

**An exploration of career changers'
perceptions of the transformation
process and how they recaptured
career success**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|---|
| ABC | Authenticity, balance, challenge |
| BPS | British Psychological Society |
| CPD | Continuous professional development |
| CoP | Communities of practice |
| HE | Higher education |
| ITT | Initial teacher training |
| KCM | Kaleidoscope career model |
| LBD | Learning by doing |
| LBW | Learning by watching |
| LSI | Learning styles inventory |
| MAO | More able other |
| OCS | Objective career success |
| PCA | Protean career attitude |
| PCO | Protean career orientation |
| PGCE | Post-graduate certificate education |
| PIS | Participant information sheet |
| RP | Rich pictures |
| SCS | Subjective career success |
| STEM | Science technology engineering and maths (teachers) |
| TA | Thematic analysis |
| TLT | Transformative learning theory |
| ZPD | Zone of proximal development |

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ABSTRACT

Research suggests that reasons for selecting, remaining in or changing career have undergone radical change over the last fifty years (Baruch, 2004). These patterns are said to be the result of changes in the ways individuals think about their career (Hall, 1996; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Maineiro & Sullivan, 2005) which have led them to feel more at ease with boundary crossing (Arthur, 2014).

To date, however, complex career change i.e. switching from one occupation to another (Parnes, 1954) has received relatively little attention (Jiang et al, 2019). There have been continued calls (e.g. Sullivan & Ariss, 2019) for more research in this area in order to understand the challenges associated with the transition process, particularly in relation to status loss i.e. becoming a novice having previously being an expert (Hoeksel et al, 2019). In addition, whilst career success literature is abundant (e.g. Heslin, 2005; Shultz et al, 2019) studies offering insights into ‘how’ it is achieved are sparse (Carless & Arnup, 2010). Calls for research in this area focus on the need to consider the role of learning (e.g. Hunter, 2019) especially during the so-called ‘honeymoon’ period and upto five years post-change (Zhou et al, 2017). This pattern continues in the learning literature too where, despite criticisms of formal learning (e.g. Boud, 1999; Wang et al, 2013), research looking at the use and value of informal learning continues to be scarce (e.g. Hoeksel et al, 2019). Furthermore, rather than looking at what learning needs complex career changers have (Anderson et al, 2014), ‘what works’ and why it is valued (e.g. Brown, 2015; Logan et al, 2016) or links between learning activities and longer-term outcomes (Tack et al, 2018; MacPhail et al, 2019), existing learning research is narrowly focused on ‘silos’ or specific types/methods of learning (Cerasoli et al, 2018).

To address these gaps in current knowledge and to respond to calls for research which reflects the individual’s voice (Dries & Verbruggen, 2011; Arthur et al, 2005) this study adopted a qualitative approach. In addition, given the challenge of collecting tacit data, especially in relation to complex and/or emotional experiences such as career change, multiple methods were judged to be beneficial (King, 2004); in this case 18 complex career changers (teachers turned teacher-educators, healthcare practitioners turned academics, and

practitioners turned teachers) took part in semi-structured interviews and completed Rich Pictures (Bell & Morse, 2013b).

Thematic analysis of the data revealed themes across three main domains: 'occupational re-orientation', 'recapturing success', and 'incremental learning'. Findings show that, whilst a risky and destabilising experience, for individuals in this study complex change was a restorative experience i.e. enabled them to get closer to what had become important to them.

Recapturing career success, however, was subject to a complex interplay between transition stage (early or later), related psychological factors (e.g. risk, trust), and choice of learning method(s).

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.”

— *Confucius*

1.1 RESEARCH FOCUS

Occupational Psychology has contributed significantly to our understanding of working life. It is, however, a diverse field and covers considerable ground, including – but not limited to – recruitment and selection; organisational analysis, design and culture; employee relations; training and development; identity, values and motivation; stress, coping and well-being; performance management, pay and success; and career guidance, change and development, including retirement.

This thesis focuses on three interconnected areas of Occupational Psychology – those of career change, career success and learning – and the ambiguities inherent in all of them (Gunz & Heslin, 2005). More specifically it looks at complex career changers moving into the education sector; their perceptions and experiences of transformation, and their use of informal learning to recapture career success. It also responds to both Clarke's (2013) call for more research given that it "is a fertile field that in recent years has been largely ignored" (p. 699) and Hall and Mirvis' (1995a) point that "research will have to match the nature of its subject: rapidly changing, fast learning and complex" (p. 349). Byington et al's (2019) systematic review, for instance, shows that new knowledge relating to 'career' is clustered around just five topics (attitudes and motivation; occupational selection; career orientation; work-family; and mentoring), with most attention being given to career adaptability, success and satisfaction, curiosity, personality and the contemporary career models (protean and boundaryless).

Existing research suggests that reasons for selecting, remaining in or changing career have undergone radical change over the last fifty years (Baruch, 2004). Contemporary models of career – protean (Hall, 1996), boundaryless (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), kaleidoscope (Maineiro & Sullivan, 2005) – argue that individuals now have far greater freedom to change career (Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Hall et al, 2018), are motivated by different career drivers e.g. authenticity, balance, challenge (Mainiero & Gibson, 2018), and are also more at ease with crossing organisational and occupational boundaries (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2012; Arthur, 2014).

Career mobility – boundary crossing (Inkson, 2006) – is not confined to only one type of change however and literature suggests that this can impact on whether change is undertaken

as well as an individual's experiences of the change process. For example, simple career change (Parnes, 1954) i.e. where individuals remain within their existing occupation but change job roles or organisations, is relatively commonplace (Higgins, 2001) and given the ability to transfer prior knowledge, skills and experience (Dlouhy & Biemann, 2018), creates little psychological disruption. On the other hand, complex career change (Parnes, 1954) – where individuals make “a more dramatic switch to a new area of work” (Wang & Wanberg, 2017, p. 556) i.e. move from one occupation to another (e.g. Accountant to Teacher) – is risky (Dlouhy & Biemann, 2018; Cortes & Gallipoli, 2018) and “cognitively taxing” (Murray et al, 2014b, p. 440). To date, however, and despite being an important and growing phenomenon, complex career change has received relatively little attention (Carless & Arnup, 2010; Jiang et al, 2019) compared with simple career change. Indeed, literature has (e.g. Guan et al, 2019; Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001; Ibarra, 2004) and continues to call (Ahn et al, 2017; Shultz et al, 2019) for more research to understand career changers' motivations and the complexity of the process e.g. Sullivan and Ariss' (2019) recent review of over 200 publications highlights that little research has looked at transition from expert in one occupation to novice in a different occupation. More particularly, as highlighted by Ibarra (2004) there is little explanation of what happens 'within' the transformation process i.e. what career changers are doing or experiencing during and after transition.

Moreover, whilst success is multi-faceted i.e. can be objective (e.g. *upward mobility, pay rise, status, recognition from others*), subjective (e.g. *confidence, satisfaction, self-efficacy, pride*) or relate to the achievement of competence (e.g. Hall & Chandler, 2005; Heslin, 2005; Ng et al, 2005; De Vos et al, 2011; Solowiej, 2014; Guan et al, 2019; Shultz et al, 2019) research relating to 'how' it is achieved, particularly in relation to career change, is sparse (Carless & Arnup, 2010). Calls for research in this area (e.g. Breeden, 1993; Vigoda-Gadot et al, 2010) – whilst acknowledging its importance – highlight the need to look beyond person-environment fit and consider a broader range of antecedents including the role of learning (e.g. Hoeksel et al, 2019; Brown, 2015; Anderson et al, 2014; Boyd & Harris, 2010; Logan et al, 2016; Hunter, 2019) and social capital (e.g. Heslin, 2003; Ng et al, 2005; Zhou et al, 2016; Kim & Beehr, 2017). A recent UK-based longitudinal study by Zhou et al (2017), however, suggests that complex career change continues to receive little attention, particularly in terms of how such a disruptive event affects career success during both the so-called 'honeymoon' period and upto five years post-change.

This same pattern continues in relation to learning where, as Hobfoll (2011) claims, “gain spirals have received considerably less attention than loss spirals, because psychologists have often been interested in deviancy and psychopathology” (p. 118); a reality which also applies to interest taken in complex career changers. Furthermore, research that has been undertaken has concentrated on (i.e. limits its scope to) individual ‘silos’ or types/methods of learning – whether formal e.g. *training programmes and qualifications* (Clarke, 2004; Cerasoli et al, 2018) or informal e.g. *induction, mentoring, networking* – rather than looking more broadly at ‘what works’ i.e. investigating use of learning per se and the value of particular methods. Recent literature (e.g. MacPhail et al, 2019; Ping et al, 2018) argues that individuals changing occupation are under-prepared and that further research is needed in relation to informal and professional learning. In addition, literature also points to both the “marginal” (Boud, 1999, p. 9) impact of and resistance to (Wang et al, 2013) one-size-fits-all formal methods, but at the same time highlights the absence of research looking at the use and value of informal learning (e.g. Sullivan, 1999; Hoeksel et al, 2019). This is particularly the case in relation to understanding which learning strategies are effective (Williams, 2010; Fox et al, 2015), “what types of learning and development are required to achieve their goals” (Brown, 2015, p. 289), and in terms of the link between learning activities and longer-term outcomes (Tack et al, 2018; MacPhail et al, 2019) i.e. how competence develops (Markle-Sorrell & Cangelosi, 2016), and perceptions/ experiences of subsequent career success. There remains, therefore, a clear need to open up and more fully explore career changers’ learning. In particular, to gather personal insights (Lord, 2014) about transition from experts who have become novices (Hoeksel et al, 2019) in order to understand how they reframe their career (Brown, 2015), what learning needs they have (Anderson et al, 2014), and the type(s) of informal learning they use and value (Boyd & Harris, 2010; Logan et al, 2016; Hunter, 2019) in their attempts to recapture career success.

Finally, recent research (e.g. Akkermans et al, 2018; Solowiej, 2014; Arthur et al, 2005; Gunz & Heslin, 2005) has also called for exploratory research to reflect the individual’s ‘voice’ (Dries & Verbruggen, 2011) and to look at “what employees want ... how people in different career contexts conceptualise(d) their career success and ... (adopt) more qualitative methods” (Heslin, 2005, p. 117) because of the greater insights (Willig 2001; Cassell & Symon, 2011; Holloway & Todres, 2003) into the lived experience that it provides. Furthermore, making use of innovative methods such as ‘rich pictures’ (Bell & Morse, 2013a; 2013b) is viewed as a major strength (Booton, 2018) since it enables crystallisation (Tracy, 2010) and, therefore, better reflects the complexity of phenomena being studied (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015; Hellman, 2017).

I.2 AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on a review of the literature and identifying a number of clear gaps in existing literature relating to career change, career success and learning, the following **research questions** are asked:

AIM A: To explore career changers' perceptions of the transformation process

1. Why do individuals choose to change occupation and what are their perceptions of the transformation process?
2. What do career changers need in order to make a successful occupational change?

AIM B: To explore how career changers recapture career success following a change of occupation

3. How do career changers understand career success in their new occupation?
4. What use do career changers make of informal learning to recapture career success?
5. What factors help and hinder career changers in recapturing career success?

I.3 THESIS STRUCTURE

A critical literature review which provides the rationale for this research, and aims to place the focus of this thesis into context, appears across Chapters 2-4. It begins by critically reviewing what is currently understood in relation to the changed nature of career and the extent to which this applies to career changers. This is followed by a review of literature on career change: what it is, who does it, the processes involved and the potential impact. The next section looks at how career changers become successful – it defines success, reviews the current understanding of objective and subjective success, and considers what is known about how individuals recapture success post-complex-career change. The final section then looks at

what is currently known about how people recapture success – distinguishing between learning and development – and considers what is currently known about how far particular forms of informal learning are used and valued by complex career changers.

Chapter 5 then discusses methodological decisions and the approach taken to collect and analyse data for this study, including the research philosophy adopted, the rationale for this research, the design, sampling method, and data collection and analysis methods used.

Findings are then presented across Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Chapter 6 interprets findings in relation to the career change process (occupational re-orientation) and associated psychological responses/ needs and relates to Aim A. Chapter 7 interprets findings relating to Aim B, Research questions 3 and 4 i.e. career changers' definitions and experiences of career success – both in their previous occupation but particularly in terms of their new occupation, and Chapter 8 interprets findings relating Aim B, Research question 5 i.e. how career changers learn and develop in order to recapture career success.

Finally, Chapter 9 discusses how far the findings of this research meet the aims and answer the research questions raised in this thesis and compare/contrast these with existing literature. Original contributions are also summarised in this chapter particularly in terms of how they challenge, add to and extend existing scholarship.

Chapter 2

Literature Review – CAREER CHANGE

“I’ve learned that making a living is not the
same thing as making a life”

— *Maya Angelou*

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to achieve two things: initially to provide a brief summary of what the term ‘career’ means and how it has developed, but the main focus is to synthesise and highlight gaps in current knowledge relating to career change.

2.2 THE CHALLENGE OF GAINING CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The term ‘career’ can be traced back to the 16th century Provençal word (dictionary.com, 2018) ‘carrera’ (to carry) – itself based on the Latin ‘carrāria’ (via road) and ‘carr’ (wagon) – the ‘movement’ connotation being quite appropriate given both historical and contemporary expectations of individuals travelling to where work is available (Kirk, 2016).

The idea of individuals ‘having a career’, however, did not appear in literature until the 1930s when Hughes (1937) defined it as a “person’s sequence of role and realized status and office” (p. 404). By the late 1960s, Super (1957) was suggesting that it would be better thought of as a process – exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline – that develops over time, although some continued to frame it in structural terms (e.g. Wilensky, 1961) i.e. as a stabilising influence, where societal status quo could be maintained because of peoples’ need to earn money and provide for their family. By the 1970s Sullivan and Baruch’s (2009) claim that “careers do not occur in a vacuum” (p. 1543) became even clearer. Based on weakened employer-employee ties that had been eroded during a time of global economic uncertainty and a sharp rise in unemployment, looser and more person-focused definitions began to emerge. Hall (1976), for example, defined career as “the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of a person’s life” (p. 4) whilst Van Maanen and Schein’s (1977) spoke of it being “a series of separate but related experiences and adventures through which a person passes during a lifetime” (p. 31). All of which highlights the situated nature of ‘career’ in that what constitutes a career at a particular point in time may not continue to be so at a later time.

2.3 THE CHANGING NATURE OF ‘CAREER’

Just as the search for a satisfactory definition of career has been a challenge, explaining the dynamic and evolving nature of career is also contested. One reason for this lies in the marked shift in the employer-employee relationship, both in terms of its longevity and its character i.e. the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989; 1996). This led Baruch (2004) to question the extent to which the ‘traditional’ career has been replaced by a ‘new deal’.

Table 1: Baruch’s (2004) new career ‘deal’

| Aspect | Traditional ‘deal’ | Transformed ‘deal’ |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Environment characteristic | Stability | Dynamism |
| Career choice being made | Once at an early career age | Repeated, sometimes cyclical at different age stages |
| Main career responsibility lies with | Organization | Individual |
| Career horizon (workplace) | One organization | Several organizations |
| Scope of change | Incremental | Transformational |
| Employer expects/employee gives | Loyalty and commitment | Long time working hours |
| Employer gives/employee expects | Job security | Investment in employability |
| Progress criteria | Advancement: according to tenure | Advancement: results/ knowledge |
| Success means | Winning the tournament i.e. upward progress | Inner feeling of achievement |
| Training | Formal programmes, generalist | On-the-job, company specific |
| Essence of career direction | Linear | Multidirectional |

2.3.1 THE TRADITIONAL CAREER

The 'traditional' career (Arthur et al, 2005; Clarke, 2013; Baruch & Vardi, 2016) has existed for many centuries and can be characterised as a long-term and stable relationship: not between individuals but between employee and employer. As such it revolves around the extent to which the individual is prepared to orient their aspirations to fit with the needs and strategic direction of the organisation (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). It typically involves spending long periods of time with the same employer i.e. rarely making external job moves, and developing expertise across different aspects of the business, for some also potentially involving taking on managerial responsibilities (Hall & Mirvis, 1995b).

As a linear approach to career development it is based on the organisation being a self-contained "career system" (Hall, 1976, p. xi) which assumes control for the course a career takes and the types of job roles available. Implicit in this relationship is the assumption that the individual will make measurable progress and, in return for demonstrating loyalty and commitment, the organisation will provide opportunities for advancement (Jans, 1989) as well as material rewards i.e. salary increases, bonuses etc (Ng & Feldman, 2010). Some argue that this reveals a darker 'truth'; one of asymmetry and dependency (Dawson, 2003) i.e. in exchange for pay individuals are indebted and more easily controlled. This view of a "culture of propriety" (Handy, 1991, p. 15) is nothing new, however, being firmly rooted in the industrial era when individuals were said to have "their life-plan to a large extent imposed ... (and) individual stages ... specified in advance" (Mannheim, 1940, p. 57). More recently, Simosi et al (2015) argued that the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis put additional pressure on the traditional career, with workers who may have formerly looked forward to continued career progression – whether in the public or private sector – being faced with more limited opportunities. For some this resulted in underemployment and/or curtailed advancement however, for others, it meant unemployment (Blustein et al, 2013) as a result of corporate downsizing; in both situations a change in individual career 'investment' was evident – for example, more voluntary job moves (Stumpf, 2014) and less formal training and development provision inside organisations and more informal support from mentors and managers (Ng & Feldman, 2014) and reduced worker well-being (Byington et al, 2019).

All of this may paint quite a negative or restrictive picture of the traditional career, and one which few would be motivated to pursue. A recent analysis of job turnover (Clarke, 2013), however, showed that contrary to claims that "the (traditional) career is dead" (Hall, 1996, p. 8) for some individuals, advancing within a single organisation remains the preferred option i.e.

the traditional career is still “alive and well” (Hall & Las Heras, 2009, p. 182). Having said this, it may be that what is defined as ‘traditional’ has changed and become less constricted, for instance Brousseau et al (1996) point to a continuum of traditional careers i.e. from most (linear; expert) to least (spiral; transitory) traditional. The ‘Spiral Career’, for example, involves lateral rather than linear advancement, shorter committed periods within each organisation/role and a more interdependent employee-employer relationship.

2.3.2 THE CONTEMPORARY CAREER

Despite its continued attractiveness for some, this ‘traditional’ approach is not the only way ‘career’ has been conceptualised. During the 1960s the narrative began to be questioned; particularly in light of interest in the human potential movement and the trend for larger organisations to downsize or outsource. At the same time a breakdown in traditional work ties also began to occur and, by the 1980s, commentators such as Handy (1984) spoke of the need to re-think the ‘future of work’; from stable and secure to being fluid.

These changes were also accompanied by a shift in the ‘psychological contract’ (Argyris, 1960), where “short-term and monetizable” (Rousseau, 1989, p. 137) work became more commonplace i.e. being employed by multiple employers, periods of self-employment and the potential need to re-train/change occupation. In turn, this also meant that individuals now assumed greater responsibility for career development (Fouarge et al, 2012).

This has not applied to only one particular demographic e.g. semi- and low-skilled workers either. Whilst initially perceived as affecting the older segment of the workforce (Bal & Smit, 2012), younger workers now also face the prospect of short-term, intermittent contracts, regular changes in employer and the possibility of needing to re-qualify. Likewise, the growth of agency-working (Fleming, 2017) has not been limited to only manual, semi-skilled and non-professional jobs: contractual changes for doctors and nurses have become commonplace (McCabe & Sambrook, 2012; Peate, 2013; Doctors and Dentists Review Board, 2018) and Solicitors – once viewed as having highly secure profession – now face the prospect of redundancy (Susskind & Susskind, 2015; FT, 2016; Deloitte, 2017).

These changes have gained a lot of attention within occupational psychology and wider academic management literature. Hall and Moss (1998), for instance, suggested that the traditional career was becoming a myth; uncommon outside of very large global enterprises. Fast forward twenty years and whilst ‘traditional’, long-term contracts clearly do still exist (e.g.

Hall & Las Heras, 2009) they are far less commonplace. Indeed, technological advances coupled with the rise of multi-nationals mean that today's 'career developer' has to be far more adaptable as well as comfortable with – or at least accepting of – change and uncertainty. Career-mobility rather than stability, then, are the new norms (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2012); a position that aligns with Collin and Young's (2000) view that careers have to now be more "flexible and elastic, enabling (them) to adapt well to a variety of functions and contexts" (p. 1).

2.4 WHAT IS CAREER CHANGE?

Implicit in this new career 'deal' is the idea of mobility, and one of the first to discuss the concept was Parnes (1954); distinguishing between 'simple' and 'complex' change. 'Simple' career change is where an individual is attached to a particular occupation and employer, and moves geographically and/or from organisation to organisation; but always within the same occupation e.g. sales with organisation x, then organisation y. By contrast, 'complex' career change involves "an occupational shift ... that involves movement from one category to another" (p. 27). The term occupation, according to Dlouhy and Biemann (2018), relates to a job "whose main tasks and responsibilities have a high degree of similarity and which require a similar skill" (p. 87). In other words, the individual moves from one occupation to another, with or without the need to switch organisation e.g. from manager with organisation x to nurse with organisation y, or from administrator to training officer in organisation z.

A few decades later Rhodes and Doering (1983; 1993) defined career change as "movement to a new occupation that is not part of a typical career progression" (p. 631); making the point that occupational change is quite distinct from the more commonplace job change. More usefully still, Breedon (1993), Neal (1999) and Feldman and Ng (2007) have clarified that whilst job change is likely to involve carrying out similar day-to-day duties and routines – with any mobility being part of an accepted career path – changing occupation involves substantial change in work tasks, activities and responsibilities as well as significant investment in retraining given that prior occupational knowledge and skills may not be transferable. As the focus of this thesis this complex type of career change is important to understand because of its influence on individuals' working and personal lives. Its complexity requires individuals to make both modest (e.g. travel to work time) and significant (e.g. nature of work such as working with adults rather than children, or in a lecture theatre rather than an operating

theatre) adjustments and these can destabilise, disorient and create psychological discomfort (e.g. Mezirow, 1997; Le Pine et al, 2004; Hobfoll, 1989; 2011; Murray et al, 2014a).

To this end, there have been ongoing calls for more research in the field in order to better understand the motivations, processes, impact and developmental needs resulting from making such a considerable change. Sullivan (1999), for example, called for more empirical work to understand the complexity of careers and, more particularly, to “examine the effectiveness of organisational programs and newer learning methods that focus on developing skills needed for success in non-traditional career paths” (p. 475) and Ackerman-Anderson and Anderson (2001, p. 39) stated that occupational change is “the least understood and most complex type of change”. Despite this, however, most change research to date has not looked at complex change but has focused, instead, on simple career change (Higgins, 2001). Ibarra (2004) also recommended a range of new research activity including exploring how career changers identify their new occupation, how they need to be/are socialised, how their professional identities are transformed and what “provides propulsion in this process” (p. 19). Since then, however, little has been done – Ibarra herself choosing to focus quite narrowly on identity as part of the career change process (2004, 2005a, 2005b; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010) – and there is therefore a significant gap in our understanding of the process. In addition, Sullivan and Ariss’ (2019) recent review of over 200 publications found that notwithstanding the abundance of studies, models and theoretical positions, little research has looked at downward transition i.e. when individuals change occupation and re-start at the bottom of the career ladder such as changing occupation from being a senior school leader (Teacher) to teacher educator, or a nurse practitioner to academic, or accountant to high school teacher. Indeed, much of the output since the late 1990s has focused on either extending or refuting career change models (see chapter 2.5) i.e. explaining the nature of career, rather than extending understanding of complex career change.

2.5 WHY PEOPLE CHANGE CAREER: MOTIVATIONS AND MODELS

Given the complexity of career change understanding motivation is key. Lawrence (1983) stated that “people rarely gave a single reason or simple set of reasons to explain why they made the change; rather, they described it as an evolution occurring over time” (p. 45) whilst Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) argue that “such life-changing decisions are rarely whimsical they are worthy of closer attention” (p. 96). Understanding of complex career

changer motivation remains unclear (Ahn et al, 2017; Shultz et al, 2019), however, and is therefore a focus of the current study.

2.5.1 MOTIVATION – INTRINSIC OR EXTRINSIC

Motivation theories relating to career change argue that career changers have largely intrinsic (internal) drives which can include one or more of a wide range of factors including lifestyle, family-friendly, sense of purpose (Wilkins, 2017; Ahn et al, 2017). Research that has explored this (e.g. Price, 2019; Evans, 2018; Wilkins, 2017; Varadharajan et al, 2017; 2018; 2019; Kim & Yang, 2017; Holme et al, 2016; Hunter-Johnson, 2015; Wagner & Imanuel-Noy, 2014; Laming & Horne, 2013; Richardson & Watt, 2006) found that having a ‘mission’ or long-held interest in making a social contribution and more widely sharing specialist knowledge were the most prominent drivers.

Career change research has also distinguished between intrinsic and altruistic motivation. Wagner and Imanuel-Noy’s (2014) survey of second-career teachers, for instance, found three main reasons for changing career: altruistic (i.e. to help children, serve society), intrinsic (spiritual, pleasure, realisation, creativity), and extrinsic motives (i.e. social status, expertise, social mobility). For most, however, the primary motivator revolved around intrinsic motives such as it being a ‘dream come true’ rather than practical reasons such as fitting around a changed home/family situation. However, research has also shown that career changers make conscious and deliberate decisions (Varadharajan et al, 2018; 2019) based on wanting a career which enables them to more fully utilise their authentic self and not just contribute towards others’ success.

The extent to which push (e.g. no longer enjoying the job, lack of occupation fit, work stress/pressure) or pull (e.g. sense of purpose, improved well-being) factors are sufficient to motivate complex career change remains contentious however. Dlouhy and Biemann (2018), for example, argue that ‘path dependence’ (i.e. human capital investment in an existing occupation and the challenge of becoming established in a new career) inhibits complex change and that those who do take the risk generally do so within the same occupational ‘class’ i.e. professional (e.g. HR Manager) to professional (e.g. Teacher). Lack of transferability of prior knowledge and skills to a new occupation is also said to increase these ‘change costs’ (Cortes & Gallipoli, 2018) particularly in terms of acquiring new knowledge and skills via educational courses and occupation-specific qualifications, as well as initial and potentially significant wage reduction. Lyons et al (2015) takes issue with this low-likelihood of career change argument, however,

arguing that career mobility is now mainstream in that all types of workers have the opportunity to make a complex change; whether *upwards* (to a more highly skilled occupation), *downwards* (to a lower skilled occupation) or *laterally* (different occupations on a similar level). Whilst Kim (2013) found that skill level can prompt career change; with lower skilled individuals changing due to job insecurity and highly skilled individuals changing due to disintegration – or at least weakened – career boundaries which traditionally led them to remain in an established career.

Dissatisfaction or lack of fit (Breedem, 1993) can also contribute towards the decision to change, especially when – as argued in the social-cognitive career theory (Lent & Brown, 1996; 2006) – individuals give thought to personal capabilities, interests, potential outcomes and likelihood of achievement/success. Wolf (2019), for example, found that career changers are prepared to relinquish expert status to become a novice *if* the change aligns with or enables alignment with their goals/values, whilst most recently Weber-Handwerker et al (2020) found that complex career changers gravitate towards occupations with greater job security.

Technological advances, wage increases and easier migration processes too have influenced complex career change (Murphy & Oesch, 2018) and a surge in professional occupations has made it easier for some individuals to change occupation because of being able to potentially match prior earning in their new career. A prime example being those re-training as Teachers via the 'Teach For All' initiative (Elliot, 2018) e.g. 'Now Teach' or 'Transition to Teach' (Department for Education, 2020), where high-status, highly-paid individuals such as lawyers and accountants take a funded training course and are then fast-tracked into senior leadership roles. What this therefore illustrates is that career change motivation is not homogenous and that individual reasons for changing occupation are likely to be as complex as the transition process itself.

2.5.2 CONTEMPORARY CAREER THEORY

Another way to understand career change motivation is through the lens of contemporary career theory.

The main three are Protean, Boundaryless and Kaleidoscope although, as Sullivan and Baruch (2009) highlight in their critical analysis of career theories (see table 2), there have been several iterations since these first came to prominence.

Table 2: Summary of Sullivan and Baruch’s changed nature of career 1996-2009

| Model | Conceptualisation |
|--|--|
| Protean career (Hall, 1996) | Individuals change to accommodate changing needs of employers |
| Boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) | Multiple employers across working life is the norm (six meanings of boundaryless); dependency upon single employer ceased |
| Post-corporate career (Peiperl & Baruch, 1997) | Non-corporate recognised: small business, self-employment, short-term projects and consultancy; permanent career rather than job |
| Kaleidoscope (Maineiro & Sullivan, 2005) | Identifies 3 decision elements individuals use to choose (enter, stay or leave) a career: authenticity, balance and challenge |
| Reconceptualised protean (Briscoe & Hall, 2006) | Two dimensions emerged as most important: values-driven and self-directed career management |
| Boundaryless [updated] (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) | Recognises a range of physical and psychological motivators to change employer and interconnectivity between these dimensions |
| Protean/Boundaryless (Granrose & Baccili, 2006) | Both recognised as representing unstable and discontinuous nature of the employment relationship |
| Career profiles (Briscoe & Hall, 2006) | Combines boundaryless (physical/psychological mobility) and protean (values/self-directed career management attitudes) |
| Boundaryless perspective (Greenhaus et al, 2008) | Identifies specific components: multi-directionality; competencies and protean orientation; decision-making factors |
| Hybrid (multiple authors – ongoing) | Theory in development: suggests careers may contain traditional, protean and boundaryless elements across their working life |

2.5.2.1 THE PROTEAN CAREER

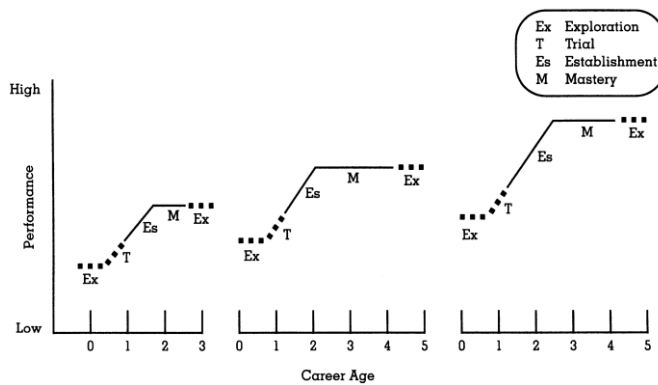
The ‘protean career’ was one of the first ‘contemporary’ models and developed out of Hall’s reflections (1976) on an increasingly ambiguous and turbulent work context; the metaphor originating from the myth of Proteus, the Greek, shape-shifting sea god (Britannica, 2018). In relation to careers it has been used to represent what has now become routine i.e. frequent changes both within and potentially between organisations/occupations.

The primary focus is agency and self-direction i.e. the individual’s power (Briscoe & Hall, 2006) to make independent career decisions based on their own values and beliefs. This is said to be built on a foundation of continuous learning, and development of the whole self which, in turn, promotes increased psychological (subjective) success and employability (Hall & Mirvis, 1995c) – as shown in Table 3 – and which are said to be of far greater value than objective measures of career success such as promotion or pay rises.

Table 3: The View from 1976 (Hall, 2004)

| Issue | Protean career | Traditional career |
|--------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Who is in charge | Person | Organisation |
| Core values | Freedom / growth | Advancement |
| Degree of mobility | High | Lower |
| Success criteria | Psychological success | Position level salary |
| Key attitudes | Work satisfaction / professional commitment | Organisational commitment |

This view is in line with Super’s (1957) theory some twenty years earlier, which argued that individuals move through a series of age-related changes in career orientation across their working lives. Hall agreed with the ‘series’ aspect of Super’s work but took issue with the



‘age’ aspect, arguing that ‘career age’ (see Figure 1) rather than age per se was important.

Figure 1: Career Stages – learning versus age (Hall, 1996)

On entering a new career individuals engage in a period of ‘exploration’, gain competence through ‘trial’ and error, and over time become ‘established’ and eventually (potentially) develop ‘mastery’. The same process then repeats itself with any subsequent career or wholesale change of occupation. However, Hall’s view was that self-awareness and career age alone would not suffice and that underpinning these is the need to develop ‘meta-competencies’ (Briscoe & Hall, 1999) i.e. to move away from a short-term performance-improvement focus to hone career identity via learning ‘how’ to learn and by becoming more adaptable. This does not necessarily occur unaided, of course, and support from others – including the wider organisation – is said to be of value; a position borne out in both Zaleska and de Menezes (2007), and Rodrigues et al (2015) research which pointed to the value of the relational aspect of learning, along with Briscoe et al’s (2012) and Li’s (2018) findings showing that support from others can facilitate well-being and success.

The protean model has not stood still, however, and conceptual precision continues to be sought (Hall et al, 2018), especially in terms of distinguishing it from others’ models which

might – on limited inspection – appear similar e.g. the boundaryless career. One recent addition, for instance, is that a protean career orientation (PCO) is predicated on having a particular ‘mindset’; one that actively evaluates personal development in terms of ‘what works’ along with a preparedness to take any required action. Other refinements include operationalising descriptors and developing the ‘protean career attitudes scale’ (PCA). Briscoe et al’s (2006) findings show that where an individual perceives themselves to be in their career/life will have an impact on what is important or striven after; a finding corroborated by De Vos and Soens’ (2008) whose research showed that agency/self-insight are correlated with perceived career success and future employability expectations.

More recently Supeli and Creed’s (2016) study of career orientation, job satisfaction and commitment showed that having a PCO was correlated with “lower levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction and higher levels of intention-to-quit” (p. 66). While other studies (e.g. Wong & Rasdi, 2015; Hirschi et al, 2017) pointed to the link between the changed global economic climate and a PCO, self-efficacy, proactivity and locus of control. The implication is that individuals have become more adaptable and clarified their career goals in order to cope with the stress associated with unstable and discontinuous employment.

2.5.2.2 THE BOUNDARYLESS CAREER

DeFillippi and Arthur’s (1994) ‘boundaryless career’ model also emerged against a backdrop of a changed global business climate. In its focus on the impact of discontinuity (Sullivan, 1999), however, rather than attributing change to individuals’ power, DeFillippi and Arthur highlighted the extent to which careers were no longer ‘bounded’ (see Table 4) but likely to experience “sequences of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of single employment settings” (p. 307).

Table 4: Comparison of Traditional and Boundaryless Careers (Sullivan, 1999)

| | Traditional career | Boundaryless career |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Employment relationship | Job security for loyalty | Employability for performance and flexibility |
| Boundaries | One or two firms | Multiple firms |
| Skills | Firm-specific | Transferable |
| Success measure | Pay, promotion, status | Psychologically meaningful work |
| Responsibility for career | Organisation | Individual |
| Training | Formal programs | On-the-job |
| Milestones | Age-related | Learning-related |

Another difference is that unlike the protean focus on self-determination, the boundaryless model views career as being about transcendence and exploration (Jiang et al, 2019); whether relating to new roles and job tasks (psychological mobility) or opportunities with new employers (physical mobility).

Over time, of course, the concept has been refined and now distinguishes ‘inter-’ (job/role moves across organisations) from ‘intra-organisational’ mobility (moves within a business). This new reality of career mobility places the ‘career actor’ at centre stage and views them as being independent career managers; the organisation, by contrast, now playing a minor role (Arthur, 1994). It has now been acknowledged, however, that absence of boundaries can lead to complex cognitive, social and emotional shifts i.e. some individuals may cope with mobility more easily/swiftly than others (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006); a recognition which is particularly relevant to this thesis i.e. wholesale boundary-crossing or occupational change.

Figure 2: Summary of Sullivan and Arthur’s (2006) boundaryless career dimensions

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|------|--|---|
| Psychological mobility | High | <p>Quadrant 3 <i>Inflated belief in own employability based on high skill levels e.g. nurses and academics. Inability to cope with changed nature of roles – due to lack of specialisation which can lead to diminished transferable knowledge/skills.</i></p> | <p>Quadrant 4 <i>Multiple job moves or ‘opting out’ altogether i.e. occupational change. Very comfortable and able to cope with change, re-learning or re-qualifying. May have qualitatively different perceptions of career success.</i></p> |
| | Low | <p>Quadrant 1 <i>Low transferability; high specialism (when employee knowledge or skills is required by a limited number or particular type of employer e.g. NASA engineer. Associated with greater unemployment vulnerability.</i></p> | <p>Quadrant 2 <i>Rapid physical change may be required but psychological adjustment may lag behind or not occur at all. Success linked to configuration of employment market i.e. only need to move because of few job competitors.</i></p> |
| | | Low | High |
| | | Physical mobility | |

The model has not been without criticism of course. It has variously been accused of being “fuzzy” (Rodrigues & Guest, 2010, p. 1157) and in need of re-labelling: Inkson (2006) suggested “boundary-crossing” (p. 326) and Rodrigues et al (2016) questioned its simplicity, arguing that most careers lie somewhere between boundaryless and embeddedness. More recently, it has been described as an oxymoron (Kost et al, 2020) and criticised for trivialising contemporary working life given its focus on individuals with an established “career history (and) occupational

identity” (King et al, 2005, p. 982) rather than those subject to the gig-economy whose employers determine mobility. On the other hand, others have questioned the extent to which it under-rates the value of boundaries in career-navigation (Gunz et al, 2007) i.e. boundaryless may not, necessarily, be better (Baruch & Vardi, 2016).

Countering these, however, Arthur (2014) argued that the metaphor remains useful, and is less a prescriptive label than an “umbrella term” (p. 632). Open acknowledgement of the need to test and refine constructs has also led to countless studies being conducted. In terms of physical mobility, for instance, Greenhaus et al (2008) updated the original model to recognise multi- rather than bi-directional mobility, and Direnzo and Greenhaus (2011) reinforced DeFillippi and Arthur’s (1994) original point about psychological mobility – that contemporary career development favours competency (knowing why, how and whom) – rather than job-specific skill acquisition. Indeed, according to Sullivan and Arthur (2006) those with higher competency levels are more likely to be mobile i.e. more experience and skill will enable career change. Core antecedents have also been examined more closely: for instance, the extent to which self-evaluation, social capital and perceived employability (Rodrigues et al, 2019) are more important than self-efficacy and proactivity (Wiernik & Kostal, 2019).

2.5.2.3 THE KALEIDOSCOPE CAREER

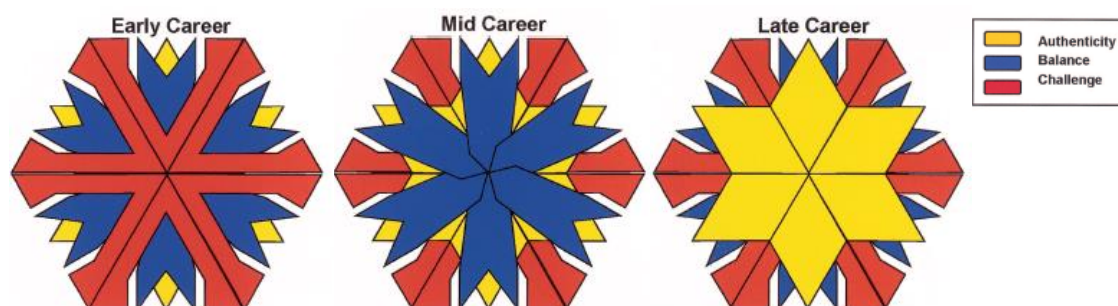
Twenty years later Mainiero and Sullivan (2005), too, used a metaphor. This time, however, a kaleidoscope – *a small cylindrical toy where the user looks through a viewing hole to see and control presentation of a myriad of shapes and colours* – was chosen to represent the nature of the contemporary career and illustrate change over time.

Prompted by reports that organisations were “losing talent as workers walk(ed) out the door to craft more reasonable, personally fulfilling careers” (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007, p. 46), the ‘kaleidoscope career model’ (KCM) was developed as a way of underpinning both the protean and boundaryless models with “cognitive reasons, or motives, that underscore career transitions” (Mainiero & Gibson, 2018, p. 362), particularly in terms of why individuals opt-out and back in to work and the link between these choices and life goals/values.

The KCM goes beyond a focus on agency, however, to recognise that individual differences will influence priorities i.e. that decisions made in early-life/career may differ quite markedly from mid- and later-career/life (Figure 3) and that career sits within a wider social context; in particular, that the ‘fit’ between work, family and personal life is a key driver (Sullivan &

Mainiero, 2007). This is said to be achieved through fine-tuning *authenticity* (the desire to live and work in way that aligns more closely with personal values), *balance* (the need to consider work in terms of how it fits with other aspects of life e.g. relationships, family, hobbies), and *challenge* i.e. developing and using a broader knowledge and skillset. These are all viewed as being equally important but do not have to be equally balanced; instead individuals can focus on one or more depending on their situation or point in life.

Figure 3: Mainiero and Sullivan’s (2005) ABCs



As with the other models the KCM has also attracted support and criticism. One key strength is that it reflects a number of respected theoretical arguments i.e. that career transition is linked to individuals’ self-efficacy and personal goals as well as expected outcomes (Lent & Brown, 1996), and to being their own ‘life design’ author (Savickas, 1997; Savickas et al, 2009). In addition, their own five-year study (2006; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007) showed that individuals were turning away from ‘traditional’ careers and objective career success towards freedom to choose and subjective career success; a finding which also reflects Heslin’s (2005) claim that success is about more than pay and conditions, and based on longer-term personal contribution and how well-matched individuals feel to their occupation/job role. This is a pattern also found in Cabrera’s (2007) research which showed that lack of authenticity and work-life balance (60% of those surveyed) were key motivators in leaving a job. August’s (2011) research, too, found that whilst each of the elements were applicable, focus changed across a working life e.g. authenticity becomes more important than challenge in late-career. In addition, when revisiting KCM ten years later Mainiero and Gibson (2018) showed that the ABC parameters continued to hold meaning but that there were clear gender differences in terms of balance and authenticity needs. For instance, balance was less important to mid-career men and authenticity was more important in later-career, whilst challenge became less important for both men and women over the length of their career.

Despite this support, the KCM has also been criticised however, particularly in terms of generalisability. Savickas et al (2009), for instance, argued that careers and individuals are far more complex than can be accounted for in such a relatively simplistic model i.e. career decisions are driven by a multiplicity of factors and not only because of the ABCs. This is also reflected in Kirk's (2016) study, where the situated nature of career is pointed to in that whilst an individual may seek to manage the ABCs in their career, they are not the only one in the relationship i.e. the needs of the organisation and its ability to respond to the individual's need/wishes should not be overlooked.

2.5.2.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE POST-CORPORATE CAREER

Clearly these theories each have their own merits and go some way to explaining the nature of contemporary careers. Equally, however, they are all criticised due to the perceived limits of their explanatory power i.e. the extent to which they accurately account for what is happening to careers and individuals. Indeed, emerging at about the same time as the Protean and Boundaryless career models, Peiperl and Baruch (1997) put forward the 'post-corporate career' model which distinguished between corporate (large organisations) and non-corporate careers (small businesses, self-employment, short-term contracts, consultancy work). As with the other three this model acknowledged the impact of economic upheaval on individuals' aspirations, expectations and decisions. It also pointed to the demise of traditional career paths and deep development of expertise; in its place, the rise in horizontal structures where generalising rather specialising is encouraged based on equipping individuals to more easily respond to fast-paced change.

However, Baruch and Peiperl (2000) also questioned the extent to which this post-corporate career 'reality' worked for most individuals, arguing that whilst highly skilled individuals and, especially those without family ties, might 'up sticks' and go to where an organisation wanted to use their talent, non-professional, semi-skilled and manual workers who were less- or unable to 'flex' would be unlikely to find these changes appealing. Indeed, more recently Baruch and Vardi (2016) suggested that the rise of entrepreneurship was largely a forced change i.e. that faced with unemployment or the need to make money, most individuals would attempt to set up their own business, even if this was simply sub-contracting on a self-employed basis for their previous employers. Their point is that career theories which glorify increased freedom and choice are ignoring the realities and preferences of the vast majority of workers, particularly those who prefer certainty and stability.

This therefore raises a question about how far what constitutes ‘career’ for one type of worker is the same for another. For instance, those entering professional careers (i.e. graduate occupations or those requiring professional qualifications and training) are likely to have different motivations and experiences, and therefore think about ‘career’ quite differently to their non-professional, skilled and manual counterparts. Furthermore, as numerous researchers have pointed out (e.g. Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Inkson et al, 2010; Gubler et al, 2014), how far concepts such as agency – which many models emphasise as a key component of the contemporary career – are important to or part of the employment dynamic for all types of worker is unclear e.g. those who are part of the ‘gig economy’ (Healy et al, 2017) including zero-hour contracts (Grady, 2017; ACAS, 2020). Indeed, recent studies (e.g. Stengard et al, 2017; Dlouhy & Biemann, 2018) have supported Aronsson and Goransson’s (1999) ‘locked in’ argument i.e. that an individual’s perception of not being in control of their employment choices leads them to give up on any attempts to change career.

Having said this, research now suggests that the number of people changing occupation is on the increase. Previous research (e.g. Markey & Parks, 1989; Schniper, 2005) had argued that 60% of complex career changers were under the age of 35, in the main because of the reluctance of those in established careers to relinquish expert power, pay and status, although sharp pay cuts and slow progress in regaining senior/expert pay levels also played a part. The role of age as an inhibitor has been called into question more recently however (e.g. Backman & Karlsson, 2020; O’Bar, 2019) with data showing that occupational mobility has steadily risen since the 1990s and is undertaken by an increasingly older segment of the population. Kreisberg (2015), for example, found that circa 2 million Americans aged 45-65 changed occupation in 2011-12. More recently, Forsythe’s (2019) cross-sectional analysis of employment in US households (1994-2016) showed that complex career change is now undertaken in mid-career and that whilst this group might make fewer moves they are of greater magnitude. The lack of UK research focusing on this group, however, presents a significant gap in understanding the contemporary careers landscape. Indeed, Shultz et al’s (2019) study of older career changers pointed out that while research exists, more dramatic (i.e. complex change), remains under-researched and knowledge relating to the impact of both attempted and successful career change is “sparse” (p. 99).

2.5.2.5 THE NEW REALITY – A HYBRID CAREER?

Despite the clear evidence that complex career change is now undertaken by more individuals and particularly those who are in later career stages, whether these individuals want to

continue to have the freedoms associated with contemporary career models or prefer to rebuild their career along the lines of the traditional model is less clear.

Indeed, in recognition of the contingent nature of career an alternative model has emerged. Rather than highlighting the distinctiveness of traditional and contemporary explanations of a 'career' the 'hybrid' model (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Baruch & Vardi, 2016) advances the argument that it can be multi-dimensional i.e. influenced by both *dispositional* (e.g. personality, career identity, changes in need and/or motivation to work, changes in outlook on work) and *situational* factors (e.g. work offered and/or available, occupational requirements, organisational change – size, location etc).

In other words, instead of offering an 'either-or' position the 'hybrid' model (Gander et al, 2019) argues that traditional and contemporary models are not mutually exclusive and that individuals may, at times, be motivated by one or combination of facets from both traditional and contemporary models; the traditional model may appeal during the established stages of a career whereas contemporary models may appeal in later career stages if individuals feel they have achieved all they can in that particular occupation and seek to change career. In addition, it also recognises the contribution of Granrose and Baccili (2006) who suggested that protean and boundaryless models could be merged in order to account, more fully, for the unstable and discontinuous nature of the employment relationship; a position also taken in Briscoe and Hall's (2006) 'career profiles' model. It also aligns with both Clarke's (2013) and Tomlinson et al's (2017) research which argued that neither the traditional or the contemporary necessarily 'fits all' and that a more flexible model is needed.

Finally, the hybrid model recognises that whilst agency (protean model) and mobility (boundaryless model) may be important to some, for others they are not and therefore contemporary careers should be thought of as 'individual differences' (McElroy & Weng, 2016) rather than as the state of play for everyone. This therefore raises the question of whether complex career changers are motivated by contemporary considerations (i.e. agency, mobility, and/or authenticity, balance and challenge) or traditional career trajectories or a combination of the two such as wanting to be mobile in order to achieve a life/career goal and then reverting to pursuing upward mobility.

What stands out across all of these models, then, is that the process of career change cannot easily or simply be explained by one single model or theory. Rather, career change – and

particularly ‘complex’ career change – needs to be seen as multi-dimensional in that it is not confined merely to a series of steps or stages that each individual moves through – whether serially or iteratively – but is comprised of mini-processes within each sub-stage of the transition process as a whole. This therefore means that further research would be useful in order to both understand these sub-processes (e.g. identity change, competency development) and to better appreciate the realities as well as the theoretical bases of career change.

2.6 THE PROCESS OF CAREER CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT

Whilst motivations and theoretical models’ explanations of the potential underlying reasons for career change differ there is considerable overlap in relation to accounts of the process of change and the impact that this can have on individuals i.e. the need to come to terms with changes to their work/professional identity the associated stress.

2.6.1 CHANGE MODELS AND CAREER CHANGE

One of the earliest change models was developed by Lewin (Burnes, 2020). Simple and easy to understand, it comprises three steps (McGarry et al, 2012; Burnes, 2020): *unfreezing* (recognising the need for change, assessing level of change required, thinking about and starting to change, experiencing destabilisation, old behaviours are discarded), *moving* (taking action to change or work towards changing behaviour) and *refreezing* (formalising changes, re-establishing equilibrium i.e. returning to a stable state, establishing new routines/habits, integration of new behaviours into older, established behaviours). Despite not having been developed to explain career change it nevertheless shines a light on the process because of its fundamental assertion that change is both constant and dynamic (Cummings et al, 2016). In studying nurse-to-nurse educator career changers, for instance, Hill and Macgregor (1998) argued that “any transition process appears to have three identifiable phases that can be documented, namely those of ‘challenge’, ‘confusion’ and ‘adaptation’” (p. 190). On the other hand Lewin’s model has been criticised for being overly simplistic and linear, although Burnes (2020) dismissed these as misunderstandings arguing that whilst it is a simple model it comprises numerous iterative sub-processes; each step affected by a multiplicity of ‘driving’ and ‘restraining’ forces.

The idea of a change as a circular process is also acknowledged in Super’s (1980) concept of ‘recycling’ where individuals return and re-work through stages previously completed. Whilst

some theories argue that career development is linear i.e. that what happens later in an individual's career is based on early stages (e.g. Schein, 1978; Greenhaus, 1987), Super' (1980) life span, life space approach argued that individuals have multiple 'decision points' and that within each life stage they will move through a process of exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. The decision to stay, move on or change is the product of a variety of personal (e.g. personality, self-awareness, intelligence, values) and situational (e.g. socio-economic factors such as family and employment conditions) factors. This iterative process is supported in Smart and Peterson's (1997) study of 226 Australian mid-life career changers who were either contemplating change, choosing a new field, implementing a change or having made the change, and which found that those in the early stage of career change (contemplation/choosing) were more concerned with exploration. The implication here then is that career change is likely to not only result in something new or different, but can also be about recapturing or recreating a particular experience e.g. a sense of balance or satisfaction.

Models specifically relating to career change do exist however as summarised in table 5.

