how we can progress. Some parents were really complimentary which made me really happy letting me know the children love being in my class and that they're happy seeing their confidence growing 😊

View detail

Ted's video 3rd February. https://youtu.be/w9_SslhG2hk

Jeffrey's Journey map 17th June. Image below:

2. Significant moments

+2	😄
+1	🙂
Zero	😐
-1	🙁
-2	😞

17 Jun 2023 · 16:08

Moments ▲

On a slightly happier note, I had my final formal observation this week. The deputy head (who is my mentor) told me that if it was still the NQT system she would be passing me off. But she said she has no reason to think I won't pass next year and complemented my teaching a lot.

It means a lot to me seeing comments like this as sometimes I don't believe in myself enough and don't think I'm a very good teacher. But when I see the observation notes it makes me feel like I'm exactly in the right job.

View detail

Extracts from Gladys and Sylvia about relationships. https://youtu.be/TNQEhTmDHRU

Glady's upload 30th June. Image below:

Q Caption & Comments   🏷 Tags   ☑ Notes   ✕

30 Jun 2023 · 13:47 (14:47)

Whilst being off ill I have realised I've not shared the big news! I'm staying in Nursery! When I was first told this I was quite disappointed. From slt discussions I was expected to move and was looking forward to changing key stages for future progression opportunities. However, I do love eyfs so much so upon my initial surprise I am now pleased to be staying. I will be working with a new partner teacher which I am looking forward to and there are going to be big changes next year. We are building a specific adapted continuous provision space for eyfs chn with send to meet their needs. This means a complete classroom revamp! I love do my current classroom but with a year of wear and tear, I'm looking forward to ripping it all out and starting again! Staying in Nursery will allow me to draw and and improve my knowledge and pedagogy from this year and share this with my partner teacher who is new to nursery. I will also be taking on the subject of re (a year early!). Staying in a year group where I am familiar with curriculum, expectations and how it runs will allow me to focus my time on this new task. I have decided to re right our current lesson plans and school vision and have agreed this with our curriculum lead and head teacher the new directions I will be taking religious education in our school. So there is definitely lots to keep my busy! I'm excited to start in September, having the new cohort of children and starting that learning process where most important through exploration, developing themselves as humans and forming their all important and unique personalities!

Rating: 🙂 +1

Gladys G. (Female BA Nursery EYFS)

Sylvia's video 11th March. https://youtu.be/fiEsPbB-TV8

Extract from Sylvia. Scan to view. https://youtu.be/4tvOt4RXCi0

Jeffrey's video extract. https://youtu.be/pw-50GPTgJg

April's video upload. https://youtu.be/Ss0FLIrO2bY

April's Journey map. https://youtu.be/1HkyllHK8T8

Sylvia and Gladys talk about collaborative learning opportunities. https://youtu.be/NJfLVp3Og3E

April's video 28th February. https://youtu.be/thBvzlNxBcc

260 of 260

Glady's concluding video. https://youtu.be/XyuHUmgqcvY

Sylvia's video 12th January. https://youtu.be/ANKtcqUEq9A

Ted's video 2nd March 2023 https://youtu.be/rSfWboOg-mQ

Sylvia's video 28th January. https://youtu.be/F3X3Vpobwvw

Extracts from Gladys and Sylvia. https://youtu.be/GOmr-wiaMfE

Extracts from Glady's, Ted and Sylvia. https://youtu.be/ONoEn2VcZHg