Table 5: Career change process models

| Model | Stages | Conceptualisation |
|---|---------------|--|
| Hind (2005) applied Janssen's 'four roomed apartment of change model' | 4 | contentment – denial when change starts to happen – confusion and psychological conflict during transition – renewal or inspiration at the start of the new endeavour |
| Lawrence (1983) | 3 | re-assessment (thinking through options and weighing up decisions to remain or move) – transition (re-qualifying) – socialisation (orienting to the new job role/context) |
| Dela Cruz et al (2013) explored second-career nurses | 3 | moving in (setting expectations for their new occupation) – moving through (assimilating culture, values, norms, rules and routines, sharing knowledge, building proficiency, observing role models) – moving out (strengthening nurse identity, putting learning into practice, trying out aspects of new professional role) |
| Schoening (2013) Nurse Educator Transition (NET) model of career change | 4 | argued that established practitioners lack preparation for teaching and adopt a trial-and-error approach to learning: anticipation/expectation – disorientation – information seeking – identity formation |
| Kemp & Borders (2017) 'dream pursuit' model | 5 | revelation (declaring the dream, expressing intention) – inciting action (readiness for change, wheels in motion, breaking out of comfort zone, overcoming fear) – development (planning and implementation, stress, resilience needed, doubt) – maintenance (significant progress; living out the dream; low control over environment) – evolution (dreams/specific activities change) |

Each of these models presents a similar picture of the career change process: thinking about it, doing it, settling into the new occupation. As highlighted by Ibarra (2004), however, there is little explanation of what happens 'within' each stage i.e. what career changers are doing or experiencing during and after transition. Her recommendation being that future research should focus on "the support of guiding figures" and activities relating to the "ease and speed of the transition process" (pp. 14-15). Indeed, Bandow et al's (2007) research of individuals moving into academia from non-academic backgrounds (i.e. commerce/industry) argued that despite having different developmental needs career literature generally focuses on change antecedents rather than exploring their adjustment/initial development. This research deficit is also picked up by Wilson et al (2014) whose research argued that complex career change is little understood, especially in terms of subsequent professional development, and that in-depth research was needed in order to better understand the phenomenon and to enable greater support to be given career changers. This is a position reiterated by Frank (2015) who added that the change process "doesn't end with orientation ... (career changers) need continuing education to maintain competency" (p. 9) and is the focus of the current study.

2.6.2 CHANGING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

The process of career change is clearly complex. For Ibarra (2004), career transition is the "process of simultaneously leaving one thing without having left it" (p. 10); implicit in this statement the idea that career change promotes both continuity and discontinuity (Wise & Millward, 2005) i.e. that an individual's prior professional identity (Ibarra, 2005a; 2005b; 1999) travels with them but, in becoming established in their new occupation, they may have to relinquish certain aspects of this career 'narrative' (Wolf, 2019) in order to 'become' something new. According to Brown (2015), the more established an individual is in their prior career the more radical the identity change will be i.e. those with a "settled occupational identity" (p. 278) may need to invest considerable energy to reframe their sense of self.

Outside of the 'generic' identity literature three occupations feature prominently in identity research relating to career change: practice to academia (healthcare), teacher educators and teachers; the latter attracting, by far, the most attention.

Whilst literature focusing on transition from clinician to academic is sparse (Duffy, 2013) one of the major challenges identified is the concept of the 'lingering identity' (Wittman, 2019), where beliefs and practices from a prior career act as 'baggage' and inhibit adjustment to the new occupation. Moreover, moving from practice to academia can be problematic since

individuals – but more usually their new employers – can mistakenly believe that practice experience is a proxy for academic knowledge (Blenkinsopp & Stalker, 2004). Lacking depth of academic knowledge, however, tends to result in psychological insecurity and a credibility gap (Sorrel & Cangelosi, 2016). This group of ‘dual identity’ individuals “enter academia as expert clinicians, but most have little or no training in the pedagogy of effective student learning” (Owens, 2018, p. 10) and this contributes to professional doubt. This is something that was also found in Murray et al’s (2014a) meta-synthesis of nursing, physiotherapists, and health and social care practitioners who had become academics i.e. that establishing a new professional identity led them to move through a series of phases: feeling new and vulnerable, encountering the unexpected, doing things differently, and evolving into an academic. Murray noted that this is not a swift process however, and could take up to 3 years; the greatest challenge being how to access tacit knowledge about the new role from colleagues. In a separate study of occupational therapists transitioning into academia, undertaken by the same team, the level of adjustment required on entry to their new occupation was described as “cognitively taxing” (p. 440) and led to reduced self-efficacy. Whilst illuminating, however, what these studies do not explore is how new professional identities develop over time.

Although also in short supply, a similar picture emerges from teacher educator research. One theme is that transitioning from ‘expert teacher’ to ‘novice lecturer’ is a considerable shock (Lord, 2014). Indeed, Izadinia’s (2014) review of fifty-two articles highlighted that despite often decades of experience and therefore secure prior professional knowledge new teacher-educators can experience serious doubts about their capabilities; most significantly in terms of HE-related pedagogy but also in relation to working with adults rather than children. Furthermore, the practice of having toes in both ponds can weaken credibility (Maguire, 2000) and result in them being perceived as “semi-academics” (Murray & Male, 2005, p. 140) within the academy since unlike their academic colleagues there is no requirement to gain a PhD or write for publication. Occupying the ‘third space’ (Williams, 2014) – neither school teacher nor academic – is therefore potentially quite psychologically hazardous in that it can impact on stress levels and self-esteem/efficacy although learning to ‘become’ i.e. settling in to the new work context, developing a sense of belonging (Williams et al, 2012), and being valued for holding dual identities (Boyd & Harris, 2010) can mitigate destabilising effects. What remains to be understood, however, is precisely how career changers develop during the transition process and start to become both comfortable with their new professional identity and work towards recapturing career success. Furthermore, whilst Boyd and Harris (2010) and Izadinia (2014) highlight the beneficial effects of colleague ‘communities’ (e.g. sounding board,

contextualising knowledge), they say nothing about how career changers prefer to learn or whether the point in their change 'journey' influences learning choice or how/when these colleague networks are used.

Finally, whilst career-change-teacher literature is more abundant (e.g. Price, 2019; Wilkins, 2017; Nielsen, 2016, Williams, 2010) it nevertheless draws the same, broad conclusions i.e. career change is stressful and that developing a new professional identity takes time. Some research highlights the regret or disappointment experienced by career changers. For example, some of those spoken to in Grier and Johnston's (2009) study of STEM career changers believed that prior professional expertise should remove the need to re-train i.e. that practice knowledge/skill equates with being ready to go, whilst others believed prior experience was of little value since new colleagues and mentors treated them as no longer being an expert in their field; the latter leading to clashes in relation to prior work approaches and expectations of professionalism compared to those expected in the classroom.

On the other hand, the development of dual identities i.e. the ability to call on prior knowledge/skill, can reinforce (Anthony & Ord, 2008) new teacher identity and self-worth. Numerous studies (e.g. Wilkins & Comber, 2015; Nielsen, 2016) show that individuals do not give up a prior professional identity but, instead 'reframe' or 'repurpose' knowledge and, in turn, this helps them to develop a more assertive classroom management style. Green's (2015) longitudinal study of mature career change teachers in the first three years in role, too, showed that industry expertise bolstered their credibility especially when delivering work-related learning. It would be interesting, therefore, to also understand how far this means that career-change teachers perceive less of a need to learn, or whether application of prior learning/success only helps them so far in becoming successful in their new occupation.

2.6.3 THE STRESSFUL NATURE OF CAREER CHANGE

Career change clearly generates "both minor discontinuities and major interruptions ... the magnitude of their impact depending on the nature of the boundaries crossed" (Chudzikowski, 2011, p. 298) and this, in turn, can outstrip an individual's ability to cope (Louis, 1980). The kind of stress experienced will of course vary, with individuals potentially experiencing emotional, cognitive (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987; Lazarus, 1993) and/or physiological stress i.e. bodily responses (Wilson, 2002). Very little attention has been given to the impact of stress in career change research however, although that which has been undertaken draws the same

conclusions i.e. that career change is a demanding undertaking but that coping strategies can mitigate the effects.

Research shows that one of the most significant aspects of career change to impact on stress levels is readiness i.e. how prepared a career changer feels both before and during transition, and how adaptable they are in terms of making adjustments to their personal, learning and working practices. As already discussed, in hiring a 'pracademic' (Posner, 2009) or "useful academic" (Angervall & Gustafsson, 2016, p. 667) there can be an expectation that they will "hit the ground running" (Beres, 2006, p. 143) but development of "double professionalism" (Hurst, 2010, p. 244) can add additional pressure, particularly given how under-prepared this group often are in terms of their professional learning. Murray et al's (2014a) meta-synthesis, for example, found that complex career change is stressful because of the mental challenging of needing to assimilate a considerable amount of new knowledge (e.g. pedagogy, how to conduct research) as well as acclimatise to a different culture; but exacerbated due to the lack of induction and ongoing support (Shapiro, 2018).

Like those changing career from healthcare to become academics, teacher educators also said the move was stressful. The most commonly expressed developmental concerns according to Czerniawski et al's (2017) survey of over one-thousand teacher educators across six countries was research illiteracy (not having a PhD and needing to write for publication) coupled with the lack of support and mentoring, which led to this aspect remaining undeveloped. In light of these challenges (Murray & Male, 2005) and given that "literature focused on how teacher educators should be prepared is even more scant" (Stillman et al, 2019, pp. 266-267) recommendations (MacPhail et al, 2019; Smith & Flores, 2019) include that future research should explore socialisation, initial induction as well as the development practices of those still acquiring competence. A similar conclusion was also reached in relation to career-change-teachers; Wilkins (2017) research, for example, found that elite career-change teachers were more likely to either drop out or fail their ITT due to a mismatch between expectations and their ability to adapt to the new working environment, and recommended that research was needed in order to understand and respond to this 'transition shock'.

All of this can subsequently lead to what Schein (1999) termed 'learning anxiety' i.e. fear of having their incompetence exposed. Having become aware of knowledge and skill gaps but wanting to avoid any potential distress, fear can act as a powerful inhibitor for career changers. This was noted in Blenkinsopp and Stalker's (2004) study of career-change managers who had

become novice lecturers; their concerns largely revolving around wanting to “appear credible” (p. 418). Indeed, the “academic bump” i.e. the feeling of having been thrown in at the deep end and having little expertise, was flagged up in Boyd and Harris’s (2010, p. 17) study of Teacher educators where the realities of the new role led to career changers reappraising their approach to teaching. Those moving from healthcare into academia, too, find the move “cognitively taxing” (Murray et al, 2014b, p. 440) and experience doubts about their capability. Indeed, “surviving self-doubt” (Wilkins & Comber, 2015, p. 1024) appears to be a major challenge common to career change (e.g. Thornton, 2010; Portoghese et al, 2015); the intensity of needing to assimilate knowledge and skill adding significant psychological strain and, as stress increases self-compassion can go down (Rainbow & Steege, 2018).

Research looking at how career changers cope with the stress of transitioning is also modest but shows that there appears to be no single coping approach that is most effective, although some are more effective than others. Schlossberg (2011) ‘4 Ss System for coping with transition’ model for instance, argued that career change is associated with confusion and angst due to a multiplicity of potential stressors, but that whilst situational demands can outweigh an individual’s ability to cope inner strength (e.g. optimism/attitude to change) along a diverse range of support, help and advice can be helpful in moderating stress. Indeed, a survey of over 2000 later-life career changers which asked about what promoted well-being Vogelsang et al (2018) concluded that seeking social support from colleagues, friends and family was the most helpful strategy.

All of this highlights that the ‘transition shock’ of complex career change along with the need to acquire new knowledge and skill whilst continuing to appear credible results in stress. What is currently missing from this literature, however, is detail relating to what helps complex career changers develop and whether particular forms of learning are used not only to acquire new knowledge/skill but also to cope with stress at certain points in transition.

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter shows that research knowledge about careers and career change continues to evolve but that motivation and opportunities to make complex career changes is more available to individuals today than in the past. The process of change remains stressful,

however, and brings a host of challenges in terms of adapting to new working environments and practices, and coming to terms with changed status and professional identity.

The main gaps revolve around the fact that whilst existing career models discuss career change their focus is not always explicitly on complex career change or on how the model relates to career changers' motivations and experiences. In particular, there is a need for a greater understanding of specific groups of career changers i.e. to know about those groups who have featured in the current literature (healthcare practitioners turned academics, teacher educators and teachers) but where questions still exist. For example, despite 1 in 3 individuals completing initial teacher training (ITT) being complex career changers little is known about their characteristics, expectations or learning needs (Varadharajan et al, 2018; 2019). Research relating to teacher-educators also reveals significant gaps in our understanding of complex career change; a group that Reichenberg et al (2015, p.42) described as a "field of unique expertise without experts". Indeed, over the last two decades whilst studies have been carried out, many researchers have continued to label it as a "young sub-field" (Holme et al, 2016, p. 341) and as an "under-researched and poorly understood occupational group" (Murray, 2005, p. 68). Furthermore, the study of older career changers per se remains under-researched (Shultz et al, 2019) and knowledge relating to the impact of both attempted and successful career change is "sparse" (p. 99).

Chapter 3

Literature Review – CAREER SUCCESS

“Life is a process of becoming, a combination of states we have to go through. Where people fail is that they wish to elect a state and remain in it. This is a kind of death”

— *Anais Nin*

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Career success is a wide-ranging topic and includes research looking at definitions (e.g. Mirvis & Hall, 1994; Arthur et al, 2005), types of success (e.g. Hennequin, 2007; Ng & Feldman, 2010), and factors helping or hindering it (e.g. Hirschi et al, 2018; Ng & Feldman, 2014; Grimland et al, 2012; Zhou et al, 2016, Walsh et al, 2018). In terms of career changer's success, however, the picture is quite different i.e. what career success means to career changers and how they experience success is under-researched and therefore little understood (Breedon, 1993; Vigoda-Gadot et al, 2010).

3.2 THE CONTESTED NATURE OF CAREER SUCCESS

There is a clear and ongoing struggle to define 'career success' (Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2010); its ambiguous nature (Gunz & Heslin, 2005) leading numerous researchers (e.g. Gubler et al, 2020; Hennequin, 2007; Heslin, 2005) to comment on the challenge it presents.

Whilst previously "largely ignored by applied psychologists perhaps because it is a difficult area to conceptualise and to define operationally" (Childs & Klimoski, 1986, p. 3) it began to attract attention in the 1980s. Some twenty-five years on, however, Heslin (2005) argued that it was still being "operationalised in a rather deficient manner" (p. 113). One possible reason is its broad roots: the original Latin 'succedere' or 'to follow', for instance, carries quite passive connotations, whereas by the sixteenth century the term 'success' was being used in a more active and positive sense i.e. setting out to achieve something.

Despite the challenge attempts to 'pin down' what is meant by the term 'career success' continue but rather than one, universally accepted construct, however, a range of definitions has emerged. One early attempt presented it as the "experience of achieving goals that are personally meaningful to the individual, rather than those set by parents, peers, an organization, or society" (Mirvis & Hall, 1994, p. 364); quite a sweeping statement and one that also points to it having a measurable component. Some five years later two competing definitions appeared: with Seibert et al (1999) stating that it could be thought of as "the positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one accumulates as a result

of work experiences” (p. 417) whereas Judge et al (1999) said it encompassed “the real or perceived achievements individuals have accumulated as a result of their work experiences” (p. 621). The addition of the distinction between real and perceived is significant given the difficulties inherent in measuring success as well as the very personal nature of some claims to success. Another five years on, however, these were followed by Arthur et al’s (2005) proposal that success is the “accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person’s work experiences over time” (p. 179).

Achievement of goals or outcomes whether real or perceived – and even those built up across a career – may not fully capture what career success means to individuals and especially to complex career changers. Solowiej’s (2014) study of male Primary school teachers and University administrators, for instance, found that definitions of success were influenced by context. More specifically, that the occupation, organisation and/or culture (organisational or societal level) an individual works in may impact or colour (Ng & Feldman, 2014) their perceptions of, or attitudes towards success. Research of public sector workers (healthcare, social work, research), for example, revealed a tendency to define success in terms of the potential for self-direction and personal growth (Buelens & Van den Broeck, 2007; Segers et al, 2008) whereas those working in the private sector defined success in terms of upward mobility and associated pay increases (e.g. Ng & Feldman, 2010; Abele & Spurk, 2009).

More recently, Mayrhofer et al (2016) added that “there is no one best way to define career success” (p. 203); a position also taken by Hennequin (2007). Her study of French blue-collar workers showed it to be more of a relative than fixed phenomenon i.e. that definitions and measurement might not apply in the same ways to everyone. Hennequin argued that the way this group thought about and defined success was quite distinct from, for example, professionals e.g. where a professional might focus on status and upward mobility, a craftsperson might define success in terms of their reputation amongst peers. This is a position that has gained increasing support. Dries (2011) for instance, and more recently Gubler et al (2020), have questioned the extent to which any single type of success could apply to all, arguing that career success is complex and dynamic; changing depending on work content and context i.e. what applies in one occupation, one group or at an individual level is likely to differ from another. These differences are also pertinent to career changers, of course, since their beliefs and feelings about success as well as their evaluations of the achievement of success may change as they change occupation rather than reflecting a cumulative view built up across their entire working life.

3.3 TYPES OF CAREER SUCCESS

Concurrent with these definitions came theorising about the duality of career success (Nicholson & De Waal, 2005; Wang & Wanberg, 2017) i.e. that it broadly cleaves between two main types: objective (or external i.e., upward mobility, earnings, pay increases, occupational prestige, educational attainment, budget responsibilities) and subjective (or internal i.e. potential for personal growth; job, life and career satisfaction) success.

According to Heslin (2005) this division was first identified by Hughes (1958) who distinguished between verifiable or 'objective' success e.g. "finely measured tolerances" (p. 94), and 'subjective' success which is less easy to measure – other than in nominal terms – due to the absence of standards and its more idiosyncratic nature. For instance, one person's description of satisfaction may be quite distinct from another's.

3.3.1 OBJECTIVE CAREER SUCCESS

Objective career success (OCS) relates to openly acknowledged (Hennequin, 2007) and measurable achievement of organisational objectives, along with upward progression (Ng & Feldman, 2010). As a type of success it had, until relatively recently, attracted far more research interest than subjective success (Olson & Shultz, 2013). Arthur and Rousseau (1996), for instance, estimated that around 75% of studies concentrated on defining and attempting to clarify the nature of objective success between 1980-1994.

Criteria used to assess the extent to which an individual has achieved OCS include those that are easily measured and generally less open to subjective interpretation or the fallibility of self-reports. According to Judge et al (2010) 'extrinsic success' relates to "objective accomplishments that are observable, assessable and verifiable by an impartial third party" (p. 92) such as pay, status, and power/authority, with Abele and Spurk (2009), later adding that these measures steadily increase up to around the seventh year of experience and thereafter begin to wane.

These indicators of success have been tested by numerous researchers over the last four decades. Research carried out by Childs and Klimoski (1986), for instance, asked 555 participants from a range of occupational backgrounds (e.g. real-estate, clerical, sales, managerial, service, teaching, blue-collar) to complete a biographical inventory and take part in an interview to rate what they believed were the most important factors in their career success. By far the most important factor was income and income growth. However, whilst other objective measures e.g. work accomplishments, meeting set goals and job prestige were also important, the second most highly rated factor was personal happiness and satisfaction which suggests, therefore, that whilst objective measures are clearly important, they are not the sole indicator of success. Indeed, these outcomes could, according to Nicholson and De Waal (2005), be subject to a range of social/contextual factors including position within a hierarchy, actual and potential earnings, reputation and influence, social networks, and an individual's health and capabilities (knowledge and skills).

Later work by Abele and Spurk (2009) also found that income and hierarchical position were judged as important indicators of career success however their work also showed that success was not simply achieved through objective means e.g. long hours, hard work, but that objective and subjective success were interrelated. Their argument was that an individual's perceptions or evaluations of their career can impact on achievement. This was substantiated by their findings which showed that whilst objective success can lead to feeling successful compared to others it is generally temporary, whereas subjective success has a significant, longer term effect on objective success. They could only speculate, however, on why this might be the case and suggested that the joint influence of confidence, motivation and increased effort might bring about noticeable improvements in work output which, in turn, are rewarded via salary increases and promotions.

Heslin (2005) also draws attention to the less than perfect neutrality of OCS, arguing that standardised measures such as salary (including increases) and promotions are 'deficient' and could easily become 'contaminated'. Deficiency relates to the fact that the main indicators of pay and promotion may not appeal to everyone; those in occupations such as teaching or nursing, for instance, are not generally motivated by these measures and, instead tend to measure achievement in terms of others' success e.g. children's progress or the health and well-being of the individuals cared for. 'Contamination', on the other hand, relates to the fact that pay/promotion can often be outside of the individual's influence and/or impacted by factors that might diminish their value e.g. tax systems, economic/social prosperity and cost of

living. All of which suggests that whilst OCS is clearly important, it is not necessarily immune from outside influences or the most important/valued contributor.

3.3.2 SUBJECTIVE CAREER SUCCESS

By contrast, subjective career success (SCS) relates to the pursuit of a person-centred, values-driven agenda (Solowiej, 2014). According to Dries (2011) and Nicholson and De Waal (2005) this form of success is more introspective and individualistic i.e. it relates to personal meaning and is non-exhaustive in that it can mean anything to anyone. For instance, an individual's perception of their experience of or aspirations for success can include one or more of the following: pride in achievement, intrinsic job satisfaction, self-worth, commitment to work role or institution, fulfilling relationships, and moral satisfaction (pp. 141-2). On the other hand, in their large-scale study of 800 business professionals Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) showed that whilst numerous indicators were identified five were viewed as being the most important and, with the exception of status, they were all subjective: time for self, challenge, security and social success. The suggestion is that the 'pay offs' for performing in role are underpinned by a range of complex and interactive motivational forces (e.g. Stumpf & Tymon, 2012; Abele et al, 2016; Bethmann, 2013). Indeed, Gubler et al (2020) argued that individuals tend to select occupations that match their own values and that, in turn, these occupations may influence how they subjectively perceive success. Furthermore, success can also be cumulative i.e. built up over successive experiences of achievement over time.

3.3.2.1 THE CHALLENGE OF MEASURING SUBJECTIVE SUCCESS

In terms of measuring SCS, the concept has been operationalised in a number of ways: job and career satisfaction – originating in Thorndike's work in the 1930s (Pan & Zhou, 2015) – and competence (Hall & Chandler, 2005) being the two main ways, although self-awareness, adaptability, and career commitment have also featured in research (Heslin, 2005). Greenhaus et al's (1990) 'career satisfaction scale', for instance, has been used in a variety of studies (e.g. Converse et al., 2012; De Vos et al, 2011; Verbruggen, 2012). These proxies have attracted substantial criticism however; not least from Heslin (2003; 2005; 2006) who argued that SCS is conceptually different from satisfaction i.e. broader, in that satisfaction is an immediate reaction whereas SCS is more goal-oriented and personalised (Pan & Zhou, 2015).

Research (e.g. Hall & Chandler, 2005) has also reflected on the neglect of SCS. Heslin (2005, 2006), for instance, argued that given that most research has focused on OCS, harder-to-measure aspects of success such as satisfaction have been neglected and Hirschi (2012) said it failed to take into account the changed nature of contemporary careers i.e. complexity and unpredictability.

These are calls to research that have subsequently been acted upon. Dries et al (2008), for instance, suggested that SCS could be understood in terms of two dimensions: intra- (within the individual e.g. development or creativity) or inter-personal achievement (outside the individual e.g. performance, advancement), and intra- or inter-personal affect i.e. feelings/perceptions of security and satisfaction or external recognition and perceived contribution. Other researchers have also considered success in terms of a 'calling': Hall and Chandler (2005), for instance, reconceptualised SCS as 'psychological success' based on its relationship to personal growth and the development of the whole person arguing that, over time, both OCS and SCS become less important to some individuals and are replaced by a greater focus on internal perceptions of feeling/being purposeful and true to oneself. Despite this range of research, however, conceptualisations and measurement of SCS have nevertheless been criticised for being imprecise (Heslin, 2003) e.g. for measuring traits or characteristics (e.g. personality, gender) rather than enacted success (e.g. mentoring, career tactics), for focusing on the 'here and now' (job success) rather than longer-term perceptions and experiences (career success), and being generally inward looking i.e. individuals considering their own achievements.

3.3.2.2 SELF- AND OTHER-REFERENT CONCEPTUALISATIONS

Indeed, Heslin (2003) argued that a more effective way to conceptualise SCS was to delineate between self- and other-referent success: 'self-referent' being an individual's reflections on achievement of their own success standards/career goals, 'other-referent' relating to comparisons with others' success i.e. outcomes/attained success of people known to the individual such as friends and colleagues, but could also include a more generalised 'other' such as those in the same occupational, age or gender group.

Heslin proposed that the importance of others in an individual's perception of success can be traced back to both Festinger's (1954) 'social comparison theory' which argues that people regularly compare themselves to others in order to shore up their self-esteem. It also links to Dweck's (1999) more recent 'implicit person theory' which argues that an individual's beliefs

underpin their attributions: an 'incremental' belief system relating to feelings of being in control of life/career including the ability to grow, and an 'entity' belief relating to perceived fixed abilities and characteristics. In his 2003 research Heslin found clear correlations between 'incremental' beliefs and the 89% of individuals who rated themselves as self-referent, with 68% taking an outward (other-referent) stance having an 'entity' belief system. The implication here is that success is not only complex, potentially changeable and influenced by a multiplicity of factors (e.g. life circumstances, cognitions and locus of control) but could be negatively affected by an individual's self-assessments and particularly social comparisons. Abele et al (2016), for example, found that social comparison (other-referent) had a direct impact on affect i.e. positive comparisons resulted in individuals feeling good about themselves but if they perceived the 'other' as better (e.g. more able) they felt worse about themselves. This finding which aligns with Boyce et al's (2010) which found that individuals felt more successful if they were paid more than their peers.

3.3.2.3 THE DRIVE FOR PRECISION

This subsequently led to a drive for precision in terms of precisely what SCS entails. Heslin (2005) argued that it needed to be reconceptualised to include a broader range of indicators which more accurately captured individuals' lived experiences. This was picked up in Solowiej's (2014) research which agreed with Heslin's point i.e. that perceptions of subjective success stem directly from an individual's definition of success. In other words SCS is challenging to measure due to its complexity and idiosyncratic nature, and what holds value and is construed as success at any particular time or within any particular context is personal and can change. Findings of Solowiej's qualitative study revealed that success broadly revolved around four subjective dimensions: life (hobbies and interests outside work, family life), social (positive interaction with colleagues, informal recognition, helping others), personal (happiness at work, utilising career competencies), and professional success (financial security, continuing professional development, career advancement, job performance), and highlighted the inherent complexity in individuals' motivations and perceptions of success, albeit focused solely on male primary school teachers and university administrators who had entered female-dominated occupations.

Heslin's (2005) claims of inconsistency in terms of how SCS is conceptualised and measured was also responded to by Zhou et al (2013) who set out to develop measurable criteria. Like others before them (e.g. Childs & Klimoski, 1986; Dries et al, 2008) they pointed to the need for success to be understood as a multi-dimensional construct but questioned the extent to

which criteria previously identified (e.g. occupational prestige, social rewards, career satisfaction) could be generalised. They therefore developed a scale comprising three dimensions: *intrinsic fulfilment* (talent/ capability utilisation, engaged in challenging work, respected by colleagues, conflict resolution, accumulation of knowledge and skill to become an expert, happy in work), *external compensation* (subjective perceptions of OCS e.g. being able to afford to support family and material possessions, power/ control/ influence over others, financial freedom, achievement of promotions) and *work-life balance* (can take care of family, harmonious family/work life, balanced, good physical condition, time to enjoy career, good physical/mental health). Zhou et al (2013) openly acknowledged the need for further testing of their scales however, and Pan and Zhou (2015) also criticised it for only establishing measurable criteria and not assessing individuals' subjective evaluations of their current situation. This subsequently led them to test the validity of the three dimensions and resulted in a refinement of the original survey (from 21-item down to 10 items) but, whilst supporting Zhou et al's findings, added the reminder that many factors can help or hinder career success and that individual opinions of what constitutes success change over time and, therefore, the fixed basis of a survey may not accurately represent all people at all points in their career.

More recently still Shockley et al (2016) questioned the extent to which individuals' careers are driven by objective motivations. Their argument is that "structural and attitudinal shifts" (p. 128) have led to subjective interpretations playing a more substantial role. As with earlier studies (e.g. Zhou et al, 2013; Pan & Zhou, 2015) they too set out develop a valid and reliable measure of success, agreeing with other researchers (e.g. Heslin, 2005) that SCS is not uni- but multi-dimensional i.e. comprised of numerous components. In fact, their findings showed there to be eight: authenticity, growth and development, influence, meaningful work, personal life, quality work, recognition, satisfaction; the 'weight' and value of each i.e. how salient they are, being determined by the individual in their own work/life context.

Despite the precision of such instruments, however, they may still not represent everybody's perception of success. This therefore points to further research being warranted particularly in terms of their application to a broader group of individuals, occupations and work environments, including whether it can accurately capture the perceptions of success held by career changers. Gunz and Heslin (2005), for instance, argued that adopting a subjectivist approach to data collection can reveal more of what success means to people than completing a scale pre-developed by a researcher; a point also put forward by Heslin (2005) who

advocated a qualitative approach to explore “subtle differences in the criteria people use to evaluate their career success” (p. 118).

3.3.3 THE REDUNDANCY OF ‘EITHER/OR’

For some researchers, however, these either-or conceptualisations i.e. OCS or SCS obscure understanding (Hall & Chandler, 2005) and this has led to fresh attempts to develop models which better explain the variety and interrelated aspects of what may constitute the ‘whole’ of an individual’s definition of success (Shockley et al, 2016). Indeed, according to Baruch (2004) the “meaning of career success” (p. 67) has changed in line with contemporary (e.g. protean, boundaryless) rather than traditional, linear career trajectories (see Chapter 2); the ‘new deal’ affording individuals considerably more flexibility in terms of whether they pursue intrinsic (e.g. work-life-balance, greater freedom career direction, job satisfaction) or extrinsic success, such as aspiring to leadership roles or higher rates of pay, or both.

This is a position with which Hennequin (2007) agreed, arguing that career success is more of a relative than fixed phenomenon i.e. that definitions and measurement might not apply in the same ways to everyone. The conclusion drawn after interviewing a range of French craftspeople and factory workers i.e. blue-collar workers was that they differed in the ways they thought about success across ‘material’, ‘psychological’ and ‘social’ dimensions (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Hennequin’s (2007) three dimensions of success

| Dimension | Description |
|----------------------|---|
| Material | concrete rewards such as monetary rewards, fringe benefits [<i>discounts</i>], and number of promotions |
| Psychological | satisfaction, job success [<i>autonomy, expertise, pleasure, interest</i>]; interpersonal success [<i>interacting with others, relationships</i>]; life balance [<i>work/life separation</i>] |
| Social | comparisons with others (status [<i>position in society based on job type</i>]; recognition [<i>how others judge you</i>]; reputation [<i>what you are known for</i>] |

The suggestion is that the ways in which this group thought about and defined success was quite distinct from, for example, professionals e.g. where a professional might focus on status

and upward mobility, a craftsperson might define success in terms of their reputation amongst peers. Moreover, as Solowiej (2014) argued, “labelling criteria for success as objective, subjective or social may not be useful for understanding what is important to individuals or how success is achieved, as this view encourages a perception that criteria should be considered as separate from one another” (p. 243).

3.4 CAREER MODELS AND CAREER SUCCESS

As covered in Chapter 2 ‘Career Change’, contemporary career models focus on the extent to which individuals have agency and control over their career. As a consequence they are generally linked to SCS given their recognition that career success can be shaped by aspects of life beyond the work and the work environment (Heslin, 2005; Solowiej, 2014) such as personal priorities (Dany, 2003) and self-concept (Dries et al, 2008) although OCS features in these models too.

3.4.1 THE PROTEAN MODEL AND CAREER SUCCESS

Underscoring success in this model is the notion of choice i.e. the individual makes career decisions based on self-knowledge or insight and wanting to invest in their own self-development. The protean career attitude (Briscoe et al, 2006) is thought important due to its role in increasing perceptions of SCS. In De Vos and Soens’ (2008) study, for instance, a strong link was found between career insight/self-management, perceived employability and career satisfaction. Indeed, they showed that those with a PCA actively set out to achieve career success i.e. that it was the goal of self-insight/career self-management rather than simply being an outcome. More recently, however, Kim and Beehr’s (2017) study showed that whilst values-driven attitudes and control over career direction and developmental activities are implicated (e.g. enhancing confidence and job satisfaction), commitment and alignment with an organisation’s values carried more weight than holding a PCA. These findings are also supported by Sultana and Malik’s (2019) study of the effects of having a PCA on university faculty career success. They showed that whilst insight, in conjunction with PCA-related activities such as CPD and networking, led to higher intrinsic success – through greater awareness of what was going on in other jobs/sectors and development of a deeper professional identity – it was not associated with extrinsic success.

3.4.2 THE BOUNDARYLESS MODEL AND CAREER SUCCESS

Career success can also be understood in terms of career mobility i.e. boundarylessness. Guan et al's (2019) meta-analysis, for instance, found that boundaryless careers can but do not necessarily always have a positive impact on success given the inherent risk and uncertainty associated with boundary crossing. One problem with measuring success in relation to the boundaryless career, however, is its operationalisation i.e. whether success is measured against personal (e.g. *being adaptable, competence*) or structural (e.g. *organisational support such as career management programmes and mentoring*) inputs. Another issue is how mobility itself is defined i.e. whether it relates to job, career or occupation; all of which impact on success and how it might be perceived and experienced by individuals. Feldman and Ng (2007), for instance, argue that "different types of mobility and embeddedness are related to different types of success" (p. 353). Distinguishing and measuring these is challenging, however, and even more so when set against the different ways in which a boundaryless career might be construed by an individual (Guan et al, 2019). Arthur and Rousseau's (1996) 'six meanings' of the boundary concept – *moves across employers, externally validated, relational, hierarchical, personal/family, psychological* – add clarity but bring additional complexity and difficulty in terms of isolating what leads to success. Furthermore, Sullivan and Arthur's (2006) subsequent refinement of the model – distinguishing physical from psychological mobility – creates yet more ambiguity since, for example, physical mobility could involve further sub-sets including hierarchical, organisational, occupational, industry, location, work pattern etc.

In addition, consequences for success can vary according to occupation: whilst Guan et al's (2019) meta-analysis found that boundaryless careers are associated with those in professional and managerial roles achieving more promotions and having greater career competency (i.e. *knowing-why, knowing-how, knowing-whom*) the same thing could not be said of those in manual occupations where changes to boundaries made them more likely to experience negative health outcomes (e.g. *heart disease, stroke, anxiety*) as a consequence of poor behaviours (e.g. *smoking, drinking, low levels of exercise*). In addition, their analyses found that particular movement sequences (i.e. in early, mid or later career), along with particular types of mobility affected success: compared to traditional career transition (i.e. promotion, work re-design) for instance, movement to other employers was generally associated with higher OCS (e.g. salary increase) but lower SCS (i.e. career satisfaction) and slower promotion prospects once having moved. This was generally only the case for more highly skilled workers and earlier in their careers however. Indeed, a limitation of research which looks at boundaryless careers and success is that the vast majority of it relates to voluntary,

inter-organisational moves made by professionals or managers. All of this is important to note since the picture that emerges does not necessarily represent those who undertake complex career moves.

3.4.3 THE KALEIDOSCOPE MODEL AND CAREER SUCCESS

Unlike the previous two models, the kaleidoscope career model (KCM) focuses on the extent to which career goals are driven by the individual's need to be true themselves i.e. the importance of authenticity but also considers the value of balance and challenge. This model is, therefore, less about holding a particular career attitude or being mobile and more about 'fit' (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007). What constitutes career success is therefore likely to be different. Indeed, Mainiero and Gibson (2018) argue that career success needs to be contextualised, in that different groups' ideas of success are likely to vary due to their specific life experiences; men and women, for instance, may have different drivers for success. Findings from their survey of over 700 individuals found that whilst authenticity and challenge were as important to men as to women, balance was far less important to men. More recently, Koekemoer and Crafford (2019) used the KCM to explore career success of generation-Y IT workers and found that they were more motivated by authenticity (e.g. making a difference) and by the need to be challenged in the work that they do (e.g. taking advantage of developmental opportunities) than by balance.

This suggests then, that identifying what is important in terms of career success and how individuals measure their success is complex and determined not only by age and sex, but potentially also by a myriad of other factors e.g. occupation, culture, historical 'time' i.e. the generation to which one belongs. Attempting to narrow down or offer an all-encompassing explanation of career success is therefore not only challenging but may be inappropriate. Indeed, as Wang et al (2013) argued, those in early, mid, and late career are likely to define both SCS and OCS differently and therefore "no single model can be used to fully describe individuals" (p. 4). Moreover, understanding that career success is dynamic and multi-dimensional may be more helpful and that repeated attempts at redefinition are likely to be a hallmark of trying to accurately capture career 'reality' at any particular point in time (Olson & Shultz, 2013), particularly if we accept Litrico et al's (2011) argument that careers can be "defined as a window through which we can see how individuals' choices and constraints over the life course play out and interact with developments in society, organizations, and personal lives" (p. 1682).

Another issue with these models and their discussions of career success is that whilst career change is implicit they do not focus explicitly or solely upon 'complex career changers' i.e. those who make wholesale changes from one occupation to another. Instead, they tend to talk about change in terms of discontent or the potential for individuals to take ownership of their career 'life' and to make changes as and when they want to. Furthermore, they do not distinguish between different forms of career change and therefore do not explain how success relates to complex career change compared to simple career change.

3.5 CAREER SUCCESS IN CAREER CHANGE LITERATURE

Notwithstanding the wealth of available literature and attempts to accurately conceptualise career success, very little research has considered 'complex' career change; and that which considers 'contemporary' careers relates to change in general but not specifically to complex career change.

One of the earliest studies was undertaken by Breeden (1993) who pointed to the paucity of research linking success (satisfaction) and occupational change. This longitudinal survey of over 400 job (simple) and occupational (complex) changers found that both groups were more satisfied post-change than those who had not changed; the main reason being increased person-environment fit. This is also borne out in a comparative study by Longhi and Brynin (2010) who investigated occupational change in Britain and Germany – where 8% changed occupation in Britain compared to 3.4% in Germany – and found that 'fit' i.e. the extent to which individuals' skills matched their occupation, was a key motivator. Their findings showed that whilst Germans will consider career change once established in their career/occupation, the same is not true for Britons i.e. career changers are less likely to change career once established. This finding is also supported in research by Dlouhy and Biemann (2018) who argued that human capital 'costs' are a significant factor in why individuals stay in an existing career, although it contradicts Sullivan and Arthur's (2006) argument that higher competency levels are associated with greater career mobility. Despite this, Longhi and Brynin showed that, post-change, both occupational and job changers reported higher levels of satisfaction across a range of measures (job/work satisfaction, pay, job security, promotion prospects, hours). This is similar to Chudzikowski's (2011) longitudinal research findings which showed that 15 years after graduating in 1970 and 1990 business alumni who had made complex or

'horizontal career transitions' achieved higher wage increases than job changers. However, this research focuses largely on objective measures of success and it would therefore be interesting to investigate the extent to which complex career change results in higher levels of subjective career success.

Vigoda-Gadot et al (2010), too, argued that the combination of career change and success are under-researched. Their research examined antecedents of career success in military personnel who were taking early retirement to change occupation. Acknowledging the challenge of career change – with many selecting second careers that provided continuity in terms of familiarity with formal hierarchy e.g. other government departments or the private defence sector – their findings showed that a range of factors were associated with a more successful transition into a new occupation (as measured by career and life satisfaction). Awareness of organisational politics in the new workplace also contributed to subsequent career success but only in terms of career satisfaction and had only an indirect effect on life satisfaction. Those who invested more time in preparing to leave the military and had strong networks of friends and colleagues (social capital) to turn to/gain advice from, however, had far higher levels of career and life satisfaction; a finding also highlighted by Wang et al (2013), who showed that resource availability during transition e.g. family or colleague support, helped increase both OCS and SCS.

These findings also align with earlier research by Holmes and Cartwright (1994) which looked at the ingredients for mid-career changers' success, at a time when "second or multiple careers, especially those involving radical change, were far from the norm in the UK" (p. 58). They argued that complex career change was more prominent amongst existing high-achievers i.e. managerial and professional occupational groups, who had been successful in a prior occupation but were no longer satisfied with it. Findings showed that most successful career changers were aged 35 or over and had experienced career change before (generally two to three times). In addition, changers stated that the greatest contributors to success in their new occupation came as a result of personal characteristics such as high internal locus of control – as found by Heslin (2003), Ng et al (2005), Zhou et al (2016), Kim and Beehr (2017) – but also from social capital i.e. help and support of others. On the other hand, the biggest obstacle to achieving career success was uncertainty or fear of the new job i.e. the unknown or feeling unprepared. This suggests – as with non-career-change studies – that a range of facilitating factors contribute towards as well as hinder success. More recently, Shultz et al (2019) analysed archival data from the New Careers for Older Workers data set (American

Institute for Economic Research, 2015) and surveyed 405 career changers aged 47 and older and found key distinctions between predictors of perceived objective career-change success (POCCS) and perceived subjective career-change success (PSCCS). The two key PSCCS predictors were age and gender, with older respondents and men being more satisfied with their career change. On the other hand, whilst only technical job skills significantly predicted PSCCS, all types of current job skills/competencies i.e. interpersonal and technical skills, and job knowledge were associated with POCCS, as was co-worker support, which helped shorten time frames for finding a new career. Furthermore, whilst family support led to longer time frames for finding a new career, it and financial resources predicted higher PSCCS. The implication here is that whilst older workers take longer to identify a new career they are happier following the move, and that prior success (as measured by transferable skills) is related to subsequent career success i.e. task completion, confidence levels and lower stress levels. Indeed, high prior technical skill levels and an individual's ability to expand/refine these in the new role are linked to greater agency and confidence.

Shultz et al's (2019) research paints a generally positive picture of complex career change and success. Zhou et al's (2017) longitudinal study of career change within British households between 1991 and 2008, however, suggests that the grass is not necessarily greener on the other side i.e. following a career change. They argued that despite being a "significant life event" (p. 67) complex change has "received little attention" (p. 68), and that disrupting the fundamental nature of an individual's job is likely to impact on satisfaction in numerous ways i.e. despite the potential to transfer knowledge/skills complex change can erode and devalue human capital because of a lack of new, job-specific knowledge and skills. This, in conjunction with high investment costs i.e. loss of wages, cost of re-training, can lead to a significant level of disconnect from previous social network and to confused professional identity. Their research considered the so called 'honeymoon-hangover effect' following career change i.e. post-change 'job satisfaction' and found that it was generally followed by a gradual return to 'baseline' as individuals become aware of the new realities. More specifically, occupational changers experience a greater dip in job satisfaction than job changers: by the second year the 'honeymoon effect' has entirely disappeared and by year five satisfaction levels are back to pre-occupational change levels. What we can conclude from this, then, is that whilst satisfaction is a product of change it is not sustained and given that lost pay during/after change is a significant dissatisfier, occupational changers can experience greater dissatisfaction than job changers. This therefore suggests – especially given the relatively small amount of literature relating to career changer success – that there is scope for further research in order to understand how

'complex career changers' perceive and experience career change, what if anything helps them, and the impact this has on perceived and actual career success.

3.6 ANTECEDENTS – FACTORS THAT HELP OR HINDER SUCCESS

To this end, a number of predictors or antecedents are acknowledged as contributing towards career success; these are wide-ranging although generally explained individually i.e. in terms of the effects of one factor – such as human capital (Hirschi et al, 2018) – and can be divided into 'situational' and 'dispositional' factors. 'Situational' antecedents relate to external or contextual factors such as the work environment (e.g. Arthur & Lawrence, 1984; Ng & Feldman, 2014), and 'dispositional' factors i.e. relating to internal, personal or psychological factors such as attitude/ outlook (e.g. Ganzach & Pazy, 2014; Grimland et al, 2012), adaptability (e.g. Zacher, 2013), cognitive ability (e.g. Dreher & Bretz, 1991), locus of control (e.g. Zhou et al, 2016), competence (e.g. De Vos et al, 2011), personality (e.g. Bozionelos, 2004), motivation (Wayne et al, 1999), and happiness (Walsh et al, 2018).

3.6.1 WHAT HELPS CAREER SUCCESS?

A meta-analysis which focused on research into a range of antecedents was conducted by Ng et al (2005), who identified four main categories of predictors: human capital (*knowledge, education, personal/work experiences*), organisational sponsorship (*supervisor support, training and development opportunities*), socio-demographic status (*gender, race, marital status, age*), and stable individual differences (*big 5 personality along with proactivity, locus of control and cognitive ability*). Their analysis also showed that for OCS the strongest relationship lay between human capital and socio-demographic factors, whereas the best predictor of SCS was organizational sponsorship and stable individual differences.

Ng et al (2005) did, however, also acknowledge that other predictors could impact on career success, including social networks and the type of experience, competence, or level of expertise developed across an individual's career, which raises an interesting question in terms of how this might relate to complex career changers i.e. whether predictors of success in a previous occupation will continue to have currency in a new occupation. To this end, Ng and Feldman's (2010) subsequent research looked at the role of human capital, cognitive ability and conscientiousness in career success and found that human capital (education/work experience)

is “robustly and consistently related to salary level, number of promotions, number of job offers, and number or developmental opportunities” (p. 207). Less clear, however, is how and why this relates to career success and the extent to which human capital acts as a kind of short-hand or ‘signalling device’ to indicate capability; whether to peers or to organisations. Their findings went on to show that individuals who invested in human capital generally had higher cognitive abilities as well as greater conscientiousness and that these, in turn, were highly valued by both the individual – whose perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem increased – and by organisations who are able to use this information to identify talent.

3.6.2 WHAT HINDERS CAREER SUCCESS?

In 2014 Ng and Feldman turned their review of predictors on its head in order to look at what might hinder career success, although this time focusing solely upon subjective rather than both OCS and SCS. Sampling over 200 articles across three decades, they identified a range of ‘career hurdles’; significantly correlated with having lower SCS were low emotional stability and work engagement (i.e. dispositional traits), along with low supervisor and organisational support (i.e. job insecurity). Factors which had less of an effect on success were an individual’s background and skill-level, although lack of participation in professional development did have a negative impact.

More recently Hirschi et al (2018) offered an integrative theory of factors said to influence career success. They also spoke of the on-going debate relating to which of these has the greatest sway, and identified three main competing theories: human capital (Becker, 1964), social capital (Coleman, 1988) and career motivation (London, 1983), although also point to the influence of proactivity and career self-management (e.g. Hall, 1996; Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; De Vos & Soens, 2008). Building on Hirschi’s (2012) ‘career resources model’ they used four key predictors (*human capital resources, environmental resources, motivational resources, and career management behaviours*) to develop the ‘career resources questionnaire’ and, from this, found that occupational expertise, job market knowledge, soft skills, career involvement, career confidence, career clarity, career opportunities, organisational career support, job challenges, social career support, networking, career exploration and learning were key to career success (incorporating both OCS i.e. salary and promotions, and SCS i.e. career satisfaction and job satisfaction). The most influential in terms of SCS were organisational career support, career opportunities, job challenges, social career support and career confidence, whilst relatively weak predictors networking and job market knowledge contributed towards OCS. All of this suggests that attempting to isolate

and test the impact of individual factors is a challenging exercise, not least because of the changeable nature of the individuals involved, the work they do and the context in which it is undertaken.

3.6.3 THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUCCESS

The impact of one type of success on another has also been studied. Stumpf and Tymon's (2012) survey of over 600 professionals, for instance, found that prior OCS e.g. promotions (but not salary increases) had an impact on subsequent SCS. More specifically, promotions led to individuals feeling more confident about their capabilities and self-worth, and to greater career satisfaction and, in turn, this increased SCS led to pursuing other job/ career opportunities. In other words OCS influences SCS which, in turn, influences OCS. Interestingly, they also found that others' (e.g. managers) knowledge of individuals' OCS had a positive impact on subsequent promotion i.e. that positive feelings about capability/ promotability were not confined to the individuals themselves. A similar set of findings emerged from Abele et al's (2016) large-scale study of 990 professionals which agreed that subjective and objective success influence each other i.e. that achievements (e.g. promotion, meeting objectives) can lead to greater life satisfaction. Importantly, they also suggested that SCS is not only a descriptive but also an evaluative term i.e. it can represent an individual's judgments about their accomplishments. It would therefore be interesting to explore how far this applies to complex career changers' experiences of subsequent career success i.e. whether, for instance, moving from 'novice' to 'advanced beginner' or 'competent' status (OCS) has an impact on career satisfaction or self-efficacy (SCS).

Prior success, too – along with professional qualities and experiences – is a contributory factor in encouraging career-change teachers to remain in their new occupation. Raveh and Shaharabani's (2019) interviews with engineers who changed career to become maths teachers, for instance, found that applying prior expert knowledge helped them to more easily orient themselves to the needs of their new occupation and that this, in turn, affected their perceptions of success. This supports Watters and Diezmann's (2015) earlier work which showed that autonomy, confidence and applying approaches to problem solving used in a prior occupation contributed to success in the new occupation. Prior success cannot be said to be the only or even the most important reason for success in the new occupation however; in part, according to Murray et al's (2014) meta-synthesis, because of the complexity of the change e.g. feeling like an impostor, and needing to acquire new skills and knowledge relating

to the new occupation, but also because what facilitates complex career transition (e.g. the contribution of learning processes) is so little explored and understood.

3.6.4 THE EFFECTS OF IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

Another factor likely to influence complex career changers' perceptions of success is impostorism. Originally identified by Clance and Imes (1978), the imposter phenomenon (IP) relates to how individuals feel about their accomplishments, competence and potential. It is therefore a pertinent topic to look at in relation to this thesis because of its power to shape individual decisions relating to learning and development (i.e. what is learnt, how it is learnt and when), along with perceptions of career success.

In essence, IP is a form of insecurity; Bernard et al (2002) describing it as “an internal experience of intellectual phoniness in high achievers who are unable to internalize their successful experiences” (p. 321). It can lead individuals to doubt their capability to meet self-imposed or perceived standards (Clance & O’Toole, 1988) and have a negative impact on psychological wellbeing (Whitman & Shanine, 2012) i.e. stress and anxiety (Bravata et al, 2020), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). LePine et al’s (2004) study, for instance, found that not understanding a task is more stressful than task difficulty or work volume, and also has a greater negative impact on self-efficacy.

Those who experience feeling like a fraud generally attribute any success achieved to luck (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016) i.e. being in the right place at the right time, or being more conscientious than co-workers. It can therefore be seen as a variant of external locus of control (Galvin et al, 2018; Rotter, 1966), where individuals fail to acknowledge personal agency and, instead, externalise ability to control situations and the cause of outcomes i.e. attribute them to others, luck or fate.

IP is also related to risk assessment (Whitman & Shanine, 2012) – in this case inaccurate assessment. An individual may believe that discovery by others of the (negative or positive) ‘reality’ of their abilities is imminent and this constitutes a threat to their sense of self, work or social standing. Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch (2016), for instance, showed that established professionals feared being judged and rejected by colleagues as a result of achieving success and consequently downplayed success or else avoided development that could lead to success. This inability to accurately judge the perceptions of others can then result in individuals feeling that they can’t trust and turn to others for support; a knock-on-effect highlighted in both

Bravata et al's (2020) literature review which showed an association between IP and social isolation, and in Kyndt et al's (2016) study of teachers new to the profession which found that despite being keen to learn they chose not to seek support from colleagues for fear of being judged.

Despite being a widespread phenomenon and one which has been researched from a number of different viewpoints (e.g. characteristics, feelings and outcomes), however, the impact of IP on career changers remains unclear and limited to just a few studies: Murray and Male's (2005) study of new teacher-educators' belief that they were 'masquerading', and Kets de Vries (2005) study of business executives' reluctance to learn. Understanding how IP might apply to career changers – particularly since they come to their new occupation with a wealth of prior experience and (potentially highly transferable) knowledge and skills – would, therefore, be valuable. In particular, to understand how fear of failure or being thought incompetent might impact on their approach to both short and longer-term learning decisions.

More recently, Whitman and Shanine (2012) offered an alternative model of coping, specifically relating to impostor syndrome; arguing that perceptions of both the quantity and quality of social support play a significant role in the coping process. Distinguishing between 'active' and 'avoidant' coping they argued that whilst some individuals will take action and seek help/social support, other individuals will seek to protect resources; preferring instead to deny the need for action or to disengage and not take action or seek support. It would be interesting to explore the extent to which this is the case in relation to career changers i.e. whether they act in a defensive manner and, if so, for how long i.e. up to what stage in the transition process.

3.6.5 THE POSITIVE ROLE OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

How complex career changers cope with feeling like an impostor also warrants attention. One such strategy may be 'impression management' (Goffman, 1963; Goffman et al, 1997) i.e. saving face by presenting a particular – generally positive – image or 'front' to others. As such, impression management can be thought of as a reaction to cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962; Morvan & O'Connor, 2017) i.e. psychological discomfort resulting from inconsistency or inability to match up the image we have of ourselves with the reality. According to Festinger (1962, cited in Morvan & O'Connor, 2017) "when dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance" (p. 11). This is a point echoed in Rogers' (1967) work which argued that the larger the 'gap' between an individual's 'ideal' and 'real' self – personal notions of

identity – the greater the psychological discomfort and, therefore, the greater the need to manage that ‘impression’.

Clearly then impression management is highly relevant to career changers since the gap between what they know/can do and what they need to know/do is likely to be associated with psychological discomfort (see Chapter 4.4.2 – Learning; Mezirow, 1997) and to therefore result in some degree of ‘face saving’. For example prior status (knowledge, skills, qualifications) might be used as a form of armour to defend against feeling vulnerable. Interestingly, however, current career change literature has yet to engage with this aspect of transition, although work by Bourgoin and Harvey (2018) – whilst not focusing on career changers – provides an insight into how it might apply. They looked at how learning is affected when an individual’s professional image is threatened, and how individuals go about learning whilst simultaneously attempting to build credibility; their findings suggesting that achieving both is a challenging and stressful endeavour but that face-saving strategies play an important role. The implication here is that how individuals are perceived by others is an important factor in shaping their perceptions of success; not least for career changers.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter highlights the contested nature of career success in that whilst there are a number of definitions of career success researchers have struggled to arrive at a definitive statement i.e. that career success is individual and context-specific and so needs to be researched in a qualitative and contextualised way. Some have argued (e.g. Heslin, 2005) that this is understandable given its poor operationalisation but what is clear is that so far little research has focused on how any of these potential ways of defining success relates to complex career changers.

A similar debate continues in terms of the two main types of success – OCS and/or SCS – i.e. which is the main focus or carries more weight/influence/value for individuals. The extent to which these conceptualisations are distinct and separate are also debated i.e. whether individuals experience both OCS and SCS and whether one can impact positively and/or negatively on the other. Added to this, much of the current literature has relied heavily upon

positivist methods to collect data and therefore the complexity and unpredictability of career success is less well understood – particularly for career changers.

Moreover, in terms of SCS the connection between what a complex career changer does in an attempt to achieve success has not been addressed, for example, the contribution of particular forms of learning to perceptions of success. Research looking at antecedents has been helpful in this respect in that there is a clearer appreciation of the role that both dispositional and situational factors play, however the effect of specific determinants is less well understood. For example, the role played by impostorism or the moderating effects of impression management. This has particular relevance to career changers where their need to cope with the stress associated with being expert-novices is potentially quite intense. This is therefore an area where further research is warranted.

Finally, of the modest number of studies which look at the career success of career changers it is clear that changing career is associated with post-change satisfaction but the extent to which this is sustained or what specifically contributes to these perceptions/experiences is unclear, particularly in light of the steep human capital costs associated with complex career change and especially those who have left established or high-status careers. Shultz et al's (2019) recent study provides some insights into complex career changers' perceptions and experiences, which is a good thing, however the contribution of particular forms of learning or development to individuals' success has not been investigated and therefore warrants further research. This is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Literature Review – LEARNING

“Through life we learn”

— *William Speirs Bruce*

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Career success is clearly both a complex and dynamic phenomenon (Gubler, 2020), and arguably, relates to both individuals' definition(s) of success (Mayrhofer, 2016; Heslin, 2005) but also to what underpins it (Ng et al, 2005; Ng & Feldman, 2014; Hirschi et al, 2018) i.e. their ability to do their job (competence) and how well they perceive themselves to be doing it (confidence). How this is recaptured following complex career change i.e. how complex career changers learn to become at least competent in their new occupation, is therefore important to understand and the focus of this final literature review chapter.

4.2 WHAT ARE CAREER CHANGERS TRYING TO RECAPTURE?

Research shows that a key aspect of career success is development of competence (e.g. Hall & Chandler, 2005; Ng et al, 2005; De Vos et al, 2011; Solowiej, 2014; Guan et al, 2019; Shultz et al, 2019). This is unlikely to be accomplished in one fell swoop however; instead it is likely to require both time and effort. One of the earliest accounts of its trajectory was developed by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980; 2004), whose 'skill acquisition model' (see Figure 5) presented a series of stages through which individuals are said to transition: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and expert. Originally developed to explain how American air force pilots acquired expertise, the model is now well established (e.g. Westerman, 1991; Cangelosi et al, 2009; Merkle-Sorrell & Cangelosi, 2016; Miller et al, 2017), but most notably applied by Benner (1982) with whom the model has become synonymous.

Figure 5: summary of the skill acquisition model adapted from Benner (1982)

- **Novice:** *no experience, needs explicit rules, no discretionary judgement*
- **Advanced Beginner:** *real experience, starts to see bigger picture/make judgements, needs support*
- **Competent (2-3 years):** *conscious awareness, planful and contemplative, sees actions within long-term range of goals/plan, flexible, perception of mastery, copes with contingency*
- **Proficient:** *perceives whole rather than part, can modify plans to reflect changing events/situation*
- **Expert:** *significant experience, intuitive grasp, deep understanding, difficulty consciously expressing 'why'*

A number of questions need to be raised here however. One is the extent to which the process is uni-directional i.e. whether individuals can 'start over'. A study by Tennant (1999), for instance, claimed that whilst challenging, transfer of prior expertise is not necessarily problematic; a finding supported in Wolf's (2019) more recent study of career changers which showed that individuals were prepared to relinquish expert status and begin again as long as the change aligned with their goals and values. Conversely, Williams (2010) found that career-change-teachers' inability to transfer knowledge and skills from a previous occupation to their new one was highly stressful; a finding supported by Murray et al's (2014) meta-synthesis, which showed career change to be "cognitively taxing" (p. 440), an experience exacerbated by the fact that novices often received little guidance during transition. This dispute over the ease of 'starting over', however, may have more to do with the type of knowledge and/or skill being transferred than transferability per se i.e. whether it is of a general (e.g. communication skills, policy) or job/occupation-specific nature e.g. how to dress a wound. Secondly, there is the question of whether individuals have to pass through each stage in the novice to expert sequence (Gobet & Chassy, 2009; Klein, 2017). Some individuals, for example, may be able to bypass parts or whole stages based on existing underlying skill or ability – e.g. 'leap frog' from 'novice' to 'competent' status or beyond – or else may be simultaneously 'competent' in one aspect of a work role, 'expert' in another, and 'novice' in another.

4.3 DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Before discussing how success is potentially recaptured it would be useful to clarify and differentiate between the meanings of 'learning' and 'development', particularly since the two terms are often used interchangeably but have quite distinct connotations.

According to Billet (1999) learning is a "product of everyday thinking and acting" (p. 152) whereas Law (2013) defined it as "a cognitive process of acquiring skill and knowledge" (p. 3). Deliberate and goal-directed, or the unintended consequence of activity i.e. incidental (Marsick & Watkins, 2001); in either form it is associated with transformation. Bass and Vaughan (1966), for instance, saw it as "relatively permanent change in behaviour that occurs as a result of practice or experience" (p. 8) but Alexander et al (2009) offer a yet more comprehensive view, seeing it as a:

“multidimensional process that results in a relatively enduring change in a person or persons, and consequently how that person or persons will perceive the world and reciprocally respond to its affordances physically, psychologically, and socially. The process of learning has as its foundation the systemic, dynamic, and interactive relation between the nature of the learner and the object of the learning as ecologically situated in a given time and place as well as over time.” (p. 186)

Development, on the other hand, is the outcome of a learning process i.e. what an individual is able to do as a consequence of learning, as well as the on-going accumulation of knowledge and/or skill i.e. “the process of growth and learning, resulting in change or progression” (Clifford & Thorpe, 2007 p. 8). As with learning, development also has a temporal element in that it relates to change, acquisition, and enhancement over time; change in what individuals know in abstract terms (i.e. theoretically or conceptually), in what they can do (i.e. levels of skill), and change in how this can then be applied to real-life situations.

Clearly then, learning and development are two sides of the same coin in that learning can lead to development and, in turn, enhanced ability (development) can facilitate yet more learning. How learning and development take place, however, is contested i.e. whether it is internal and individual (i.e. cognitive, behavioural, attitudinal, motor), or social in nature. At one end of the spectrum constructivists (e.g. Kivinen & Ristela, 2003; Tobias & Duffy, 2009) argue that knowledge/skill is built or ‘constructed’ through individual discovery, effort changes in how information is stored in the brain; at the other end, social constructivists (e.g. Shabani et al, 2010; Noe et al, 2014) argue that it is acquired via social interaction; ‘scaffolded’ through support from ‘more able others’. These theories have attracted considerable attention and it is neither the aim or within the scope of this literature review to offer a thorough re-examination; instead a discussion of those theories that clearly relate to career change is presented.

4.4 LEARNING THEORY: INDIVIDUATED OR SITUATED

During the 1970s, theorising about ‘andragogy’, Knowles et al (2011) proposed a set of principles said to underpin adult learning: *need to know* (why, what, how), *self-direction* (autonomy), *previous experience* (mental models), *readiness to learn* (related to life or task), *orientation to learning* (problem-centred; contextual), and *intrinsic motivation* (personal payoff).

Two decades later DeFillippi & Arthur (1994; Arthur et al, 1995; 2017) spoke about the ‘intelligent career’, arguing that individual competence is based on knowing *how* (knowledge and skills), knowing *whom* (relationships and networks) and knowing *why* (motivation and career identity). Of course, learning – and the gradual development of competence – is also influenced by a variety of other factors such as cognitive ability, self-belief and context, and no single theory (Gagne, 1967), therefore, is likely to capture the entirety of human learning. This has not dissuaded countless theorists from developing them, however, although the extent to which learning is rational and cognitive, or social in nature remains contested.

4.4.1 THE INDIVIDUATED VIEWPOINT

Many learning theories are process-related i.e. refer to change in knowledge and/or skill over time. One of the most prominent is Kolb’s (1984; 2014) experiential learning theory. Building on Dewey’s (Hébert, 2015) earlier theory that experience is a bridge between abstract thought and understanding, Kolb argued that learning – or transformation – takes place following or during direct experience with phenomena, which then brings about changes in personal development (skills, capabilities), education (knowledge) and work (application).

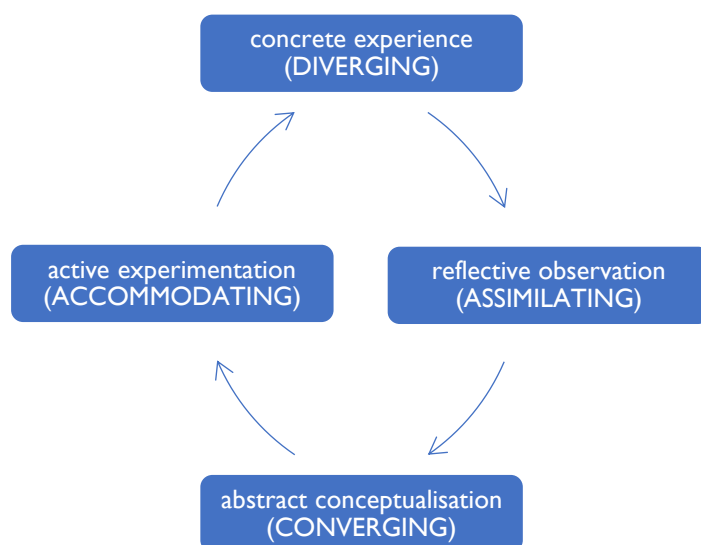


Figure 6: Kolb’s learning cycle and learning styles (1984)

This now well-known ‘learning cycle’ presents learning as a multi-linear process i.e. rather than a one-off event, learning is iterative – somewhat similar to Bruner’s (1966;

Smidt, 2011) ‘spiral curriculum’ where deeper, more complex and nuanced understanding develops through exposure to increasingly advanced levels of knowledge – and argued that the ‘ideal learner’ (Peterson et al, 2015) would be flexible i.e. prepared to learn in different ways, and able to independently navigate the entire cycle (see Figure 6) which broadly divides between: ‘**grasping**’ i.e. *concrete experience* (new situation or skill) or *abstract conceptualisation* (formulating ideas, coming to conclusions, developing connections), and, ‘**transformation**’ i.e.

reflective observation (new knowledge/ skill is added to or updates existing schemas) or *active experimentation* (refining, testing ideas and updating schemas).

However, the 'learning styles inventory' (LSI), now in its fourth iteration (Kolb & Kolb, 2011) also acknowledged that individuals may have preferences for particular modes of learning (see Figure 6): 'diverging' (concrete), 'assimilating' (reflection) 'converging' (abstract) or 'accommodating' (practical). Over time this argument has gained widespread support. Lai et al's (2015) application of the LSI, for example, found that most neurosurgeons' prefer to 'assimilate' i.e. to 'reflect', whilst Ming and Armstrong (2015) found that extraverted managers prefer 'concrete grasping' and 'active experimentation', and Joy and Kolb's (2009) study of learning preference across a range of countries highlighted the effect of cultural relativity i.e. collectivist cultures tend to favour a more abstract learning approach.

In addition, Kolb and Kolb (2009; Passarelli & Kolb, 2011) have since extended the core theory to formulate the 'learning way', a set of competencies which include viewing oneself as a learner who trusts the process (*learning identity*), having a positive disposition towards learning (*learning spaces*), connecting with others who foster/support learning (*learning relationships*), paying attention to what is being learnt (*mindful experiencing*), and actively setting out to experience and learn (*deliberate practice*), all underpinned by the ability to think about thinking or actively and deeply reflect (*metacognition*). The implication is that whilst the cycle provides the 'basics' of learning, a foundation of underpinning 'learning attitudes' are needed in order to maximise the benefits.

Despite research adding yet more weight to the argument that most learning is experiential however – such as Becker and Bish's (2017) recent management development study which found that both individual needs and experiences, along with learning context can affect saliency i.e. judgement of the value of learning processes – Kolb's work has still been criticised: the LSI for being overly simplistic and not being empirically validated (Tennant, 2019); the theory, for neglecting the social aspect of learning and offering an overly individualistic and cognitive view of individuals as rational and in control of their learning choices. Kolb's 'ideal learner' has also been called into question by Tennant (2019), who argues that individuals may have little or no awareness that they are learning or possess any particular sub-stage preference. Kolb (2014) countered, however, that whilst the individual sits at centre stage of this theory, learning is a complex phenomenon and contextual and social factors have not been

disregarded but viewed as background enablers or factors that can potentially hamper progress.

Kolb's work, then, points to learning as an internal, cognitive activity. A range of other learning theories, however, take issue with this argument; not by disputing the function of internal mechanisms but arguing that the social or vicarious aspects of learning also play an important role.

4.4.2 THE SEMI-INDIVIDUATED VIEWPOINT

Straddling the constructivist/social-constructivist divide is Mezirow's (1997) Transformative Learning Theory (TLT); and another relevant theory given the focus of this thesis. Indeed it captures the very essence of complex career change i.e. empowerment, risk-taking and changing 'form' (Kegan, 2000). Like Kolb, Mezirow also saw learning as a process and one that

is recursive, but adds that this can be 'epochal' (sudden and dramatic) or 'incremental' (progressive); in either case involving individuals working through a series of phases (Figure 7).

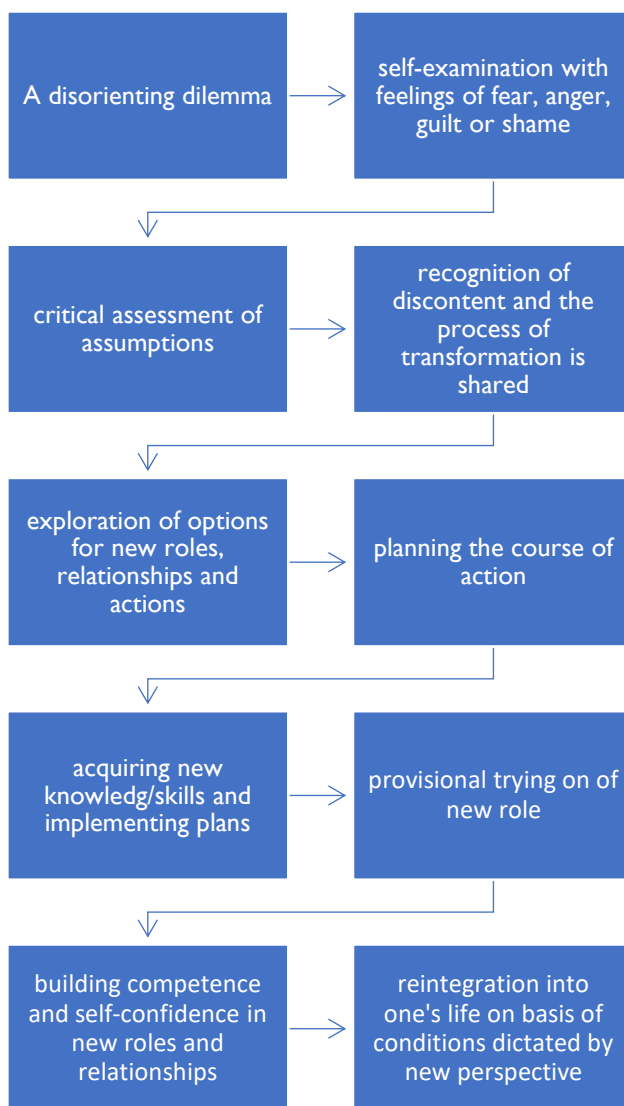


Figure 7: Mezirow's (1997) Transformative Learning Theory

Unlike Kolb's theory, however, Mezirow argues that the transformation process contains some degree of psychological discomfort or dissonance depending on the level of change being experienced: for example, a simple career change is likely to be less 'painful' than a complex career change where the individual makes a wholesale change in both occupation, employer and, potentially, location; the greater the upheaval, the greater its disruptive

capability. The primary reason for such discomfort is said to be an individual's 'frame of reference' or mental 'habits' (Calleja, 2014) i.e. accumulated experiences and associated sense-making which have shaped and embedded perceptions over time. According to Mezirow, the more or less prepared an individual is to explore, ruminate and potentially dispense with these, the more limiting or liberating the experience will be.

Mezirow also attributed depth of learning and developmental progress to reflection but, unlike Kolb, argued that it needed to be critical i.e. involve deep exploration and analysis of experiences, behaviours and attitudes (Mezirow, 2012; Mezirow & Taylor, 2009; Tennant, 2019). This process, itself, underpinned by imagination and discourse; developmental progress being predicated upon being open to (Baumgartner, 2001) 'thinking outside the box' as well as out loud, and to fully exploring events or dilemmas. A closely associated facilitator – based on Taylor's (2007) review of forty studies – is trust in the process and feeling safe; a key outcome being greater comfort when asked probing/challenging questions.

TLT is not without its critics however. Fleming (2018), for instance, argued that it is overly rational and does not pay sufficient attention to the role of emotion in learning i.e. some transformations may not make sense or may initially appear to go against the individual's interests such as deciding to give up a successful career as an Accountant to become a Teacher. Baumgartner (2001), however, defended TLT, stating that it is a "complex process involving thoughts and feelings" (p. 18), and updates by Taylor and Cranton (2012) have also acknowledged the affective dimension; in particular the value of social relationships. The concept of 'restorative' learning has also been added by Lange (2004) to expand the nature of transformation from 'disruptive' i.e. involving a measure of pain, to changes that enable individuals to get closer to their authentic self.

4.4.3 THE SITUATED VIEWPOINT

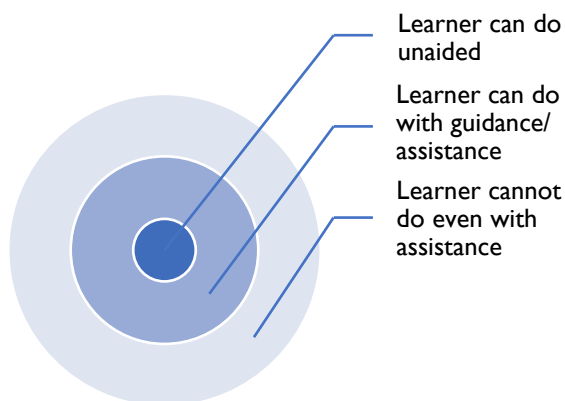


Figure 8: Vygotsky's ZPD

At the other end of the continuum lies the social constructivist view of learning (Sclater, 2012). Early in the development of learning theory, this was advocated by Vygotsky (2011), who argued that learning is an

'outside-inside' process, with learning being gradually absorbed through repeated exposure to the social world. Like Kolb, however, Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD – see Figure 8) argued that individuals will occupy one or more 'zones' as they learn: the 'comfort zone' i.e. capable of doing something alone and unaided, the 'intermediate' zone i.e. capable of doing something with support, or the 'challenge' zone i.e. incapable and in need of a 'more able other' for support/guidance i.e. co-creation.

The idea of 'co-creation' features in the work of numerous other psychologists and educationalists. Mercer (1995), for example, argued that peer learning has great value because individuals who take part in co-construction or 'cumulative talk' (p. 104) are less likely to cover up deficiencies in their knowledge and will therefore be more open to alternative ways of learning and developing over time. Wood's (1998) work, too, highlighted the benefits of sensitive scaffolding i.e. support related to – or contingent upon – an individual's existing as well as developing knowledge and skill; the supporter's level of control/guidance adjusting as competence and confidence increase. This was also found in Eisen's (2001) study of college teachers' joint peer-learning which showed that qualities such as trust, non-evaluative feedback, non-hierarchical status, voluntary participation, partner selection, shared goals and authenticity were also important.

A broader conceptualisation of social learning, however, can be found in Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory. Their argument is that learning takes place within 'communities of practice' (CoP), is complex and integral to any form of activity, transforms as it is constructed and used by a learner and, unlike cognitive-rational arguments (e.g. Kolb, 1984; 2014), is powerfully affected by the environment (e.g. politics, rules, norms) in which it occurs. Situated, then, means learning via interaction between an individual and the environment or "lived in world" (Lave, 2009, p. 202; Sclater, 2012). The implication is that learning is constant and not only an active conscious act but can be unconsciously internalised through social participation (Wenger, 2011; 2009; 2000). This being the case, learning can be seen as almost intuitive in that it does not require planning or volition or, as Eraut (2000) said, may occur in the 'interstices of formal learning contexts' (p. 133).

The application of Lave and Wenger's (1991) work is apparent in many domains, but importantly – given the focus of this thesis – to workplace learning and career changers. Most recently, for example, Burgess et al's (2019) work showed its application to be "enriching and rewarding" (p. 1) for medical students, whilst Hennekam et al (2019) observed its use in online

forums to facilitate music composer collaboration and professional development. In terms of beginning a new occupation too – such as becoming a Teacher-Educator – Harrison and McKeon (2010) argued that CoP is valuable since it recognises the novice's journey and inherent challenges of being 'peripheral' or on the margin of a new setting or team.

On the other hand, CoP has been criticised for not necessarily providing the most accurate explanation of how learning occurs (Billett & Pavlova, 2006), especially in terms of not recognising the intentional or agentic nature of learning. Yandell and Turvey (2007) also questioned the extent to which peripherality is possible in some learning situations; being a new school teacher, for instance, where full engagement rather than taking a back seat is the norm. The less than rosy reality of interacting with others has also been considered in that not all 'others' may be helpful or willing to offer support (Harrison & McKeon, 2010; Murray, 2006) and worse, some relationships may be asymmetrical (Eisen, 2001) and the greater power or influence possessed by the 'other' may lead to an abusive or less conducive learning partnership. In practical terms this could mean that career changers may avoid particular individuals/groups and thereby limit their learning opportunities.

4.5 LEARNING PROCESSES

Whichever theory is subscribed to, however, the thread that runs through them all is process i.e. change. In terms of how this relates to specific methods of learning, the over-arching process can be subdivided into two sub-processes: formal and informal. The form(s) these take is diverse; indeed, the ways individuals develop competence has changed quite markedly over the last half-century (Manuti et al, 2015) – the key difference between now and 'then' being who initiates the learning and how it is delivered or acquired i.e. the organisation or the individual. Over the last forty years learning has moved away from individuals attending in-house training to now seeking more bespoke solutions for their developmental need(s).

4.5.1 FORMAL LEARNING PROCESSES

Traditional approaches to the practice of learning have been formal i.e. intentional (Billett, 2016; Clarke, 2004), organisation-led (Alexander et al, 2009), 'off the job' (Manuti et al, 2015; Clarke, 2004) – whether face to face or via distance learning – often theoretical rather than practical or applied (Svensson et al, 2004; Gulati & Puranam, 2009), and generally validated or certified (Spaan et al, 2016). Formal processes are, therefore, normally associated with

pedagogic instruction such as lectures, assignments, making notes (Cerasoli et al, 2018) or structured learning such as training programmes (Eraut, 2000) i.e. the teacher/ tutor/ lecturer/ trainer decides what is included and how it is to be delivered. Indeed, Noe et al (2010) stated that formal learning is a “systematic, logical approach for practitioners to follow in programme design, delivery, and evaluation” (p. 280).

Consequently, formal learning processes possess variable degrees of value – whilst some formal learning can be individualised (e.g. coaching, mentoring) most forms are popular because they can be swiftly delivered and often simultaneously to a large group of people (Clarke, 2004), however their broad scope and non-individualised format means that they are rarely able to meet specific or individual learning needs (Cerasoli et al, 2018). Nor do they necessarily transcend the confines of the setting to become relevant to the learner or utilise the learner’s prior experience/ knowledge/ skill (Raelin & Coghlan, 2016). Furthermore, the extent to which they are utilised or of value to career changers is unclear (see section 4.6), especially in view of the broader nature of their transition i.e. they are not simply moving to a different organisation and transferring knowledge/skill from an existing occupation but have, instead, little or no foundation on which to build both from an organisational and an occupational standpoint. This is an aspect of learning which, therefore, warrants closer inspection.

4.5.2 INFORMAL LEARNING PROCESSES

In contrast to formal processes, informal methods are experiential (Cerasoli et al, 2018), “situation specific” (Spaan et al, 2016, p. 378), and often – but not exclusively – unplanned or a by-product of work and/or social interactions (Cunningham & Hiller, 2013; Marchington & Suter, 2013). According to Dale and Bell (1999) they take “place in the work context, relate[s] to an individual’s performance of their job and/or their employability” (p. 1), whereas for Marsick and Watkins (2001) informal learning is simply something that takes “place wherever people have the need, motivation, and opportunity” (p. 28). Earlier work by Marsick & Volpe (1999), however, went further: specifying a set of characteristics that informal learning processes generally share i.e. that they are “integrated with work and daily routines, triggered by an internal or external jolt, not highly conscious [but rather] haphazard and influenced by chance, an inductive process of reflection and action, linked to learning of others” (p. 5).

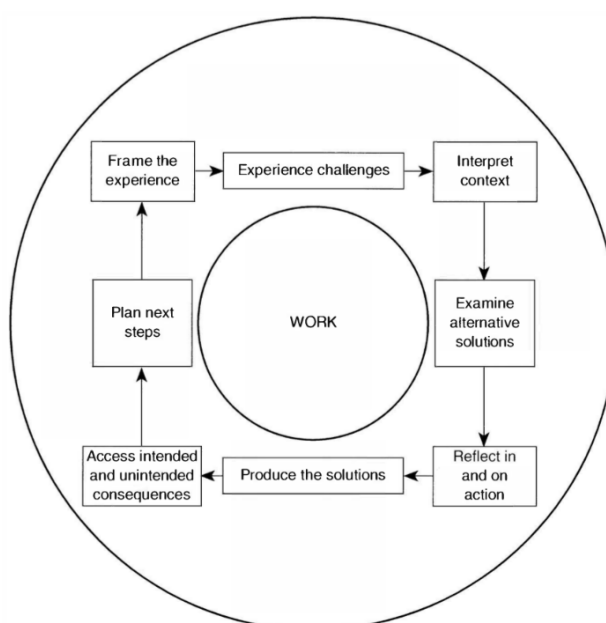
Furthermore, research now shows that informal learning, especially peer-relationships, constitutes the principal approach to learning (Garrick, 1998), with formal training having only

a “marginal” impact (Boud, 1999, p. 9). Wang et al (2013), for instance, point to experienced, mature individuals being more resistant to one-size-fits-all programmes; preferring tailored approaches and the freedom to adapt content to their own need(s). Indeed, there is now abundant evidence of its use: both Livingstone (1999) and Cerasoli et al (2018), for instance, found that 70-90% of organisational learning is now informal; Kyndt et al’s (2016) literature review showing the most identified activities to be reading professional literature, observation, collaboration with colleagues and reflection (used around 30% of the time) and learning by doing, internet browsing, trial and error, and experimenting (used around 20% of the time). This has subsequently led to calls (e.g. Sullivan & Ariss, 2019; Stillman et al, 2019; Czerniawski et al, 2018; Price & Reichert, 2017; Murray et al, 2014; Gardner, 2014) for research to investigate career development in terms of “what types of learning and development are required to achieve their goals” (Brown, 2015, p. 289).

A clear link has also been shown to exist between informal learning and career success (Boxall et al, 2007; Heslin, 2005). In Solowiej’s (2014) study of men working in female-dominated occupations, for instance, achievement of career success was attributed to use of informal learning processes including opportunities to socialise and build relationships with work colleagues, collaboration with colleagues, to giving and receiving informal support, informal recognition and feedback from work colleagues, and flexibility to achieve success in other areas of life. Indeed, Hirschi’s (2012) ‘career resources framework’ argued that to be successful individuals need to call upon/utilise a range of informal *human* (i.e. individual education, skills, occupational knowledge), and *social* resources (i.e. relationships with others such as networks).

Figure 9: Marsick and Watkin’s (1997) ‘Informal and incidental learning model’

Whilst contemporary research (Van der Rijt et al, 2012) suggests that informal learning is of greater value in career development terms, however, measuring its value is nevertheless problematic; not only because of the multitude of terms used to describe it (e.g. informal



processes, informal methods, informal types of learning, informal development etc), but particularly since it is often viewed as fundamental to doing a job, and can, therefore, be virtually invisible for performance management purposes (Boud & Middleton, 2003). Indeed, the extent to which informal learning is ever a planned and conscious activity is also debatable. Marsick and Watkins' (1997) 'informal and incidental learning model' (see Figure 9), for instance, highlights the tacit nature of some forms of informal learning i.e. those that are not necessarily recognised by the individual or consciously incorporated into practice, or else are the product of unintended or chance encounters/experiences. The implication here is that whilst informal learning can be planned and occur at a visceral level this does not necessarily have to be the case and, therefore, may not always be available for conscious inspection or use. From a research point of view this means that alternative approaches to data collection or memory retrieval would be helpful e.g. using qualitative and innovative methods.

Care should also be taken to avoid thinking of these two processes as dichotomous; adopting an expansive rather than restrictive approach may be more appropriate (Fuller & Unwin, 2004; Kim, 2005). Eraut (2004), for instance, argued that irrespective of contemporary preference for informal learning (e.g. Livingstone, 1999; Haim & Amdur, 2016; Cerasoli et al, 2018; Kyndt et al, 2016) the two processes are better thought of as existing on a continuum, with individuals moving 'to and fro' selecting the learning method that best fits their need. Barnett's (1999) suggestion that they need to be interpreted "under conditions of supercomplexity" (p. 29) is therefore quite helpful; a point echoed by Billett (1999; 2016) i.e. that learning is not a simple, cognitive input-storage-output process but is also shaped to some extent by both personal interpretation as well as others' learning, perceptions and experiences.

Furthermore, a recurring claim across research (Hurst, 2010; Gardner, 2014; Hunter, 2019) is that whilst informal learning and peer support is valued more research is warranted in terms of understanding the specific learning strategies (Hoeksel et al, 2019) that career changers use both during the initial transition period as well as post-career change (Anderson, 2009; Griffiths, 2011; Brown, 2015; Sorrel & Cangelosi, 2016) especially in terms of expert novices' interpretations (Tigchelaar, 2008; Williams, 2010) about which learning strategies are most effective (Fox et al, 2015). More recent literature (e.g. Tack et al, 2018; MacPhail et al, 2019) has also called for future research to focus on the link between learning activities and longer-term outcomes e.g. perceptions/experiences of success.

4.6 CAREER CHANGERS' USE OF LEARNING PROCESSES

Literature suggests that the following methods are particularly relevant to career changers: induction, formal qualifications, reflection, mentoring and relationships (communities of practice, networking and collaboration).

4.6.1 INDUCTION

Mullins (2005) describes induction as “attention to rules and regulations, familiarisation with the culture and methods of operation of the organisation, and personal training and development needs” (p. 816) which, according to Price et al (2015) can last up to five years. This can be delivered formally or informally but is most often provided via HR departments or managers (King et al, 2018) in the form of short-courses (face to face and/or online).

For career changers, induction serves a number of purposes and is therefore important to consider. For instance, health practitioners turned academics who took part in Shapiro’s (2018) study said that role-specific orientation and clarification of expectations helped to overcome feeling uncertain due to being in a new and unfamiliar environment. This is a point that also comes through clearly in Maaranen et al’s (2019) study of teacher-educators who described the early part of their transition as a period of survival and of feeling incompetent. Teacher-educators in Murray and Male’s (2005) study saw it as a “life raft” (p. 135) and, in order to help changers to adjust as well as to address discrepancies between expectations and reality, the solution proposed by some studies (e.g. Hurst, 2010; Haim & Amdur, 2016) is to provide a ‘structured’ programme which contains a clear schedule of learning. This is echoed in both Boei et al’s (2015) study of teacher-educators which concluded that an “informal learning trajectory is no longer sufficient”, and Day (1999) who argued that formal induction accelerates learning. Baker’s (2010) research of nurses-turned-academic along with Meizlish et al’s (2018) study of faculty in an American university, too, found high levels of satisfaction amongst those completing a formal orientation programme with most reporting it as a valuable experience e.g. helping improve preparation to teach and promoting awareness of support services/resources. Marfell et al (2017) go further still, adding that formal induction is a vital “preparation for teaching and navigating the academic culture [and can] contribute to a successful transition to a new role as a nurse educator” (p. 478).

Other research suggested that limited formal induction can lead to career changers “falling through the cracks” (Gardner, 2014, p. 108) and have a detrimental effect on both success and decisions to remain in a new occupation (Fry & Anderson, 2011; Anderson et al, 2014). McKeon and Harrison (2010), on the other hand, argue that in-depth reflective learning conversations are more effective in facilitating initial success than one-off, short and intense induction workshops. Indeed, earlier work by Harrison and McKeon (2008) argued that inappropriate induction can be a barrier to the early stages of learning, and pointed to the need for flexibility i.e. to orientation via working with experienced colleagues; a position also subscribed to by Trowler and Knight (2004) who stated that as ‘activity systems’, organisations help new starters to learn from existing communities of practice.

Murray’s (2005) study of new teacher-educators along with a 2010 follow-up, however, showed that quality of the delivery of both forms (e.g. a formal programme; ‘buddy’/mentor) is often inconsistent or inadequate. Its value is further diluted as a consequence of the one-size-fits-all approach generally taken (King et al, 2018; Watters & Diezemann, 2015) along with lack of follow-up and support from management (Gourlay, 2011; King et al, 2018). Given career changers’ perceptions of arriving ‘de-skilled’ (Murray, 2005) the need for induction to be tailored to their needs is therefore clearly important: indeed, both Wilkins (2017) and Wilkins and Comber’s (2015) studies of ‘elite’ career-changer-teachers, and Watters and Diezemann’s (2015) study of professional scientists-turned-science teachers found them to be ambivalent about induction, primarily because it failed to take prior experience into account.

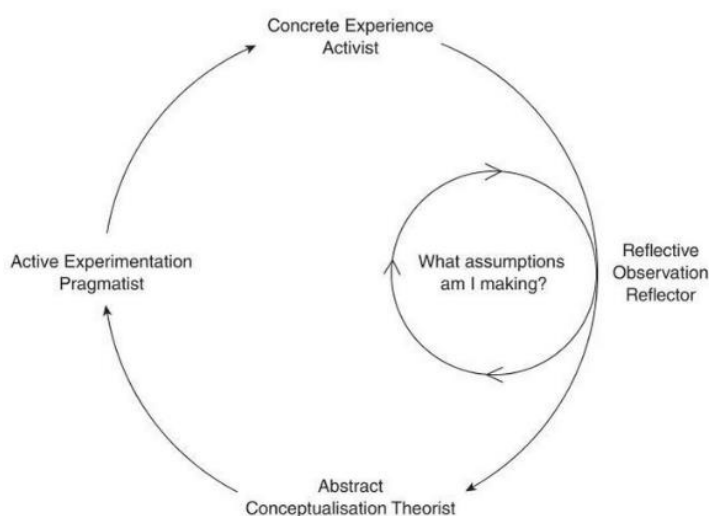
4.6.2 COURSES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Occupation-related qualifications (Eraut, 2000) e.g. post-graduate certificate in Higher Education (PG Cert), in addition to the potential for completion alongside informal learning methods (Manuti et al, 2015), are viewed as being effective for transmitting organisation-wide initiatives or policy changes such as information security. Becker and Bish’s (2017) research, for instance, found that individuals prefer this type of formal learning when developing factual or procedural knowledge, although Clarke (2004) pointed to limitations such as it not being embedded within the work individuals do or being aligned to learning needs. On the other hand, Fuller and Unwin (2004) argue that studying to gain such qualifications offers individuals the opportunity to share knowledge/understanding and to develop theoretical/conceptual knowledge; neither generally are associated with informal learning.

Obtaining occupation-specific qualifications is valued by career changers: both Boyd and Harris (2010), and Harrison and McKeon's (2010) showed that new teacher-educators benefitted from attending PG Cert lectures/seminars because it enabled informal learning via networking with other novices with whom they could share concerns and discuss learning needs (e.g. HE-specific pedagogic knowledge). The potential for formal courses such as a master's degree to offer career changers reassurance (Cooley & De Gagne 2016; Cleary et al, 2011) has also been noted. The appeal for nurse-educators – only 45% of whom felt confident about their skills and even fewer (10%) saw themselves as an expert – is to help address their biggest perceived challenge i.e. assessment and designing learning activities (Oprescu et al, 2017) especially since only 35% had a master's degree and 1.4% had a PhD. On the other hand, some research (e.g. Walker et al, 2018) argues that formal learning such as courses, workshops and presentations hold little value, in particular because of the lack of time given to follow-up and consolidate learning. This same report also highlighted that formal, initial teacher training (ITT) was not highly valued by career-change-teachers either; with only 53% believing that it prepared them for the realities of teaching. This therefore suggests that more research is needed in order to understand what use complex career changers make of qualifications in order to recapture career success.

4.6.3 REFLECTION

Kolb's (1984; 2014) argument that reflection is a key aspect of learning is supported by numerous writers (e.g. Boud, 1999; Mezirow, 1997; Schon, 1983) – the consensus being that without reflection little 'movement', real learning or progress is likely to be made. Schon's (1983) identification that reflection can occur both '*in action*' (Schon, 1983) i.e. reactions to and changes in thinking (reframing) or behaviour during an experience or event, and '*on action*' i.e.



potentially deeper thinking about experiences after an event is useful, but the distinction between the abstract, non-active form and action-oriented '*reflexivity*' (Savickas, 2016; Bassot, 2016) even more so.

Figure 10: Argyris' 'double-loop' applied to Kolb's learning cycle

Argyris' (1982; 2003; Bassot, 2016) 'Ladder of Inference', for instance, shows that individuals move through a series of steps when judging situations or people, or making a decision (*observable event, select data, add meaning, make assumptions, draw conclusions, adopt belief, take action*), and that any thinking errors along the way are likely to lead to a negative outcome unless a 'double loop' (revisiting) of the data is carried out to check/update beliefs/assumptions (see Figure 10). In terms of how this might affect career changers: processing of both their own and others' behaviours – if not verified – can potentially lead to or reinforce negative beliefs such as not being worthy of being a member of their new team/occupational group.

Research relating to career changers' use of reflection is quite sparse but nevertheless reveals it to be amongst a "palette of tools" (Selkrig & Keamy, 2015, p. 425; Phuong et al, 2018), with critical reflection being valued more highly than simple, descriptive reflection because of its potential to transform practice, particularly when facilitated through collegial conversations. Murray et al's (2014) study of nurses who switched occupation to become academics highlights their use of reflection in relation to overcoming 'impostor syndrome' i.e. as a way of coping with the stress associated with being a novice. Gardner (2014), too, highlighted nurse-educators' use of reflection and reflective journals to develop teaching skill and to help gain confidence, particularly across the first 2-3 years in their new role. This is something that also appears in pre-service teacher research where they are shown to value safe spaces and a shared approach (Auhl & Daniel, 2014) to reflecting on developing practice but, interestingly, also grew to value written reflections (Grier & Johnston, 2009) – which were initially avoided; the preference being for talking to colleagues and other new teachers about 'how things are going' – because of the opportunity to revisit journal entries and see the progress they had made.

4.6.4 MENTORING

Unlike reflection, mentoring has a significant presence in career change research, both formal i.e. planned and informal i.e. unplanned (Clutterbuck, 2005). According to Higgins and Kram (2001) mentoring is the "developmental assistance provided by a more senior individual within a protégé's organization" (p. 264). Clearly this will be the arrangement for some but for others, such as career changers. Mentoring will potentially involve an older (protégé) 'novice' and a younger (mentor) 'expert' (Finkelstein et al, 2003; Allen et al, 1997). Much has been written about mentoring in general as well as in terms of its application to particular groups e.g. nurses and healthcare professionals (e.g. Woolnough & Fielden, 2017) and athletes (e.g. Sandardos & Chambers, 2019). Clutterbuck (e.g. 2007; 2014), for instance, has written

prodigiously on the subject, arguing that having a mentor can be valuable for anyone, not least in terms of enhancing self-efficacy, job performance and progression, but also in terms of reducing anxiety (Arnold & Johnson, 1997).

For teacher-educators, some saw being provided with a mentor as a core 'need' (e.g. Ping et al, 2018; MacPhail et al, 2019) especially in terms of establishing positive work relationships with experienced colleagues but also because of the developmental gains that come as a result of bespoke provision (Stillman et al, 2019). On the other hand, Harrison and McKeon (2008) found that poor mentoring – *reactive rather than proactive and lacking in clarity regarding developmental goals* – was perceived as being worse than no mentoring at all, particularly in the case of mentors who have been formally allocated rather than self-selected. Numerous other studies (e.g. Guberman & Mcdossi, 2019; MacPhail et al, 2019; Van der Klink et al, 2017) also highlight that mentoring rather than being mentored can help extend and develop practice, particularly in terms of conducting research.

Career-change-teachers perceptions of mentoring is also quite mixed. For instance, whilst thought useful for fostering positive relationships and aiding retention (e.g. Haim & Amdur, 2016; Jorissen, 2003), those very early in their new role prefer tailored guidance from subject specialists who understand the specific demands they face (Griffiths, 2011; Walker et al, 2018) and for it to be developmental rather than evaluative. On the other hand, inconsistency along with disregarding prior experience has led some to view mentoring as a demotion (Anderson et al, 2014) and to widespread dissatisfaction (Wilkins, 2017) in others. A closely related issue is the one-size-fits-all approach generally adopted; Watters and Diezmann (2015) finding that career changers were “scathing in their criticisms” (p. 190). However, Green (2015) suggested that this seeming inability to match provision with need might be rooted in mentors' not having changed career themselves – instead having come to teaching via the traditional route (i.e. school-university-school) – and therefore not understanding career changers' needs.

An unmistakably positive picture emerges for health practitioners-turned-academics however: strong mentoring is seen as being useful both for gaining feedback and for aiding transition into a faculty role, especially for those who feel under-prepared e.g. in terms of pedagogic knowledge and skills (Shapiro, 2018; Grassley & Lambe, 2015; Murray et al, 2014). Weidman (2013), too, argued that for clinical nurses making the transition from expert to novice “feeling competent coincided with mentorship” (p. 106), particularly when mentor and protégé shared the same philosophy (Gardner, 2014). More recently, Mower (2017) argued that “the single

most useful prerequisite of a successful transition from a clinician to an educator is a mentor” (p. 113); an argument underscored by Nowell et al’s (2017) systematic review of the same year, which showed it to have a positive impact on a wide range of outcomes including *behaviour* (increased publications and retention), *career* (success i.e. rank; skill development/competence), *attitude* (job/career satisfaction; confidence; lower anxiety; greater empowerment), *relationships* (peer relationships/bonds which led to reduced perception of isolation and increased openness) and *motivation* (personal growth, self-awareness, reciprocal learning).

4.6.5 RELATIONSHIPS: CoP, NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

Trowler and Knight (2004) argue that “much professional learning is social, provisional, situated, contingent, constructed and cultural in nature” (p. 165) and this is reflected in the considerable amount written about the value of peer relationships as a method of learning; from the looser form where knowledge sharing (Cunningham & Hillier, 2013) takes place via informal conversations with individuals and wider communities of practice, through to networking and collaboration.

Grier and Johnston (2009), for instance, spoke of the value of building relationships within the teaching community that career-change-teachers enter, and how developing these can aid socialisation. Green (2015), too, acknowledged the benefit of working with the wider teaching team in terms of career changers’ gradual internalising of “established practices, rules and practices” (p. 53). More recently, Walker et al (2018) spoke of how helpful buddying or peer-to-peer support can be and of the value of having multiple of sources of support, especially those with greater experience or knowledge of the same subject specialism.

In relation to teacher-educators use of relationships, communities of practice feature extensively; the fragmented nature of some types of professional learning (Ping et al, 2018) and the fact that self-initiated development can be challenging because career changers often ‘don’t know what they don’t know’ making it particularly valuable. Maaranen et al (2019), for instance, argue that it “plays a critical role in this learning process” (p. 213), and is especially helpful when knowledge or a particular approach is contested (Tack et al, 2018); co-construction helping individuals to shape the agenda (Stillman et al, 2019) such as when agreeing on a collective developmental focus based on organisation objectives. Furthermore, MacPhail et al (2014) argue that since CoP is “meaningful, purposeful, and revolve[s] around authentic tasks” (p. 42) it is a more powerful form of learning because it comes from real, daily

experiences/work. As a type of 'apprenticeship model' (Harrison & McKeon, 2008) i.e. learning through interactions with experienced lecturers (Boyd & Harris, 2010; McKeon & Harrison, 2010) it can offer career-changers a lower-risk strategy for gaining competence, although it can also lead to the perpetuation of errors of course (Murray, 2006).

Unlike teacher-educators, however, CoP is rarely a research focus in studies relating to health practitioners-turned-academic. Hurst (2010) found that in trying to overcome anxiety and confusion, and adapt to a new working context, physiotherapy lecturers spoke of seeing themselves as belonging to a community of practice and also made use of informal chats with colleagues and peer learning; the study's focus on identity change, however, means that very little detail is provided about the nature of these forms of learning. Reybold and Alamia's (2008) 10-year study of female nurses-turned-academics, too, makes reference to CoP but in only relation to the lack of research exploring the phenomenological experience of preparing for and developing in a new academic role.

Research relating to relationships in general, however, is more apparent. Informal relationships are distinct from either formal or informal mentoring in that they are looser in structure and not confined to giving advice or guidance but involve open dialogue that can be exploratory, relate to meaning construction or involve sharing "collective wisdom" (Hartung & Wilson, 2016, p. 255). Those with colleagues who act as role models (Cleary et al, 2011) are shown to be helpful in terms of reducing stress (Weidman, 2013), feelings of being alone or feeling isolated, and their ability to reduce power distance (Nowell et al, 2017; Gardner, 2014) i.e. perceptions of social unease due to being at different positions in the team/organisation hierarchy. They are also utilised in the absence of a mentor or where formal or informal mentoring was believed to be inadequate (Milsom & Moran, 2015), especially in order to overcome the impact of identity change (McArthur-Rouse, 2008). Cooley and De Gagne's (2016) study of novice nurse faculty also found that along with personal qualities and completion of formal courses, building strong colleague relationships facilitated transition; a finding reinforced in Fullerton and Gherissi's (2015) research of midwife professional relationships where knowledge sharing and interprofessional communication help to foster co-operation and improved care outcomes. In fact, Shapiro's (2018) exploration of nurse-educators transition found that by far the most adaptive strategy was seeking guidance from more experienced colleagues; gaining feedback (Murray et al, 2014) and input in relation to specific aspects of the new role in particular. On the other hand, Goodrich (2014) identified that whilst relationships can be useful, nurses transitioning to become academics need

individualised support in order to be successful, and to have time to gradually develop confidence and self-esteem in their new role; readiness, in particular, being seen as key to achieving success in their new role.

Networking i.e. building relationships with individuals outside of the individuals' team or organisation (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; De Toni & Nonino, 2010) has also been considered in career change research. According to Murray et al (2014), for example "successful transition into academia was facilitated through participant involvement in the enjoyable activities of networking with colleagues, working with students, sharing their passion for occupational therapy and contributing to curriculum development" (p. 444). Whilst drawing attention to the need for more research in relation to learning via CoP and informal networks Boyd and Harris (2010) concede that networking with other teacher-educators during completion of their PG Cert was beneficial since it facilitated a critical stance toward pedagogy and also enabled meta-cognition i.e. reflection on the transferability of their own prior knowledge and skills. For career-change-teachers, too, networking is seen as a positive aid to development, especially continuing contact with peers with whom they completed initial training which enabled them to share concerns and insecurities or gaps in knowledge and skills. Although Walker et al (2018) added that it is just amongst a range of support options.

Finally, collaboration or working on joint projects (Downe & Finlayson, 2011; Gray & Wood, 1991) also features in career-change research although the volume depends on the occupational group studied. Research relating to health practitioners-turned-academic, for instance, is extremely thin. Indeed only Fullerton and Gherissi's (2015) study of midwife-educators explicitly talks about it and this does not solely look at the experiences of career changers. It does, however, highlight that working inter-dependently rather than in isolation helps practice-related communication and decision-making. Collaborative learning research is also quite sparse in relation to career-change-teachers. Here too, it tends to focus on either established or those in the early stages of transition (McCormack et al, 2007) such as NQTs and early career teachers, rather than career changers in isolation. On the other hand Walker et al's (2018) study provides evidence that working with more experienced colleagues on lesson design, schemes of work, or team-teaching aspects of the curriculum can help to quell self-doubt and insecurity, particularly for those early in their transition.

By contrast, teacher-educator research is more abundant. It, too, points to the benefits of collaboration (e.g. Guberman & Mcdossi, 2019; McKeon & Harrison, 2010); for example, that

regular collaborative rather than individual reflection can be useful in developing, challenging and extending practice (Ping et al, 2018; Selkrig & Keamy, 2015), with Kelchtermans et al (2018) – having established the *International Forum for Teacher Educator Development* (InFo-TED) – going further still to advocate an international approach. Other studies, however, point to teacher-educators having “relatively few opportunities for collaborative work” (Harrison & McKeon, 2008, p. 151; Kitchen et al, 2019) due to working in subject-specialist teams, with team boundary-crossing rarely happening outside shared topic areas such as professional studies (Nevin et al, 2009). Rivalry and competition (MacPhail et al, 2019) are also cited as potential obstacles in that whilst joint project work can be beneficial, colleagues are sometimes reluctant to share or cooperate; Van der Klink et al (2017) suggesting that this may be because concerns, activities and goals differ from one institution, context, or geographical location to another.

4.7 WHAT HELPS OR HINDERS LEARNING

The learning methods used to develop competence (or more) are only part of the picture however; psychological and situational factors underpinning their selection and application are also important to understand, particularly in view of their power to influence subsequent success or developmental progress. Many factors – dispositional and situational – can potentially impact on learning whether the motivation to learn or the act itself (Baert et al, 2006). Cerasoli et al’s (2018) meta-analysis, for example, highlighted the potential impact of antecedents, for instance, *individual predispositions* (e.g. adaptability, perceived need for learning), *demographics* (e.g. age, education, rank, experience), and situational factors such as *job characteristics* (e.g. demands, control, autonomy), *support* (from colleagues or being incentivised by the organisation), and *opportunities to learn* (e.g. potential for new learning, time). However, literature mostly focuses on negative factors or inhibitors (e.g. Kyndt et al, 2016) such as organisational culture, time, self-esteem, insecurities relating to competence and much of this is confined to non-changers and simple career changers’ experiences. Therefore, whilst providing useful, general information, the lack of complex-career-change-specific research is a clear limitation.

In terms of individual predispositions a range of individual traits and orientations are said to affect learning. Noe et al (2013), for example, found that the Big Five personality traits can

have an impact, in particular extraversion, openness and agreeableness which were linked to motivation to learn and being adaptable in terms of the form(s) of learning the individual was prepared to consider and use. Self-efficacy, too, is implicated in motivation to learn (Maurer & Palmer, 1999; Noe et al, 2013) with the individual's self-belief about personal performance in the role making them more or less likely to take part in or undertake learning. Tannenbaum et al (2010) also suggested that the extent to which an individual feels in control of their learning can improve learning uptake i.e. lead individuals to become proactive.

Deci and Ryan's (2002) 'self-determination theory' argues that personal growth is achieved through satisfying or meeting three different needs: the need to be competent, the need to be autonomous, and need to relate to others. Undertaking a complex career change is likely to make it harder to meet some of these needs than others and will, as a consequence, lead to increased levels of stress and anxiety. LePine et al's (2004) study, for instance, found that not understanding a task is more stressful than task difficulty or work volume, and also has a greater negative impact on self-efficacy which, by extension, can lead some to feel like an impostor.

Situational processes which can underpin and therefore strengthen learning, according to Cunningham & Hillier (2013) include planning (e.g. *defining parameters of learning, setting goals, alignment with learning needs*), engaging in active rather than passive learning (e.g. *being given time, space and support to learn; sharing expertise; learning with colleagues; identifying role models*), positive relationships (e.g. *clear communication; trust; mutual respect; developing good matches for joint learning or mentoring*) and learning which relates to the work being undertaken by the learner (e.g. *reflecting on learning; linking performance to appraisal*). Respect and trust, in particular, were seen as key requirements for effective learning especially in terms of the learner feeling safe and, therefore, 'opening up' i.e. not feeling restricted; a finding supported by numerous other studies (e.g. Manuti et al, 2015; Fletcher, 2016; Tews et al, 2017).

On the other hand, learning can be facilitated; coping strategies such as seeking social support, for example, can offset or moderate the effect of inhibiting factors such as impostorism (Vergauwe et al, 2015). Hobfoll's (1989; 2011) 'Conservation of Resources' theory is a useful way to understand the process. This argues that threat to or 'resource loss' is highly stressful, and that loss rather than the potential to recapture resources becomes the main focus of cognitive and emotional energies. In other words, being able to do something better is discounted or not valued whereas being unable to do something is felt sorely. In relation to

career changers this means that loss or unacknowledged prior/expert status, along with any perceived inability to function fully in new role/context, is likely to be a major preoccupation as opposed to focusing on having succeeded in being appointed to a new, potentially higher-status role (e.g. academic) or on any gains in new knowledge and/or skill.

In order to cope with this 'stress' Hobfoll (1989; 2011) argues that individuals undertake 'resource replacement' which involves reinterpreting threats as challenges, and 'resource investment' i.e. investing time in learning new knowledge/skills and, over time, developing competence and achieving success. The more 'resources' an individual perceives they have the greater their eustress i.e. positive wellbeing. Coping, for Hobfoll (1989; 2011), is not simply an individual pursuit, however, but a shared activity. His argument here is that groups (e.g. complex career changers) are likely to be affected by similar stressors and will therefore benefit from a collective or 'caravan' response. Interestingly, however, processes related to recapturing success i.e. 'resource investment', have not received as much interest as those relating to loss and this is therefore an aspect of career development – and career change in particular – that would benefit from attention.

Unlike Hobfoll's (1989; 2011) focus on collective coping, Folkman and Lazarus' (1980; 1985) earlier work on 'coping strategies' focus on the individual's experience stress and "behavioural efforts made to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts among them" (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, p. 223). Indeed, Lazarus (1993) argued that it is not the stressor but the individual's cognitive appraisals that contribute towards or mediate stress. His studies, in partnership with Folkman (e.g. 1980; 1985; 1987) identified two main branches, both based on undertaking an initial assessment of stressors: *problem-focused* serves the purpose of managing or actively responding to stressors and consists of 'confrontive coping' and 'planful problem solving', whereas *emotion-focused* coping, as the name suggests, involves use of one or more strategies aimed at coping with the feelings associated with stress: psychologically 'distancing' oneself, exerting 'self-control', 'accepting responsibility', physical 'escape avoidance', 'positive reappraisal' and/or 'seeking social support'. Despite having gained widespread recognition, however, interest in how these strategies apply to career change or, indeed, to learning and development per se is virtually non-existent and yet coping is highly relevant to these areas, particularly since certain forms of informal learning may mirror some forms of coping; for instance 'informal chats' would appear to relate to 'seeking social support'.

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter reinforces the argument that career change is a complicated endeavour, but has also shown that how individuals recapture success i.e. learn, is no less complex. It has established that learning can be an individual and rational undertaking and/or situated i.e. affected by the context within which it takes place, and that a range of processes can be used to facilitate transition.

However, the particular methods used and valued by career changers – as well as factors affecting their selection – is still not fully understood. One reason for this may relate to researchers' tendency to study one or a narrow range of learning methods i.e. research is typically undertaken within topic-specific 'silos' such as induction, mentoring, communities of practice etc. There is clearly a benefit in adopting this approach in terms of clarity, in providing details of what is used, the potential value of particular forms of learning etc. On the other hand, it results in understanding being limited to what is or was in fashion at the time the research was undertaken. For example, Byington et al's (2019) 'mapping' of research appearing in the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* between 1994 and 2016 showed a trend for studying mentoring. In addition, whilst this might establish what is happening in the real world it can also promote a self-fulfilling cycle i.e. lead to greater use of particular methods (such as mentoring) and therefore even more interest in this form of learning rather than reporting broader learner preferences/ behaviours and may, therefore, also unwittingly overlook other trends or important aspects of learning e.g. the impact of psychological factors such as impostor syndrome on selection and use of particular learning methods. Furthermore, a key finding from this literature review is that informal learning is often tacit and therefore conventional research methods may not have identified all informal learning and its effects; its impact on individual's perceptions of career success specifically is not well understood.

Therefore, despite the range of research that has been undertaken, there remains the clear need to open up and more fully explore career changers' learning. In particular, to gather personal insights (Lord, 2014) about transition from experts who have become novices (Hoeksel et al, 2019) in order to understand how they reframe their career (Brown, 2015), what learning needs they have (Anderson et al, 2014), and the type(s) of learning they use and value (Boyd & Harris, 2010; Logan, Gallimore & Jordan, 2016; Hunter, 2019) in their attempts to recapture career success.

4.9 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review has highlighted that whilst we have some understanding of career change there are clear gaps in terms of motivations, experiences of the process and how individuals select and use learning to help them to recapture success.

Clearly both motivation theories along with contemporary career theories go some way to explaining potential reasons for career change but these are largely confined to simple rather than complex career change. Indeed, the current debate in terms of who is doing the career changing – younger or older workers, and whether they have less or more experience i.e. have invested less or more in terms of human capital – suggests that there are still gaps in the current literature base particularly in terms of what motivates career changers and, therefore, what they will regard as career success in their new occupation. Shultz et al's (2019) recent comment about the extent to which current knowledge of more dramatic career change is “sparse” (p. 99) further reinforcing the need for more attention to be paid to this aspect of careers.

How career changers then make the initial transition and begin to form their new professional identities is also not fully understood or how changes in identity impact on perceptions of or attempts to recapture subsequent career success. Clearly there is a level of understanding in terms of the ‘essential’ process (i.e. thinking about it, doing it, settling in) but beyond this a clear gap remains in terms of what happens next i.e. during and following transition from one occupation into another, and especially in terms of subsequent use of informal learning and development. As Frank (2015) said, the change process “doesn't end with orientation ... (career changers) need continuing education to maintain competency” (p. 9). The concept of the ‘lingering identity’ and the extent to which this might impact on transition and development of competence is also not clearly understood. Current literature is clear about the taxing nature of moving from one field into a totally distinct one, and the challenges of potentially having a toe in both the past and the present, what it is unclear about however is how new professional identities develop over time. For example, how a career changer moves from seeing/thinking of themselves as a nurse when they are now researching nursing practice, or how someone who has had a successful career in banking and finance re-orientates to see themselves as an economics teacher.

These continuities and discontinuities create considerable stress for career changers however this too is an aspect of career change that has been seriously neglected especially in terms of how it might impact on their choice and use of learning in their new occupation and, as a consequence help or hinder their attempts to recapture career success. Doubt, feeling like an impostor and the need to 'save face' (impression management) in the new occupation are particularly pertinent to complex career change – and are clearly acknowledged as being present in career changers' experiences of transition – but how individuals' inability to accurately judge themselves in relation to others effects their learning (e.g. whether and when they seek support from others) has not been explored either in the short-term (i.e. during initial transition) or in the longer-term (e.g. 2-5 years post-change).

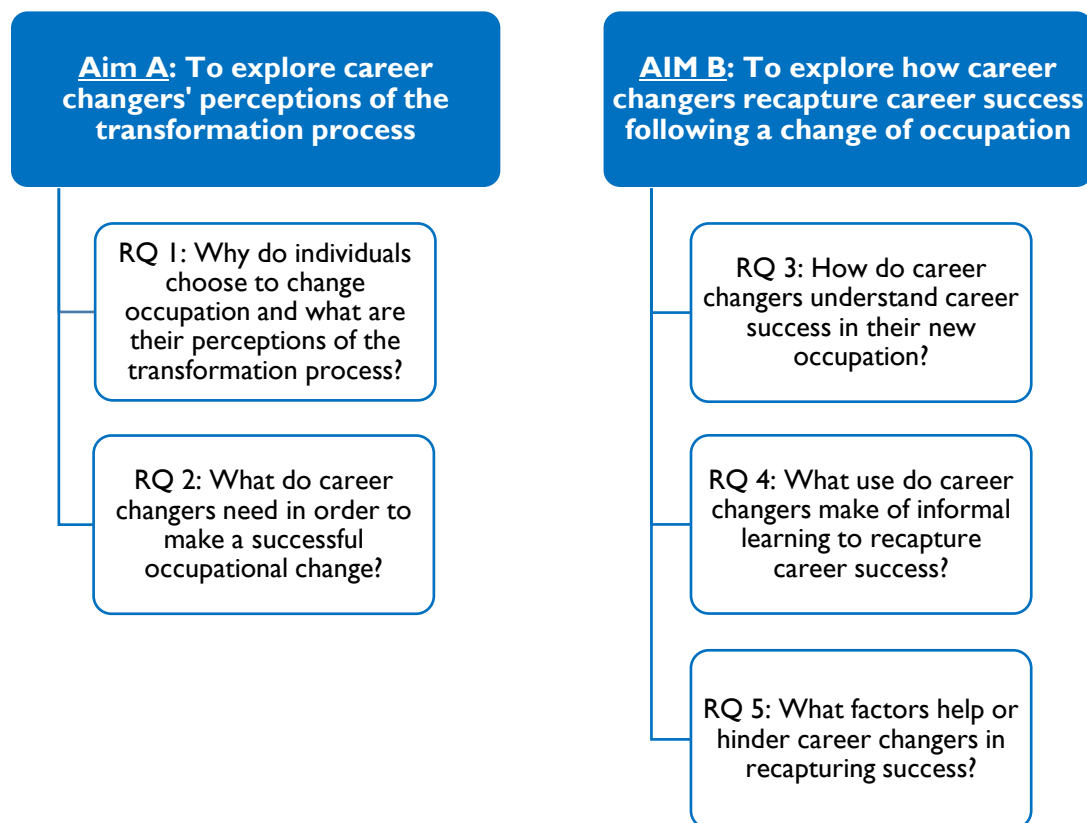
Moreover as individuals who transition from being experts to becoming a novice in their new occupation it is currently unclear how easy it is for complex career changers to transfer prior knowledge or experience from their previous occupation or whether this hinders progress in their new role. The existence of the 'intelligent career' concept offers some insight into development of new competence but does not provide details about when learning will take place. This is an important gap since it limits understanding of the extent to which particular forms of learning take place at particular points in the transition process. Linking back to what was said about the influence of doubt above, psychological discomfort associated with complex career change may inhibit an individual's approach to learning or mean that only certain types of learning are valued. Whilst there is clear evidence of a general preference for informal learning the extent to which this applies to complex career changers is less well understood – there is currently some understanding that a small range of informal processes are used but why these are valued or rejected, and when they are utilised remains unclear. For example, mentoring features widely and is presented in positive terms in general careers literature and yet preference for it is mixed in career change research. Knowledge relating to what helps or hinders complex career changers' learning, too, is quite limited. Dispositional and situational factors have been studied but those which appear to have the potential for greater impact (e.g. trust and insecurity) have attracted less attention; indeed, where they have been looked at they are only one of a range of factors and not considered in terms of the impact on either choice or timing of use of particular learning methods.

Methodological limitations have also been highlighted, most clearly pointing to the over-reliance on quantitative approaches. Recent career change research has repeatedly called for use of qualitative, in-depth and potentially longitudinal research to explore the personal

experiences of complex career changers and particularly in terms of accessing tacit information (e.g. Manuti et al, 2015; Shamsie & Mannor, 2013; Murray et al, 2014; Zacher et al, 2019; Fox et al, 2015; Tigchelaar, 2008; Williams, 2010) i.e. that which is hidden or difficult to access because of its emotional content. This approach to researching complex career change has been argued to be potentially more profitable because it would enable a broader picture to emerge particularly in terms of the interstices and connections between learning and career success.

In addressing these gaps in current literature this thesis therefore aims to explore career changers' perceptions of the transformation process, and to explore how career changers recapture career success following a change of occupation (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Aims and Research Questions



The following chapter will discuss the methodology adopted in order achieve these aims. Chapter 5 comprises a discussion of this study's research philosophy, adoption of a pragmatist epistemology, taking a qualitative approach, the multiple methods design, participants involved in the study, ethical considerations, and data analysis.

Chapter 5

METHODOLOGY

“There are three methods to gaining wisdom. The first is reflection, which is the highest. The second is limitation, which is the easiest. The third is experience, which is the bitterest”

— *Confucius*

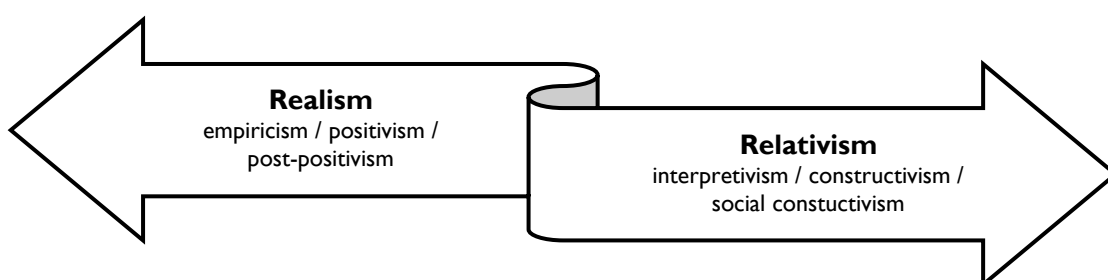
5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research philosophy i.e. the ontological and epistemological basis of this study, and is followed by a detailed explanation of the specific methods used to collect data and the rationale for their selection. The design of the study, details of participants, along with data management and ethical considerations are then presented and, finally, an explanation of decisions related to, and application of, analytical tools is provided.

5.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Research philosophy – ontology – is concerned with what it is possible to know or discover (Willig, 2001) i.e. the underpinning beliefs held by researchers. It also governs subsequent research design and what constitutes valid data and research outcomes, but is primarily concerned with the ‘stance’ taken by researchers (Boucher, 2014); their ways of seeing, view of reality or orientation towards what they are studying. In essence, it revolves around the extent to which a researcher believes that what we can know is accessible (realism) or inaccessible (relativism) – see Figure 12 – below.

Figure 12: The interconnection of research philosophy, design, method



The **ontological stance** taken in this thesis is that it is accessible to some extent i.e. it is possible to know and discover some aspects of human behaviour but that others are tacit by nature. The related **epistemological stance** (how something can be known) therefore, is pragmatic i.e. whilst erring towards the relativist end of the continuum (see above) the position taken in this thesis lies between the two polarities (Prabash, 2012). It is not believed that all knowledge is observable or that irrefutable fact can be generalised and provide universal truths, but neither does this thesis subscribe to the view that no two people (Burr,

2003) will perceive or understand a lived experience in the same way (e.g. phenomenology, hermeneutics).

Table 6: Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology (Prabash, 2012)

| | Positivist | Interpretivist |
|--|---|---|
| Ontology | | |
| Nature: being/world | Have direct access to real world | No direct access to real world |
| Reality | Single external reality | No single external reality |
| Epistemology | | |
| 'Grounds' of knowledge/ relationships between reality and research | Possible to obtain objective knowledge; research focuses on generalisation/ abstraction; thought governed by hypotheses/theories | Understood through 'perceived' knowledge; research focuses on specific and concrete; seeks to understand specific context |
| Methodology | | |
| Focus of research | Concentrates on description and explanation; detached, external observer | Concentrates on understanding/ interpretation; researchers want to experience what they study |
| Role of the researcher | Distinguishes reason from feeling; aims to discover external reality; strives to use rational, consistent, verbal, logical approach; seeks to maintain clear distinction between facts and value judgement; distinguishes between science and personal experience | Allows feeling/reason to govern actions; partially creates what is studied/meaning of phenomena; pre-understanding is important; distinction between facts/value judgments less clear; accepts influence from both science and personal experiences |
| Techniques used | Formal statistical methods | Primarily non-quantitative |

Interestingly, despite being most closely associated with natural sciences realism features prominently across Psychology (Cassell & Symon, 2011; Johnson & Cassell, 2001; Symon & Cassell, 1998) and Occupational Psychology including career change, success and learning research. For example, use of questionnaires/surveys in job analysis, career change motivation and coping research (Cabrera, 2007; Vogelsang et al, 2018); job satisfaction scales (e.g. Zhou et al, 2013); career success measurement (e.g. Shockley et al's, 2016 development of the 'subjective career success inventory'); meta-analytic studies (e.g. Hirschi et al's, 2018 predictors of career success; Cerasoli et al's 2018 study of informal learning antecedents) and even running controlled experiments (e.g. Fry's 1976 study of success, failure and self-assessment). The argument here is that reality exists apart from human influence (Johnson &

Cassell, 2001) and that objective facts can be ascertained by controlling and replicating conditions; its concern with accuracy, cause and effect, testing theories and hypotheses or with observing specific, isolated behaviours with a view to generalising discernible patterns is, of course, completely appropriate when investigating certain phenomenon e.g. brain architecture or prevalence of particular types of behaviour (Table 6).

Positivist researchers' claims of accuracy, of course, rely on the ability to falsify (Popper, 2002a; Earp & Trafimow, 2015) – test, challenge, refute, update or replace – discovered knowledge; for a hypothesis to be “conclusively decidable” (Popper, 2002b, p. 17). This is a goal Popper himself (Scotland, 2012) later took issue with however, arguing that research often raises more questions than it offers firm answers. Billig (2013) also questioned why psychology should wish to “cling fast to the belief that the route to knowledge is through the accumulation of experimental findings” (p. 179) since phenomena is often complex and contextualised. Indeed, Earp and Trafimow (2015) suggest that informative and credible research needs to acknowledge inherent variability and nuance. This is particularly important when studying career change because of the difficulty individuals have in easily or quickly recalling specific memories or making connections between experiences and outcomes e.g. the contribution of a particular form of learning and subsequent career success. Adopting a qualitative approach, on the other hand, can reveal deeper levels of insight.

The positivist hegemony is losing its power – albeit slowly – within psychological research, however, and being challenged by a growing number of researchers who see the merit of adopting a more relativist stance. Their argument is that greater explanatory power is achievable when the existence of multiple realities is recognised (Willig, 2001) i.e. that there is a value in understanding and accepting that experiences, and the meaning attributed to them, are in some way constructed – whether individually and socially. For instance, the extent to which career changers' interactions with colleagues in their new workplace is a positive contributory factor in facilitating career success.

The position taken in this thesis is that knowledge exists on two planes: the real, objective and independent, and the subjective, socially-situated and constructed (Zimmerman, 2015). Whilst individuals' experiences and perceptions may be relative to the context and time in which they take place, some may be shared with others i.e. have an external reality, independent of that individual's views. Rather than subscribing to the view that only what applies to the majority constitutes valid knowledge, behaviour and experience is, instead, viewed as being multi-

layered (Black, 2006), where some aspects will be more easily accessible (e.g. personal definitions of success), but other experiences of career change may be less so. For example, attributing value to particular types of informal learning in terms of their contribution to subsequent career success. This therefore means that data will be combination of personal, complex and nuanced interpretations (e.g. rationalisations and emotional responses to experiences, reasons for and feelings about changing occupations, perceptions about and conceptualisations of career success, specific reasons for selecting and using particular informal learning methods, and the value they place on these in terms of subsequent career success) set alongside facts about lived experiences with which others can identify (e.g. selection/use of particular types of informal learning).

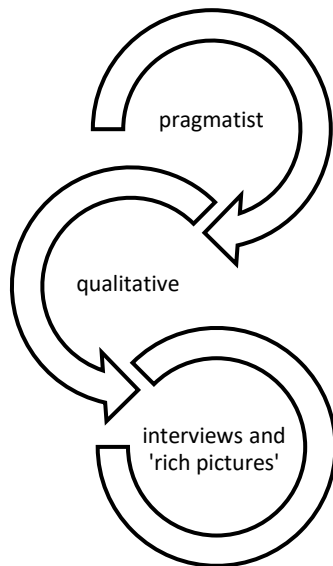
This 'between-the-lines' stance is also apparent in a number of contemporary studies (e.g. Bonneywell's (2017) study of perceptions of the utility of coaching; Owen's (2018) exploration of the challenges of career-change-nurses who became academics; Spaan et al's (2016) study of GPs' use of informal learning to enhance formal learning; and Santos' (2015) in-depth interviews with academics about barriers to career success) and reinforces the argument that objective measures such as surveys are unlikely to be uncover certain aspects of the lived experience and that looking beneath surface layers to the "deep and truly illuminating" (Slaney, 2015, p. 344) will enable greater insights to be gained into occupational change, learning and career success. In essence then the argument of this thesis is that both realism and relativism have limitations (Cornish & Gillespie, 2009) in the study of career change: in seeking to present a single truth a realist epistemology may not fully capture the complexity inherent in career change and relativism, whilst providing valuable insights, may not recognise shared experiences.

5.2.1 A PRAGMATIST EPISTEMOLOGY

By contrast, adopting a pragmatist approach would acknowledge the situated nature of reality i.e. that it is "shaped by social context" (Guyon et al, 2018, p. 155) but also enable the identification of patterns across a range of occupations.

This approach also suits the practical nature of Occupational Psychology through offering practical recommendations, embedding rigour, and accurately reflecting lived experience – in the case of this thesis and focus on research questions that are of value to both 'would-be' and

experienced career changers, as well as to organisations, regarding the realities of the occupational change experience as well as how career changers recapture a sense of success.



This approach means that whilst phenomena is brought to the surface for conscious inspection it is also followed by some form of action. As Cornish and Gillespie (2009) state “knowledge is a tool for action and ... should be evaluated according to whether it serves ... desired interests” (p. 800) i.e. research needs to possess utility (Guyon et al, 2018) and be of use to those it informs. This is a position which has become increasingly attractive in psychology: for instance, Steele’s (2009) research which considered the practical value of career anchors to individuals, professionals and organisations involved in career discussions/decisions and, more

recently, Akkermans et al’s (2018) acknowledgement that research needs to provide practical insight for young workers experiencing career shocks (change).

Figure 13: Occupational psychology research typology

| | | Theoretical/Conceptual content | | | |
|---------------------|--|--------------------------------|-----------|------------------|------------|
| | | High | | Low | |
| Practical Relevance | | Method rigour | | Method rigour | |
| | | High | Low | High | Low |
| High | | Potent | Prescient | Pragmatic | Popularist |
| Low | | Proficient | Pompous | Pedantic | Puerile |

Pragmatism also recognises and responds to the on-going researcher-practitioner divide within Occupational Psychology highlighted by both Gelade (2006) and Arnold (2004), who question how far some published research is fit for purpose; being either too theoretical or else failing to offer clear implications or recommendations for practice. This position also undermines the BPS (2018b) stated aim of Occupational Psychology which is to “increase the effectiveness of the organisation and improve the job satisfaction of individuals”. As a consequence, adopting this approach enables recommendations to be made at both the individual and

organisational level and is also useful in guiding both existing and potential occupational changers, professionals who advise them, and organisations who seek to more effectively support their career development. It is an approach which also aligns with Anderson et al's (2001) 'quadrant 1' or 'pragmatic science', which revolves around having a robust methodology and producing practical interventions, and with Arnold's (2004) adaption of the research typology (see Figure 13), which also meets the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* publication criteria.

5.2.2 A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Given that the approach taken to gathering data originates out of the guiding epistemology, meaning derived from data collected during this research is interpreted rather than accepted at face value or as a fixed reality i.e. it is **inductive** (bottom-up).

This ties most intuitively with adopting a **qualitative** approach, where the researcher is "interested in how people make sense of the world and how they experience events" (Willig, 2001, p. 9). In practice this means that rather than seeking to establish a causal relationship between the 'experience' and the 'experiencer', the individual's 'voice' is the 'item' of value. For instance, career changers' rationale in making particular informal learning choices, such as who to have informal chats with. In other words, data is treated as being *representative* of experience/phenomena (Byrne, 2001) rather than a facsimile, and seen as being transferable or applicable to people other than the participant.

A number of important factors have been considered in relation to adopting this qualitative approach: reflexivity, research quality and generalisability.

Reflexivity is considered important because of the potential influence a researcher may have before, during or after data collection (Willig, 2001; Tracy, 2010). This is not necessarily something that leads to bias however, but can be advantageous (Berger, 2013; Morse, 2015). Indeed, reflexivity can be viewed as helpful since self-awareness may help to advance lines of enquiry and result in more open and complete responses from participants. To this end, experience of complex career change and of working in teaching (High School and University) was viewed as an asset rather than a source of potential bias that participants would need to be protected from. In particular, the ability to adapt questioning in order to encourage

participants to extend their thinking in connection with perceptions and memories of career change and add follow-up 'probes' in order to check understanding or seek clarity was thought beneficial.

Research quality is key to methodological rigour (also see section 5.3); with researcher trustworthiness and authenticity featuring prominently in contemporary research papers (Cassell & Symon, 2011; Pawson, 2006; Anderson et al, 2001). The argument being that quality and credibility are not solely achievable through quantitative methods – as measured, for instance, by the external reliability – but also via qualitative explorations of lived experiences. Tracy (2010), for example, argued that where quantitative studies rely on triangulation, qualitative research more appropriately relies on thick description and crystallisation to confirm findings and reveal complexity. This was the approach taken in the current study i.e. in order to make manifest what was latent – for instance, reasons why career changers select particular individuals to engage with for informal chats – the researcher used prompts during the interview to encourage participants to provide fuller or deeper explanations, paraphrased and summarised responses, and sought reflections/explanations of the meanings of Rich Picture (RP) sketches.

All of which might lead to the expectation of a proliferation of qualitative research but this is not the case. A 5-year review of research across a range of occupational psychology journals found that use of qualitative methods alone – as opposed to mixed – is under-represented (Cassell & Symon, 2011) and is attributed partly to the long-standing 'paradigm war' i.e. negative views about rigour and credibility (Denzin, 2008). Indeed, Denzin et al (2006) suggest that many (positivists) view qualitative research as being akin to fiction or simple common sense and, by extension, it fails to meet requirements for scientific rigour. On the other hand, they also raise questions about so-called levels of objectivity and transparency associated with quantitative methods and suggest that its focus on statistical measurement can obscure insights into the very phenomena it seeks to reveal.

The inability to replicate findings is also held out as a criticism i.e. to test and re-test, and therefore, the inability of qualitative research to offer verifiable reasons for particular phenomena (Hellman, 2017). This has had a powerful influence on psychology, although seems to miss the point of what qualitative research sets out to accomplish i.e. it is less about establishing 'the truth' than 'a truth' (Denzin, 2009). This is a position advocated by numerous writers (e.g. Skovdal & Cornish, 2015; Wiles et al, 2011) who argue that replicability is not

necessarily the best measure of quality. To quote Denzin (2008), perhaps those carrying out qualitative research “need to remind the resurgent post-positivists that their criterion of good work applies only to work within their paradigm, not ours” (p. 321); a ‘call to arms’ which has been responded to in numerous articles arguing not only for the virtues of qualitative research but also for the numerous ways in which quality can be assured e.g. Tracy’s (2010) ‘big tent’ criteria.

Therefore, whilst careers and success-related research can demonstrate generalisability (e.g. Shockley et al, 2016; Hirschi et al, 2017; Zhou et al, 2017), it may not accurately capture the lived experience of all individuals. In fact, in continuing to adopt this approach research fails to reflect a growing call for research to reflect the individuals ‘voice’ (Dries & Verbruggen, 2011) especially in terms of where an individual is situated in their career (Arthur et al, 2005). This is a position which also echoes Heslin’s (2005) call for more practical or pragmatic research in order to extend understanding of “what employees want ... (and) how people in different career contexts conceptualise their career success” (p. 117), and specifically look at career change and the potential psychological conflict resulting from the gap between prior and ‘new career’ success.

This is not to suggest that qualitative research does not take place or contribute to the occupational psychology knowledge base, it does – for instance, Archer and Yates’s (2017) work highlighting how workplace coaching improves confidence; Cunningham and Hillier’s (2013) work on the value of informal learning, and Du and Wang’s (2017) work looking at factors contributing to informal mentoring quality – but more is needed; with the caveat that caution needs to be exercised to avoid an ‘anything goes’ approach (Denzin, 2008). In addition, whilst single method studies can yield large quantities or rich data, some forms of data can be challenging to collect, particularly that which is tacit i.e. linked to complex and/or emotional experiences such as career change. Making use of multiple data collection methods can therefore be beneficial in such cases (King, 2004).

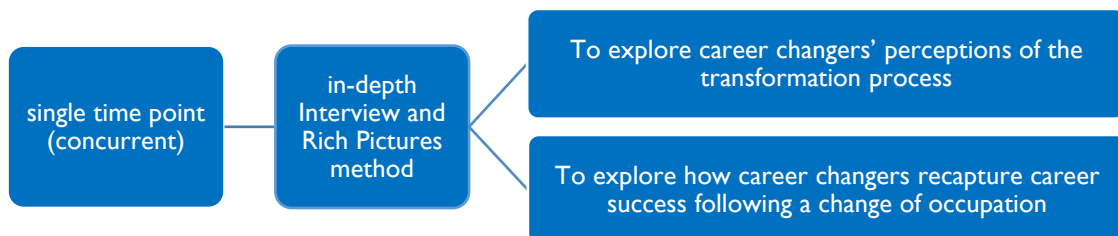
5.3 MULTIPLE METHODS DESIGN

Whilst bearing Denzin’s cautionary note in mind, this study gathered data using multiple methods to achieve its aims. Data collection occurred within a single time point (see Figure 14) using a ‘concurrent’ rather than ‘serial’ approach (Hall & Rist, 1999; Morse, 2009) i.e. two

methods – one primary (interviews) and one supplementary (rich pictures or RP) – were run simultaneously with the RP data adding to and helping to extend/clarify or add to responses given in interview. In other words the two methods were separate (Morse, 2009) and contributed distinct types of data relating to the same topic i.e. career change.

The rationale for this approach is that it enhances both rigour and credibility (Tracy, 2010; Creswell, 2012; Morse, 2015); rigour because in using multiple methods the researcher is able to analyse rich and abundant data of a complex phenomenon such as complex career change, and credibility because thicker description can extend and deepen understanding. Furthermore, as Manojlovich et al (2015) state: “often, as researchers, we fail to recognize that one technique alone cannot capture the phenomenon of interest” (p. 68). For instance, whilst interviews can elicit surface or ‘safe’ information from participants, RPs accessed tacit information which would have been difficult to obtain through interviews alone (Morse, 2009) i.e. emotional memories or recollections about experiences that are difficult to put into words such as the challenges of changing occupation, feelings associated with being a novice or with identifying a reliable colleague to talk to.

Figure 14: Timing and presentation of methods



Given the personal and potentially sensitive nature of what they disclosed, participants were asked to take part individually and interviewed for an average of 90 minutes per participant (26 hours in total).

The interview comprised two main sections (see Appendix 3) – development of a ‘career profile’ and the ‘interview-proper’ where data was collected relating to the aims and research questions.

- The 'career profile' involved career changers providing a brief background/overview of their career to date including hierarchical position, team relationships, start and end points; change over time e.g. highs and lows; change rationale; career intentions.
- This was then followed by an in-depth, semi-structured interview to explore career changers' perceptions of the transformation process (*why they chose to change occupation; their perceptions of the change process; what career changers need in order to make a successful change*) and how career changers recapture a sense of success following a change of occupation (*whether definitions of success remain the same after changing occupation; how career changers make sense of career success in their new occupation; how they use informal learning to develop competence and confidence in their new occupation; and what helps and hinders them in gaining a sense of success in their new occupation*).

This stage of the process also involved participants being invited to construct an RP (Bell & Morse, 2013b) which gave participants the opportunity to augment their testimonies with sketches representing their thoughts/feelings/experiences and thereby extend and enrich the 'picture' being developed (see Appendix 6).

Justifications for use of these methods – along with their evaluation – follows.

5.3.1 INTERVIEWS

Interviewing is essentially an interpersonal exchange (Kvale, 2007) i.e. where two or more people explore a particular topic. They have been used extensively in social science research and have enabled researchers to access worlds previously unexplored; their appeal apparent not only in academic research but also in the wider world e.g. the now ubiquitous chat-show and 'slice-of-life' programmes:

In-depth interviews, in particular, are highly valued within qualitative research because of their ability to look beneath the surface, provide a richer understanding of phenomena, and highlight issues of central importance to participants which might otherwise be neglected; strengths that are particularly associated with 'conceptual' interviews (Kvale, 2007) where data relating to perceptions, meaning and attributions is sought.

Various types of interview are available to the would-be researcher: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (King, 2004). The distinction between the three revolves around the extent to which pre-set questions are used and how far the researcher frames the focus: structured interviews involve asking only pre-set questions whereas at the other end of the continuum, un-structured interviews involve only pre-set themes or topics. Between these two lie semi-structured interviews which, like the 'structured' approach, involve developing a series of questions but with the flexibility to exclude questions or insert additional 'probes' depending on responses. The advantage here is that researchers can 'drill down' (Kvale, 2007) or follow up on responses, whether verbal or communicated via body language (Gill et al, 2008; Galletta, 2017) in order to clarify and deepen their appreciation of what is being discussed – for instance, if a participant appears thoughtful or laughs when answering.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were chosen to address the gap identified in this research primarily because they would enrich understanding of the career changers' perceptions of the transformation process and how they used informal learning to recapture success in their new occupation. Their effectiveness in terms of being able to "tap lived experience" (Madill & Gough, 2008 p. 256) was crucial; particularly in relation to helping to access tacit knowledge. The specific questions asked in interview (see Appendix 3) were based on research literature (see Chapters 2, 3 and 4) relating to career change (i.e. motivations, processes, challenges), career success (i.e. the multiple and changing nature of definitions of success; how moving from expert to novice status affected these definitions, perceptions of success post-change), and informal learning (i.e. challenges associated with learning in a new occupation/organisation, reasons for selection and use of particular learning processes and their perceived value).

More broadly, career research utilising interviews shows that they allow researchers to "explore multiple meanings" (Murray et al, 2014b, p438) and 'flex' in order to focus in on experiential aspects of particular interest to participants (Reybold & Alamia, 2008). Moreover, they help participants to "articulate how their self-identified critical incidents (shape) their longer-term sense of professional self" (Wilkins & Comber, 2015 p. 1017); in other words, the interview process can bring to the surface previously unknown or unacknowledged aspects of 'self' and experience. Furthermore, studies not using a qualitative approach have nevertheless acknowledged that "interviews might shed more light" (Akkermans et al, 2018 p. 9) upon particular phenomena as well as clarifying distinctions between individuals and groups of individuals experiencing said phenomena.

The picture is much the same across career success and career development literature (e.g. Archer & Yates, 2017; Wilkins & Comber, 2015; Dries et al, 2008), where interviews are seen as providing richer contextual data that, whilst not collected on a vast scale, is nonetheless recognisable across a range of contexts (Santos, 2015) e.g. whether a career-changer is moving from commerce to work in a High School, an ex-health professional now working as a University academic, or those who moved from teaching to become a teacher-educator. On the other hand, “idiosyncratic meanings” (Dries et al, 2008 p. 256) gleaned from across these diverse groups can help readers (lay, practitioner or academic) to better understand the specific or particular needs of individuals and/or occupational groups (Heslin, 2005). Indeed, the more open the interview – in terms of inviting participants to describe what they do rather than narrowing their focus to look only at particular incidents – the more effective a tool it is (Eraut, 2004); not least because of the potential for interviewees to recognise commonalities or distinctions within their own experiences (Scheeres et al, 2010). Unlocking the ‘participant voice’, however, relies on interviewer skill and judgement in terms of knowing what and when to probe and how far to take a particular line of questioning. Underpinning this is the need for interviewer reflexivity i.e. being open to adjusting their questioning approach, and being able to develop trust (King, 2004); without this the likelihood of peeling back layers of experience to reveal what is really going on – for instance the drivers for occupational change – is hampered.

One inherent limitation of interviews, however, is the reliance upon self-reports which, whilst providing “the only window on their inner states” is “... often foggy” (Schwarz 2004, p11). The current study collected both retrospective and concurrent self-report data – participants were asked about their experiences and perceptions of learning and success in both their previous and new occupation – and whilst questioning was largely linear participants were encouraged to review their responses in order to promote greater recall and reduce recall bias (Hassan, 2004; Schwarz, 2004). In addition, questions were divided into three periods: a brief review of their career history, a detailed discussion of their prior career, and finally a detailed discussion of their new occupation – this was done in recognition of the way autobiographical memory is said to function in ‘chunks’ of time. In addition, questions were ‘nested’ so that more general questions were asked, followed by questions about specific experiences or perceptions, which is something advocated by Dries et al (2008) in order to develop rapport between researcher and participant. Follow-up and clarificatory questions were also used in order to check understanding and assess the veracity of responses.

5.3.2 RICH PICTURES

The supplementary method used to explore career changers' experience of complex career change and how they recaptured career success was the Rich Picture (RP) method (Bell & Morse, 2013b). Pictures can encapsulate a situation, problem or experience and as a method, visual images are becoming increasingly prevalent – particularly in recent years (Rose, 2014).

Their subjective nature, however, has led many academic researchers to remain cautious about their use (Cassell & Symon, 1994; Howe, 2004; Denzin et al, 2006), mostly, it seems, because of a reluctance to adopt unfamiliar and untested approaches i.e. pictorial interpretations of events, situations, or experiences rather than relying on the accessibility of the spoken word. Both Armson (2011) and Stiles (2004) argue, however, that researchers can benefit from original insights generated from these approaches; not least when exploring 'messy' aspects of life such as perceptions, rationalisations and experiences of career change, learning and career success. Their ability to hold up "a mirror up to human experience" (Bell & Morse (2013a, p. 332) helping to reveal the ineffable and, in the process, enabling researchers to gain greater insights that might otherwise go unrecorded and, therefore, unrecognised.

The RP method is just one technique amongst many (Lewis, 1992; Berg & Pooley, 2013) that can be used to explore thinking processes and lived experiences, and originates from Checkland's 1970s work (Checkland & Haynes, 1994) on Soft Systems methodology (SSM); an adjunct to mapping approaches used in information technology circles to illustrate and show connections between various systems. Checkland argued that a systems approach could be usefully applied to any aspect of human and organisational endeavour (Horan, 2000) to gain a different perspective on a situation, problem or idea; that it was helpful in bringing our own thinking into a sharper focus so that it becomes available for conscious inspection. This is not to deny that some knowledge may be invented rather than discovered (Butt, 2013) but that active inspection can yield greater awareness by those who either plan to or may have already experienced particular phenomena.

RP is an unstructured approach (Bell & Morse, 2013b) for "surfacing" (p. 34) i.e. making manifest what is latent in order to gain a simpler understanding of complex phenomenon by getting what is in an individual's head onto paper in graphic form. As such, it is particularly

useful in enabling individuals and groups to consciously inspect and map connections (see Figure 15 below) which might otherwise be difficult to express (Cristancho, 2015).

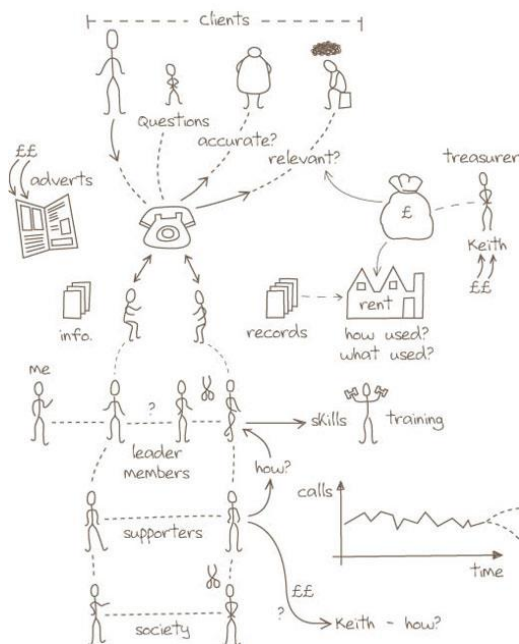


Figure 15: Example rich picture (The Open University, 2018)

More recently, Berg and Pooley (2013) suggest it as a key “contemporary knowledge elicitation device” (p. 31) and, as such, it aligns perfectly with both the aims and epistemological basis of this thesis by stimulating greater recall (Bell & Morse, 2013a) and, thereby, promotes deeper reflection in connection with experiences and perceptions of career change, learning and success. As a method to augment the primary interview method, it was also used to ‘crystallize’ (Tracy,

2010) i.e. to extend our understanding, cross-check conceptualisations and clarify the complexity inherent in occupational change (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015; Hellman, 2017).

Whilst use of visual methods such as drawing, video and photo-diaries are becoming increasingly popular across health literature (e.g. Guillemin & Drew, 2010; Guillemin, 2004; Walklet, 2018), however, RP has not featured widely outside management literature. Its uptake in psychology in general and occupational psychology in particular, is virtually non-existent, with the exception of occasional use of career timelines e.g. Wyatt and Sylvester (2015). This makes its absence notable given that organisations can be thought of as complex ‘meaning-making’ systems (Booton, 2018). On the other hand since it does now feature across social sciences and educational research disciplines such as social work (e.g. Clark & Morriss, 2017; Matthews, 2012), ergonomics (e.g. Stanton & McIlroy, 2012), and HE research, curriculum planning and inter-professional development (e.g. Reid & Koglbauer, 2018; Berg et al, 2017; Fougner & Habib, 2008) this provides a basis for its application in psychological research too.

RP works by enabling individuals to model or mind-map thoughts, feelings, and experience connections (Cristancho, 2015). Images or representations allow the ‘drawer’ to view, talk about and reconceptualise links (Mazzetti & Blenkinsopp, 2012) between mental models they

have on a particular topic or related topics; although understanding can also emerge during the process, for instance, a career changer's feelings about the process which can produce significant psychological discomfort.

There are no tightly prescribed 'rules' for facilitating a session or series of sessions, although leading academics such as Bell and Morse (2013a) provide some guidance: ensure that all imagery drawn by the participant is visible throughout the process, and text – as opposed to shapes – should be avoided if possible, whereas Berg and Pooley (2013) suggest use of pre-designed 'icons' which participants select and use to create their own pictures. The outcomes of RP can, therefore, vary depending on the researcher's approach: follow-up questions can encourage additional sketching in order to improve the quality of a representation help yield more data, but there is also the potential that context, participant-facilitator (researcher) dynamics and the topic(s) under discussion can affect production.

Given what is known and unknown to individuals as they produce their pictures, RP can also often result in unexpected, unusual (Mazzetti & Blenkinsopp, 2012) and sometimes startling revelations. As a consequence, in the current study participants were briefed about their right to withdraw at the outset of the interview, and recordings were temporarily stopped and the participant reassured when emotional or vivid memories of experiences were raised. Follow-up support was offered during de-briefing but no participants expressed a need for this.

One important aspect of RP though is a clear focus on producing a visual image. Text e.g. notes, quotes, speech bubbles – whilst permitted – is thought to have limited utility (Bell & Morse, 2013a) because the challenge of 'externalising' or putting experiences or emotional responses into words (Akbar, 2003). The reason for this lies at the heart of the nature of tacit knowledge in that it is generally deeply personal, embedded (Shamsie & Mannor, 2013) and can, therefore, require more time or probing in order to prompt an individual to make a link between what they implicitly know and what they are currently doing or being asked about (Eraut, 2000) i.e. to realise that they know something of value – to the researcher at least. Despite this, the researcher in this current study recognised that individual differences could mean that some might prefer text or find drawing – as the sole approach – too challenging. Participants were, therefore, reassured that depictions could take any form judged helpful and that, in some cases, giving verbal responses might be preferable or easier than trying to draw an image. Individual RPs, therefore, are a very personal take on a situation or experience, and

unrestricted exploration (other than self-censorship) is key, as is choice in terms of whether or not to draw (see Appendix 6).

5.4 SAMPLING

Participant sampling relates to selection of individuals (Martinez-Mesa et al, 2016; Etikan et al, 2015) to take part in research. In quantitative research this involves selecting individuals who are representative of a target population (Martinez-Mesa et al, 2016; Vasileiou et al, 2018). The approach taken in qualitative research, however, involves selecting participants according to practical availability (e.g. convenience sampling) or their experience of a phenomenon and the richness of the data that can be collected from them i.e. purposive sampling (Guest et al, 2006; Malterud et al, 2016; Etikan et al, 2015). In the current research purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants had direct, first-hand experience of complex career change.

Robinson (2014) suggests a four-point approach to selecting a purposive sample: defining the 'universe', deciding on the size, devising a strategy and sourcing participants. In terms of the first criteria, the current study's '**sample universe**' comprises an occupationally homogenous group in that all participants are career changers. This broad group consists of three sub-groups all of which are within the education sector (see below).

The education sector was selected because whilst extant career change research is quite limited, of the studies conducted a handful of occupational groups feature prominently: those changing occupation from some form of practice into academia e.g. vets (Buoro, 2015) and scientists (Angervall & Gustafsson, 2016; 2014), but by far the most prevalent were nurses or allied health practitioners such as occupational and physiotherapists (e.g. Hurst 2010) and those changing occupation from some form of practice into teaching (e.g. Wilkins, 2017; Antink-Meyer & Brown, 2017; Nielsen, 2016; Watters & Diezmann, 2015).

In addition, literature argues that there is a merit in looking more closely at these groups because having experienced prior career success they have a lot to lose i.e. they can be thought of as high-risk groups, and are also likely to experience considerable challenge when developing competence in their new occupation. Loss of expertise, for example, has been shown (e.g. Zhou et al, 2017) to be a key barrier to career changer perceptions of success i.e. despite the potential to transfer knowledge/skills complex change can erode and devalue

human capital because of a lack of new, job- specific knowledge and skills. Transfer or prior success and skill development too (e.g. Shultz et al, 2019) have been identified as important to successful career change but the value or contribution of particular forms of learning to such individuals' subsequent career success has not been studied and therefore warrants attention. Therefore, obtaining meaningful insights into their first-hand experiences (Morse, 2015) of career-change in real-life occupational settings will both deepen and extend understanding.

Table 7: Sample groups

| New occupation | Teacher to Teacher Educator (TE) | Healthcare Practitioner to Academic (A) | Practitioner to Teacher (T) |
|-------------------------|---|--|--|
| N | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Interviewed | August – October 2018 | August 2018 – January 2019 | March to October 2019 |
| Prior occupation | Teachers: Economics, IT, Science, Geography, RE, PE x2 @ Assistant Head x4 @ Head of Department | Youth Worker (1) Nurse (1) Occupational Therapist (2) Physiotherapist (2) | Accountant (2) Business manager (1) IT Consultant (2) Financial Analyst (1) |
| New setting | University | University | School |
| Participant code | RS, LM, FG CD, IJ, OP | QR, KL, EF BC, HI, NO | PQ, JK, DE AB, GH, MN |
| Mean age | 42 (range 34-52) | 41 (range 36-48) | 47 (range 26-56) |
| Sex | F = 4; M = 2 | F = 6 | F = 3; M = 3 |

In terms of **sample size and sampling strategy**, in total eighteen individuals (N=18) were recruited (see Table 7). This number is in line with suggested guidelines for conducting qualitative research i.e. small enough for “individual cases to have a locatable voice within the study, and for an intensive analysis of each case to be conducted” (Robinson, 2014, p. 29), whilst also generating sufficient data to enable some level of within and cross-group comparison. In turn, given the in-depth nature of the interviews, the practical reality of handling a higher volume of data and its associated information power (Malterud et al, 2016) had to be considered, as did the point at which data saturation would occur (Saunders et al, 2018; Mason, 2010). Had saturation not been achieved more participants would have been sought until a point was reached where no new themes were apparent from the data.

Other inclusion criteria included years of experience in their new occupation. Participants were all self-identified ‘career changers’ into the education sector who had changed occupation within the last 6 years i.e. had up to 5 full years of experience in their new occupation. This post-change limit is based on Benner’s (1982) ‘novice-to-expert model’ which showed that individuals new to a job role move through a series of ‘positions’: from ‘novice’, where they possess little/no understanding of the job and gradually develop capability, to ‘expert’, where job/role knowledge is deeply embedded and the individual is able to make intuitive and innovative links between aspects of their role and those of others. This, of course, occurs over time and whilst there is no causal link between experience and expertise, it is acknowledged that more time/experience is generally associated with superior job capability and increased confidence; both of which clearly relate to career success.

Benner (1982) made little reference to timeframe but argued that to become ‘competent’ (the mid-point in the novice-to-expert model – see Chapter 4.2) generally takes around 3-4 years and that acquiring expertise – whilst not offering a definitive timescale – takes circa 10 years. This position aligns with professional recognition: for instance, the legal profession’s PQE (post-qualification experience) signifies competence after 3 years. This is also something that is found in both teaching and nursing, where titles such as ‘newly qualified’ and ‘early career’ signify transitions through/up the developmental continuum and also ties in to ‘main pay scales’ for salary determination. For example, in teaching each year of experience up to 6 years attracts an automatic pay increase based on accumulation of competence/confidence.

That being said, for the purposes of this research, years/experience-in-role had to be counterbalanced against predominantly retrospective data and the associated limits on an individual’s ability to faithfully remember events and experiences and/or communicate perceptions and feelings (Schwartz, 2004). In this case, not only their experience prior to and following career change, but also their selection of informal learning processes used to recapture a sense of career success; all of which could date back more than a decade including the 1-5 years in their new role.

The overall sample was sub-divided into three sub-groups:

Teacher-to-Teacher Educator (TE) – comprised individuals who, whilst working in a HE setting, did not in the main possess higher level qualifications (e.g. PhD) at the time they took part. One with two years’ experience in the new occupation completed an MA the previous

summer, whilst two other participants began theirs after 3 years in role. Teacher-Educators are not expected to contribute to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) or engage in writing for publication (although some do). In addition, they do not tend to deliver University-wide courses; focusing instead on initial teacher-training (ITT). They all possessed prior departmental and/or leadership experience and had been recruited as a Teacher-Educator based on this and/or having been a successful 'professional mentor' (a school-based role with responsibility for overseeing subject-mentor provision) and/or subject-mentor (a subject teacher or Head of Department with significant experience teaching/leading their subject). Despite having extensive teaching experience, however, none had previously taught adults or taught their subject specialisms at either degree or post-graduate levels.

Health and Social Care Practitioner-to-Academic (A) – comprised individuals who possessed or were expected to quickly acquire higher qualifications (PhD) and teach across a wide range of professional and general academic modules from level 4 (undergraduate degree) to 7 (master's degree). They are also expected to write for publication, which may contribute towards the REF. Unlike Teacher-Educators this group was drawn from a broader range of occupational backgrounds – youth work, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and nursing. All had prior senior departmental, training (e.g. inducting junior colleagues; delivering programmes relating to their specialism) and/or leadership roles but none had any teaching experience.

Practice-to-Teacher (T) – comprised individuals from a wide variety of prior commercial/practice occupations who made the decision to become a school teacher. No pre-set criterion was used in terms of selection to participate based on prior occupation or in terms of teaching subject. With the exception of a few who had delivered occasional on-the-job training for co-workers, they possessed no knowledge of pedagogy or experience of managing the development of large groups of individuals, especially children and young people. Unlike the other two participant groups the 'T' group were legally required to undertake initial teacher training (ITT) which lasted one year full-time. For clarification: all ITT programmes (PGCE, School Direct and SCITT i.e. School Centred Initial Teacher Training) involve a combination of placement in one or more schools (planning and delivering lessons, marking student work, taking part in extra-curricular activities e.g. meetings, parent consultation evenings, open-day/evening events etc), attendance of University-based workshops/seminar, and completion of post-graduate level assessments.

In terms of **sourcing the sample** all participants were approached via institutional and wider personal and professional networks, although some participation was the result of snowballing i.e. recruited participants referred others within their occupation. When approaching potential participants a copy of the 'recruitment poster' (see Appendix 1) and the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 2) were emailed in order to familiarise themselves with what they would be asked to do. Following agreement to take part, they were forwarded a soft copy of the 'Consent Form'; a hard copy of which was then produced during pre-interview briefing and participants were asked to re-read and sign it.

The first two participants were utilised in order to **pilot the procedure, interview questions and RP method**. In both cases these went according to plan and findings from these two participants were also incorporated into the study findings. Two aspects of the interview were changed as a result of this pilot: firstly the order in which questions were presented was changed from asking questions in relation to themes (career history, success, learning) to asking questions according to career chronology (career history – previous occupation – new occupation) and covering experience and perceptions of success, and use and value of informal processes within each 'time frame'; secondly, based on the stated self-protective value of particular forms of learning and when these were used during transition, a question was added in relation to why particular methods were selected and used (see Appendix 3, question 18).

5.5 PROCEDURE

- Participants were briefed prior to completion of the 'career profile' and interview, and told that they would be asked to attempt to depict their thoughts and feelings relating to career change, success and learning. Brief details of the researcher's own complex career change were also shared before beginning each interview in order to promote openness and candour on the part of participants and establish early rapport.
- Participants were provided with sheets of white A3 and A4 paper, along with a collection of pencils (standard and coloured) and pens (biros and felt-tips).

- Reassurance was offered in relation to sketch quality and participants were told that their representations could be 'free form' i.e. there was no expectation of drawing expertise and that 'stick men', lines, circles, dots, symbols, cartoons, sketches, arrows were acceptable.
- In line with Bell and Morse's (2013b) 'loose' guidelines, participants were asked to try to restrict the amount of writing (e.g. labels, notes or speech bubbles) but that they had free reign on placement of 'items' on paper (as well access to additional pieces of paper) – they could move, change or remove depictions or start over if they felt it necessary – they could include themselves in the picture but needed to clearly identify roles and relationships if relevant.
- Participants were also told that the RP aspect was not mandatory and they were free to simply provide verbal responses to interview questions.
- Following their interview participants were debriefed and offered the opportunity to ask questions.

5.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study adhered to the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct (2018a) and the University of Worcester Ethics Policy. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Worcester research ethics committee based on potential issues with research involving human participants and discussion of personal experiences of career change which might involve sensitive material. Participants were fully briefed (see Appendix 2) on the potential ethical issues and how the researcher would minimize any potential, negative effects. Participants were provided with a paper 'consent form' (sent electronically at 'invitation' stage – see above) detailing their rights and my responsibilities.

In terms of **data management** this research complied with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (Gov.UK, 2020) and the Data Protection Act 1999 (Gov. UK, 2020) by following the eight principles: Fairly and lawfully processed; Obtained only for specified and lawful purposes, and not be further processed in any manner; Adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose for which it is processed; Accurate and, where necessary,

kept up to date; Not kept longer than necessary; Processed in accordance with the individual's rights under the DPA; Kept secure by the taking appropriate technical/organisational measures against unauthorised or unlawful processing and accidental loss, destruction or damage; Not transferred to countries outside the European Economic Area, unless there is adequate protection.

In relation to **confidentiality and anonymity**, in light of the sensitive nature of some of what participants shared and the fact that direct quotations have been in this thesis, personal data which could identify a specific participant or lead to them being recognisable to anyone outside the project was removed i.e. *their name and place of work*. Unique pseudonyms were created in order to preserve participant identity and enable participants to request withdrawal of data within the 10 days outlined in the PIS (see Appendix 2). Participants were briefed about how their data was pseudonymised and informed that personal data (identifiers) collected from them would be stored separately and securely on a password protected laptop to which only the Researcher has access. For the purposes of providing demographic data information relating to their sex has been retained.

During briefing, the benefits and purpose of preserving and sharing research data was explained e.g. having the participant's voice/story/perspective heard. Clarity was also provided in terms of how data sharing would occur (limited to the DoS as detailed above) and the interviewer was careful not make misleading claims in terms of destruction of data. This was because it may not have been possible to initially analyse everything from the transcript and there may have been a need to revisit the transcript to clarify understanding, lift and use direct quotes, and possibly to analyse from a different theoretical viewpoint. In order to ensure analytical quality data was shared with the DoS during the development of themes.

In terms of **potential risks to participants**, given the nature of this study, it was highly unlikely that participants would suffer harm by taking part. However, participants were made aware that if interviews included any questions which, for whatever reason, they did not wish to answer they could stop the interview or the question could be omitted. Participants were also made aware that they could withdraw from the study at any time, even after taking part but limited to 10 days after participation (see PIS – Appendix 2).

On the four occasions participants became distressed or anxious the Researcher: empathised with their emotional response, offered reassurance about continued confidentiality and sought

confirmation that they were happy to continue – on those occasions that they continued to be upset/distressed the Researcher offered the opportunity to temporarily pause the interview exercise and take a break for an agreed period. No participants contacted the researcher regarding issues after taking part. Had this occurred they would have been referred to a suitable, qualified service such as the University of Worcester counselling service or other, relevant organisation.

The BPS ethical guidelines for conducting research (2018a) also highlight the difficulty participants often have in failing to properly read information presented in information sheets and consent forms whether this is in paper copy or online. To overcome this difficulty, participants were provided with a copy of the participant information sheet (PIS) (see Appendix 2) and consent form as an attachment to the initial invitation to participate. This information was also reiterated during the briefing; the purpose of which is to explain the purpose of the research, what participation involves and how findings will be used. The PIS also explained the need to meet an 'essential' criterion for taking part i.e. having changed occupation and have 1-5 years post-change experience. Details regarding withdrawal of data and how to contact the researcher were also provided.

Ethical dilemmas can occur where participants share actions, decisions, behaviours, intentions where the Researcher cannot maintain confidentiality (e.g. self-harm; bullying in the workplace). This did not arise during this study but had it happened the Researcher would have sought advice from the DoS or wider supervisory team. This data would not have been omitted from the transcript or additional notes taken during interviews but would have been coded for pseudonymity and stored securely (both as a digital recording and then in a password-controlled transcript, password protected on the Researcher's UoW laptop/Onedrive account, and in a lockable cabinet during the period it remains in print form).

5.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative analysis techniques are “diverse, complex and nuanced” (Holloway & Todres, 2003) and comprise numerous types (Madill & Gough, 2008), including discursive (focused on the linguistic characteristics of data), thematic (focused on recurrent themes/ideas with similar meaning), structured (applying a-priori domains and codes) and instrumental (aligned with a particular epistemology e.g. use of IPA in phenomenological research).

Given the pragmatic stance taken in this research, the practical utility of analysed data was the key parameter for choice of analysis tool i.e. that it would help to produce both credible and transferable findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). This meant that whilst other approaches were considered (e.g. narrative analysis – with its ability to zone in on meaning within individualised stories or accounts of particular phenomenon, such as complex career change), these were set aside in favour of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) Thematic Analysis (TA) which, as a data analysis tool rather than a data collection method, can be used with any epistemological paradigm (Clarke & Braun, 2017). In particular it was selected because of its focus on identifying commonalities across and within data (e.g. the use and value of particular learning methods) and its ability to reveal unexpected insights (e.g. underlying reasons for use of particular forms of learning throughout complex career changers’ transformation journey).

A significant benefit of utilising TA in this study was that it met key criteria for assessing the rigour or trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Nowell et al, 2017) of qualitative research i.e. to be credible, confirmable, dependable and transferable. In terms of **credibility**, as a recursive approach it involved ‘prolonged engagement’ with the data i.e. carefully scrutinising (reading and re-reading transcripts and re-listening to audio recordings) and moving back and forth through transcripts to identify ‘semantic’ codes i.e. “explicit or surface” (Braun & Clarke, 2006 p. 13) rather than hidden or ‘latent’ meaning. Over time these were used to produce themes, sub-themes and over-arching domains. To become a theme, data needed to be significant rather than prevalent i.e. stand out, whether due to depth of an individual account or richness and similarity across the data set. Indeed, Clarke and Braun (2018) argue that themes can be “usefully thought of as key characters in the story we are telling about the data (rather than collection pots into in which we place everything that was said about a particular data domain)” (p. 108); a fact that makes TA particularly valuable in studying an under-explored phenomena such as complex career change.

As an inductive or bottom-up approach – *analysis is driven by data rather than pre-existing themes* – TA also conforms to the need for qualitative data analysis to be **confirmable** i.e. for findings to be clearly grounded in the data. How ‘key’ a theme was, for example, had less to do with prevalence and more to do with “whether it captures something important in relation to the overall question” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 10) i.e. qualitative richness; with extracts being drawn from the data to reinforce thematic salience. Furthermore, use of Braun and Clarke’s 6-step systematic framework (see Table 8) meant that internal consistency was built into the process i.e. codes generated were revisited to be sure of their applicability to particular

themes and sub-themes, and repositioned within different sub-themes if required. The same also applied when confirming the relevance of extracts used to illustrate key examples within the thick description.

Table 8: Braun and Clarke’s (2006) Phases of Thematic Analysis (abridged)

| Phase | Description |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1. Data familiarisation | Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas |
| 2. Initial code generation | Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code |
| 3. Searching for themes | Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme |
| 4. Reviewing themes | Checking themes work in relation to coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ |
| 5. Defining/naming themes | Ongoing analysis to refine specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear thematic definitions/names |
| 6. Producing the report | Selection of vivid, compelling extracts, final analysis and relating analysis back to research question/literature, producing a report |

This is further enhanced by its **dependability** i.e. TA’s systematic approach enabled decision making in relation to coding, theme and sub-theme development to be transparent i.e. “auditable” (Nowell et al, 2017, p1) and, therefore, available for later inspection if required.

Finally, TA also enabled **transferability**, in that thick description of themes and sub-themes, along with illustrative extracts, could be used to highlight the potential relevance of findings both to participants and to those outside the study i.e. how far the findings have a bearing on another context.

5.7.1 Interview analysis

Using Braun and Clarke’s checklist (Table 9) helped the researcher to become – to use Denzin and Lincoln’s (2000) term – ‘interpreter-bricoleur’; greater intimacy via piecing together, considering and reconsidering the data over time helped create an original composition:

Table 9: Braun and Clarke’s (2006) 15-step checklist (abridged)

| Process | Criteria |
|----------------|--|
| Transcription | The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for ‘accuracy’ |
| Coding | Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process |
| | Themes not generated from a few vivid examples (anecdotal approach); coding is thorough, inclusive and comprehensive |
| | All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated |
| | Themes have been checked against each other and back to original data set |
| | Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive |
| Analysis | Data is analysed: interpreted, made sense of - rather than paraphrased/described |
| | Analysis and data match each other: extracts illustrate the analytic claims |
| | Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic |
| | A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided |
| Overall | Sufficient time allocated to phase completion without rushing/giving light once-over |
| Written report | Assumptions about, and specific approach to, TA are clearly explicated |
| | Good fit between what is claimed and what is shown to have been done i.e. described method and reported analysis are consistent |
| | The language and concepts used consistent with epistemological position |
| | Researcher positioned as <i>active</i> in research process; themes do not just ‘emerge’ |

- Trustworthiness of the interview analysis was achieved as outlined in the previous section (see 5.7 above) i.e. following transcription, transcripts were read and re-read, and notes were made in margins along the way in an attempt to draw-out significant points being made – particularly interesting responses or phrases
- Having completed this ‘first sweep’, each transcript was returned to twice more (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017) and the process of identifying codes began (see table 10)
- These were then cut and pasted into a separate word document and clustered under broad ‘category’ or sub-theme headings (see table 10 and Appendix 5)
- Following initial analysis data was matched to sub-themes across the whole data set
- Extracts were lifted out in order to exemplify particular thematic patterns

Table 10: Excerpts of transcript coding (participant 10)

| | |
|---|--|
| I think it's more the emotion that goes with it. I think it's the underlying emotion because when you're under-confident if you expose the gaps I think you feel frightened and you feel worried and you feel upset that there's all these gaps that need filling. Whereas, actually, when there are some things that you can do well and you feel confident in, you can 'park them' again so here's me (RP: drawing circle: 3:1 ratio), if this bit of me is confident it's fine to ask for help with this bit (refers to RP i.e. the ¼ 'gap') because this bit is alright (the ¾ confident) | Being judged Anxiety |
| So coming here and it's all like hyper-academised (laughs) that was terrifying, that was absolutely terrifying because it did make me feel I don't know anything. | No longer expert |
| It was a bit like "oh god there's all this stuff I'm supposed to know and don't know it" you know "I'll just have to carry on pretending that I do because nobody's noticed yet" (laughs) "and maybe I'll just find out about these things as I go along" | What others think |
| Oh terrifying (laughs) absolutely terrifying. And I think you've made this decision, and I had this lovely HPL year in the middle so it was a fully informed decision to come into academia and then was still kind of flawed by all this stuff. | Anxiety Not knowing |
| I did spend a lot of time, I'm very much a doer, I'm not a reader or a thinker, I'm very much a jump in with both feet and get on with it, so I did spend a lot of time just doing it and hoping that things would sort of gradually find a place. | Active learner |
| Then I did my PG Cert and my PG Cert was, in retrospect, it was excellent. Not sure I'd have said that at that time (laughs). It was problematic in that it wasn't well run. The staff were changing every 5 minutes. | Vocational relevant |
| when I've got a bit that I'm really confident with I feel much safer to say I can't do this other bit. I think at the beginning when it's all new, when this learning curve thing is going on there's no security in anything because you're like going "ohhhhh". Once you get that security back then I felt a bit more able to expose the areas that are not so strong. | Lower risk = open up |
| I think there's something about taking sort of taking confidence in holding on to the things that you're good at. Holding on to what you can do. So it's back to this again isn't it? It's kind of like solidifying this (points to RP: 3:1 circle) because even actually coming in and saying everything's a question mark, it isn't necessarily because I'm an occupational therapist, this is that actually but now this bit contains the teaching bit (points to RP where the 3:1 used to be her in her OT role and now represents her in her HE role) as well so I think something about holding onto the stuff that you have got to help sort of shore up the gaps a bit. | Shoring up Evidence = open up Shoring up |

- Data was re-checked in order to confirm thematic salience and that themes accurately represented what had been said
- The whole process was refined in discussion with the researcher's DoS
- The role of the researcher 'reflexivity' was also considered during data analysis i.e. the researcher reflected on the extent to which their own experiences of complex career change as well as in terms of constructing and potentially co-constructing meaning might influence interpretations of the data. Care was, therefore, taken to check and re-check coding, and to draw out extracts which would reinforce conclusions being drawn so that the participant's 'voice' was not merely reported but deepened via close engagement with text.

As a working document – i.e. under active creation – this, in turn, helped the researcher to go beyond description to interpretation and to better tell the story (Clarke & Braun, 2018) of career change and recapturing success from the perspectives of the three occupational groups who took part, in that the themes became “key characters” (p. 108) and helped to clarify their experiences.

5.7.2 Rich picture analysis

By contrast, since the RP data was constructed by participants to supplement their responses to interview questions rather than as a stand-alone activity, meaning was derived from and images were matched to interview content and, therefore, to the theme identified from carrying out the related text-based analysis (see table 10 – sections highlighted in green).

As with interview data, RP analysis followed a procedure which enabled the researcher to enhance trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Nowell et al, 2017). **Credibility** of the RP analysis was achieved via spending prolonged periods reading and re-reading transcribed interview data and cross-checking RP sketches and associated participant notes with responses to interview questions in order to be sure of its applicability to particular themes and sub-themes. This also enabled the researcher to clarify and reveal additional layers of complexity inherent in occupational change (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015; Hellman, 2017); this thicker description helping to refine early stages/levels of thematic analysis, and therefore enabling a more credible story (Morse, 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2006) of career changers' experiences to be told.

Confirmability was achieved through crystallisation (Tracy, 2010; Glaw et al, 2017) and carried out in two ways. Firstly, by assessing how well particular RP sketches captured what was said in interview i.e. the overlap between the sketch content or meaning (as judged both by the researcher's interpretation of the sketch and via further questioning of the participant in order to gain clarification or confirmation of meaning). Where RPs were drawn before offering a verbal response to a question, the researcher asked participants to elaborate on or explain their sketches. As explained earlier (see 5.3.2), the researcher recognised that sketching images to represent experiences, events and perceptions would be challenging for some participants and they were, therefore, invited to add text 'notes' to their pictorial representations as they were being drawn, or instead of only drawing where they felt this was an easier way to express particular points. This is reflected in some of the RP images used in this thesis (see Chapters 6 to 8). In addition, the researcher also asked participants to add notes/ details or say more when drawings appeared ambiguous or were harder for the researcher to interpret. This was especially important given the now accepted position that images should be viewed "more as communicational tools than representational texts" (Rose, 2014 p. 24) i.e. that multiple-meanings might potentially be derived from an RP image. This consequently elicited in thicker description of particular images, for example T:GH's sketch of the boat being buffeted about on the water (pp. 159-160) and, therefore, confirmed meaning and researcher interpretations. Despite being text-based rather than pictorial, however, notes added by participants to their sketches were treated as being part of the whole RP presented with the visual rather than text-based data. Having said this, data collected as a result of the researcher asking probe questions in order to check understanding and clarify RP meaning became part of interview transcripts and were, therefore, thematically analysed.

The related criterion of **dependability** was achieved via an "audit trail" (Tracy, 2010, p. 842) to the original rich picture sketches drawn by participants and related researcher notes. This made the process taken to arrive at particular interpretations and conclusions transparent.

Finally, the **transferability** i.e. applicability of the findings outside of the research context, was achieved through selecting sketches which were both illustrative of particular extracts and which articulated key findings i.e. possessed the potential to resonate (Tracy, 2010) with individuals who may or may not have experienced complex career change. For example, T:MN's sketch of a bike (p. 182) to represent the need for stabilisers (scaffolding from a MAO) during the early stages of occupation change, or A:BC 's use of the coloured-in circle (p. 135) to represent reluctance to reveal gaps in competence and/or confidence.

5.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has detailed the philosophical stance of the research, the epistemological choices and the methods used to carry out the study. The specific research aims and questions are shown to clearly tie to these foundational decisions. A clear rationale has also been provided at each stage and especially in relation to benefits of using qualitative methods to explore occupational changers' definitions and perceptions of success and the use and perceived value of informal learning and development processes.

Chapter 6

Interpretation of Findings

OCCUPATIONAL RE-ORIENTATION

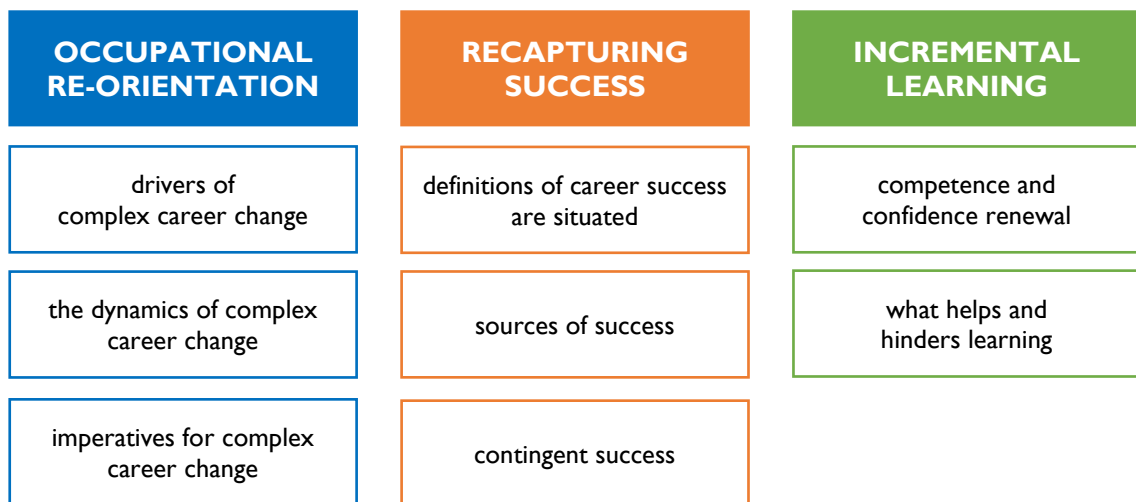
“In the last analysis, what we are communicating far more eloquently than anything we say or do”

— Stephen Covey

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter – along with chapters 7 and 8 – presents an interpretation of findings for each of the three thematic domains elicited from the data collected (see Figure 16). Exploration of each domain revealed a number of key themes. These are presented in each findings chapter, with quotations from transcripts and RPs used to support and illustrate the 'story' being told. Due to the limited differences between occupational groups all groups' findings are discussed together; any differences are highlighted within each findings chapter.

Figure 16: Thematic domains and main themes

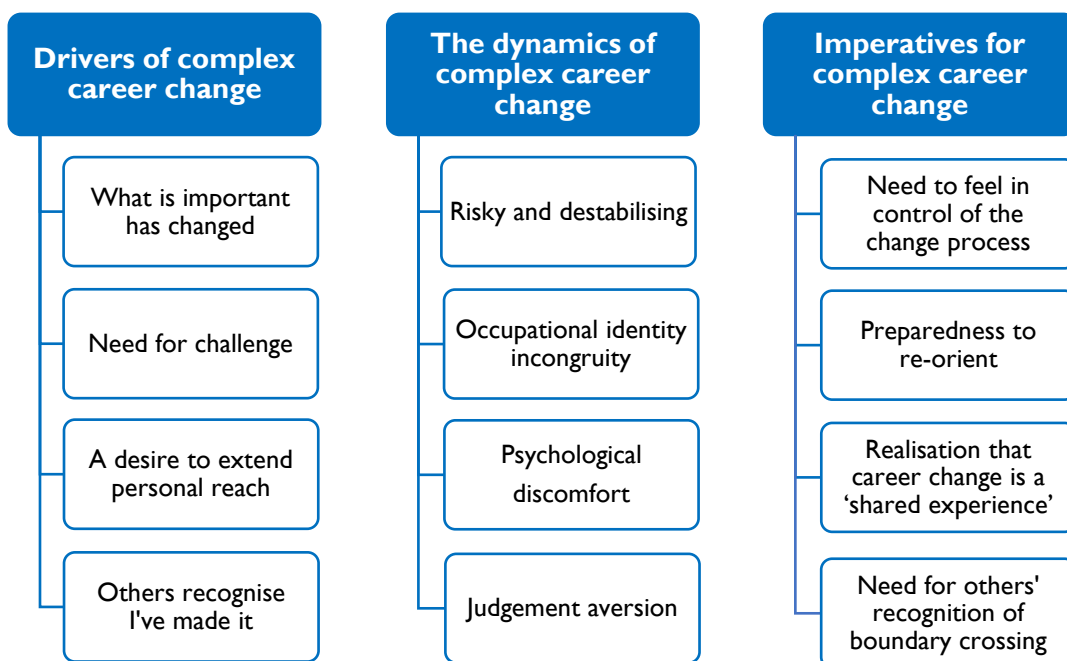


- **'Occupational Re-orientation' (Chapter 6)** details findings relating to motivations for and experiences of complex career change, along with what individuals stated they needed in order to make a successful complex career change.
- **'Recapturing Success' (Chapter 7)** relates to how complex career changers define success and the extent to which this changed depending on where they are in their life and career, what they perceive as key sources of success, and what helped and hindered them when recapturing career success.
- **'Incremental learning' (Chapter 8)** looks at the over-arching learning process complex career changers moved through to recapture career success i.e. the gradual (incremental) move from an inward- to outward-looking approach and also considers what they perceived to be key learning enablers.

6.2 INTERPRETATION: OCCUPATIONAL RE-ORIENTATION DOMAIN

This thematic domain represents career changers' perceptions of their motivations for and experiences of complex career change. The three main themes (as shown in Figure 17) are: 'Drivers of complex career change', 'The dynamics of complex career change' and 'Imperatives for complex career change'. Each contains a number of sub-themes which represent the distinct nature of each main theme and distinguishes what participants said was significant about their experiences as a complex career changer.

Figure 17: Occupational Re-Orientation Thematic Map



6.3 DRIVERS OF COMPLEX CAREER CHANGE

This theme relates to *why* individuals changed career; the motivating factors or needs that participants highlighted in terms of what they looked for in this new occupation i.e. 'what is important has changed', the 'need for challenge', 'a desire to extend personal reach' and 'others recognise I've made it'.

6.3.1 WHAT IS IMPORTANT HAS CHANGED

This driver relates to complex career changers' awareness of occupational 'fit' and that it has changed over time. In other words, what was once important in their previous occupation no longer held the same appeal, and that something else has become important in career terms (e.g. a sense of purpose).

"I felt more purposeful in the last year than I have ever done before in my career ... I am absolutely so proud and so delighted and I feel privileged to be in this really special role" (TE:CD)

Gaining clarity about what has become important is linked to career maturity i.e. having achieved expertise. A:QR, for instance, talked about experiences in her previous occupation prompting her to pause and re-think her decision to remain in the healthcare sector.

"You re-evaluate what you're going to do by where you are, you evaluate what it's all about. I think in one particular organisation I was definitely not looking at my success and was actually looking at my role as 'how do we manage this person so they do exactly what we say?' ... they wanted to maintain the power and that was the reason I walked away because it was asking me to work with no creativity and no real integrity"

Prior success, too, did not always provide a sufficient reason to remain; the mis-match between career needs and the occupational reality acted as a spur. For instance, speaking about his prior, lucrative career in financial services T:GH said that how his occupation appeared from the outside did not reflect the reality:

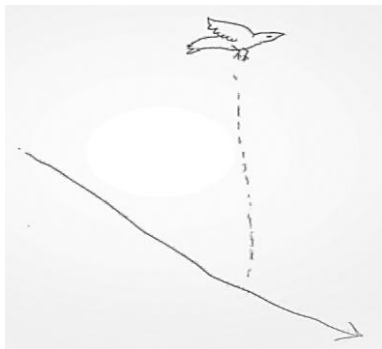
"They paid well ... (but) I said stop because it was too much, very demanding work ... I was travelling 26, 27 days a month and at a certain point I became a platinum card holder of many airlines (laughs) ... it looks nice but it's not ... (it was) so physically demanding so I stepped back" (T:GH)

Recognition of a lack of fit became even more apparent when individuals had the opportunity to make a comparison with where they were versus where they could be, particularly in terms of their personal ethos and that of the employer and/or occupation itself.

“I had to walk away ... I feel that organisation isn’t successful in my view ... I think that’s where the friction comes about whether you feel you’re successful or not ... you’ve got to stay within your own framework haven’t you? ... I feel confident and secure in who I am now which I think takes years to build” (A:QR)

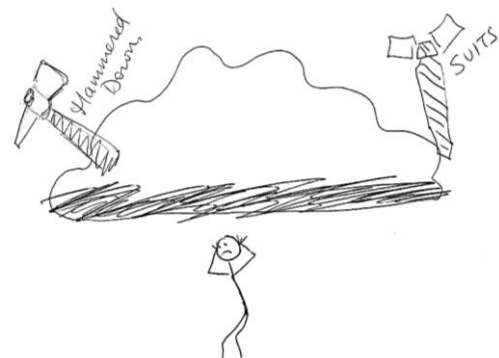
“I thought this is a good environment for me, I like it here, I don’t think I’m not a business person ... and I don’t begrudge that but it wasn’t personally doing me any favours, self-fulfilling it wasn’t a great activity. The situation was good but the job wasn’t me ... it wasn’t kind of floating my boat” (T:PQ)

This awareness of what had become important did not always reside at a surface level however. For instance T:AB spoke about having “nightmares about finding myself in my old school” and said that teaching “didn’t even enter the radar” until he had left his previous occupation and begun to reflect on what he wanted out of life.



This was an experience shared by occupational therapist-turned-academic A:EF, whose two separate rich pictures capture her reasons for wanting to change career. She talked about her perception of “being shot down in flight” and that she “didn’t see it coming”.

She also spoke of feeling as if she was being “hammered” by senior colleagues (see the RP below); the painful realisation of the ethos-mismatch firing her drive to identify an occupation that would align with her personal values.



For A:BC the decision to remain in her previous occupation, despite labelling it as “dysfunctional”, was because “it hadn’t got kind of too toxic yet”. A:HI, too, talked about career change being predicated on the need to find an occupation where her values were in tact:

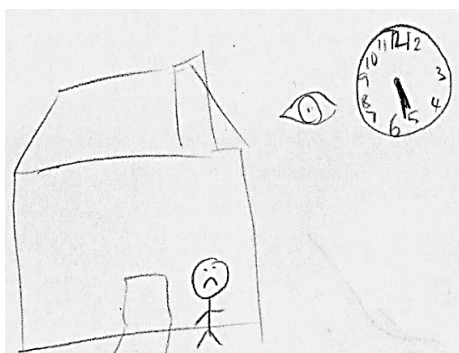
“My change of direction in my career was about finding something where my values were not being smashed” (A:HI)

Cognitive dissonance and feeling 'restricted' by perceived bureaucracy and the sometimes-political nature of leadership also acted as a motivator to change career. Frustration and a reduced job satisfaction led to a desire to identify an occupation with greater complementarity.

"I was not happy in my job ... I'd done my masters and (a colleague) said 'oh we need someone to come and help out with some stuff' ... I was like I love this I could do this all the time" (A:KL)

"I'm definitely at that point where I've made that decision ... go get your promotions if you want them... and I will have my freedom of expression ... and enjoy that" (TE:FG)

This is also very clearly captured in teacher MN's RP which illustrates her feelings about her previous job i.e. that she was unhappy, and this ultimately led her to change her occupation:



"I wasn't particularly passionate about what I was doing I thought I've got to get out of this ... I would constantly watch the clock ... and as soon as it was 5:15 I was packing my things up and going ... I realised one thing I enjoyed when I was studying for exams ... (was) teaching other people" (T:MN)

Completing self-assessments also helped some career changers in retrospect by validating their decision to change occupation.

"I did this strength-scope ... all the things that were my strengths were the things I was able to do in my new job and ... things that I wasn't able to do in my old job" (A:KL)

6.3.2 NEED FOR CHALLENGE

The need for challenge revolves around career changers' search for something more engaging than was found in their prior occupation. It is clearly linked to 'years served' and prior success; the 'been there, done that' mentality and feeling that they still had more to offer coming through very clearly in interviews. It is also connected with perceptions of stagnation:

“The enjoyment was starting to go which made me re-evaluate what I was doing ... so I kind of felt like oh I’ve progressed and I’ve got to this level and I’m really pleased but there’s nowhere else to go” (A:KL)

Career changers’ motivation to change also reflected a clear recognition that prior success did not necessarily equate with feeling fully ‘utilised’ and the belief that there might be more to achieve i.e. another occupation might provide greater satisfaction and use untapped potential.

“I need a new challenge because I’m a bit mid-life crisis-ey I suppose and so I went the teaching route, let’s have a go at teaching ... the challenge side of it was great ... the challenge of using my academic knowledge that I’d not been using at all from 20 years ago ... I can feel my brain’s enjoyed it it’s been very stimulating.” (T:PQ)

Career changers also said feeling ‘stuck’ and stagnating motivated them to make the conscious decision to look outside their existing occupation rather than making a simple career change; the steepness of the learning curve acting as a lure rather than as a disincentive:

“It wasn’t stimulating anymore ... I didn’t really feel like I was learning anymore ... I’d had these kind of massive learning curves earlier on and that hadn’t happened anymore and it just got a bit dull ... I felt restricted. I was slightly banging my head against a brick wall because career progression wasn’t evident ... it was just a bit static” (A:BC)

“After four years there I thought I just want a new challenge ... I need(ed) to do something that stimulate(ed) me and I need(ed) to be challenged ... the intellectual challenge of working with graduates and post-graduates I found really exciting” (TE:LM)

“If you’re not having a new challenge you’re standing still ... I thought my expert knowledge is good but I wanted to improve” (TE:RS)

The need for challenge also reflects an openness to change and to returning to being a novice.

“It was a new challenge so I was really enjoying it and I think just, I recognised that I didn’t know much but could find out and get better at it so I suppose it was embracing a new challenge. I didn’t really mind being a novice. I think it was recognising ok this is like an opportunity to develop skills in a new area” (A: PT)

6.3.3 A DESIRE TO EXTEND PERSONAL REACH

Wanting to have a bigger impact i.e. to go beyond the personal to the social was another key driver which is understandable given that participants had all previously worked in people-oriented occupations. However, their focus on 'giving' and 'sharing' is markedly different from helping or supporting (e.g. caring for a patient, fixing an IT glitch) in their previous role because the focus is reaching people beyond their immediate team/environment.

“As clichéd as it sounds, I wasn’t making difference in my old job ... I actually lost a close friend ... I went to the funeral ... she was a primary school teacher ... and it wasn’t just little kids, there was everybody she’d taught for years ... that moved me because I thought, you know what, that’s an impact that is. At the moment if I dropped dead tomorrow, six people will turn up and two of them will be vicars. That made an impact on me and I thought you know what, let’s do it.” (T:AB)



T:AB's rich picture (opposite) also points towards a realisation that continuing to push a rock up a hill was not satisfying and that having a positive impact on others was more important.

Getting a 'bigger bang for your buck' also featured across interviews; whilst distinct in terms of who was helped and supported or how this was relayed (e.g. a lecture rather than care of a patient) individuals were motivated to change career by the potential to utilise high levels of competence and confidence built up in prior role(s) and to have a greater potential impact.

“I wanted to share my message ... if I can train thirty trainees a year, they’re gonna make kids feel the way I make kids feel on a bigger scale” (TE:IJ)

“... what I teach now reflects back to my learning there” (A:HI)

“I could have more of an impact if I’m training teachers because that would then spread out to a wider field and the benefit of my experience, I could actually share that” (TE:LM)

Also notable was that whilst passing on knowledge and skills was a key driver, career changers' underlying motivation to inspire others came through very clearly and seemed to be a greater catalyst for change. In other words, providing the foundation for emerging abilities such as helping others become a teacher, healthcare professional or achieve in some other way such as running a business or gaining professional qualifications/accreditation.

“That’s one of the reasons I came in, if I can inspire one or two students a year to go off and make some of the differences that I made in industry” (T:DE)

6.3.4 OTHERS RECOGNISE I’VE MADE IT

The drive to undertake complex career change was also driven by a need for prestige i.e. being admired and respected for achieving or having the prospect of achieving success. The focus here is not the career changer’s own recognition that they have or are ‘becoming’ successful in their new occupation but others’ views of their having ‘made it’.

“Lecturer at University sounds more successful than teacher of ...” (TE:IJ)

For some, being part of the University ‘arm’ of the education sector was seen as prestigious and made them feel more successful, especially when reflected in others’ perceptions.

“Being an academic is perceived by people as being the pinnacle of your career. When you tell people I’m a physiotherapist ... it’s “oh so you just massage people?” When you say I’m a lecturer at university ... it comes from other people’s acceptance and other peoples’ recognition” (A:NO)

Career changers looked for external validation when they felt “eroded” (A:BC) in their previous occupation. For some this came from being approached by their new employer with a view to considering a career change. However, having others recognise their new status and success was also linked to perceptions that being able to change occupation, whilst achievable, was nevertheless a significant jump.

“I think because I’ve been successful, either through luck or not, I’ve proven that what people thought I was going to be when I was a kid is wrong ... I suppose I wanted to do this because again it shows people it doesn’t matter what your background is, you can do stuff like that” (TE:IJ)

Despite this need for admiration from others featuring as a driver for some career changers, it was not a motivator for all. Those moving from a variety of previous occupations including accountant, business manager and financial analyst to become Teachers, for instance, talked about their new occupation in terms of demotion in some respects; a finding undoubtedly linked to having changed career from high-status, high-income, high-achieving occupations.

6.4 THE DYNAMICS OF COMPLEX CAREER CHANGE

By contrast, change dynamics relates to career changers' experiences of the transition process; how they perceived the experience of moving into and becoming established in their new role, the impact this had on skill and knowledge development, and establishing new professional relationships. At the forefront of these reflections on their complex career change experience was that it was 'risky and de-stabilising', led to 'occupational identity incongruity', and was accompanied by 'psychological discomfort' and 'judgement aversion'.

6.4.1 RISKY AND DE-STABILISING

This theme relates to career changers' concerns about uncertainty and the belief that prior success may not necessarily translate into subsequent success i.e. that changing occupation will involve the need to prove themselves all over again. This is tied to a sense of not knowing what is to come or what is involved; to almost blindly going into a new occupation and setting perhaps optimistically, but certainly without a clear understanding of what lies ahead.

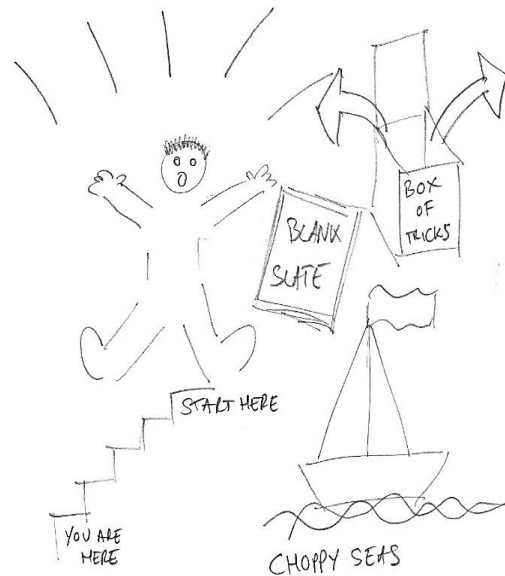
“You’re going into a new work environment and just the whole thing of knowing a new place ... yeah it’s a bigger challenge than I thought it would be but it’s still a good challenge but it was bigger. I think I went quite naïvely into it.” (T:PQ)

“I didn’t know directly any other teachers I had no friends who were teachers and so it was my initiative” (T:GH)

The need to acquire more than knowledge and skills in order to develop psychological security was also a common response, as was the need to feel in control and self-assured; particularly in terms of settling into the new context and team or work unit. This was generally associated

with becoming a novice and being unsure about how prior experience might be used in the new occupation/setting.

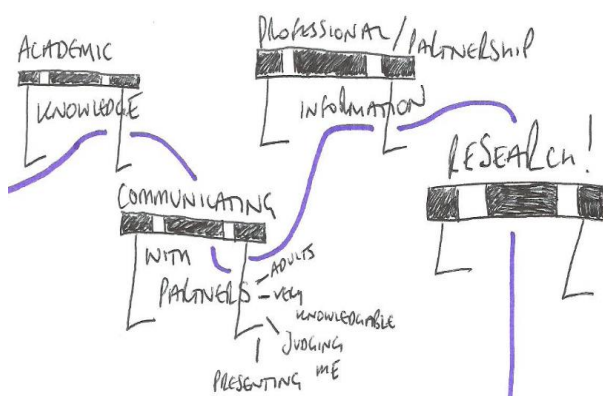
This is illustrated in TE:LM's RP which depicts changed status – from being at the top i.e. an expert in their previous occupation to being at the bottom (a novice) in their new one. Notes added by TE:LM reinforce this sense of instability and denote feeling unsteady; “box of tricks” also suggests that prior experience, knowledge and/or skill is important.



“Every time you move you’re taking a risk aren’t you and you have to re-establish yourself ... when I go into a new school I’ve got to re-establish my authority ... I didn’t have that mental image or map ... and I found it very unsettling” (TE:LM)

Moving not just to somewhere but also to *something* completely new led career changers to feel that they did not belong and to need to manage associated feelings and emotions; a perception captured quite eloquently by TE:RS.

“The best way I can describe it is learning a new language in a new context ... moving on to learn this new language of ‘academic’ work is a big change”



This was echoed in career changers’ comments on the ‘steep learning curve’ associated with starting a new occupation i.e. the need to come to terms with multiple hurdles (as illustrated in TE:IJs rich picture – opposite), new systems, and to acclimatise to new profession-specific jargon.

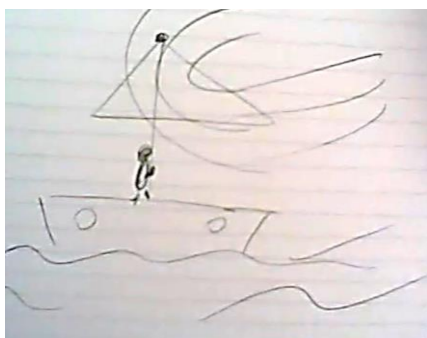
“There was this whole new language out there that I didn’t have a clue about ... there’s a whole theory base around pedagogy, you know even the word pedagogy needed to be explained to me ... I did feel a little bit like it was my problem for not having spotted it before I made the leap, that there was going to be this big kind of gulf that I’d have to climb back out of” (A:BC)

“I felt that I needed to go more down this research route and the more I went down it the unhappier I became” (TE:OP)

Feelings associated with inconsistency and unpredictability also feature prominently especially in terms of experiencing stability for a short period of time or in relation to a particular aspect of their new role followed feeling destabilised or unsure.

“It’s been really rocky ... really, really hard ... I didn’t go there thinking I knew everything, I didn’t, and I learnt a lot of valuable things” (T:JK)

The destabilising effect of career change is captured clearly in T:GH’s RP which depicts his move from a senior and highly experienced financial analyst who worked both nationally and internationally with high profile businesses to becoming a teacher. Whilst only representing



his own personal experiences, his RP nevertheless expresses the turbulence spoken about by other career changers especially their sense of being buffeted about and feeling the need to cling on in anticipation of things starting to settle down. This presents an optimistic view: that progress or forward momentum will be achieved rather than continuing turmoil.

“At the moment I’m still holding on because the winds are absolutely unpredictable, they come from different directions, and I’m still learning how to at least to predict most of the time where the winds are coming from, and to find out how to manage my boat, it goes up and down on the waves.” (T:GH)

Career changers also talked about a key challenge being the need to do things outside their previous experience (e.g. teaching adults rather than children, or preparing a lecture about

rather than treating a patient) and that prior experience did not always help. They did, however, acknowledge the mediating effect of being in a team of experienced professionals:

“The other people who’ve all started have been clinicians that have come into academia so we’re all kind of in the same boat and I think that’s helped. I think if I’d come into a team of established academics and I was the only ‘newby’ I could have felt very different. I think probably they weren’t expecting us to be amazing HE people” (A:KL)

It was not only moving towards (a new occupation) but away from (a previous occupation) that destabilised; this may be related to maturity (i.e. age) and prior experience.

“Leaving the health service is a big deal. We are slightly conditioned to believe that there’s nothing else out there and there’s a whole kind of job for life but clearly that’s not the way the world is now” (A:BC)

“I loved the whole process absolutely, apart from the last placement was just tough ... I found it tough but I think a lot of them just sailed through it quite nicely. There’s no doubt they had their issues but I think I had, because I’m older I had all the other life stuff going on as well as trying to do the training.” (T:PQ)

On the other hand, those who ‘dipped their toe in the water’ by taking on part-time, Associate Lecturer roles whilst still in their previous occupation felt less uncertain about their prospects.

“My contract was coming up to the end and they didn’t really know what was happening, whether the other physio was coming back part time or full time or whether there would be hours, so I started to get a bit twitchy and thought I need to think about my financial security” (A:NO)

6.4.2 OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY INCONGRUITY

This theme relates to the early stages of transition (e.g. the first year) and associated after-effects i.e. dilution of self-efficacy and uncertainty about their core sense of self. It also relates to losing ‘expert’ status and becoming a ‘novice’, and the cognitive dissonance experienced as a consequence i.e. uncertainty about what is valued, such as prior experience, skill, knowledge.

“I’ve been through an identity crisis in the last couple of years ... because my identity is totally about me as a teacher and it’s not really like that here” (TE:OP)

Career changers spoke of initially perceiving themselves to be a fraud or impostor – *as opposed to having longer-term doubts about their ability to become successful in their new role* – and this led them to question who they were and who they were becoming or had become.

“There’s that fraudulency, I’m now teaching you to teach what I used to do but I’m not doing it now ... when I’m teaching primary oooh big fraud alert you know, I haven’t done that, haven’t been in those classrooms ... I’m putting myself out there but I feel a big impostor” (TE:CD)

Trying to make sense of their new reality also affected career changers’ early experiences e.g. the need to come to terms with having moved away from a practice role.

“I was kind of like ‘oh right that kind of makes sense now’ and it kind of helped me kind of get my head round ‘ok well it is alright to have liked this new job and it has been ok to move on and it’s not been a waste of all those clinical years, it’s been learning and it’s ongoing.” (A:KL)

Moving from private to public sectors also impacted on career changers’ professional identity especially in terms of pace and values. The need to remain ‘grounded’ i.e. to not over-estimate the power of prior experience or underestimate the level of new professional knowledge and skill required was seen as being important.

“Changing occupation a lot of obstacles. It’s a painful process ... first of all changing sector ... means you have to learn everything from scratch ... so it can be painful because (the) public sector is a different world and teaching is completely different ... it’s a different culture ... it requires a consistent level of humility.” (T:GH)

Re-framing of who the individual thinks they are, have been, and how they need to be going forward in their new occupation was also a concern for career changers.

“I think the flexibility thing has been one of the key things for me, I think I have been, I just am as a person, a chameleon, some people would say re-inventing myself I’m not sure that’s the way to put it, but I’m comfortable with that” (T:PQ)

“At first I wasn’t really confident enough to know that I could learn anything about it but I think I had enough awareness that actually gosh this is a whole new career. I can remember actually actively thinking I’ve taken on a new career and of course I’m not going to know everything and of course I’m going to be struggling ... I just reframed it ... Once I had that realisation that it was a career changer ... once I got maybe six months or so in I realised no this is a career change, there’s lots of big things going on here and you’ve got to learn lots of stuff” (A:BC)

Career changers also perceived not being fully accepted into the new cadre. This was disconcerting and undermined their emergent sense of belonging to their new occupation.

“There’s a perception of me and some staff get it and they were like “you must come in on this” and “you’d be brilliant in this we’ll do a brilliant simulation” and then other members of staff don’t want me involved in it” (A:EF)

“There’s a little bit of an uncomfortable tension in that I can’t decide how to be ... in some ways I’m destabilised because I’m not quite sure of the best way forward” (TE:CD)

Career changers also worried that whatever approach they took could be perceived negatively and undermine their credibility. This was linked to a clear realisation that their previous ‘professional self’ had to be left behind so that the new ‘professional hat’ could become more firmly fixed and that this was better done earlier in the change process.

“You realise that you are at the bottom rung again ... you have to be prepared to go into your new job, to relinquish your old role and realise nobody cares what you did ... you have to forget your old career so that you can use it to inform what you do but it no longer is who you are at work ... if you can’t honestly say to yourself “I can do that” then you shouldn’t change jobs” (TE:FG)

On the other hand, prior professional status led some career changers to doubt colleagues’ capabilities, to believe there was a mismatch between their own and new colleagues’ status/

ranking, and to not relish being observed or assessed by those they believed inferior when they believed themselves already possessed of sufficient capability to perform in the new role.

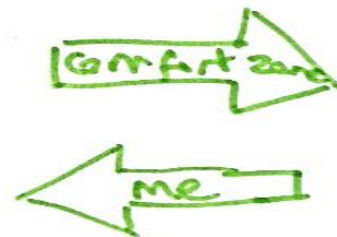
“It was like being surrounded by kids who were teachers ... all these screaming girls were actually teachers. That was the worst bit ... it was a nightmare ... you couldn’t have a conversation with them because it was just a completely different level. Then when I came here ... you’re dealing with adults and can have a decent conversation and I think that was really important” (T:JK)

“I found that quite hard to take early on in the teacher-training because I wasn’t used to it. I’d been working on my own doing my thing ... I found that quite wearing. I was kind of ‘leave me alone’ (laughs) ‘stop watching me in the classroom’ (laughs) but yes I see the value in it, it just can be quite hard to digest” (T:PQ)

6.4.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL DISCOMFORT

Anxiety associated with the move into their new occupation was viewed as something only the career changers experienced i.e. others (including other occupational changers) were fine and able make swift and seamless transitions. This is captured in both TE:OP’s RP and in her words (below):

“We think other people, they’ve just landed perfectly, it’s only me, they can do it and even if people tell you, you wouldn’t believe it ... the psychology of it is incredible isn’t it ... I’ve never been insecure really in my academic ability but (I feel it) very much here” (TE:OP)



For some, however, psychological discomfort e.g. feeling stressed, uneasy, unsure, and lacking the psychological resources to cope was something to be endured; a natural part of change.

“I have put myself out of my comfort zone a bit and made myself try different things” (A:KL)

Discomfort was linked to no longer being the expert and feeling insecure in terms of not knowing the rules, routines, responsibilities associated with their new environment and, for some, this extended to feeling alone during transition.

“You move career (and) you don’t know what you don’t know” (TE:RS)

“I was very frightened on the first day. It took courage, blind courage” (A:EF)

Change of pace also led to psychological discomfort i.e. moving from challenging, non-stop practice-based environments such as a classroom or hospital ward, with the need to be mentally switched on as soon as they arrived was in stark contrast to the slower pace of HE.

“I had space to plan and think and I wasn’t used to it and I was thinking about what I’d done all those previous years and what my colleagues would be doing” (TE:LM)

“when you come from quite a fast-pace environment into this you feel quite unproductive because you’re not running around all day every day ... so it kept making me feel like I’m not doing enough ... that, for me, what a challenge” (TE:RS)

The sense of vulnerability was also exacerbated when individual starting points were less than positive i.e. when career changers were not able to begin the change process on solid ground.

“towards the end of my career when I was made redundant I lost my confidence quite badly ... I think going into teacher-training it has gone and that’s probably why my teacher-training was so hard because I’d no confidence left. So every criticism I took on board and I also criticised myself as well.” (T:AB)

Doing things for the first time was also stress-inducing e.g. preparing to lead a lecture:

“(it was) terrifying and exhilarating all at the same time because I really didn’t have a clue what I was going to do and I was week by week by the seat of my pants ... coming here it’s all like hyper-academised ... that was absolutely terrifying because it did make me feel I don’t know anything ... you don’t know what you need to know anymore ... the language and jargon was just mind blowing” (A:BC)

“It was very much ‘off you go and we’ll see you when we see you’ and I found that really uncomfortable to start off with” (A:NO)

Feeling exposed and needing to work hard to portray themselves as capable also appears across interviews: key challenges were bringing to the surface knowledge gained potentially many years ago, and feeling that despite investment (e.g. time, effort) progress would be slow.

“Initially I didn’t have in my mind, ready to hand, the science, which was a bit fundamental (laughs) ... do I know the right bits of it that I should be teaching you at this point? No I don’t so I’ve had to re-look at that again. You’re much quicker at picking things up when you’re older if you’ve learnt it before but that’s been quite a biggy for me because it was about 20 years ago” (T:PQ)

“The stress of that first and second placement. The second I nearly crashed. It destroyed my confidence a bit. I think it was that expectation as well ... I had one class that I just kept tripping up on. I spent seven and a half hours planning one lesson and it just played on my mind to the point where I went down rapidly.” (T:AB)

Acceptance of the sometimes painful or less straightforward nature of the change journey is also a significant aspect of career change i.e. that a sense of instability is quite normal.

“It hasn’t been a smooth journey but yes I’m here” (A:HI)

“That destabilisation has made me feel a bit uncomfortable at times and then when I’ve gone in to teach a session I think that discomfort in my position comes out but actually what I feel I need to do is try to accept that destabilised position and not being a bad position, it’s not bad to be destabilised, if anything it can be quite good to be sort of on your feet and ready to go in a new direction” (TE:CD)

Lack of stability also left career changers questioning their motives for changing career and searching for reassurance. This was accompanied by the need to know who was a ‘safe base’ i.e. who they could trust to call upon when needing to check their knowledge and skills.

“I was feeling a bit out of my comfort zone and I could have done with a bit of spoon feeding” (A:BC)

“there’s a little bit of looking for a bit of security” (T:AB)

“The other thing I felt quite challenging is I’m the only (specialism) within my team so ... although we can network and share tips and ideas there was nobody really for me to say well have you taught this before, what are your experiences?” (A:NO)

Psychological discomfort did not only occur during the earliest days of change, it was ongoing.

“I just got used to it, but I think it would panic me to go into it now ... I found it harder in the second year because I had more year 5s and they weren’t SEN so that was more challenging” (TE:MN)

“At the beginning it wasn’t so bad actually but as time went on I was more aware of my inability. It’s that conscious incompetence thing and I was more aware of my incompetencies which then made me more aware that I was being observed and needed to sort them out, but sorting them out involved my capacity of brain that I didn’t have a very large amount of. So that was a big conflict.” (T:PQ)

6.4.4 JUDGEMENT AVERSION

Another common trait amongst complex career changers was their aversion to being judged i.e. thought of badly, and a concern with being perceived as incompetent.

“I started to realise that I was maybe not taking it in and then I worried about asking the same questions again ... when I first started it was all new and I kind of didn’t mind asking questions and saying show me how to do this, and then the more I was there I put more pressure on myself thinking I should know this by now ... I didn’t like to ask questions and I felt like ‘oh’ so then it became more difficult to ask for help and that’s when I felt like I was going to flounder and get left behind” (T:MN)

“I wasn’t very good at actually asking people for help or saying ‘I don’t know this’ because that, for me, is a sign of failure. I worried what people thought of me and that they’d think I was stupid or not good enough. I wouldn’t admit to them that I didn’t really know what I was doing but I would suck up their experience like a sponge and take it all in” (A:NO)

This over-riding concern with what others might think – as illustrated in TE:IJ’s RP – was linked to a palpable fear of potentially negative outcomes e.g. threat to career/ job, team gossip. This led some to present a professional image but hide their inner anxieties.

“In my first year I was quite defensive ... I think through fear of people judging what I’m doing I might not chat to others straightaway” (TE:IJ)



“I think it’s part of confidence. We can’t all know everything all the time ... but we often feel like we need to present a front ... it was a bit like I’ll just have to carry on pretending and hoping nobody’s noticed. I spent at least a year, if not longer, saying to people ‘so I’m new into academia and I’ve been in clinical practice for nearly twenty years and I’ve done less than a year here so you’re going have to forgive me because I don’t know anything. That was my safety blanket, that was like my shield” (A:BC)

Identifying a trusted colleague was greatly valued – respected for the quality of their advice and as a potential source of affirmation. However, career changers acknowledged that ‘settling in’ takes time and that they have free choice in relation to who they talk/turn to for help.

“I can’t share much otherwise I’m going to maybe discover later I’ve done something wrong and it will bounce back on me ... if I have issues I might share with a couple of people maybe three” (T:GH)

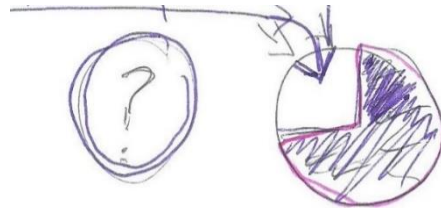
“Of course all the people I work with in teacher education, they’re all me, they were all teachers so of course they’re going to help me transition because they’ve been there, they understand” (TE:OP)

Also recognised was a need for psychological strength to overcome fears and assert credibility.

“There are a couple of people who are really experienced who I could absolutely think you know what I know you’d support me with my writing but I’m not going to do that because you’re too good and you’re too scary. I think it’s the underlying emotion because when you’re under-confident if you expose gaps I think you feel frightened and you feel worried and you feel upset that there’s all these gaps that need filling” (A:BC)

Knowing 'who' is important to career changers but so too is knowing 'when' i.e. the right or comfortable time to share concerns or learning needs rather than 'parking' them.

This is illustrated clearly in A:BC's RP where she represents her willingness to open up to others as a 'competence circle'. The more complete the circle (with knowledge, perceived competence, increased confidence) the more willing she was to reveal rather than conceal self-perceived 'gaps'. In her sketch she highlights that 75% of the 'competence circle' needed to be filled in before she would reach out to others or open up about her learning needs, particularly in relation to her line manager – where her need to avoid being judged was at its highest.



6.5 IMPERATIVES FOR CAREER COMPLEX CHANGE

This final theme relates to what complex career changers said they needed when going into and during the process: control, adaptability, realising that others have been through the same process, and the need for the challenges inherent in complex career change to be recognised.

6.5.1 NEED TO FEEL IN CONTROL OF THE CHANGE PROCESS

The desire for agency and to feel in control of the change process including subsequent development was important to career changers; being given advice or directed was perceived as loss of autonomy and led to them feeling restricted in terms of ownership of ideas or plans.

“When it’s advice ... I feel that that takes away from my ability to change what I want to do or to respond in real time to the needs of the people I’m working with ” (TE:FG)

In addition, rather than having plans dictated or driven by a manager or colleague – no matter how well-meaning – career changers preferred to exercise personal choice over who was turned to and when this was done, particularly during the initial settling in period.

“The really good thing is that X (boss) lets me do my own thing to a very large extent, more so now ... so I’m now starting to feel in control of my own courses now which I never used to so I think that’s good” (T:JK)

Having said which a friendly approach to pointing them in the right direction was welcome but on the understanding that decisions relating to learning and development were theirs.

“I’m like going around having these little conversations with lots of people to try and enable things whilst having no power or autonomy myself, no decision-making power, nothing” (A:EF)

On the other hand, career changers also spoke of their acceptance of the need to be flexible and to understand that control might be something that they needed to relinquish in the initial transition period; acknowledging the newness of both the situation and their role in it helped them to accept some uncertainty/lack of control.

“I think because of my age and the different things I’ve done I know I can go into an environment and I know what I’m like ... I know that if I’m patient that usually expands into something that works for me as opposed to going in with all guns blazing going I’m a fantastic person and I can show you how amazing I am. So I think I’ve kind of learnt my method of going into a new environment ... it’s definitely a security thing isn’t it” (T:PQ)

The need to work within clear parameters is accepted but having the freedom to exercise choice is preferred and viewed as more motivational.

“I’ve got all those flexibilities to choose when I do them and I’m trusted to do them” (TE:LM)

“I wanted to feel like I can do this, I’m capable of defining myself” (A:HI)

“That’s a different kind of pressure but that pressure’s on you because you can actually take ownership” (T:AB)

Control also appears to be linked to career changers’ experiences of stress. For instance A:NO spoke of not coping particularly well when not in control and when expected to work as part of a multi-disciplinary team where deadlines are not always maintained by colleagues; something that seemed more acute because she had previously been a senior line manager/lead practitioner and responsible for workload management. Similar feelings were expressed

by T:AB who had changed career to become a Teacher having been a senior and highly experienced computer programmer:

“My confidence has gone up because there are times when I said ‘right I’ve got 10 things to do, I’ve time to do 4 of them, so ... I can’t do those, and if they come back and say why haven’t you done these I can say because I was doing that, that, and that ... You either let me do it my way and I protect myself or I’ll be out of this career” (T:AB)

6.5.2 PREPAREDNESS TO RE-ORIENT

This relates to career changers’ readiness to adapt the way they think about and cope with/ react to the new challenges and setbacks they experience.

“I’ve had to change my mind-set just to accept that a little bit more like actually when you speak to people they all say “God we used to do this wrong and we used to do that wrong and they’re ok now (laughs) so actually just like accept it because if you worry about every single mistake you ever make it just makes the self-doubt even worse” (TE:IJ)

It is about mental preparation for what is to come – a form of personal well-being. One participant even admitted that it was *“really nice to be at the bottom of the rung again” (TE:FG)*

Career changers acknowledged that looking at change as an opportunity which would, as with all new things be accompanied by problems to overcome, was a helpful coping strategy.

“Throughout the year there were some things that went wrong and so you know, that happens, and I know they’re going to go wrong and I accept them” (TE:LM)

“There haven’t been major crashes ... you’re always on a learning curve aren’t you?” (A:KL)

“I think I am very hard instead I should relax and let some things go ... I’ll get there. I’m learning this ... I’m a decent teacher but I know I can improve” (T:GH)

“The novice perspective is really useful because I’ve come into this role ... and I’ve been able to say well I didn’t get it I didn’t understand it or I felt intimidated by it or I was confused ... being the novice is helpful and informative” (A:EF)

Allied to this is career changers' willingness to readily accept status-change i.e. that they are no longer the expert but a novice. Embracing rather than resisting, and recognising that change is a process i.e. is gradual and takes time – was seen as key to developing a sense of calm.

“I’ve never seen being a novice here as being a disadvantage. I’ve absolutely recognised that I have been a novice but I think I’ve kind of embraced it and thought I’m a novice and that’s ok and I’ll get beyond novice at some point and that’s alright” (A:KL)

“I quite like it in some ways, because I can say ‘I’m new I don’t know how to do it’ (laughs) it won’t last, in five minutes time I go oh gosh I’m supposed to be an expert now” (T:PQ)

Adopting a mature, open attitude to change was also spoken about by career changers:

“It is big and it’s not big at the same time because it’s just another jump and you have to get yourself to the point where you can jump and that I think can be quite challenging. All those things I was saying about the security that’s big, you kind of have to get yourself to that ‘ready to jump’ ... I wonder whether something has to be not right to make you jump because if it was all fine you’d never move” (A:BC)

This illustrates that a key coping strategy is preparedness. This can take a number of shapes e.g. ‘dipping a toe in the water’.

“I first started to give private tuition ... just to understand what they are looking for, what is the spec, how it works, to get a flavour from that side ... then after a couple of years I decided to get into teaching” (T:GH)

Readiness is also linked to resilience i.e. the ability to bounce back – this is something that new Teacher PQ spoke about when thinking back on her journey from having been an Accountant:

“I think it’s a resilience isn’t it ... my mentor said she thought I must be very resilient because I kept coming back for more (laughs) ... if I really dig down, if you’ve got a reasonably solid background i.e. your upbringing ... you could say that some people are naturally very resilient and when something bad happens to them they manage to bounce back, but maybe it’s just intrinsic.” (T:PQ)

Belief that change is positive, enjoyable and should be welcomed was fundamental to career changers' well-being during the transition process.

"I realised that I was going to enjoy the change or thought I was going to enjoy the change" (TE:BS)

"To the point where I actually enjoyed the change and didn't find it abrasive" (TE:LM)

"I think you've just got to recognise that in some of these roles and jobs you're on a steep learning curve, you've got to accept that you're going to require a number of elements of support. I really have lived by that. If I need the help and if I need to go back 10 times I'm quite prepared to do it because I'm not going to sit and go I'm a failure if I ask this one again" (A:QR)

6.5.3 REALISATION THAT CAREER CHANGE IS A SHARED EXPERIENCE

This relates to career changers' recognition that others' support could be beneficial i.e. others had changed career and experienced similar challenges, obstacles and concerns.

"Once I realised that other people were in the same boat then I was alright" (A:BC)

"The other thing that helped me was the reassurance that everybody else was a bit unsure and panicky and 'I'm not good enough, I don't really know what I'm doing and I'm winging it too' ... very much that reassurance that I wasn't alone" (A:NO)

Seeing others confront challenging situations offered career changers reassurance, particularly in terms of struggling with something new and working through it together. Realising that despite their additional experience that colleagues also benefitted from taking a collective approach to working out the right or most effective solution/approach was also comforting.

"it's just nice to kind of know that you're not on your own and think you're in the same boat but also you share ideas together and it didn't feel like I was just going and asking all the time but when they're also in the same position" (T:MN)

Recognising that complex career change is becoming more commonplace also helped, especially in terms of realising that they were surrounded by like-minds who had ‘been there and done that’.

“I don’t feel at all like I’ve been on this journey by myself you know, our team, there are so many people who have said I remember ... I felt the same way when I came in” (TE:OP)

“... communicating with people was the secret” (TE:LM)

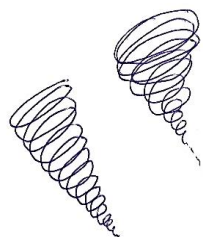
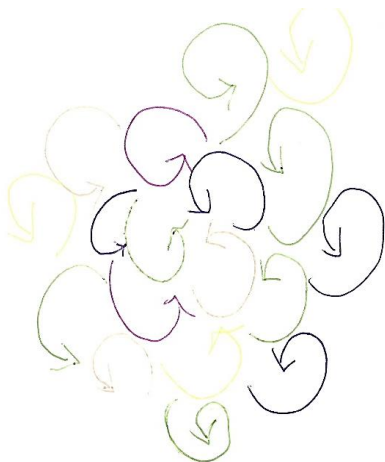
“I think just because there was a group of us that were all in the same boat it was ok. The expectations were that you were a novice and that was ok and there was lots of support” (A:KL)

6.5.4 NEED FOR OTHERS’ RECOGNITION OF BOUNDARY CROSSING

The final imperative relates to the perceived lack of recognition on the part of their new organisations (line managers, HR, colleagues) that they had crossed a major boundary i.e. that their career change differed from simple, ‘within organisation’ change. They sought recognition that they were distinct from simple career changers – they brought diverse experience, had different expectations and different learning needs.

“They don’t seem to take account of previous experience at the level we sort of worked.” (T:JK)

“... from a university perspective I don’t know whether it’s because I’ve come from a long career in practice but it was quite a big shift” (A:NO)



This is captured in A:EF’s rich picture which illustrates the multiple inputs and the feeling of being swept away/up in a whirlwind of information coming from a range of people but which did not necessarily take into consideration her experience and existing knowledge/skill.

“I like the fact that the University are now doing ‘new to teaching’ workshops because I could have really used that at the time” (A:BC)

Career changers spoke of the need for employers to have greater awareness of both the change process per se and of individual changers themselves i.e. what they need, when they need it, and how they need it to be ‘delivered’. This is in terms of low-level minutiae (e.g. how to use a photocopier or printer, how to login in to particular systems), through to the more central expectations of the new role (e.g. the need to write lesson plans, how to structure assignment questions or to ‘chivvy’ learners to complete preparatory reading/tasks).

“You’re like ‘right I need to go and speak to X now, I’m doing something wrong’. And that’s it really, it’s that, it’s seeking a bit of reassurance really. It’s like the old, if it’s just you it’s you but if it’s everybody it can’t just be you and that’s what you get from that” (T:AB)

Concerns were also raised in terms of the need for recognition of their differing needs in relation to induction, where career changers spoke of it needing to be tailored to their needs and to take account of their differing experiences.

“I give you my blood but in exchange I get a minimum of support” (T:GH)

“All we get is bombardment of information ... it would have been good to have a bit of time to work that out and then maybe have somebody say what support do you think you’re going to need? ... I found it very much a tick box exercise rather than ‘how can we develop you?’ ... I didn’t find the induction very useful” (A:NO).

This extends to being assigned to a mentor i.e. to an experienced colleague pre-selected by the line manager:

“I was allocated a mentor when I first started and I had my first meeting ... and she sort of said “oh I don’t really know what my role is” (laughs) so I sort of said “oh ok I’ll get in touch if I need anything” and that was the extent of the conversation” (A:NO)

6.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Findings relating to occupational re-orientation show that complex career change is not only a complicated endeavour, but that individuals who choose to make such dramatic changes share particular change motivations (drivers), experiences of the transformation process (dynamics) and needs in terms of making a successful career change (imperatives).

What motivates complex career changers is shown to change over time and is linked to career maturity i.e. prior success and gaining a clear understanding of the nature of their prior occupation enabled individuals to better understand what was important to them and, by extension, what was no longer important. This is something that is also associated with a sense of stagnation and career changers spoke of their need for something beyond what could be offered by their previous occupation. Allied to this was their desire to enter an occupation that enabled them to extend their personal reach; no longer satisfied with or motivated by being able to do a good job for themselves or even for their 'customers', a key motivating factor which propelled them towards their new occupation was being able to move beyond their role and even beyond the timeframe in which they worked i.e. make a lasting difference.

Career changers' experience of the transformation process was also illuminating and highlights the risk associated with leaving an established career where they were at least competent if not expert, to begin again in a new occupation as a novice. Having taken the risk – and despite prior career success – uncertainty, particularly in terms of feeling underprepared and exposed in relation to lacking knowledge and/or skill, was a key dynamic. Related to this is the impact that complex career change had on occupational identity, with incongruity being particularly prominent during early stages of transition. Career changers spoke of experiencing a drop in self-efficacy, ambiguity in terms of their core sense of self, and feeling like an impostor. This turbulence in turn led to sometime quite intense psychological discomfort; not only as a result of judging themselves harshly but also based on perceptions that others' were or had been more effective at handling transition. For most this resulted in judgement aversion i.e. actively avoiding asking questions or admitting their need for help or support, and to keeping inner anxieties about being thought of as incompetent hidden from public view.

The overarching imperative for complex career changers revolves around two opposing needs. The first centres on personal power i.e. needing to feel in control of the career change

process but at the same time being sufficiently adaptable to give up a known and successful previous occupation for one that is a new and unknown. The second centres on looking outside themselves, both in terms of realising that they are not alone in this challenging endeavour since colleagues they now work with may have experienced complex career change and could, therefore, be a valuable source of support, but also in terms of needing the organisation they are joining to recognise the scale of their move and for support to be tailored to their distinct developmental needs.

Chapter 7

Interpretation of Findings

RECAPTURING SUCCESS

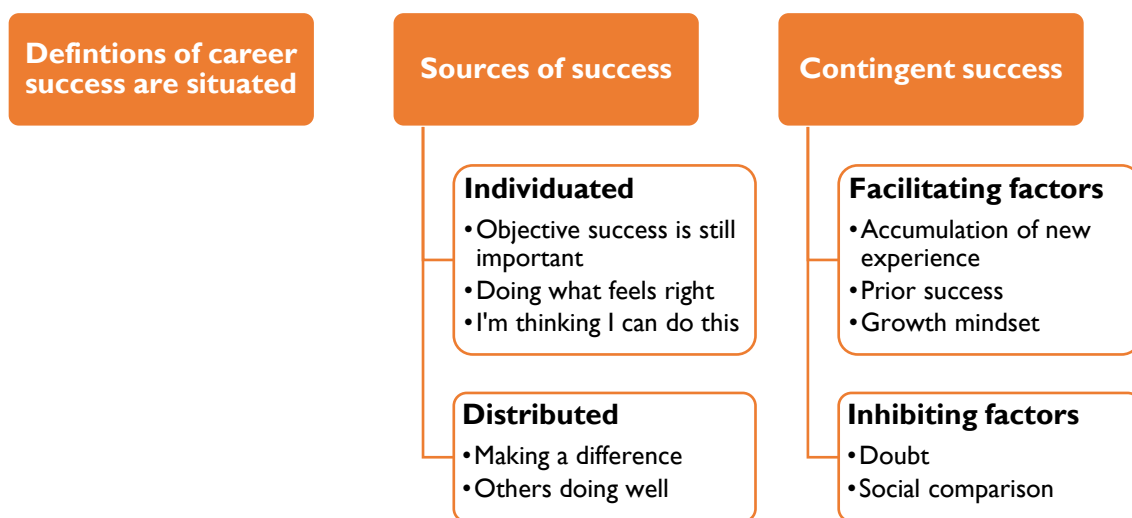
“The only people who see the whole picture are the ones who
step outside the frame”

— *Salman Rushdie*

7.1 INTRODUCTION – THE RECAPTURING SUCCESS DOMAIN

Following on from the approach taken in chapter 6 (Occupational Re-orientation) this chapter also presents the findings from all three occupational groups. The ‘recapturing success’ domain (see Figure 18) represents the perceptions and experiences of career success and contains multiple themes: ‘definitions of career success are situated’, ‘sources of success’ (individuated and distributed), and ‘contingent success’ (facilitating and inhibiting factors).

Figure 18: Recapturing Success Thematic Map



As with the previous chapter, each theme, along with the accompanying sub-themes is analysed, and extracts from transcripts are included to further illustrate meaning/patterns.

7.2 DEFINITIONS OF CAREER SUCCESS ARE SITUATED

This theme relates to definitional flux i.e. how career changers’ perceptions of success changed based on where they were situated in their career and in their wider life i.e. the point they were at in their career (e.g. mid- or late-career) and the point in their life (e.g. mid-life). Career changers spoke about the way this affected the way they thought about and defined success, in particular since changing occupation; as illustrated by TE:CD:

“my measure of success isn’t quite the same, I’m not really sure what it is at the moment”

“So from a (new occupation/employer) perspective I’ve probably been successful but in (old occupation/employer) I wouldn’t be (laughs)” (A:KL)

Lack of alignment with the individual’s definition of success was a key reason for changing occupation. For example, the clash between the drive for measurable results versus what individual teachers perceived to be important or motivational in their job.

“I would get results but that’s not my main driving focus, whereas for a deputy head, for example, who’s responsible for results, that is their agenda” (TE:LM)

What is valued across a career is also something that can change. For instance, the extent to which objective measures of success continue to be sought i.e. whilst upward mobility and earning more had been a motivator, this changed in line with life or career goals.

“I think I’ve changed from looking at success as moving up ... to more of an inner thing ... I think it’s gradually changed over time” (TE:IJ)

“Success would have probably been financially driven certainly early on ... we’re talking 30 years ago ... I think even then underneath I wanted to be able to learn to do (my job) very well and I was probably struggling ... which is probably why I left” (T:PQ)

Career changers’ perceptions of success altered from objective to subjective i.e. softer and, potentially, less tangible measures such as satisfaction, happiness, achieving personal goals.

“My colleagues and friends that have chased promotion throughout their career and have climbed the ladder haven’t necessarily been happy ... they’ve reached the pinnacle of their career and actually that (isn’t) the happiest place” (TE:LM)

“I think I would define success for me by whether you felt gratified by what you were doing, whether you felt that you were happy, whether you felt that you had made a difference or had done a good job” (A:QR)

Achievement may also not be particularly significant but still be perceived as a success. For instance, having a positive impact on an individual and feeling good about that.

A related finding is that recapturing success is not necessarily immediate and that this may be frustrating or make measuring success a challenge. For example, ex-teachers who were used to measuring learning progress/outcomes but became a teacher-educator – where success is vicarious i.e. related to a trainee’s success in role – found success took longer to manifest.

“You don’t see your successes or they can be long term successes and you’re not there to see the outcomes” (TE:OP)

“It’s more up and down I think with teaching, some days you feel successful and literally the next day you can feel like the worst teacher in the world” (T:MN)

What is measured by an organisation can also impact on an individual’s definition of success e.g. the extent to which success is openly discussed, or the way it is discussed. Both contributed towards thoughts of career change or a changed perception of an occupation.

“We don’t stop to think about the successes ... our system is inherently built to ... focus on what are the problems and the deficits and how we address them” (TE:CD)

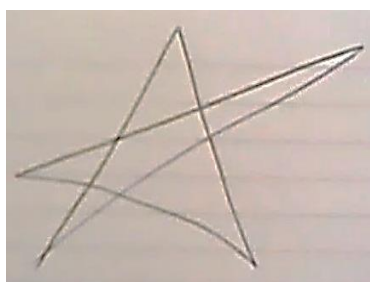
7.3 SOURCES OF SUCCESS

This theme reveals career changers’ perceptions of the sources of their success:

7.3.1 INDIVIDUATED SUCCESS

This sub-theme focuses on career changers performing well in their job and comprises ‘objective success is still important’, ‘doing what feels right’ (feeling successful), and ‘I’m thinking I can do this’ (shoring up i.e. ‘talking self-up’, feeling more confident/competent).

7.3.1.1 OBJECTIVE SUCCESS IS STILL IMPORTANT



Success can be objective and linked to status and gaining recognition based on holding an ‘expert’ or leadership role e.g. Head of Department, Assistant Head, Sister, Director. For T:GH, for instance, success in his previous occupation as a financial analyst was about being the ‘star performer’ and at the top in terms of making money for his organisation.

“Other people are confident that you know what you’re doing ... when I got that band 7 level you know the more junior physios might come and say “could you give me a hand?” ... and you sort of think “oh I must know what I’m doing if more junior people are asking for help” (A:KL)

*“I see success as being external as opposed to being internal ... other people’s recognition of what I’m doing that’s probably what it is to me. So not internal. I’m the kind of person who likes to be thanked so if I don’t get thanked I get really p***ed off” (T:JK)*

This perception of personal success is also important i.e. career progression and accomplishing qualification-related milestones along the way showed that they were successful.

“I was the first person at the University to be awarded with Teaching Excellence” (T:JK)

“I have to have very measurable and tangible things ... I started off as a basic grade and then I got a senior 2, band 6 there was no way I could sit at band 6. I had to take that next step ... it’s been important that I’ve made those progressions ... boxes I can tick” (A:NO)

Some career changers continued to apply the same measures to their new role e.g. unambiguous outcomes or results, particular achieving at a high level etc.

“very often with money comes recognition or with recognition comes money so yes I am money driven ... I’m not one of these people who goes ‘I’ve won a race today’” (T:DE)

Others see success as being about personal responsibility and results rather than contributing to a team ‘effort’. For instance, Accountant-turned-Science Teacher (T:PQ) said:

“I was of the chain of events rather than (now) ... I’m kind of top of the pile really ... that’s a measure of my success ... I think the responsibility for success is down to you and how you utilise what you’re capable of”

On the other hand, career changers also commented on changed priorities or adjusting their concept of success i.e. what made them successful before has not transferred to the new occupation e.g. acquisition of higher-level qualifications takes over from student support.

“I was able to reframe that ... I haven’t thought this through before, there is something quite powerful about the Worcester Teaching Award that went ‘you know you’re good at this’ ... a bit of patting yourself on the back and going “look at me” that builds your confidence to be able to say oh I can do this bit” (A:BC)

Promotion was no longer viewed as being the only or best signifier of success. For some, achieving mastery or improving capability was a better external signifier of success.

“there’s external markers of successful here as well ... you know if you presented at a conference or published a paper you know there’s that marker of success” (A:KL)

Visible or externally-recognised success is also about gaining acknowledgement and respect. Being praised for doing a good job – rather than simply doing a good job – features as an indicator of personal success for career changers.

“(when I get) oh well done, I’m like oh that must mean I’m being successful” (TE:IJ)

“being good at what you do but having that, I guess, validated by people around me ... it’s really good to hear that you’re doing fine that you’re doing it well” (T:PQ)

“Validation from others, yes, absolutely a hundred percent ... it’s definitely validation ... it’s part of that acceptance, yes they recognise I’ve had some influence on that and yes, they’ve done the hard work, but the fact that they recognise that I’ve helped, to me, that’s like the best feeling in the world. That’s almost as good as helping somebody walk again” (A:NO)

“I’m definitely a recognition person. If you don’t say to me ‘wow that was brilliant’ then as far as I’m concerned it wasn’t ... unless the person that matters says it ... that, for me, is like yes, nailed it” (T:DE)

This also includes being nominated for awards or being given additional responsibility.

“I’ve had a few nominations along the way for students-choice awards ... that’s very fulfilling to know ... students are appreciating what I’m doing” (A:BC)

“because they saw me as a professional in computer science not a teacher ... he treated me as an equal ... actually we could have really good conversations so he was on the same level as me too” (T:JK)

“there’s a multiplier effect that I’ve never had access to before and I had some positive feedback ... the nomination was so purposeful” (TE:CD)

Allied to this, career changers talked of wanting recognition for professional status and led some to overtly highlight prior experience and success to justify occupational change.

“last week one of my students said ‘oh tell us something about yourself’ and I thought what she was really saying was ‘convince me that you can do this’ ... so I share with my students because I think it gives me some professional credibility ... ” (TE:LM)

“... a couple of people emailed me ‘I saw your article, I really liked it’, it really resonated ... a couple of students spotted it and emailed me ... all of those things were really affirming ... added together to kind of help that confidence build” (A:BC)

On the other hand, some career changers spoke of success needing to be downplayed or not actively sought because of its negative impact on colleagues i.e. jealousy. By contrast, concentrating on improving practice was acceptable.

“... it was good to be at the top but you do feel for other teachers whose classes are at the bottom” (TE:RS)

“you’re getting a lot more back then so you almost don’t have to spend so much time guessing and ... there are more opportunities to pat yourself on the back and think ‘actually that went really well” (T:MN)

7.3.1.2 DOING WHAT FEELS RIGHT

Success can also be intangible. Some signs of being successful are implicit and may, therefore, not be particularly easy to measure i.e. associated with feelings or emotional responses/experiences.

“I definitely think it’s me feeling it rather than someone telling me” (TE:IJ)

“I think it needs to feel more that I’m doing what feels right” (T:MN)

“Something you enjoy. Knowing what you’re doing I suppose that’s a bit vague but you know, being competent in the day to day ... you’re confident you know what you’re doing ... I still say you know it’s kind of enjoying your job and looking forward to going into work in the morning rather than dreading going in. That’s the most important thing probably for success. You could be working in a shop but if you love it then that’s successful I would say” (A:KL)

“I’ve always sort of been very connected to the teaching because that gives me a lot of satisfaction” (TE:LM)

Perceptions of having been successful are also about ‘doing the job’ i.e. achieving personal goals and feeling capable and in control rather than achieving organisational objectives.

“It’s much more about the feeling of it being an atmosphere of progress” (TE:CD)

“it’s feeling that satisfaction ... not defined by objects or certificates or other peoples’ ideas but that reassurance within yourself when it comes to affirm that I can do a good job, I am capable to learn, I am capable to move on” (A:HI)

*“when I go to bed at night I think what have I achieved today and it’s not just that I’ve had a good day ... success is much more than just school.
For me, success now is about life” (T:JK)*

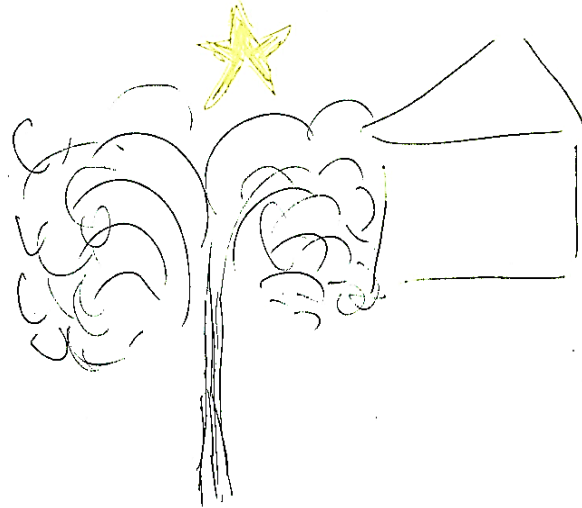
Success is also tied into a deeper sense of who we are and what we stand for. Career changers spoke of success in their new occupation aligning with their values, ethics and personal integrity.

“Every job I’ve done, I’ve had success in because I work hard and I do a good job ... you become more philosophical about ‘what does success mean to you’ ... it’s not financial or material it’s kind of more integrity and values and ethics” (A:QR)

“something about a sense of fulfilment, I think in, that respect and work and your career being part of who you are and your identity, that for me is about being successful” (A:BC)

This is illustrated very clearly in business woman-turned-Teacher's (T:DE) comments and rich picture, which highlight the contribution of colleagues and a positive workplace atmosphere/culture to a sense of success in a new occupation.

"I went then to my second placement and the people there I just felt like I'd gone home. It was entirely different atmosphere ... Every time I walked through that door I felt like somebody was wrapping their arms around me and giving me a big hug ... so inside it feels like it whooshes all from my foot and goes wooooo, like the top, like a big explosion, you know like those water jets when they go up" (T:DE)



A stimulating new occupation can also help career changers discover more about their professional selves.

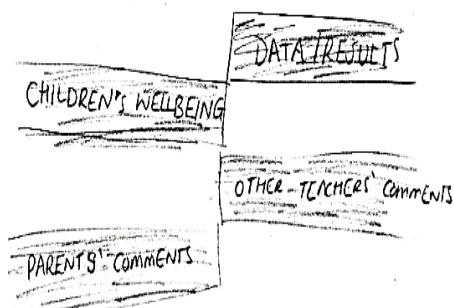
"Where I am at the moment I'm quite happy too, it's not about taking the next level because I feel like I can develop that way (referring to professional development i.e. teaching credentials, PhD), there are so many opportunities in higher education" (A:NO)

"I'm still really open to experiences and learning about something new, that's exciting ... that increases my job satisfaction" (TE:LM)

Being true to one's own values and doing something that fulfils an inner need is also a key indicator of success for occupational changers i.e. something they get back.

"You've got to have some sort of extrinsic motivator but as soon as you do you lose something I think ... success for me is when you are doing something that gives you some pay back" (TE:LM)

“They said ‘do you want to do a PhD’ and I said well no I just want to do the job well and I think that’s a thread for me ... I’m not after big promotions, I’m not after loads of responsibility I just want to do what I’m doing to the best of my ability” (A:PQ)



Career changers also commented on the multi-dimensional character of success – T:MN spoke of “different layers” and her RP depicts this as flags pointing in different directions. Success can relate to being pleased about getting good results, to feedback from others and from contributing towards improved outcomes/experiences e.g. a child’s well-being.

7.3.1.3 I’M THINKING I CAN DO THIS

This source of individuated success relates to self-belief and the way career changers gain a sense of success from shoring up i.e. feel more confident/competent by ‘talking up’ their ability to develop and succeed in their new occupation.

“My thinking has moved in a way that I’m pretty sure is positive ... I think I have felt a real success at it, I was like I do get this, I can pick this up ... I’m not thinking I can’t do it, I’m thinking I can do this, I can, you know and I’m loving it” (TE:CD)

“to me that’s what success is, knowing you can do it ... it’s like someone who’s a paramedic, knowing they’ve got the confidence that they can save somebody’s life if they need to do it. That’s success” (T:AB)

Career changers are not doing this to mislead themselves or to ‘hoodwink’ i.e. it is not a misplaced sense of confidence. It is about recognising their potential and competence can develop unevenly.

“Good enough with features of like “I’m proud of that”, that’s like individual events or projects or sessions during the year” (TE:IJ)

“It’s me that’s got to make the adjustment ... people around me often will see the true picture before me, so people around me have already seen that I have got something positive and valuable that I can offer the University” (TE:OP)

There is also acknowledgement that adopting a 'can do' attitude can take time. It involves reflecting on existing competence and using this self-knowledge as a form of protection from self-doubt. Gaining success is also about looking back and recognising progress over time.

“Really pleased it’s end of year ... I’m on top of my BTEC now and know what I’m doing with that now” (T:JK)

“I think there’s something about taking confidence in holding on to the things that you’re good at. Holding on to what you can do ... I think something about holding onto the stuff that you have got to help sort of shore up the gaps a bit” (A:BC)

“Last year I had responsibility for those classes with a bit of support as an NQT but the success is you get through the year and you’ve done it, nothing fell off you know, no parents came rattling the doors saying ‘what are you doing with my children?’ ... It makes you think, yeah ok I really can do this” (T:PQ)

In some cases it relates to career changers’ ability to overcome obstacles as they re-orient and become familiar with ‘what works’ in their new occupation and to apply prior competencies.

“So I’m thinking “WOW I found that” you know people don’t necessarily know that I’ve done that but I know ... that’s made a huge difference to every student” (TE:LM)

Thriving and not simply surviving featured quite prominently. As does recognition that success is about learning from mistakes and not just about achieving outcomes.

*“... you can start again if you’ve f***ed up it doesn’t matter” (TE:FG)*

“Throughout the year there were some things what went wrong ... I know they’re going to go wrong and I accept them, I try to counter them but you can’t always can you?” (TE:LM)

“I’ve had to change my mindset just to accept that a little bit more like actually when you speak to people they all say “God we used to do this wrong and we used to do that wrong” and they’re ok now so actually just like accept it because if you worry about every single mistake you ever make it just makes the self-doubt” (TE:IJ)

Recapturing success via shoring up also relates to building up a track-record or evidence bank.

“The reason I feel more successful now is because there’s lots more evidence ... when I was in the NHS the evidence was that my patients got better but there wasn’t any other positive feedback or module evaluation or pieces of work ... there’s many more ways to measure success that I recognise in this job. It’s still taking me a while but now I’ve been here a few years I’m starting to recognise those things and to believe when people say “oh you are really good at teaching”, I’m starting to think ok maybe I’m alright” (A:NO)

“Sustained as well so I think about like, if I was to repeat the same thing three years in a row and it was to work every single time, I’d think oh ok well that’s right” (TE:IJ)

Positive re-appraisal of challenges faced during transition also helps career changers in terms of tuning in to what matters most e.g. pride, being able to realise an ambition.

“I do genuinely feel privilege because I am allowed to do the things that I’m interested in” (TE:LM)

“I am absolutely so proud and so delighted and feel so ... privileged to be in this really special role” (TE:CD)

Some career changers framed occupational change in terms of a learning opportunity.

“I think coming in with some of the skills so getting some experience, have a little bit of experience of teaching ... so you go in with a little bit of knowledge which gives you a bit of confidence and you know what you’re getting yourself into” (A:KL)

For others shoring up involves taking a step back and thinking about the process as a whole.

“I perceive myself as being successful because I think actually having made the transition was successful in itself” (A:BC)

7.3.2 DISTRIBUTED SUCCESS

Distributed success relates to success achieved via others i.e. vicariously but also through helping others to achieve their own success.

7.3.2.1 MAKING A DIFFERENCE

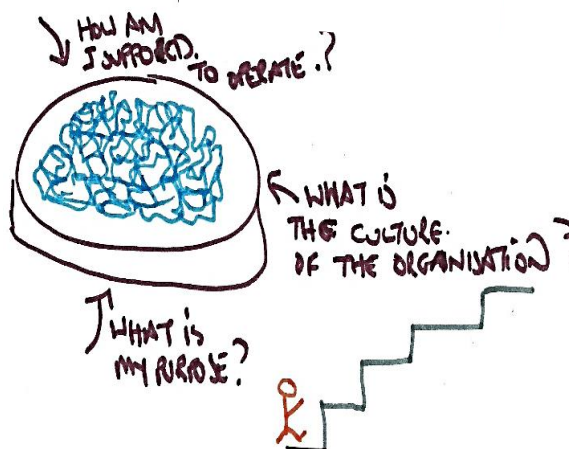
This relates to what career changers do directly to help, facilitate and improve others' outcomes.

"I'm not a person who sort of makes a target and has a goal ... it's much more about doing it well for the people I'm doing it for" (TE:CD)

"I don't think it's about my teaching skills or knowledge, I actually think it's about I know what it's like to have self-doubt" (A:NO)

"I never define success by what my final pay-scale is going to be or whether I've been promoted umpteen times, it's about whether I've made a difference ... whether I can support those students that are giving up on themselves ... success to me is not what title you have, success to me is the difference you can make and I think that's what I judge it by" (A:QR)

Realising that 'purpose' was important also featured in career changers' discussions of how they perceived success in their new occupation. This is shown in A:QRs words and in her RP (opposite) i.e. success is about her role but also about alignment with the organisation's values i.e. how this partnership improves others' lives.

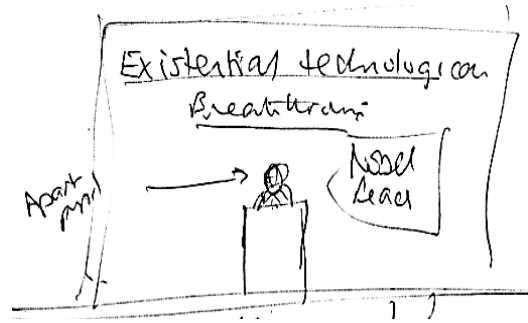


A constant in these descriptions of others' success is being the facilitator or catalyst.

"the purpose of my role is to train teachers to be successful teachers in school and for them to succeed and to stay in teaching" (TE:RS)

"To have them have the confidence that I had, to know that they can approach a problem, break it down, analyse it, solve it in little bits, put it back together again and it works, to me that's success ... it's transferring my ability, my confidence in dealing with situations" (T:AB)

This is also captured in T:AB's RP which depicts a student on stage accepting a Nobel prize. What stood out from his discussion of this 'dream' future was that it was underpinned by a selfless conviction that he was not there but had enabled theirs. Their success was his success.



"It's your students who are getting better aren't they ... we need to try and do our best job for our students not like trying to get further ahead" (A:KL)

"I tell my students ... I am a facilitator ... if I was a good web-designer ... I'd be out earning fifty thousand a year designing websites, but I'm not, I'm in here teaching you so that you can go out and earn fifty thousand pounds a year" (T:DE)

Making a difference is about the potential for fulfilment too i.e. what might happen for others but which is not necessarily automatic.

"what I love about my role is helping to engage and hopefully supporting making competent nurses ... career success for me is feeling that I'm doing something worthwhile ... I love enabling other people to succeed. I love watching people achieve their potential ... it's seeing someone have a lightbulb moment" (A:EF)

"I can't teach everything (but) nature throws a seed ... and even if just some of them click onto it and then you think ok I've done the seeding, it will come, it will come" (A:HI)

"If it's all about you then you come and you go and nobody notices and you don't make an impact ... it's the fact that you've put that ripple in pond ... something just nudges them and changes their course" (T:AB)

7.3.2.2 OTHERS DOING WELL

This theme is about others doing well rather than the career changer's personal role in that success. This differs from 'making a difference' because success is vicarious i.e. relates to what an 'other' achieves rather than what the career changer has done to enable that success.

"it is other people's success, other people's happiness and enjoyment of my subject" (TE:OP)

“I love it when the students can be successful and if we can make them better nurses or paramedics or physician associates and I play a part in that I’ll be super happy” (A:EF)

“seeing the results of what you’re doing ... last year the students that I’d taken through did fine ... I must be doing something right” (T:PQ)

“I would get more pleasure from a collective success than an individual success” (A:QR)

Conscious awareness of this vicarious pursuit of success is also acknowledged by career changers, who talked about their ‘reflection in action’.

“It’s not me or what I’m doing, it’s them doing and being able to do ... (success) for me is knowing that you had some impact on that person” (T:AB)

“I think the other thing I’m seeing is their success ... I see their success and almost as part of my success as well ... I see their progression as a reflection of my achievement” (A:NO)

“success is touching somebody else’s life in a positive way ... some of that glory of that success rubs off on me” (TE:LM)

7.4 CONTINGENT SUCCESS

This final theme presents what career changers said helped or hindered them to achieve career success in their new occupation:

7.4.1 FACILITATING FACTORS

7.4.1.1 ACCUMULATION OF NEW EXPERIENCE

This relates to career changers’ perception of success as time-dependent and their observations that despite having been in their new occupation for some time (between 1 and 5 years) they still did not wholeheartedly perceive themselves as being there yet, but that time

enabled them to build experience. It is also about how building up a catalogue of experiences (and successes) in dealing with new situations brought increased self-efficacy.

“I don’t know it happened immediately, I think I needed to secure some success you know, I needed to go through the process and just sort of prove to myself and everybody that I could do it to my satisfaction, so I didn’t presume success I don’t think” (TE:LM)

Lack of expertise – even allowing for modesty – is also significant; prior success and underlying core competencies does not mean that competence in the new role is automatic.

“Yeah so coming into my third year here now I’m more in my comfort zone ... still that doesn’t feel very successful because well let’s face it, I haven’t read a book yet” (TE:OP)

“I suppose how I’ve become successful is just giving myself time to learn the job ... I’m quite willing to listen but also far more prepared to go ‘no, I’ll keep going with it’ ... I feel confident and secure in who I am which I think takes years to build” (A:QR)

Lack of knowledge when starting in a new occupation is part of the change experience.

“I don’t know what I need to do is something that everyone goes through but then for the last three and half years I haven’t felt that I’ve done that job yet” (TE:IJ)

“... now I can feel myself being in a place where I know it’ll come good ... now that I feel that I’ve got that confidence in the actual teaching ... it builds slowly” (A:BC)

“I think it was a gradual growth ... gradually I think I had that pressure off me” (A:HI)

Success over time also relates to deeper learning or assimilation of knowledge. GH spoke of navigating choppy waters. His first RP features him holding tight to the mast of a boat and signifies his insecurity in relation to new knowledge and skill development.



His second, on the other hand, shows him sitting on the side of the boat holding a fishing rod; this represents his vision of change over time and starting to feel more comfortable/ successful in role.

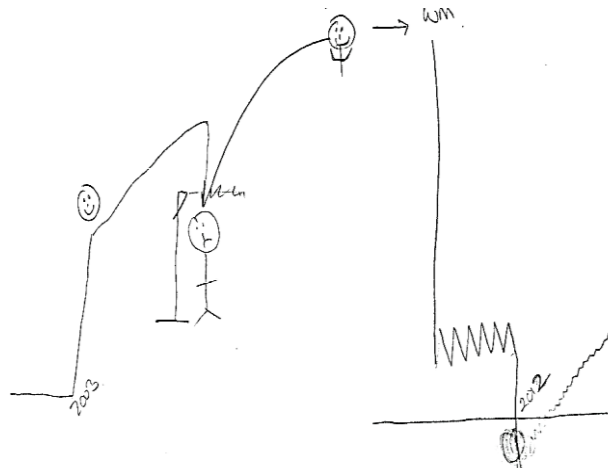
“What I’m expecting takes time, I know that it can take at least 5 years so I’m still understanding where is the north, south, the co-ordinates of the plot ... I think in a couple of years probably I will become a good teacher” (T:GH)



Career changers also said that time to reflect on their successes and experiences is important.

“I could have felt more successful if I’d had the time and space to go and explore” (TE:CD)

Negative events can also facilitate change. A:NO’s RP depicts upward progression followed by a dramatic drop due to an episode at work. This lasted several months – as shown by the zigzag lines – and during this time she had the time to reflect on her occupation no longer being a good fit and made the decision to move into academia.



“I was just broken and I’d just had enough ... and I thought “maybe this is impacting on my patient care” and that, to me, was like the worst thing ... so then yeah very slowly we started to feel a bit better about things” (A:NO)

Consistency over time is also important; the cumulative effect of ‘sticking with it’ and being able to repeat the same outcomes/results/performance.

“Once I realised that that was all it was I was oh that’s alright, I can do that” (A:BC)

“If I was to repeat the same thing three years in a row and it was to work every single time I’d think oh ok well that’s right” (TE:IJ)

Some career changers spoke of the value of having changed occupation before; having learnt the 'change ropes' i.e. how to more quickly establish what contributes to their success in role.

“I think there’s a time period at which that (taking risks) becomes ok. Because I would have said I couldn’t have made this leap anywhere before this (prior occupational change)” (A:BC)

7.4.1.2 PRIOR SUCCESS

Career changers spoke of prior success helping them to recapture both a psychological sense of success and actual, measurable success in their new occupation.

“I’ve done lots of different things through my career that have been successful that have built on each other and that have led me to where I am now. I think if I wasn’t a subject expert I wouldn’t have got the job” (TE:RS)

“I was used to working with dare I say it awkward people ... so any sort of personality types I kind of knew how to deal with because I was coming across them so that’s helpful” (T:PQ)

Recognition on the part of career changers that prior experiences along with an understanding of how to handle particular situations or scenarios is also beneficial.

“We were experienced clinicians but knew nothing about teaching. We’d never taught in HE properly ... because you’re teaching something very clinical that you’ve done for a number of years there’s a level of confidence with your clinical knowledge even if you’re not massively confidence with your delivery possibly” (A: KL)

“Somehow I’ve filtered straight to my sub-conscious that ‘what happened last time and how should I deal with it?’ and that’s why I think you do just get better year after year after year” (TE:CD)

Career changers also recognise that whilst they have experienced success in a previous occupation it may not be easy to recapture success or to become the expert again.

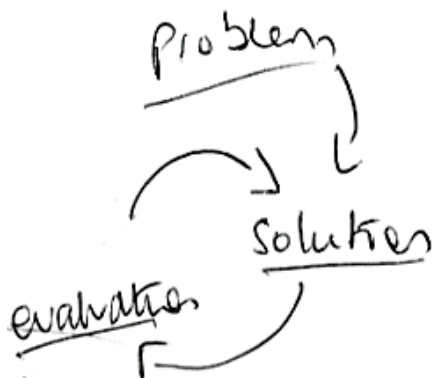
“Yes because we’ve been towards the top of where we were or very competent where we were and then you expect to get there again and that actually this occupation it’s going to take longer for you to get anywhere near where I was before” (T:PQ)

On the other hand, career changers also said that prior success also enabled them to pick things up more quickly in their new environment.

“it did sort of prepare me to prioritise ... it’s the same here, if you’ve a year 11 about to fail their exams in June or year 10 ... we’re going to have to go to year 11 because we’ve got time. So there are things that crossed over between the two I think” (T:AB)

Career changers said that prior success helped them to acquire competence and perceive themselves as being successful in their new role more swiftly.

“if you’re successful and secure then you can change to something else ... actually if you’ve been successful here you can be successful here (points to old and new occupations on career timeline) ... you have a feeling that “I know I can do this even though it’s been really hard ... it really is just another thing” (A:BC)



Wisdom gained across their entire career to date also helps; such as taking potentially quite challenging situations in their stride or taking calculated risks. Ex-computer programmer spoke of using an iterative cycle (RP: problem, solution, evaluation) in his previous occupation and how using this with his students has helped him gain a sense of success:

“... people are too scared to have a go – the worst that happens is that you break a broken car, it’s still broke, big deal, it was broken when you started and I think that’s something that I’ve brought into teaching... it’s problem solving yeah absolutely ... and that’s like your classroom management” (T:AB)

7.4.1.3 GROWTH MINDSET

Feeling optimistic about overcoming or handling the challenges associated with changing occupation also contributes towards career changers' growing sense of success.

"I would say that adversity brings huge growth" (TE:OP)

"I'm not positive all the time but you know ... that magic of being with a great mix of people who want to progress together as an organisation" (A:EF)

"When you're successful and you can overcome something like that not quite I can do anything I don't think that but do you know what I mean? Once you've overcome something awful you can overcome other awful things ... you've been scared and it's been ok" (A:BC)

Making use of others' approaches towards gaining success is also seen as helpful.

"If I'm coming in and I listen to something on the radio that's just changed my lesson as soon as I walk through the door. When the NHS got clobbered a couple of years ago, that changed every lesson for the next week ... it was nothing about anything they were supposed to be learning at the time but that's relevant" (T:AB)

"If somebody else has tried something that's worked really well I go "oh I wonder if I can use that and how might that work?" (A:NO)

An 'open to change' mindset also features in career changers' descriptions of how they gained a sense of success; the need to be flexible.

"I am very receptive to what the students tell me because I say you are an expert at being a student, tell me what would make it easier ... I'm constantly in that cycle of what could we do better ... so on a week by week basis I had to adapt and be flexible" (A:NO)

"If something doesn't go very well you'd know it immediately ... and I would go back home thinking ok that needs tweaking ... I needed to expand" (A:HI)

7.4.2 INHIBITING FACTORS

7.4.2.1 DOUBT

Most prominent amongst the inhibiting factors that career changers discussed is doubt or 'impostor syndrome' and talked of the distinction between prior expertise and now being a novice.

This is very clearly illustrated in A:QRs RP which highlights the janus-faced-nature of complex career change in that prior experience does not necessarily help.



"I was teaching but thinking but I don't really know what I'm doing" (T:JK)

Doubt is also related to perceptions of success rather than objective measures i.e. outcomes do not necessarily lead career changers to feel confident or competent.

*"Before the summer I actually thought oh my gosh that's really s*** ... I felt quite successful (in my old job), now I haven't felt that, I've felt s***" (TE:OP)*

"I definitely went through a period when I thought I don't know anything at all, I'm crap, I don't know stuff ... it was the first experience that I had of going from feeling like ok at things to feeling in a role where everybody thought I was a specialist ... and I felt I knew nothing" (A:BC)

Feeling like a fraud is also a common belief amongst career changers; that they do not quite belong.

"This is an act" (T:DE)

"I look around the table and think everyone's looking to me as I should know everything and I'd suddenly have an oh my god all of these people think I know everything and I don't" (TE:RS)

"I work incredibly hard. Probably too hard, but again that is probably the 'somebody is going to find out that this is all fake and I'm just winging it, and it's all made up' yeah" (A:NO)

Gaps in ability to teach in Higher Education and complete what they perceive to be core tasks e.g. writing for publication, also creates a profound sense of insecurity for some.

"I still reflect on the initial days ... I would go home and think I didn't say that did I? Oh my god all of the people are going to do it wrong ... I'm to be blamed for this you know I couldn't cope with that panic in the initial days ... I would worry myself to death" (A:HI)

Doubt is also not something that career changers stop experiencing quickly.

"It's important to feel confident and feel like you've got the skill-set ... you're constantly having to be reflective and changing but that can wear you down ... so it's hard to have that consistent feeling of success because it's always changing the, what's the word, the sort of goal posts are changing all the time" (T:MN)

"The question mark at the moment is have I got confidence that I can put a class through and get a great result. At the moment that's not there ... there's still some gaps ... I am incredibly self-critical ... and that's held me back in the past" (T:AB)



What others think also affects confidence and perceptions of success in the new role as illustrated in TE:IJ's RP where she talks about feeling the need to 'fake' being competent and confident until those aspects are achieved for real.

"For me it is more like the personal obstacles like self-doubt, impostor syndrome, worrying what everyone else is thinking" (TE:IJ)

Self-doubt is compounded by stress and, in turn, this blurs career changers' perception of success.

“I feel less successful because I have felt an impostor and a bit of a fraud despite getting those lovely bits of recognition and I feel slightly not a failure, that’s far too strong but I’m not a success on the academic success criteria” (TE:CD)

Even objective measures or externally recognised results do not always equate to feeling confident.

“Results would say that I am doing a very, very good job, but I don’t feel like that” (TE:IJ)

Career changers also question whether accumulated knowledge and skills from a previous occupation will be maintained; without it whether they are able to demonstrate expertise.

“I felt quite inferior for quite a long time and I can see them go ‘mmm you’re going to be a dinosaur in a couple of years’ and not know anything about practice” (A:KL)

Having others questioning a particular response or way of handling something in the new role also led career changers to question their capability.

“They’re the moments that get to me on a personal level the most and make me sort of go away and think ‘oh I’m rubbish at this, I’m not making the right choices, I’m not doing a good job’ ... it would cause me sometimes to lie awake at night” (T:MN)

Some questioned whether ‘doubt’ is influenced by their individual psychology e.g. early socialisation.

“I often wonder if, in my growing up, my mother had said things like ‘oh that’s lovely, that’s good, that’s wonderful’ ... I’ve got a really low opinion of myself” (T:DE)

“I just think that at some point someone’s going to come along and say “do you know what you’re not that good this person’s better, off you trot” you know “we’ve found out the truth” ... at least I know where that comes from now ... I know that’s my anxiety and childhood experiences” (A:NO)

7.4.2.2 SOCIAL COMPARISON

Career changers' doubt about their potential to recapture career success can be exacerbated by the related tendency to compare how quickly or effectively they have settled in to the new occupational role, their capabilities (past and present) and their progress/success in the new occupation as set against that of colleagues'.

"I look at some colleagues and I'm in awe of how much they know because I could never remember all that stuff ... It took me three or four years whereas other teachers around me seemed so much more switched on" (TE:IJ)

Comparisons with colleagues who hold a Masters qualification and/or a PhD are also a significant inhibitor. Practice expertise does not seem to be valued in the same way by career changers. This is something that also appears in LM's RP where he identified a number of colleagues as 'experts' and the impact this had on feeling unsure about confidently speaking with any of them.



"I didn't feel successful because you're surrounded with people with very impressive academic qualifications that can be a little bit intimidating ... and you think can I convince this group of people that I know what I'm talking about?" (TE:LM)

Commercial sales manager-turned-Teacher (T:DE) was even more explicit in relation to her continued chasing after higher qualifications and completion of professional qualifications:

"Just to make me better, just so that when I talk to somebody they think oh she knows her shit" (T:DE)

Social comparison can also be useful but needs to be set against recognition of the individual's own strengths/capabilities or progress.

"You get two or three people say you get that confidence thing that I can do it because it's not you then is it? They've been like that all day and no teacher has really managed to get them into line" (T:AB)

“I did this strength-scope because sometimes you compare yourself to other people don’t you and I can think of one girl in my office who is absolutely fabulous ... and you know you compare yourself to her and you think oh crikey ... it made me think about rather than comparing myself to other people actually we’ve all got our own strengths” (A:KL)

7.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Findings in the ‘recapturing success’ domain revolve around three main themes: definitions of career success are situated, sources of success and contingent success. In terms of definitions of career success complex career changers spoke of experiencing definitional flux and that they now thought about career success in a different way. Lack of alignment between their changed definition of success also contributed towards reasons for leaving their previous occupation, in particular their focus on subjective rather than objective measures of success.

This is closely related to career changers’ perceived sources of success in their new occupations. Objective success remained important but less so and when pursued focused on the need to be the expert although this was as much about others’ recognition, and therefore, confidence in the career changer because of their expertise. Subjective sources of success feature more prominently however and career changers spoke of their need to do what felt right rather than to solely focus on achieving organisational goals i.e. having a deeper sense of who they were at this stage in their career/life and with alignment to personal values. Self-belief was another key source of success but career changers said it required shoring up i.e. to be bolstered through positive self-talk and evidence gathering. Distributed success was also an important source of success however and cleaved between career changers playing a personal role in facilitating others’ success i.e. making a difference, and in effect basking in the glory of others i.e. vicarious success.

Success in their new occupation was not automatic however and career changers spoke of a number of facilitating and inhibiting factors. They spoke of the sometimes quite debilitating effects of self-doubt and, in particular, of feeling like an impostor. Gaps in occupation-specific knowledge and/or skill were the key concerns i.e. being unable to do the basic in their new job role but also worrying that any success might be short-lived. This was compounded by career

changers' tendency to compare themselves to more experienced others and whilst they recognised that this was not a fair or realistic comparison they nevertheless continued to worry that others were more successful. On the other hand, accumulating new experience helped them to begin to perceive themselves as being success or being on the road towards success, in particular gaining a deeper understanding of key elements of their new roles. Prior success was also viewed as being helpful both in a psychological sense and in terms of measurable success. Knowing how to handle particular situations or scenarios was particularly helpful but so too was having some form of mental template where new knowledge could be assimilated more easily. Career changers also spoke about the value of being open to change and feeling optimistic and how taking on new challenges contributed towards their growing sense of success.

Chapter 8

Interpretation of Findings

INCREMENTAL LEARNING

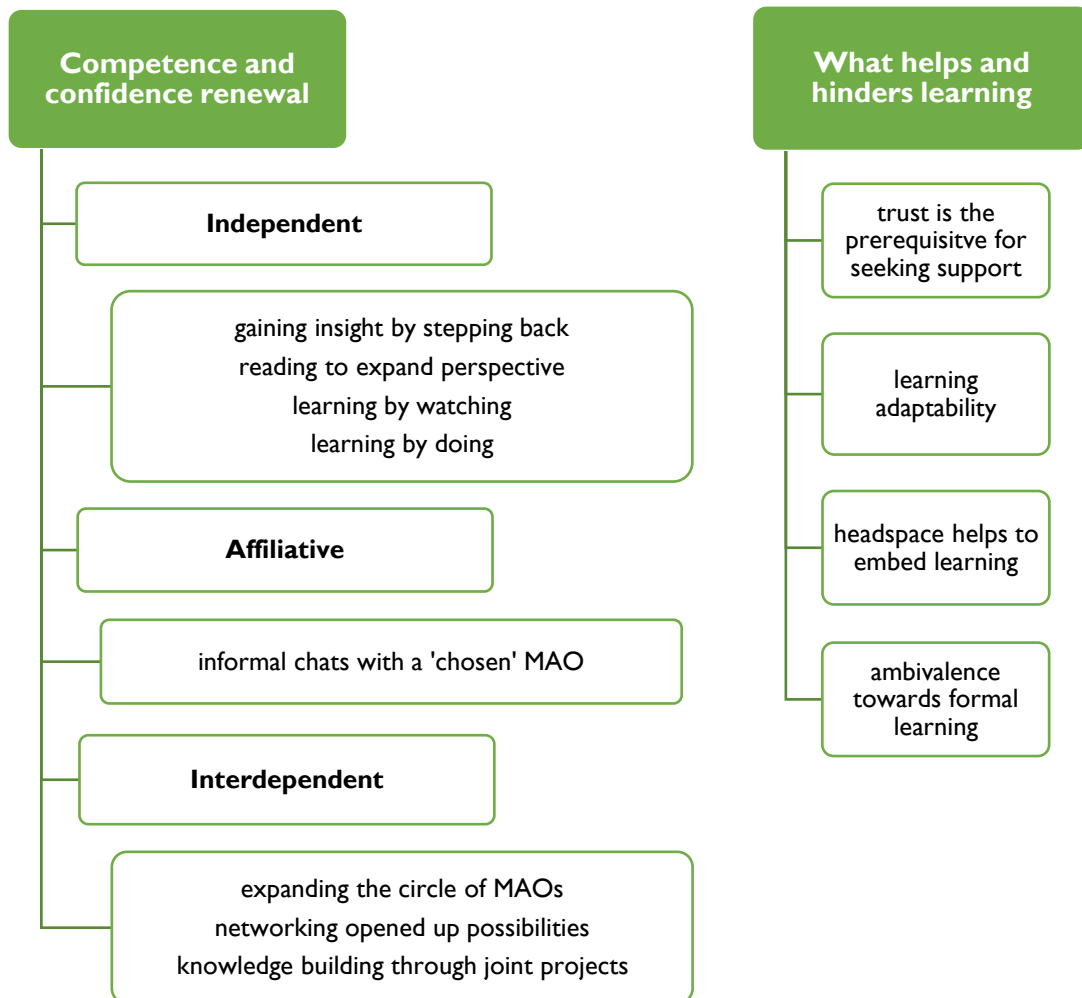
“Get the habit of analysis – analysis will in time enable synthesis
to become your habit of mind”

— *Frank Lloyd Wright*

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The 'Incremental Learning' domain relates to how occupational changers move from being a novice in their new occupation to become at least competent i.e. how they learn. It comprises two main themes (see Figure 19) – both have an underlying relationship with time; one covert (competence and confidence renewal), the other more overt (learning enablers). In both cases, there are clear sub-themes and these deal with the more specific and separate features of the theme. Each is discussed and accompanied with exemplars in order to shine a light on the nature of occupational change across the three participant groups: Teacher-Educators (TE); Practice to Academia (A) and Practice to Teaching (T).

Figure 19: Incremental Learning Thematic Map



8.2 COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE RENEWAL

This theme is substantial and the main focus of occupational changers' discussions about learning in their new occupation. It is divided into three sub-themes: **'independent'**, **'affiliative'** and **'interdependent'**.

8.2.1 INDEPENDENT LEARNING

A number of 'independent', learning processes i.e. methods or ways of learning, were spoken about (namely: gaining insight by stepping back, reading to expand perspective, learning by watching, learning by doing)

8.2.1.1 GAINING INSIGHT BY STEPPING BACK

The primary function of reflection is to help alleviate career changers' sense of exposure (see psychological discomfort Chapter 6.4.3; Chapter 9.3). Becoming more aware of their abilities, attitudes and behaviours helps career changers feel more in control of their development.

“As you become more experienced you do stop feeling as much and you start seeing more and maybe that's the stage I'm in in my own career, so I'm feeling it all at the moment but I'm not actually experienced enough to see it all” (TE:IJ)

“It's 95% about reflective teaching. Learning through thinking” (T:GH)

Career changers value what they gain from reflection i.e. greater insight and clarity about how to do something better in the future or an aspect of occupational knowledge/performance.

“I used to think 'oh why did that go so wrong' ... so I'm always thinking, replaying things in my mind ... what would have happened if I'd done it another way, how could I ...” (T:DE)

There is also recognition that increased awareness of what works or does not in specific work situations or contexts can be helpful, especially in terms of improving practice.

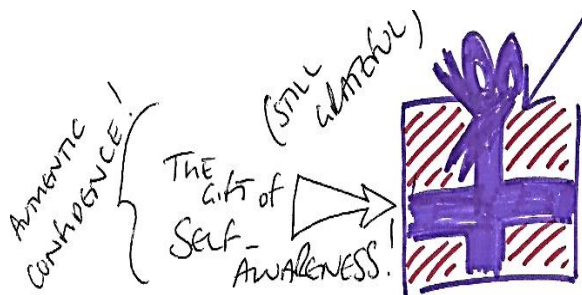
“It’s thinking about what you might not have seen or spotted and you kind of go ‘oh that’s why that’s happening’ so I can try to find a solution to that, that sort of thing really” (T:PQ)

“I think you can’t improve at anything ... unless you think well what am I doing well, what stuff was a bit mmm, how am I going to get better at doing this? I wouldn’t ever go and try something new I’d always want to read about it, watch someone else do it, sit back and eventually try it but I would very much sit back first” (A:KL)

Reflection is also a way of realising that something went well or better than they thought it might. Being a ‘fact checker’ helped career changers to make more accurate assessments of progress over time:

“I’m very reflective but too self-critical ... if you have what you think is a bad lesson and you don’t think about why and was that me, was that them, was that the material ... you can look at things and you can say ‘you know what, that was a much better lesson than it should have been” (T:AB)

Reflecting was also seen as a way of “triangulating” (A:KL) i.e. checking multiple thoughts and



actions. Its value lying in helping to identify solutions to learning issues and refining approaches. It was also seen as a form of gift or reward in that it helped career changers to see the reality of their progress (or otherwise) – as illustrated in TE:IJ’s RP:

“... reflection is a catalyst to go into all these different things ... if you observe a colleague but you don’t reflect on what they did then phhh ... I think it’s key, absolutely key” (T:AB)

“It helps me to think about what went well and even better if ... and sometimes I experiment ... if I see that something went wrong during the first teaching I try to change something during the second ... the third time is the best teaching of course because I’ve learnt from the previous two” (T:GH)

Some career changers spoke of the benefit of having time to mull over experiences away from the experience itself; 'distance' gave them perspective and helped them avoid jumping to premature conclusions or moving to action precipitously.

"Reflection in the car is really good ... I have a bit of a think ... I can see things clicking into place ... it's very, very useful" (T:PQ)

"You're not wrapped up in it so you've perspective and that is very powerful" (TE:LM)

"I'm a very big reflector, I'll quite often drive home ... it's almost like I'm making mental notes on the way home to try to make some links" (A:NO)

Career changers also recognise the challenge of reflecting in terms of time to think more deeply.

"You do need a bit of experience ... I think my earlier reflections compared to what they are now ... I thought you know what went wrong but not why, what can we do about it?" (T:AB)

On the other hand, career changers also spoke of the value of co-reflection i.e. the benefit of reflecting and then discussing thoughts and ideas with colleagues both later as well as earlier in the transition process.

"You try it and then you reflect on it and you discuss it with other colleagues" (A:KL)

"I've never been worried about having reflective conversations with colleagues so if I make a mistake I don't think oh how do I hide this and say it wasn't me ... I would probably advocate reflective thinking and processes far earlier ... not writing things off, keeping an open mind" (A:QR)

8.2.1.2 READING TO EXPAND PERSPECTIVE

Career changers valued actively researching aspects of their new occupational job role during the early stages of transition (i.e. within the first year). This was achieved through reading – whether online or via books and articles in professional journals.

“I read a lot. I look at all the professional journals. My first thing is to read about stuff and then my second point is that I throw myself into it” (TE:LM)

Career changers talked of its inherent benefit being gaining insight and finding out what others think/believe without needing to expose their own knowledge/skill gaps or their own views.

“I look things up in books. It gives you a different perspective or you get other peoples’ perspectives” (TE:RS)

“I do a lot of reading ... I go home and read around whatever it is that we’ve done or looked at ... if something doesn’t go in I read it and write it out” (A:NO)



Gaining a more nuanced understanding is captured by ex-Accountant turned Science Teacher’s RP (T:PQ) which illustrates her need to feel knowledgeable as well as skilled:

“It was sort of bringing everything together ... the reading bit gives you the depth that you don’t get (from chatting)” (T:PQ)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, career changers also spoke of use of online reading and researching and the value of gathering information from more than one source and staying ‘in the loop’.

“I think that can be the most valuable often ... much more important in academia than where I was working” (A:KL)

“Twitter and youtube and the internet have been amazing. I set up a clinical skills twitter account ... I can follow all kinds of organisations ... this gives me a sense of the wider profession because I only have a limited view here” (A:EF)

On the other hand, online reading/researching is used for ease of access and to stay on top of occupation-related news.

“You can keep up to date with reading but it wouldn’t be my chosen thing. It’s quite expected in our jobs now” (A:KL)

8.2.1.3 LEARNING BY WATCHING (LBW)

Learning via watching more experienced colleagues was valued as a reinforcer of 'what works'. Career changers appreciated the opportunity to observe colleagues' approaches to working with students and other colleagues, and when handling specific challenges e.g. complaints.

"I really respect, respect, respect how much knowledge they've got" (TE:IJ)

"All those subtle elements of your professionalism and your skill-set I think I gathered from watching colleagues making those big mistakes ... every bit of life experience in there has layered on my understanding of people and of self to become that practitioner" (A:QR)

LBW enabled career changers to learn what could be tacit too e.g. how to engage with others:

"I observed somebody in their session so I learned a lot of how they engaged people and how they talked to people" (A:EF)

"I get excited when I see new things, when my colleagues do different things. I think 'god that's wonderful, this is why your teaching works, why couldn't I think of all that?'" (A:HI)

LBW also offers a 'segue' into informal chats with the person being observed.

"I'm watching all the time, looking at how other people do it ... I tried to learn as much as possible from them ... you have feedback from colleagues when you see that things work" (T:GH)

Learning from observing an experienced colleague is a quick-fix: it enables career changers to absorb examples and apply these to their own practice or to reject them.

"You can see how something should work ... if you actually see someone else doing it who's had all the time and the practice, and they've done it before and they've done it wrong and now they're doing it right, it's efficient isn't it ... so you go in there and think well actually I can nick that" (T:PQ)

“I stand at people’s doors and spy on them and look at what they do (laughs) and I think I like that or I don’t like that. So there are things that maybe I’ve heard people saying that I think oh I don’t like that, I want to make sure I avoid saying that.” (T:DE)

Career changers also identified a temporal aspect of LBW i.e. that it is better done in short bursts i.e. not watching a whole lesson but viewing discrete parts of a lesson.

“Observing colleagues is extremely useful but not for too long ... a whole lesson’s too much really” (T:PQ)

They also distinguished between LBW early on in their transition and later on when they were more established; longer-term observations becoming part of practice assessment and improvement.

“observation of more experienced teachers is really important ... when I was in my job, even in the second year ... we kind of went and watched each other, which was really great. I found that really helpful.” (T:MN)

On the other hand, some career changers felt a sense of psychological discomfort in observing and then absorbing others’ practice into their own performance.

“I feel like a little bit of a leach actually” (TE:OP)

“the further on you get on ... it’s more awkward to observe colleagues. When you start off no-one minds you watching them but when you’re been going a while I think people feel a bit intimidated ... people think you’re judging them” (TE:PT)

8.2.1.4 LEARNING BY DOING (LBD)

LBD involves adopting an active rather than vicarious approach. Like ‘reflecting’ and ‘LBW’ it is seen as an important aspect of developing new expertise but also making initial progress:

“I was just kind of trying to work it out ... I think I was just absorbing stuff. Just stuff that I needed to know but I didn’t know what it was. I’m very much a doer, I’m not a reader or a thinker. I’m very much a jump in with both feet and get on with it ... hoping things would sort of gradually find a place” (A:BC)

This illustrates career changers' clear acknowledgement that 'trial and error' is central to their attempts to recapture career success.

"I think it's through case by case or experience by experience ... I think learning in action that's been the most successful" (A:QR)

"You go from zero to potentially having some aspect, hopefully. It's almost like when you swim a hundred metres, that's not a success, that's a representation of everything you've done to get to that point ... the culmination" (TE:FG)

This 'trial and error' approach appeals to career changers because of the tacit nature of developing expertise i.e. they could not be told everything or equipped with all the necessary skills/knowledge and so discovery learning becomes the default. There is also acknowledgment that becoming successful again is not an easy thing to do and that hard work is required.

"it's very much kind of learning on the job really ... it takes a while doesn't it, to get your head around things? It's that experiential learning, it is this kind of like right I'm going to try this today" (A:KL)

A knock-on-effect is that it provides career changers with a growing awareness of the realities of the new job; the intricacies and unseen or unappreciated aspects of their new role.

"I was able to see all of the aspects of the job so it wasn't just about the teaching ... I did a lot of those other things that are part of the role that I wouldn't have had a clue about when I first applied" (A:BC)

It also seems to point to the need to develop a practical understanding of what might, up until that point, have been largely theoretical or abstract.

"I learnt that I could teach in my own way, do my own thing" (T:DE)

"It was very much learning on the job ... the way I learn is very much, I've got to be doing it ... it was more that on-going learning really that I found helpful ... watching and doing and being I suppose out in the real world ... the placements were for me really helpful" (T:MN)

Taking on additional responsibility and being stretched outside their comfort zone is also important i.e. finding their own ways of doing things as well as stepping up to take over projects from others.

“There’s no substitute for the job than doing it. I’m very hands on ... I can’t just learn a form it’s how am I going to apply this? So it’s a very practical approach to learning” (T:AB)

“There’s a thing called X-LAB ... I’m the key person doing it this year ... which is going to be really good because it means I’m going to have to get to know people in different parts of the school to interact and sort things out which is really good” (T:PQ)

For some, however, LBD is seen as a “parallel” (TE:IJ) process, combined with reflection.

“It was trial and error and just reviewing every area and looking at the student feedback and reflecting and thinking ‘ok that worked well, what didn’t work well’ and knowing that I was allowed to change things .. yeah, learning from experience” (A:NO)

LBD then is about marrying up aspects of the job that have felt disconnected or where there has been only partial understanding; timely feedback helping to cement ‘what works’.

“if the feedback was weeks later, by that point the moment’s gone, if you get feedback straight away, you’ve just lived and experienced what they’re talking about ... I would be able to remember how I did explain it and therefore think yeah ok I can see what I could have maybe done differently, and that stays with you” (T:MN)

8.2.2 AFFILIATIVE LEARNING

As with ‘independence’, this second sub-theme also shows career changers’ clear preference for informal learning.

“It was kind of jumping into big shoes so there was something about these other people that helped me to be able to fill those shoes and feel ok and not be judged ... they could kind of carry me to a point, so there was enough overlap so actually if I did do something really stupid they would stop it being stupid ... they were a bit of a safety blanket at the time” (A:BC)

'Affiliative learning' is concerned with the development of a close working relationships with colleagues.

"My degree didn't come into it; it was very much asking my colleagues help on the job" (T:GH)

"We had a great working relationship and became good friends ... there was an equality between us" (TE:OP)

"I think it's that in-the-moment, the specifics of whatever you're dealing with at that time ... it's when you've got that real individual with you in the moment" (A:KL)

It is where the career changer turns to a colleague and either initiates contact i.e. seeks advice or asks for help, or responds to prompts in relation to competence development.

"I was completely lost so I got everything from J, out of observing J and asking her questions ... now whilst I don't understand it all, I feel as though I've kind of crossed a bridge. I think it's actually coming to the coffee room in the morning and having a chat, you know I'm always talking to J for advice and stuff... what do you do about this?" (T:JK)

It also relates to holding 'tailored' conversations about a specific learning need or event.

"It can be quite specific to you yourself can't it? It's for you isn't it? You've had a particular problem in your classroom or you've had a particular success in your classroom or whatever and then you're talking about it and it is your own experience. So they're only really going to be responding to that experience that you've had, which is what you want ... (it's) tailored to you" (T:PQ)

8.2.2.1 INFORMAL CHATS WITH A CHOSEN MORE ABLE OTHER

The only valued form of informal learning method at this point in the competence-confidence renewal process is having informal chats.

"I gravitate towards these people ... that is the default, I don't realise I'm going to do that, I don't realise that I'm going to learn so much from that person" (TE:OP)

“I think for me chatting with colleagues. I learn a lot from X (she was) a teacher for an awfully long time. So any time I’m talking and she says ‘have you thought about this?’ I will prick my little ears up and listen to everything she says” (T:AB)

This could be with any trusted colleague but, in the main, career changers turned to a ‘more able other’ (MAO); a colleague with greater knowledge and experience in the new occupation.

“It was quite informal and because I shared the office we could just talk about stuff and I could ask questions. She was a point of reference really” (TE:LM)

“I suppose you’re looking for their advice and experience as well. Yeah, I suppose it’s drawing on other people’s experiences really ... someone else has been there and tried it you know and they may have tweaks or ideas or how things work in practice” (A:KL)

In particular, career changers valued informal chats with someone who had also experienced career change.

“N had also changed career at the same time as me, had also become a Teacher Educator and it was more useful to actually just talk to them” (TE:RS)

“She’s a key person because we have had so many chats about “can’t do it, can’t do it, can’t do it” then “yes we can, yes we can ... can we?” (TE:OP)

This approach is also valued because career changers feel less exposed i.e. they reveal gaps in their knowledge, skill or competence to fewer colleagues.

“I feel so lucky because I had that scaffolding ... there’s no structure to it whatsoever, it’s just literally, I have a conversation with a colleague” (TE:IJ)

“I’d rather have a critical friend that says oooh you to do this and I think that’s really valuable ... certain people who’ve done it before” (A:QR)



Auditor-turned-Teacher, T:MN likened the scaffolding and supportive relationship with a MAO to having stabilisers on a bike:

“You need someone to hold your hand ... it’s kind of like taking you out there with stabilisers on”

Informal chats also enabled career changers to be observed by a MAO and gain advice or an informed opinion about the extent to which they were making developmental progress.

“Sometimes it’s another person you know almost validating your opinion” (A:PT)

“... it just so happened that (colleague name) was in the room, saw my reaction, said why don’t you write something about it. I went straight to my desk and just typed up the whole ... she supported me and she’s fantastic for the record” (A:EF)

Another function of informal chats is providing a psychological ‘release’, a way to digest, make sense and let go of stressful or challenging experiences. It also helps career changers gain advice and hear personal stories and experiences of the MAO which put the novice professional more at ease, or at least put their own experience into context.

“We always share our horror stories which is really nice ... by sharing those horror stories and someone else shares a horror story you get it off your chest and hear someone else has had some “oh yeah” moments and then you can laugh about it” (TE:FG)

This is particularly valuable when coming from a senior colleague.

“(colleague name) was very open, very approachable ... then hearing what, because she’d been teaching a long, long time, and hearing some of the things perhaps that she’d done ... kind of having somebody to bounce ideas off and discuss things with who’s quite open to, you know if you tried something and it went a bit tits up it was ok you know” (A:KL)

On the other hand, the idea of the MAO is not limited to those with greater seniority. Career changers also spoke of the value of talking with assistants and those on the periphery of their role – but who have nevertheless ‘been there and done that’ – or who have observed others for long enough to be able to offer sage advice and/or help the career changer work through the practical implications of pursuing a particular approach.

“I loved working with (my TA) because she’d been a TA for about 15 years and we had a great relationship and I would always ask her for advice because she was right there” (T:MN)

The informality of the chat – whether about specific needs for improvement or to chew over aspects of the job/role – is seen as contributing to developmental outcomes e.g. idea generation, identifying solutions. The organic aspect is seen as being particularly valuable since it provides reassurance and expands understanding.

“You never know what a conversation will spark. It’s that delightful serendipity ... you only get a sense of this if you have these informal chats” (A:EF)

“Very, very helpful and it’s that shared experience thing as well isn’t it? When you start off and you talk to your colleagues who are in the same boat as you, you discover that some of your anxieties are the same as theirs” (TE:LM)

“... ‘short cuts’ and ideas from other people ... they’ll just make you think about it ... it made me think more critically, she’d questioned me about something and I didn’t know. It was a very good question so yeah, it’s the start of the critical thought process” (A:KL)

It is also clear that the choice of individual to develop a relationship with is based on mutual respect and a genuine wish to be supportive on the part of the MAO.

“It’s somebody that would be honest and open and wanting the best support, so it’s not somebody who is self-gratifying, doing it for self-gratification ... it’s not somebody who’s doing it to move power, a power relationship, it’s people who I feel genuinely listen ... I think you just get a sense when you’re talking, you just get attracted to people” (A:QR)

In addition to offering a good return on the investment of time and energy, the interactive nature i.e. being able to bounce ideas around and explore or clarify, is also valued.

“They were very giving and they gave me time, and I learnt so much just by talking to them. I think it’s quite interactive chatting isn’t it? You start a conversation and it might be over tea or coffee ... you start getting into something that’s concerning you or you want a strategy to deal with or whatever, and they can give you a bit of advice or comments about it and the way they do it, and then you can bounce that back to them. It’s given to you and then you can bounce that back to them and you can develop it, and I think that’s much better, it’s a very efficient way of learning than reading because that’s a very passive, one-way thing. So it works better for me” (T:PQ)

The pace at which the career changer feels comfortable developing knowledge/skill is another important aspect spoken about.

“Sometimes that could be quite overwhelming and there’s been times when I have been over-stimulated perhaps and I’m like ‘I need to have a lie down this is far too much ... stop sharing’ but ‘thank you very much, I’m so glad you’ve done everything and read all this amazing stuff ... that I have not!’” (TE:CD)

Overall, informal chats with a MAO are highly valued by career changers – whether for significant obstacles or concerns, or to simply ‘check in’.

“There’s one of the teachers who’s so experienced ... the conversations we’ve had, been very helpful ... she’s been generous ... she’s become a bit of a person that I would turn to and that’s become more than sitting around having a coffee, it’ll be I’ll knock on the door and say can I have a quick chat?” (T:PQ)

8.2.3 INTERDEPENDENT LEARNING

Over time career changers gradually expand their pool of potential support from a selected MAO who they trust and to whom they feel safe to reveal aspects of their learning gaps, to revealing more about their perceived competence to a wider group of individuals. This took the form of relationships with a broader group of MAOs within their own organisation, to networking with colleagues in their field and even to collaborating on joint projects.

“Those links, those informal connections with people and the freedom within an organisation to enable you to create those has been more than beneficial than any training course that somebody has just put me on to do to tell me how to do my job” (A:QR)

8.2.3.1 EXPANDING THE CIRCLE OF MORE ABLE OTHERS

Drawing on support and having additional ‘others’ to bounce ideas off within their team and organisation was valuable to career changers. These additional contacts were only sought once they felt established in their new occupation however i.e. once they realised that sharing ideas and gaining input from more colleagues gave them more sources from which to select a solution or approach that worked for them.

“The word that keeps coming up is relationships ... relationships and chatting is major for me” (TE:OP)

“I’ve been very lucky through this journey ... lots of supportive people who always encourage and share” (A:HI)

Prior experience of developing relationships made reaching out to others in the new context easier; those with a similar background/level of experience are particularly valued.

“It’s been easier for me to go and speak to people, learn from them rather than go on actual training courses ... talking in a bit more depth to other teachers early in their career” (T:PQ)

“I’ve sought out support from people who know the job ... who will enable me to understand how to do this job better ... you start talking and you just start to get that conversation going and it is one that both of you can invest in” (A:QR)

Availability of multiple sources of knowledge along with their openness was also valued.

“There’s a bunch of people who come in here and you can chat with them but it’s not management or anything like that” (T:JK)

“One of the many things I’ve loved about this new role is feeling a really positive sense of connection to community” (TE:CD)

“I try to engage in as many ways as possible to sort of learn from other people, discuss things and share information, and we try and plan as a team as well ... we have discussions where lots of different ideas come to the table” (A:HI)

Building informal relationships within the new occupational team is also valued because it enables career changers to cope with a stressful or challenging work experience.

“If I’ve had a dreadful lesson ... and you go and say to other people ... ‘how’ve you found A3 today?’ and they go ‘oh bloody bouncing off the ceiling today” (T:AB)

“Coming back into the office and just saying ‘oh I’ve got this really complicated case what do you think?’ ... that kind of informal discussion is really important” (A:KL)

“It’s so supportive and it’s so encouraging and it’s so open, it’s friendly but it’s beyond friendly, it’s developmental. It’s everybody wants to help everybody else do better, do more” (TE:CD)

The value of informal relationships also lies in shared learning or problem solving.

“I chat with people every day on that corridor and learn from them, and learn, learn, learn hugely, I mean sometimes it’s learning about things I didn’t know, and sometimes it’s wow I hadn’t really thought about that” (TE:OP)

“There’s definitely something about shared learning, learning together rather than necessarily learning from. So having that kind of peer level supporting you and I can give as much as I can take rather than always being me going tell me stuff, you’re better than me, tell me stuff” (A:BC)

A shared approach also provides comfort for career changers in that there is always somebody on the team who will be able to help.

“I liked the comfort of having people around me that really knew what they were doing ... I felt like I could go to all of them because they are experienced ... It was really helpful. So I could kind of go to one room and if I couldn’t find the person I could go to the next room. That was the main way I settled and learnt.” (T:MN)

8.2.3.2 NETWORKING OPENED UP POSSIBILITIES

Career changers also spoke of the value of being able to ‘share’ with individuals and colleagues outside their immediate team/unit/organisation.

“I’ve developed a lot of new networks in the past year it’s been great ... because of the fact that you’re meeting other people from other schools ... it just gives you a fresh outlook on, you’re getting out of the space you’re normally in and gives you a slightly different overview of what you’re trying to achieve so they’re useful ... they give me different perspectives” (T:PQ)

“I enjoyed going back to the PG Cert and meeting up with those people and having those conversations again” (A:BC)

Networks hold a value because it enables career changers to meet like-minded individuals, to reflect and form ideas and plans for action, and can also help to motivate and energise.

“Some of my successes, coming back to this informal learning, came through my network ... I felt so developed ... and I thought yeah I’ve got a lot to learn from you” (TE:CD)



The RP by A:EF shows the extent to which a career changer’s network can involve talking non-specialists such as technicians and students, particularly when the career changer believes they share the same goals.

“I think doing the PG Cert, it wasn’t the course ... it was a really good opportunity to network with people and although I wouldn’t necessarily say I would ask for help, I’m very good at sucking up other peoples’ ideas” (A:NO)

The supportive aspect of networks is also important – being able to turn to others, outside of the individual’s immediate occupational team, for advice and guidance.

“I’ve got a lovely network here that I would go to. I wouldn’t go to them for specifics but I think what I do find is that they open up the opportunity for a nice reflective dialogue ... it enabled me to be alongside a range of lecturers who were at different stages and learn from a whole range” (A:QR)

“I am still in touch with Bloomberg, I still meet with my friends. I still talk to them about things that help my CPD, my informal CPD” (T:GH)

8.2.3.3 KNOWLEDGE BUILDING THROUGH JOINT PROJECTS

The most specific form of wider relationship used by career changers was when moving from knowledge-sharing to knowledge-building through working on joint projects. This was not used by many career changers but those who did talk about it were positive about its value.

“collaboration has built my confidence in the academic sphere ... working with (X) in the last few months made me feel that maybe I do have something to say” (TE:CD)

Also valued by career changers was the ability not simply to be a junior member of the group picking up tips from a group of more experienced others, but also to be an expert in their own right; their knowledge and experience also contributing to the project and being valued.

“I went and did like a module, taught a module alongside a really experienced lecturer and I was like her number two. She was obviously a very experienced teacher but not so much in (subject) so it worked quite well between us because she knew how to teach and I kind of knew how to do the clinical stuff” (A:KL)

Team success is also valued, whether in terms of course delivery, working with individual students and/or achieving particular outcomes e.g. student recruitment and retention, or ‘pass’ rates.

“You don’t achieve anything alone ... there is a huge collaboration among different teachers. We help each other as much as we can” (T:GH)

“There was something about just being supported to act into the role so actually I’ve had quite a lot of that. Yeah, just try that and see how you get on ... and I had some real kind of eureka moments” (A:BC)

8.3 WHAT HELPS AND HINDERS CAREER CHANGERS' LEARNING

This second theme in the 'incremental learning' domain relates to factors that career changers said underpinned effective learning and, in turn, enabled them to recapture career success.

8.3.1 TRUST IS THE PREREQUISITE FOR SEEKING SUPPORT

The first of these – having faith in the person or people turned to, or from whom help or advice is accepted – is a highly significant 'enabler', in that it was spoken about with great emphasis by all career changers.

One aspect of the working relationship which facilitates trust for career changers is talking to people who are 'travelling the same journey'.

“What really helped was other people who had had that transition already and told me you're going to feel like this, it's going to be like that” (TE:RS)

“I suppose I would tend to stick with people in my team because I know and trust them and I know that we're all kind of in a similar level of experience.” (A:KL)

Trust is related to risk in career changers' minds: if a career changer does not trust a colleague they will behave in a self-protective way i.e. not open up or seek their advice.

“When you trust your colleagues you're more likely to be open about sharing some of those ideas because there is a little element of risk isn't there, involved with talking about those things, so trust is a key factor” (TE:LM)

“Absolutely I think they're potentially self-protection. There probably are people outside of the department you could ask stuff but you might be a bit worried about your reputation or the reputation of the course ... there's a bit of a safety net” (A:KL)

Career changers apply their drive for self-protection to guide them when sussing out who to trust – at whatever level in the hierarchy or job role.

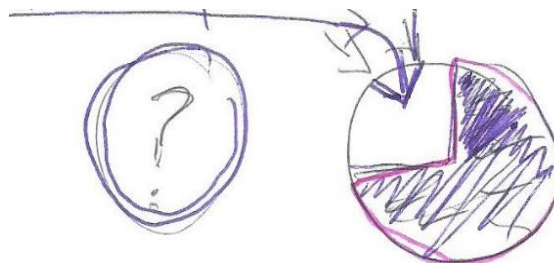
“There’s an SLT, I was in the coffee area the other day ... he’s standing there and I’m having a conversation with my informal mentor about some behaviour issues and she’s giving me some quite nice advice and then as we leave she calls me and says ‘don’t do that again in front of him’ and I had not spotted that that could be an issue, but that could have been an issue, that’s the reason why I would avoid ... it’s like self-protection” (T:PQ)

Trust is also linked to time in that the greater the perceived potential judgement of ‘others’ the less likely the career changer would be to trust them or open up to them. This was spoken about, in particular, with reference to career changers’ desire to maintain or enhance their manager’s perceptions particularly during the early stages of their transition.

“I think when you look at your peers you don’t have that same need to feel that they’re right and therefore you don’t get the same perspective that you might be wrong either. So it helps to give you confidence in yourself because you have this bit that is yours which they can’t possibly know because they’re not in the same profession so they can’t possibly judge that bit ” (A:BC)

This is also apparent in A:BCs RP (also see Chapter 6.4.4, p. 133) – she depicts a circle that is only partially coloured in. The coloured in section relates to her perceived competence and confidence; the blank section relates to her perception of the ‘gap’

in her knowledge, skills, competence. She spoke of not revealing gaps in her knowledge, skill and competence until she felt that she was around 75% confident.



“When I’ve got a bit that I’m really confident with I feel much safer to say I can’t do this other bit. I think at the beginning when it’s all new, when this learning curve thing is going on there’s no security in anything because you’re going like ‘ohhhhhh’. Once you get that security back then I felt a bit more able to expose the areas that are not so strong ... yeah as my confidence goes up I am far more likely to ask for help” (A:BC)

Whilst trusting a selected MAO and colleagues who have ‘been there’ is important, so too is trusting others that career changers talk to. This can include non-specialist colleagues e.g. technicians, colleagues from other departments or colleagues who work outside their occupational sphere. Career changers’ avoidance or putting off revealing gaps to line managers amplifies the value of being able to turn to these wider, but crucially trusted, networks.

“It was really helpful, there was no needing to tip-toe round or worry that I might look stupid, that I’m not saying the right thing because actually they weren’t going to, they weren’t interested in any of that kind of stuff ... our roles were different enough” (A:BC)

Trust also relates to being offered support in a positive way, and this extends to the need for MAOs to share what has worked for them in a more open and less prescriptive way.

“I think it’s this informal chat, just a quick chat, it doesn’t have to be about work. It can be about anything ... I think putting a little bit of a caveat on that ... I’d only do that with people I trusted ... that’s a big element. You’ve got to trust them and if you haven’t got that trust you can’t really say ‘look I’m really having trouble with xyz what do you reckon’ because they’re going to say ‘oh you’re an idiot then aren’t you’ instead of going ‘do you know what I was thinking that last week, have you tried this’ ... that knowing that they’re not going to throw you under a bus. I think that’s really important because it builds that relationship.” (T:AB)

There is also a desire to gain honest but considerate input. Career changers spoke about this in terms of respecting and being respected; being able to put things out there e.g. “here’s what I’m thinking”, and obtaining feedback and suggestions that are sensitive to the career changer’s ‘novice’ – and therefore not yet confident – status.

“I worried about that I would rather observe and would rather have reflected, would rather have had very informal chatting to glean without directly asking. I would worry a lot about seeking advice because I would feel that I should know it by now. When is the cut-off point when you can stop asking?” (A:EF)

As confidence and trust builds career changers feel that they can more comfortably begin to make their own contributions.

“It needs to be a two-way street, that someone else trusts you, to be able to come to you and say what do you think ... I think that’s part of the trust thing as well” (T:AB)

“I felt that whatever I was asking it was kind of fair enough because it was a parent coming to me with a completely different issue or it was a different question about the RE we had to teach ... so it felt like I wasn’t asking the same thing, and I felt like I’d got to a place because I’d been doing it long enough” (T:MN)

8.3.2 LEARNING ADAPTABILITY

This enabler relates to ways of thinking about learning and career changers’ preparedness to adapt their approach.

“The idea came into my mind of research and academia so actually maybe I do need to start thinking about being research led and not just relationship led” (TE:CD)

There is a clear acknowledgement that what works for one career changer may not be effective for others. TE:FG, for example, spoke of the power of feedback from colleagues and how this prompted him to adapt his preferred ‘activist’ style and to take more time to reflect.

“You need to know which way you learn best and pursue what’s best for you, I don’t think I would suggest anybody does it in one particular way ... I had an informal buddy I never wanted. I never asked any questions because I like finding things out myself ... it doesn’t fit with my way of working things out” (TE:FG)

For some career changers this extended to completing psychometric tests which gave them a better appreciation of how they learnt and helped them realise that career change – whilst challenging, stressful and destabilising – opened up new and rich avenues for personal growth.

“The thing that really made it make sense to me when I started was ... the strength scope ... I’d felt bad about leaving my old job and I couldn’t quite get my head around it even though I was enjoying my new one ... I got the report back ... and all the things that were my strengths were the things I was able to do in my new job and they were all the things that I wasn’t able to do in my old job ... it made me think about rather than comparing myself to other people actually we’ve all got our own strengths” (A:KL)

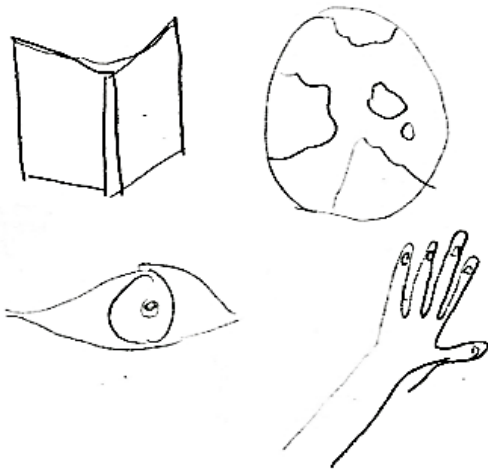
Prior occupation also contributed to career changers' preferences or preparedness to adapt their learning style/approach.

“Because of the nature of my specialism I’m constantly looking at new things, I’m constantly learning new things myself anyway and so I’ve got sort of a mindset that I have to keep moving. We always get things done. We are completer-finishers as a type you know” (TE:LM)

For some, change of occupation was associated with both a change in values and what they found acceptable in relation to personal and professional development. As a consequence, some career changers felt a degree of psychological discomfort and the need to re-evaluate what was important to them rather than simply aligning their values with those in their new occupation. TE:LM, for example, talked of their negative reaction to being coached, which was commonplace within the Teacher Educator team but had been absent in their previous role as a Teacher, where self-sufficiency was the norm.

“I found it of limited value because people were trying to steer me down a route that I felt didn’t held those values” (TE:LM)

For some changers, depth of understanding could only be achieved through bringing together the theoretical or academic aspects of knowledge, with the practical. This was articulated very clearly by Auditor-turned-Teacher (T:MN) whose RP shows her ‘take’ on combining multiple styles of learning: the ‘book’ represents theoretical/academic knowledge, the ‘eye’, the need to



look around and see what others are doing or how they are making use of knowledge, the ‘hand’ represents taking a hands-on approach and applying knowledge/skills acquired, and finally, the ‘world’ represents applying knowledge/skills to a broader set of situations/ scenarios/contexts. Her explanation of this in relation to an example from her setting reinforces this message i.e. that whatever has been internalised needs then to be externalised.

“I need to feel I’ve got some knowledge in my head to then go in to the real world and actually apply that ... you need some theoretical but that’s not enough ... it needs to feel useful and I remember sometimes being very frustrated because we’d have like staff meetings where we’d be told a new way of teaching maths ... I remember thinking for example if I was given a year 2 lesson, I’m thinking ok but tomorrow when I’m going in to teach year 4 and 5, how can I apply that?” (T:MN)

Career changers also recognised that learning is on-going and that they would need to be willing to adapt their approach i.e. what they did or how they handled situations in the past may not work in their new setting or with their new colleagues or ‘customers’.

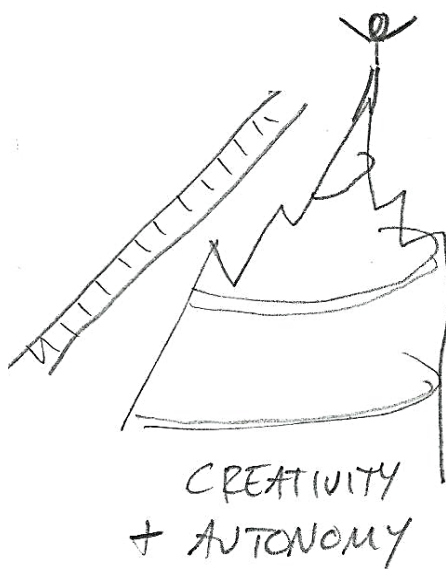
“I’ve always thought I’m a bit of a chameleon, I try to adapt, genuinely ... I’ll do anything ... You can give me something that I’ve never done before and I will have a go at it. I will find a way to do it and I will search the internet, I’ll search libraries, I’ll ask people, I’ll ask people to ask people” (T:DE)

8.3.3 HEADSPACE HELPS TO EMBED LEARNING

Another ‘enabler’ relates to the extent to which career changers have the time and ‘headspace’ to think about, reflect and embed their learning.

“I can feel that my brain is starting to think more deeply ... thinking about something so hard that I actually feel a little bit uncomfortable” (TE: CD)

Building in time to compartmentalise and mentally sort through what has been learnt during a particular time period is important in helping distance the career changer from their experiences and potentially make learning less painful. For TE:LM this autonomy also fosters creativity – see his RP opposite.



“There’s got to be a place of reflection, a time ... being able to hold the spaces ... not move down an over-managed route, give people their space to work creatively to reflect ... you’ve got to be given a piece of space to be able to do that and you can’t force it” (A:QR)

Having time to do this can be a major obstacle and was something carried out by some career changers in their own time travelling to or from work rather than encouraged as another way to learn 'in the job'.

"... it is that step away from your desk, it is that have a bit of brain space ... if only there were more time" (TE: CL)

On the other hand, providing time to learn, reflect or assimilate is something that the employing organisation can and does helpfully provide in some instances.

"... just reflecting now on it I think there was something about this role that made it ok to learn" (A:BC)

Some changers added that attending formal learning events – whilst not the main focus or approach to learning – was valued because it provided time away from the intensity of the workplace and afforded opportunities to reflect.

"That's the first time I've been out of school and not teaching all year and actually came back on Friday because we've had a departmental review ... and I felt fairly relaxed about the whole thing because I'd been a way for a day" (A:PQ)

Career changers also talked about learning as an on-going activity and the need to factor in time for continuing professional development.

"I don't necessarily feel like I'm not still a novice (but) I do feel like you're always learning on this job. It's a bit exponential. I don't think you ever stop ... I don't think you ever get to the stage where you feel like 'I know everything', I think you always feel like you've got to keep on top of the latest evidence ... you have to make an effort so that you're keeping things interesting and fresh" (A:KL)

8.3.4 AMBIVALENCE TOWARDS FORMAL LEARNING

Complex career changers were ambivalent about the value of formal learning, with most but not all types of formal learning being viewed as passive and unhelpful in terms of enabling them to learn and recapture success in their new occupation.

“I have done various training courses like safeguarding ... but that doesn’t make me good at safeguarding. It’s experience, it’s lots of experiential learning on the job. You go on external courses ... but you can sit in the back of the course and unless you actually put it into practice and try it out on someone you might as well not have been there. So it’s always the doing and the trying” (A:KL)

The lack of value also relates to their inability to apply knowledge practically in their job.

“I’ve certainly not got it from a book ... I’ve spent most of life reading but there is no way I’m going to sit down and read a manual on how to assess BTEC” (T:JK)

“We’re putting all these people through their PG Certs ... and yet there’s no encouragement or guidance on what to do with that ... it’s good work but nobody knows what to do with it afterwards” (A:NO)

There is also a clear appreciation that attendance on courses – whilst potentially useful from a knowledge updating point of view – holds very little value in terms of skill development.

“I did take some lesson ideas from more theoretical lectures but in terms of the way I learn, I don’t know how helpful I found that ... lectures on learning theories for example I think I didn’t find that really came into the job itself” (T:MN)

Induction courses in particular were not valued by career changers because of the generic nature of programmes and their failure to embed occupation/department-specific knowledge.

“We have two induction days but that’s well it’s just a waste of time ... there would have been formal stuff but I’ve forgotten it” (TE:FG)

“I didn’t find it very useful because essentially I went round and met all these people and didn’t really know who they were ... what would have been useful was to go and observe different people teaching and look at some resources (and) to meet different teams and talk about your expertise and how you might be able to do some shared working ... all we get is a bombardment of information ... it would have been good to have a bit of time and maybe have somebody say what support do you think you’re going to need?” (A:NO)

Trust in career changers being able to learn independently is also pointed to as a concern.

“... as soon as you formalise I think you lose something ... I’m a little bit wary about over-formalising because there’s an element of trust involved” (TE:LM)

“A lot of CPD, even today, is just irrelevant” (T:AB)

Formal mentoring or ‘buddying’, too, provokes equivocation and ties-in with career changers’ need for space and time to make their own learning choices e.g. who to talk to.

“... maybe one of your colleagues rather than a manager, who’s doing the same aspect of the role that you could maybe buddy up with ... for me, I want to know who’s out there because I want to suck up all their resources and knowledge and skills thank you very much!” (A:NO)

However, some formal learning is valued: professional qualifications such as the PG Cert.

“I was always very interested in doing extra things and I thought wow this will be an opportunity to actually get some extra qualifications” (TE:LM)

“When I came here it was a part of your probation, you do a PG Cert in Higher Education which was great and I enjoyed it” (A:KL)

Learning via formal qualifications also facilitates exploration of personal and professional values.

“My MSc ... was really transformative in terms of my practice” (A:BC)

“The PG Cert was a mixed bag but I think you’ve got to make yourself try new things ... I had a way I was used to teaching where I put loads of information on a powerpoint and talked at people, that was very much my comfort blanket and I could have easily gone on doing that so it’s kind of making yourself try something different” (A:KL)

Formal learning is also valued because of career changers’ drive for fulfilment of a life aim.

“I decided I wanted to further myself by doing a PhD. I’d got to that point in my career I suppose where I thought I’m not doing that self-fulfilment” (TE:FG)

“I’ve done a PG Cert, I’ve just completed that. Oh it was fantastic. I loved it and then I wrote an article. My first so yes I wrote an article about my experience” (A:EF)

8.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Findings in the ‘incremental learning’ domain include two main themes: the competence and confidence renewal process, and what helps and hinders learning. Development of competence and confidence involved three distinct stages of learning: independent, affiliative and interdependent. Trust was the prerequisite for career changers to seek support: the less comfortable they were about revealing gaps in their knowledge and/or skills, the more inward-looking or independent their approach to learning; the more comfortable they were, the more outward-looking or interdependent their learning.

Career changers spoke of valuing independent reflection i.e. gaining insight by stepping back so that they could more clearly identify what worked or did not work. This also contributed to accumulation of evidence upon which to judge their success or progress. Reading and actively researching aspects of their new occupation also helped, especially during early transition. This enabled career changers to deepen their understanding or to broaden their perspective and, therefore, to make more informed decisions about job-related tasks/projects. Complex career changers also spoke of the value of observing experienced colleagues, particularly when handling what they perceived to be challenging aspects of the new role e.g. handling complaints. Taking an active rather than vicarious approach to learning i.e. learning by doing, was also valued, in particular because of the tacit nature of developing competence or more i.e. that personal discovery of what is involved revealed the intricacies and unseen or unappreciated aspects of their new role.

As they became less uncomfortable about revealing gaps in knowledge/skills or about asking for help career changers engaged in affiliative learning i.e. informal chats with a chosen more able other (MAO). They spoke of the value of this form of informal learning in terms of being able to trust a particular individual and confide their concerns and worries, but also in terms of

gaining tailored and highly supportive feedback, coaching or direction i.e. being offered a form of early stability or scaffolding. The role of MAO was not confined only to more senior colleagues however, and career changers also spoke of valuing input and support from individuals who had also been through a career change and would therefore have a better appreciation of the particular challenges they experienced, as well as their preferences for how to learn.

Over time career changers gradually expand their pool of potential support from a selected MAO who they trust and to whom they feel safe to reveal aspects of their learning gaps, to revealing more about their perceived competence to a wider group of individuals. This took the form of relationships with a broader group of MAOs within their own organisation where they valued a shared approach to learning or problem solving, to networking with colleagues in their field and even to collaborating on joint projects where the focus moved from knowledge sharing to knowledge building.

In terms of what helped and hindered their learning, career changers spoke of the value of trust (see above) but also of being prepared to adapt their approach to learning i.e. what might work for one individual or in one situation or with one challenge may not work for another. Having headspace also helped to embed learning i.e. time to reflect and think about how specific aspects of their new role fitted together or how they might make changes going forward. Only one aspect of learning was considered as an inhibitor and this was having their learning determined or planned by others i.e. formal learning such as induction or formal mentoring. On the other hand, if the formal learning helped them to gain a better understanding of the foundations of their new occupation it was valued. Career changers spoke positively about vocational qualifications, for instance, and in particular about the opportunity to network with others new to their occupation.

Chapter 9

DISCUSSION

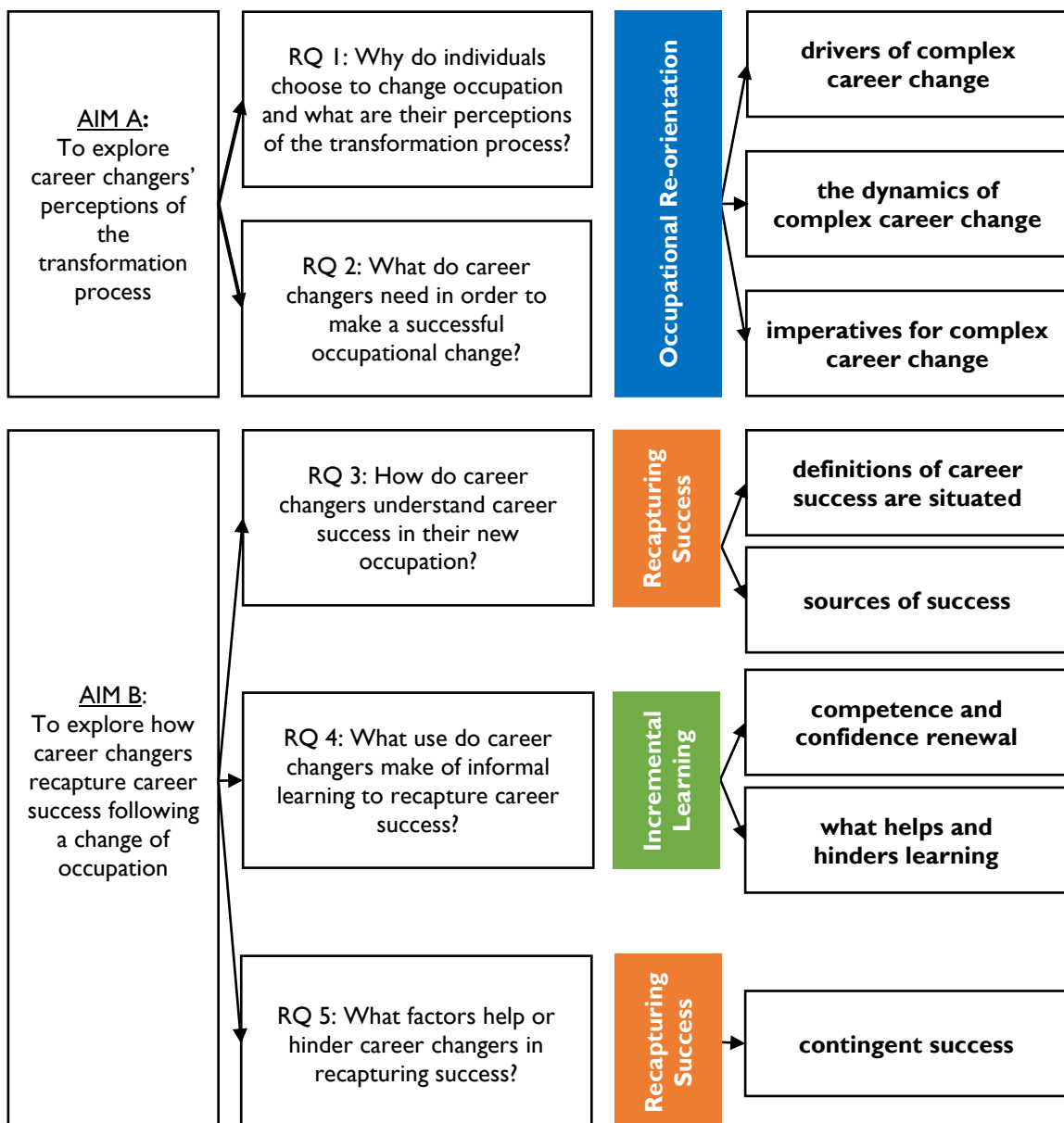
“Trust those who seek the truth but doubt those
who say they have found it”

— *Andre Gide*

9.1 INTRODUCTION

To demonstrate that the aims and research questions have been addressed, this final chapter will firstly present a high-level summary of the findings (see 9.1.1); complemented by Figure 20 (below) which shows how particular themes map on to the aims and research questions. To highlight the connections across domains and themes, however, and to discuss how the findings support, question or extend existing literature relating to career change, success and informal learning (see chapters 2 – 4) the in-depth discussion of the findings takes the form of the ‘story’ of complex career changers’ transformation (see sections 9.2 – 9.7).

Figure 20: How the themes relate to the aims and research questions



Finally, method limitations, a summary of the main original contributions, and a reflection on the overall PhD process will be discussed, along with recommendations for further research and implications for practice.

9.1.1. HOW THE AIMS WERE MET AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS ADDRESSED

This study set out to explore how career changers perceived the transformation process (Aim A) and how they recaptured career success (Aim B) – with a particular focus on how they made use of informal learning. The expectation was that a better understanding would be gained in relation to the value of particular learning methods and this was the case, however it also became clear that this was only part of a more intricate picture. Indeed, the major contribution of this thesis – and one that directly responds to numerous calls for research (e.g. Sullivan & Ariss, 2019; Shultz et al, 2019; Heslin, 2005; Ibarra, 2004) to illuminate this “least understood and most complex type of change” (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001, p39) – is finding that far from being a straightforward process, recapturing career success happens as a result of a complex interplay between the stage of transition, related psychological factors, and choice of learning method(s).

The first research question asked why individuals chose to change career and their perceptions of the transformation process. Findings show that multiple **drivers** motivated individuals to step away from their previous occupations and start again in a new one: changes in what was thought to be important in their life/career, the need for challenge, a desire to extend personal research and to gain admiration and respect. Moreover, the findings show that despite these driving forces, the **dynamics** of complex career change shaped career changers’ perceptions of the transformation process, which were rooted in the need to manage psychological risk i.e. the extent to which they were prepared to expose or reveal perceived lack of competence, knowledge and skills. This led to the development of a new model (see Figures 21 – 29) which, put simply, shows that destabilisation and occupational identity incongruity brought about by their status change (from expert to novice) created psychological discomfort and this resulted in the perceived need to implement a range of psychologically ‘protective’ strategies. The purpose of these was to mitigate stress and provide a buffer i.e. the space and time to learn at a pace that was comfortable for the career changer.

The second research question asked what career changers needed in order to make a successful occupational change, and a number of key **imperatives** were discovered. Key findings were that despite welcoming occupational change and being prepared to re-orient to

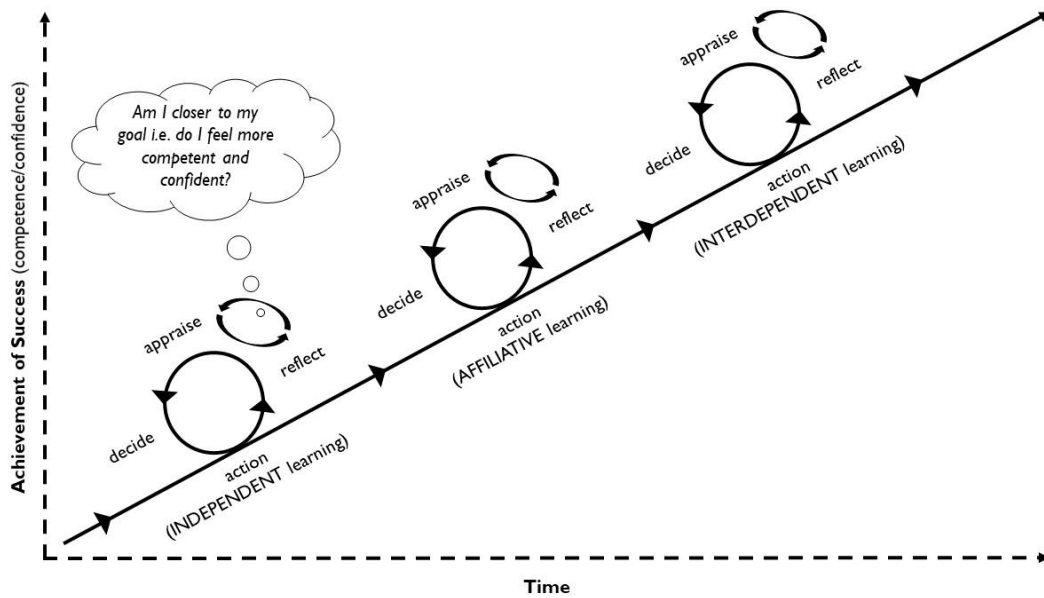
the demands of their new occupation, and even realising (over time) that others' experiences of career change could mitigate some of their own negative experiences, complex career changers felt a strong need both for the scale of their change to be acknowledged by those they now worked with but also to be in control of the change process; especially in relation to how they learnt and developed at particular points in their transformation journey.

The third research question asked how complex career changers understand career success in their new occupation, and findings here showed that there had been considerable definitional flux in relation to **individuated sources of success** i.e. that, over time, lack of alignment in their previous occupation had led them to rethink what success meant to them. Objective success (e.g. getting results) was still attractive but more subjective, intangible forms of success had become important; doing what felt right, in particular, along with being authentic took priority. Early perceptions of success, however, were of it being uneven and complex career changers spoke of the need to 'shore up' their personal appraisals and re-frame experiences based on gradual development of a new track record. However, **sources of success** were not only based on personal success but **distributed**, and findings show that these cleave between career changers' need to make a personal difference i.e. to help or facilitate others' development, and their desire to gain vicarious success based on others doing well.

The fourth research question answered in this thesis was what use career changers make of informal learning in order to recapture career success. This took the form of an elaborate feedback loop (see Figure 21), where selection of learning methods was based on regularly 'testing the water' to establish whether it was safe to reveal the extent of their competence and associated gaps in learning; the ultimate goal being to recapture career success. In the earliest stages of transition – when the learning curve was at its steepest – this involved the career changer using **independent** learning methods that enabled them to conceal perceived incompetence from public view and to gradually raise confidence levels. Over time, however, as psychological discomfort began to subside – and in line with their perceptions of increasing, albeit tentative success – career changers' **judgement aversion** decreased, their **trust** in others increased and they began to make use of **affiliative** learning methods that involved a greater degree of exposure of their perceived (and actual) competence and learning gaps. As yet more time passed, career changers began to reveal their learning needs to a broader group of colleagues and to adopt an even more shared – or **interdependent** – approach to their on-going development. The culmination of this '**competence and confidence renewal process**' being both greater belief in their ability to perform in their new occupation and

measurable progress towards, as well as evidence of some achievement of, their ultimate goal: recapturing career success.

Figure 21: The career changers' feedback loop



Finally, the fifth research question asked about factors that helped and hindered career changers recapturing career success, and findings show that this is **contingent** i.e. not automatic. Career changers spoke of the sometimes quite debilitating effects of **self-doubt** and, in particular, of feeling like an impostor. Gaps in occupation-specific knowledge and/or skill were the key concerns i.e. being unable to do the basics in their new job role, but also worrying that any success might be short-lived. This was compounded by career changers' tendency towards **social comparison** with more experienced others and whilst they recognised that this was not a fair or realistic comparison they nevertheless continued to worry that others were more successful. On the other hand, **accumulating new experience** helped them to begin to perceive themselves as being a success or being on the road towards success, in particular gaining a deeper understanding of key elements of their new role. **Prior success** was also viewed as being helpful both in a psychological sense and in terms of measurable success. Knowing how to handle particular situations or scenarios was particularly helpful but so too was having some form of mental template which enabled new knowledge to be assimilated more easily. Career changers also spoke about the value of being open to change and feeling optimistic (i.e. possessing **growth mindset**) and how taking on new challenges contributed towards their growing sense of success.

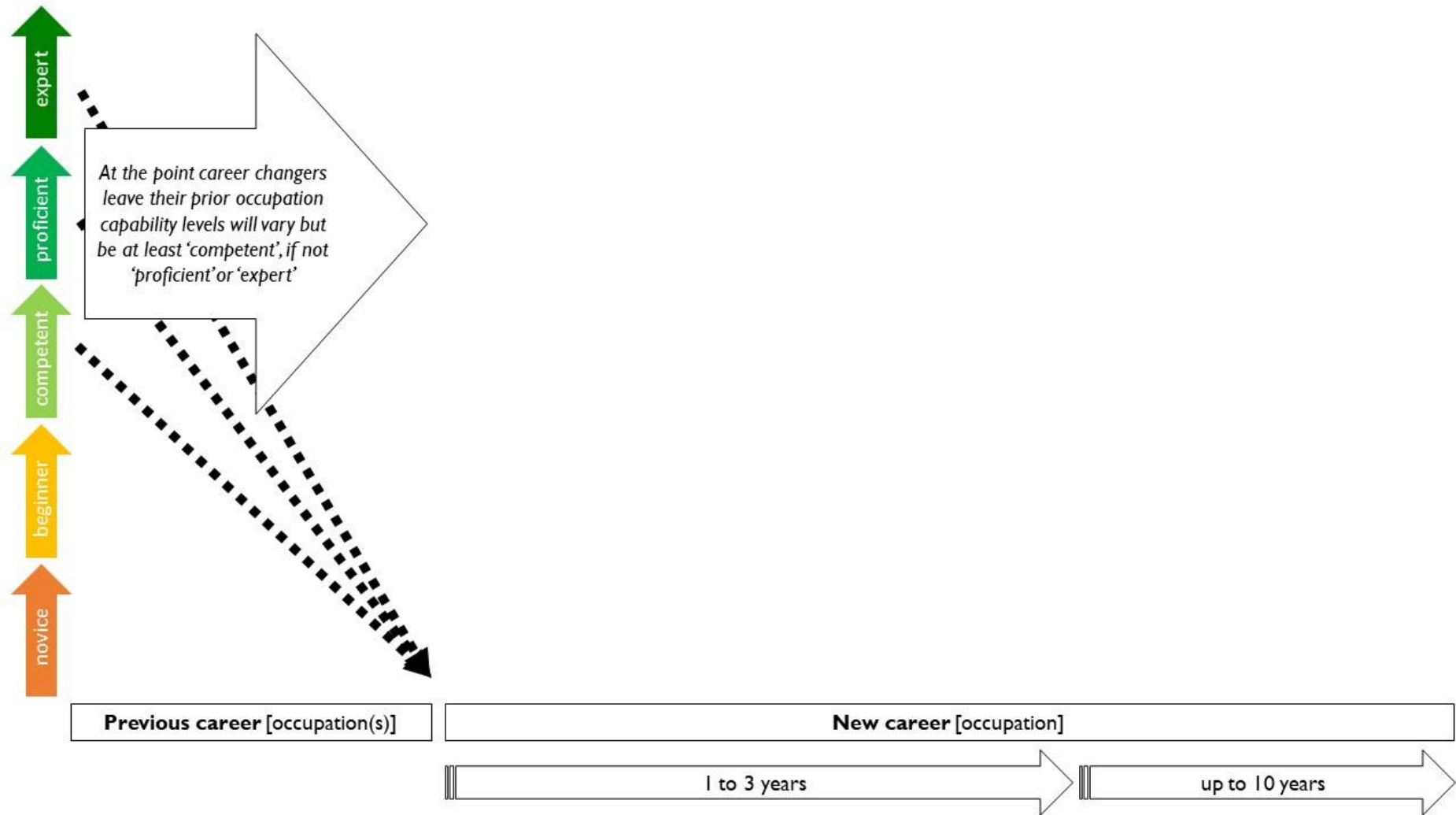
This short summary of how findings answered the five research questions and addressed the aims of the study hopefully provides some insight into complex career changers' journey to recapturing career success but is, of course, merely a snapshot rather than an in-depth account of the intricacies involved in the transition process. What follows across the rest of this chapter, therefore, is a detailed discussion of each of the main findings alongside the new model developed from these findings i.e. the 'competence and confidence renewal process' (see Figures 22 – 29). This is presented across five key sections or timeframes: before complex career change, the beginning of their transition, the early stages of development, later in their developmental journey and later still. Each of these looks closely at the key findings but also how they address both the aims and research questions of this study and respond to/ support or challenge previous literature.

9.2 BEFORE COMPLEX CAREER CHANGE

The findings of this study show that the period prior to occupational change shapes both complex career changers' transition experiences and the strategies they use to recapture success **i.e. what is important has changed (Aim A; RQ1 - Drivers)**. This period can run to many decades or last just a few years but, as Super (1980) argued, includes multiple decision points including disengagement (i.e. thinking about and deciding to leave a career) and exploration (consideration of a new career). Changing occupation after having an established career brings a number of challenges, not least, the motivation to undertake what is accepted as being a **risky and destabilising process (Aim A; RQ1 – Drivers)** but also the **preparedness to re-orient (Aim A; RQ2 – Imperatives)** i.e. to 'trade in' accumulated knowledge, skill and competence – sufficient for career changers to at least describe themselves as having previously been 'competent', if not 'proficient' or even 'expert' – and return to being a novice (see Figure 22 – opposite).

This is in line with previous research which shows that non-typical career progression (Rhodes & Doering, 1983; 1993) carries substantial risks (Breedon, 1993; Neal, 1999; Feldman & Ng, 2007) particularly when individuals move to new occupations where previous knowledge/skills are difficult to or cannot be recaptured. However, despite the argument that high change costs (Cortes & Gallipoli, 2018) and 'path dependence' i.e. remaining in a particular career because of prior decisions/pathways (Dlouhy & Biemann, 2018) are disincentives, individuals in this study were prepared to take the risk, give up significant prior human capital investment (e.g. seniority: Assistant Head Teacher; Financial Analyst etc) and take pay cuts. This suggests that a rational focus on risk or cost-benefit ratios is not the primary or only metric used in career change decision-making. On the other hand, the findings of this research do support Dlouhy and Biemann's (2018) argument that changers often seek to minimise risks associated with complex career change by remaining in the same occupational class; in this case moving from one profession (e.g. nursing, occupational therapy, teaching, accountant) to another (academic, teacher educator, teacher) and, importantly, to professions that enable and welcome re-training. Indeed, the ability of all career changers in this study to move could, to some extent, be argued as only happening because of the type of occupational change involved i.e. where salary parity – both initially and in the longer-term was assured (e.g. moving from a senior nurse to senior lecturer – or where access to re-training; often undertaken with a bursary – for some equating to around £40,000 – and a follow-on career is highly likely). This

Figure 22: The 'picture' before a complex career change



therefore affects their transformation process i.e. given that recapturing success is part of their drive there is also potentially a high(er) risk of showing their real or perceived incompetence.

All of the complex career changers who took part in this study spoke of having been **successful in their prior occupation** and across their career history (**Aim B; RQ5 – Contingent Success**). They viewed this as a positive factor in helping them to recapture career success because it equipped them with transferable knowledge, skills, capabilities. In line with Raveh and Shaharabani's (2019) findings which showed that application of expert knowledge can assist initial career change orientation, participants in this study said that they also felt that they were able to more rapidly acquire knowledge and skills in their new occupation based on pre-existing schemas (i.e. prior experience) of what had worked for them in the past; particularly in terms of handling complex situations or problems. In turn this also offered reassurance to career changers that, having been successful before, success was also attainable in their new occupation; a finding which supports Watters and Diezmann (2015) finding pointing to the value of being able to apply experience of problem solving to handling new situations.

A key question, then, relates to why these individuals decided to make such a complex and risky change. In agreement with Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant's (2003) statement that career change is "rarely whimsical" (p. 96) the findings of this study point to a multiplicity of reasons. However, contrary to some recent career change research (e.g. Wagner & Imanuel-Noy, 2014), despite having experienced prior, objective career success i.e. high status and associated pay and benefits, career changers no longer saw monetary rewards as a sign of success and, instead, most closely associated it with psychological contentment and resonance i.e. tuning into the context in which success is achieved; a finding which clearly illustrates the point made by numerous researchers (e.g. Zhou et al, 2013; Pan & Zhou, 2015), that individual preferences for what constitutes success can change over time. Indeed, on entry to their new occupation career changers **defined success (Aim B; RQ3 – Definitions are situated)** as both being subjective and in multi- rather than uni-dimensional terms (Shockley et al, 2016; Heslin, 2005) i.e. as intrinsic (*doing what felt right, attainment of less tangible measures such as satisfaction, happiness, achievement of personal goals*) and altruistic (e.g. *helping others*). These findings mirror current literature (e.g. Price, 2019; Evans, 2018; Wilkins, 2017; Varadharajan & Schuck, 2017; Kim & Yang, 2017; Holme et al, 2016; Hunter-Johnson, 2015; Laming & Horne, 2013; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Hall & Chandler, 2005) which talks about career success being about more than pay and conditions (Heslin, 2005), and which points to personal or psychological success now playing a more central role in all individuals' (i.e. not only career changers') perceptions of what constitutes career success, and is therefore a driver of career change.

Career success in their new occupation also appears to be tied to career changers' sense of who they are, and what they as an individual stand for. In line with literature (e.g. Hall, 2004; Dries et al, 2008; Solowiej, 2014; Gubler et al, 2020; Weber-Handwerker et al. 2020) career changers spoke of pursuit of career success in their new occupation being fuelled by deeper concerns i.e. the need to 'craft' their career so that it more closely aligned with their values and personal integrity; subsequent success 'tested' or compared to a kind of personal 'ethics-match-checker'. The implication here is that success is not fixed but fluid i.e. **'definitions of career are situated'** (Aim B; RQ3), and that what is perceived as career success changes in line with particular stages in an individual's life and career (e.g. early, mid, late career) i.e. what once seemed vital, such as extrinsic motivators (e.g. high salary, promotion) no longer holds an attraction or is only part of the 'success picture'. In turn, of course, this can also have an impact on the extent to which an occupation continues to be attractive and on decisions about whether to start over in a distinct occupational role and setting. In other words definitional variability is linked to 'time served' and more time in a particular occupation or career per se can lead to greater clarity about what constitutes success as well as to the motivation to re-orient in an attempt to achieve a closer person-environment fit.

To this end, whilst contemporary career theories such as Protean (Hall, 1996; Hall et al 2018; Briscoe & Hall, 2006) and Boundaryless (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) argue that weakened bonds between individuals and employers have created a new norm of career mobility/flexibility (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2012) and pursuit of individual career responsibility (Baruch, 2004), the findings of this study align most closely with the Kaleidoscope model with its focus on authenticity, balance and challenge (Maneiro & Sullivan, 2005; Mainiero & Gibson, 2018). Rather than being driven by the need for agency and self-direction, career changers highlighted lack of fulfilment and the **need for challenge** (Aim A; RQ1 – Drivers) and greater life/ occupational fit as their primary reasons for leaving established and successful previous careers. In particular, the 'pull factors' being 'purposeful' and wanting to be stretched in a way that was beyond the scope of their previous occupation and to explore untapped potential, were significant drivers for changing occupation; the steep learning curve associated with complex change acting as an attracter rather than a disincentive. This provides a useful insight into the mind of a 'career changer' illustrating – as shown in Wolf's (2019) research – their willingness to engage with uncertainty i.e. that despite high human capital costs and potential psychological discomfort, expert status was willingly relinquished because the new occupation was believed to more closely align with personal values, offered opportunities for personal/professional development and ultimately increased human capital.

As argued by Heslin (2003) career success can be self- and/or other-referent. For career changers in this study other-referent success (achievement of people known to them) was just as important as

self-referent, with their **'desire to extend personal reach' (Aim A; RQ1 - Drivers)** i.e. transcending their personal work-sphere and making a real and lasting difference being spoken of as an important reason for changing occupation. Passing on knowledge was the main catalyst, along with inspiring others; the belief being that prior knowledge, skills, aptitudes could be better utilised and enable career changers to extend their 'reach'. For example, instead of teaching 30 children, a teacher-educator could train 10 new teachers who might then each teach 30 children. Even those who had not previously had education or caring occupations i.e. those moving from some form of commercial career into teaching, highlighted wanting to better utilise their prior expert knowledge and skill by transferring it to others. Changing occupation based on being motivated to make a 'social contribution' is in line with literature (e.g. Wilkins, 2017; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Price, 2019) where it is viewed as being a high-ranking motivator. It also goes some way to supporting Jiang et al's (2019) point that a boundaryless career is more about transcendence and exploration rather than simple mobility. Of course career changers' drive to 'extend personal reach' could also be attributed to their 'career age' (Hall, 1996) in that having previously achieved high status and associated objective career success (OCS) they were now secure enough to start over and pursue a career which enabled them to pursue their long-standing or immanent desire for a career with greater meaning. Indeed, as a natural extension of their other main motivator – feeling purposeful – this reflects both Hall and Chandler's (2005) reconceptualization of subjective career success (SCS) as 'psychological success' and Dries et al's (2008) dimensions of success model i.e. that over time being true to oneself and inter-personal affect (perceived contribution) can become more important.

Having said which, the findings of this study also call into question literature (e.g. Kim & Yang, 2017; Hunter-Johnson, 2015; Laming & Horne, 2013) which argues that complex career change is solely driven by the need to satisfy intrinsic forces e.g. 'mission'. For two of the occupational groups (teacher-educators and healthcare academics) whilst not the **primary driver (see above), acquiring extrinsic rewards (Aim B; RQ3 – Sources of success)** i.e. endorsement and recognition (Abele et al, 2016; Bethmann, 2013) gained as a result of now working in a higher-status, socially valued occupation (*prestige*) and one worthy of kudos (Gottfredson, 1981; Walker & Tracey, 2012), were important and enhanced their self-esteem. This therefore suggests that even when moving between similar occupations career changers are not a homogenous group in terms of their motivations and that whilst **doing what feels right (Aim B; RQ3 – Sources of success)** is important, extrinsic motivators nevertheless play a role in complex career change decisions. Furthermore, whilst **having others recognise that they had made it (Aim A; RQ1 – Drivers)** was a motivator and seen as a significant jump for those changing career to work in HE (i.e. *teacher-educators and health-practitioners-turned academics*), individuals who changed career to become school teachers viewed their new occupation as somewhat of a demotion – or, at most, a

horizontal move i.e. to an occupation perceived to be of a similar status – but were nevertheless motivated to make the change because of their desire to achieve greater authenticity; a goal that was shared by all career changers spoken to in this study.

It is important to note, however, that despite aligning with some aspects of contemporary career theory, career changers in this study also appeared to value traditional careers (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Ng & Feldman, 2010). Indeed, all entered unionised environments (i.e. university and schools) which are generally thought of as stable and which offer job security and the opportunity for traditional career development i.e. via horizontal job moves and/or upward mobility. This, therefore raises a question about the extent to which their complex career change was particularly risky – in that the majority moved from one traditional occupation (i.e. teaching, nursing) to another traditional occupation (e.g. teacher-educator, academic) – and supports Baruch and Vardi's (2016) argument that career change – even when voluntary – may not only be about the pursuit of freedom or agency. This, in turn, suggests that whilst individuals' career decisions and behaviours may align with contemporary (Hall, 1996; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005) and 'life design' theories (Savickas et al, 2009), this alignment is only temporary i.e. leading up to and during the initial transition period and that other motivators (e.g. job security) drive their occupational selection and that their longer-term motivations are based on a traditional model of career. The findings of this study therefore support Baruch and Peiperl's (2000) and others' (e.g. Inkson et al, 2010; Gubler et al, 2014) point about the over-glorification of freedom, and arguments (Clarke, 2013; Tomlinson et al, 2017) that neither traditional or the contemporary alone are likely to fit all. Instead, the 'hybrid' model, which shows that rather than being mutually exclusive traditional and contemporary models are complementary (Baruch & Vardi, 2016; Gander et al, 2019) i.e. that career motivations are likely to be a combination rather than 'either-or', appears a better explanation. In other words, both models are likely to play a role at some point in an individual's career.

Another finding relates to the career stage at which complex career change takes place and directly responds to Shultz et al's (2019) claim that studies of older career changers are "sparse" (p. 99). Research that has been carried out also shows it to be a contentious subject. According to Protean (Hall, 1996; Hall et al 2018; Briscoe & Hall, 2006) and Boundaryless (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) theories individuals are likely to change career at any age but most will be older – although those with higher status may be less likely to be mobile (Briscoe et al, 2006) – whereas Markey (1989) and Schniper (2005) argue that around 60% of career changers are under 35. However, with the exception of one individual – T:MN was 26 – participants who took part in this research all switched occupation in their late thirties and early forties and were well-established i.e. had achieved senior status in their previous career/occupation. This therefore suggests that not all career changers are

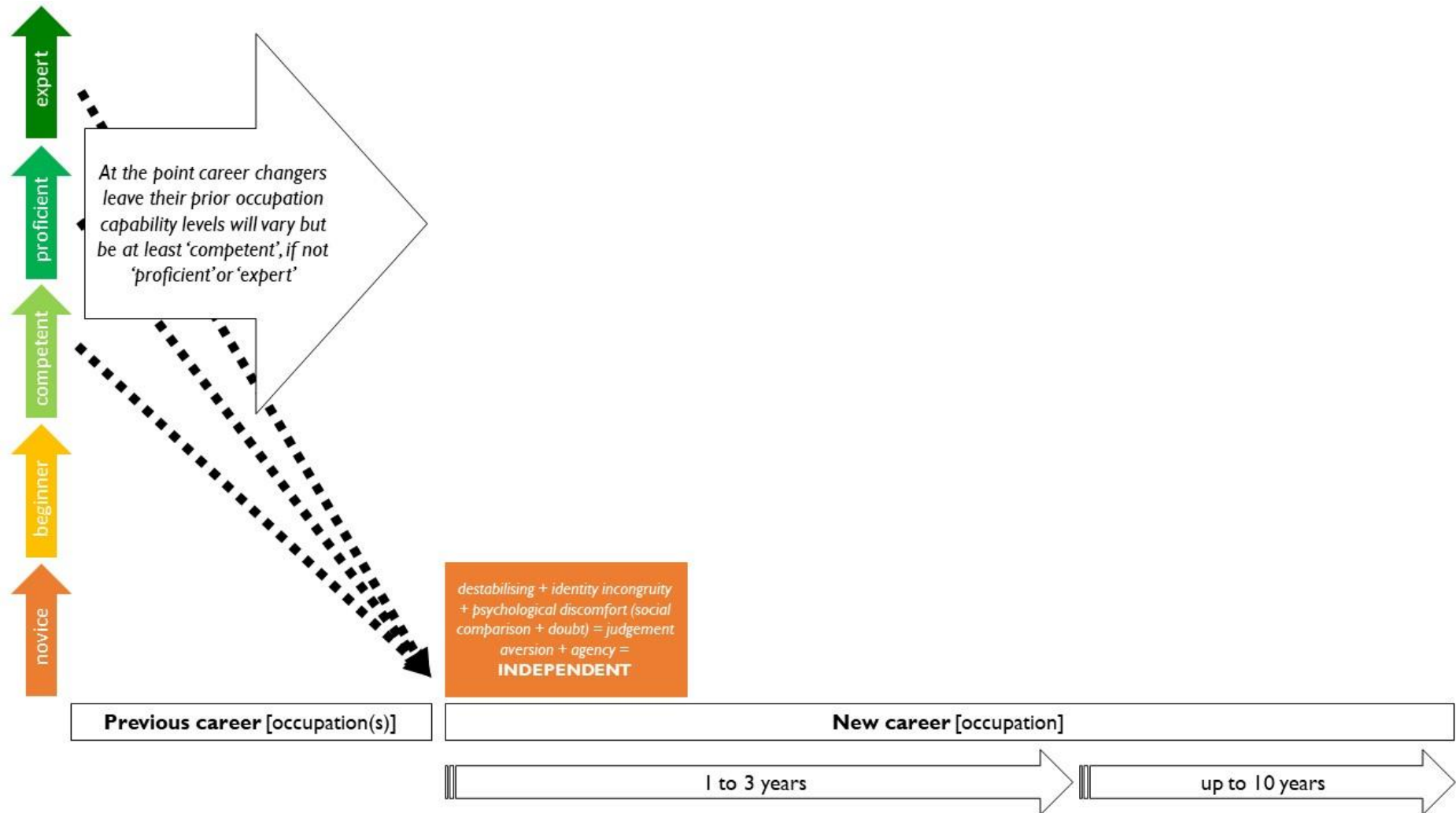
young, and that older career changers change occupation because they feel in control. It also further reinforces the fact that the ‘locked in’ argument (Dlouhy & Biemann, 2018; Stengard et al, 2017; Aronsson & Goransson, 1999) does not apply to all individuals and also offers support to more recent studies (e.g. Kreisberg, 2015; Forsythe, 2019; Shultz et al, 2019) which showed that those in mid-career are likely to make more complex career changes precisely because they do perceive themselves to be in control of their career/life. Indeed for those taking part in the current study – and in alignment with Cabrera (2007) and August (2011) – the ‘pull’ factors outweighed the cost or were seen as being a reasonable cost given their increased need for authenticity/occupational fit.

9.3 IN THE BEGINNING – SELF-PRESERVATION

Having taken the ‘leap’ career changers spoke of the ‘dynamics’ of their early transition (see Figure 23). Complex career change was seen by all as an undertaking requiring both time and patience in order to make substantial psychological adjustments i.e. preparedness to relinquish their existing sense of self and to accept some, or possibly even considerable, psychological ‘re-sculpting’. Indeed, the primary experience was of it being risky and destabilising, and associated with psychological knock-on effects including emotional turbulence, identity incongruity and judgement aversion.

Unlike some of the more simplistic models of career change which identify generic and arguably perhaps overly optimistic processes e.g. Lawrence’s (1983) ‘re-assessment – transition – socialisation’ or Dela Cruz et al’s (2013) ‘moving in – moving through – moving out’, the new model developed in this study (see Figures 21 – 29) is based on career changers into education speaking of feeling **destabilised (Aim A; RQ1 – Dynamics)**, due to established knowledge, skills and competence developed across their prior career(s) being undermined as a result of losing ‘expert’ status. This very clearly aligns with notions of the “academic bump” (Boyd & Harris, 2010, p. 17) highlighted in ‘dual identity’ literature (e.g. Owens, 2018; Murray et al, 2014; Izadinia, 2014) which talks about the psychological challenge of moving away from an established professional identity and stepping into a new and largely unknown context. The associated and sometimes-intense feelings of occupational insecurity for career changers in this study was also attributed to the steep learning curve – particularly during the initial 6 months – and exacerbated by feeling out of control due to the initial lack of predictability in their day-to-day work (e.g. not having a mental map of the year ahead and not knowing what tasks they might be asked to complete) coupled with perceived inconsistency in advice or guidance given by colleagues. A good example of this complex emotional and cognitive experience captured adroitly by T:GH who used the analogy of being a sail boat buffeted by strong winds (see Chapter 6.4.1, p. 124). This finding does, however, support more

Figure 23: The beginning – self preservation



complex career change models. For example Kemp and Borders' (2017) multi-faceted 'dream pursuit model' identified sub-components/ processes within transition including 'breaking out of a comfort zone' and 'overcoming fear'; and Schoening's (2013) NET model (see Chapter 2.6.1, p. 26) of career change highlighted that those with experienced track records are more likely to experience disorientation. On the other hand, as argued by Ibarra (2004), these models – unlike the current study – do not discuss career changers activities or responses during each stage of transition i.e. how they learn and develop in order to recapture success.

An interesting additional finding which appeared to destabilise some career changers was the impact of their altered pace of work. For teacher-educators and healthcare academics their new and less chaotic working environment – compared with the classroom or hospital environment – might be considered by some as being less stress-inducing, but the novelty of having more time for these groups was accompanied by feelings of guilt and perceived loss of productivity. This runs counter to contemporary career success research (e.g. Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Stumpf & Tymon, 2012) which argues that having more time for oneself is an indicator of subjective success, although as only one of a number of measures the complexity and interaction of motivating factors as well as their individual definitions of success (Heslin, 2005; Solowiej, 2014) could account for this finding. The implication is that what might superficially appear as quite a prosaic aspect of an occupational change – a slower pace of working – may have unexpected effects on stress levels i.e. add to rather than eliminate the need to utilise coping strategies and create additional and unforeseen consequences including perceived pressure to deliver.

Perceptions of disorientation and being de-stabilised also resulted in career changers experiencing **psychological discomfort (Aim A; RQ1 – Dynamics)** – the generally negative and sometimes irrational feelings and emotions associated with being scared, and feeling vulnerable and isolated. In line with both Hind's (2005) model of career change and Mezirow's (1997) 'transformative learning theory' which point to confusion and psychological conflict during transition, some career changers in this study judged themselves harshly due to having high expectations of themselves in terms of speed of learning/ acquisition of knowledge/skills and early performance which, in turn, intensified already elevated stress levels. This also accords with current literature which highlights lack of preparedness for the scale of the psychological changes involved as a major stressor; the more complex the change, the greater the stress (Chudzikowski, 2011). Adjustment and settling-in difficulties associated with "double professionalism" (Hurst, 2010, p. 244) were commonly spoken about especially in terms of their impact on 'learning anxiety' (Schein, 1999). In line with Murray et al's (2014) meta-synthesis which showed that being new led healthcare career changers to feel vulnerable, health practitioners-turned-academics in this study found the need for high use of meta-

cognition in order to successfully transfer practice knowledge to the classroom highly stressful. Similarly teacher-educators' need to adjust their teaching practice in order to appear credible when working with adult learners created developmental concerns – as found in Blenkinsopp and Stalker's (2004) novice lecturers study – especially in terms of obtaining advanced teaching qualifications. For some career changers, however, psychological discomfort was accepted as something to be endured; which highlights that while career changers share common psychological characteristics/responses, individual differences in relation to outlook and resilience can have an impact. The value of individual inner strength is something that Schlossberg (2011) picked up on; with optimism or a positive attitude towards change and its associated challenges being seen as key change enablers.

Career changers' experiences of instability were also associated with **identity incongruity (Aim A; RQ1 – Dynamics)** i.e. not yet 'belonging', and lack of integration between the person they were (or thought they were) and their new 'novice' status. In particular, a major cause of discomfort was loss of prior expert status and associated human capital i.e. whilst some knowledge and skills were transferable others required in order to perform competently in their new occupation were not. For many – despite significant prior career success – this led to an underestimation of their capabilities, perceptions of being inferior and concerns that lack of competence may not be transitory but a previously unseen or unacknowledged personal deficit. This aligns clearly with Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory where the disorientation associated with making complex career change requires individuals to make major changes in their mental habits or 'frames of reference' (Calleja, 2014); the subsequent self-examination often eliciting feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame.

This feeling of being out of their 'expert' comfort zone (see Figure 23) was further exacerbated by career changers' strong sense of professional integrity in that despite potentially exposing weaknesses or gaps in their current knowledge/skill/competency they all spoke of the need to be genuine. The implication is that prior 'professional' or 'occupational identity' can be difficult to disengage from especially given its propensity to offer psychological comfort or security; an argument which aligns with the small number of studies on the subject (e.g. Brown, 2015) which suggests that individuals who are established in their career i.e. have a 'lingering identity' (Wittman, 2019), may struggle to reframe their occupational identity.

On the other hand, whilst supporting findings of studies highlighting the transferability of industry experience (e.g. Ord, 2008; Wilkins & Comber, 2015; Green, 2015) – especially in terms of bolstering credibility (with students and colleagues) – dissonance attributable to status loss led some career-change-teachers to perceive themselves as superior rather than inferior to new peers;

working alongside contemporaries with whom they had little in common and particularly having been successful professionals with career histories which included holding well-paid, senior roles, caused consternation. However, as found in Grier and Johnston's (2009) study of career-change-teachers who believed prior professional expertise equipped them to teach without the need to re-train, career-change-teachers in this study spoke of feeling 'stuck' due to being unable to openly express their concerns. Their experience was that being the 'newby' limited how far their concerns or ideas were considered or would be responded to. The implication here is that identity incongruity is not a one-way-street for career changers in that it can be the result of being over- just as much as feeling under-qualified, and this highlights the fact that the *mental* transition accompanying *physical* relocation can be a major inhibiting factor; the magnitude and timescale of the inertia varying depending on the individual career changer in question.

Associated with identity incongruity was career changers' perceptions that recapturing success may not be possible or easy; or would at least take considerable time/investment. Indeed, whilst not entirely fulfilling Whitman and Shanine's (2012) definition that "impostors do not take pleasure in their successes; rather they lose the sense of joy and reward that typically accompanies success" (p. 189), the change from front-line task performance (e.g. working with a patient; putting in place an IT fix) with responsibility for outcomes/results, to being a facilitator of others' outcomes led career changers to experience considerable **doubt (Aim B; RQ5 – Contingent success)**. As already stated (see 'psychological discomfort', p. 210) 'learning anxiety' (Schein, 1999) is a well-established experience of those beginning a new job but for the complex career changers in this study it ran deeper than worrying about learning gaps. Indeed, even the success career changers spoke of having achieved in their new roles did little to counter concerns about being 'found out' i.e. revealed as being incompetent. A common descriptor was 'fraud'; a finding that is in line with both generic (e.g. Clance & Imes, 1978; Bravata et al, 2020) and the small quantity of impostorism literature directly relating to career changers (e.g. Murray & Male, 2005; Kets de Vries, 2005) all of which shows that inaccurate self-assessment of capability and perceived risk to an individual's sense of self/social standing increase anxiety and social isolation. Of course, this self-doubt could be attributed to the occupations that these groups of career changers moved into i.e. occupations that make use of prior success/ expertise but do not fully equip them to 'hit the ground running'. In common with Le Pine et al's (2004) finding, for instance, which showed that failure to understand a task is more damaging to self-efficacy than task difficulty – and despite being able to draw on teaching, clinical practice or commercial expertise – the personal perceptions of career changers in this study in relation to their inability to teach adults and complete what they thought were central, academic tasks (e.g. writing for publication), created a profound sense of insecurity. This emotional reaction is clearly tied to

vulnerability (Murray et al, 2014) associated with leaving the 'comfort' of a known occupation/ professional identity.

Self-doubt was also made worse by career changers' focus on the negative which blurred their self-referent (Heslin, 2003) perceptions of early success. Hobfoll (1989; 2011) argued that individuals who have experienced 'resource loss' tend to discount successes and gradual improvements in capability/ performance and are, instead, preoccupied with their perceived loss of competence and inability to transfer prior human capital. This is something that came through clearly in the current study where career changers questioned any success they achieved, including any recognition or feedback from others. Rather than being the result of their capabilities, success was attributed to luck and 'just getting by' i.e. being able to do the job and having objective measures of success (e.g. course results, feedback) was not enough.

This was further compounded by career changers' propensity try to engage in **social comparison (Aim B; RQ5 – Contingent success)** i.e. 'sussing out' the behaviour, thinking and performance of colleagues; a behaviour which runs counter to Heslin's (2003) claim that taking an 'other-referent' stance is mostly confined to individuals who perceive themselves as having fixed abilities and characteristics i.e. Dweck's (1999) 'entity belief' system. Indeed, psychological discomfort and doubt was perhaps even more acutely felt when not only weighing up the effectiveness of their own performance (self-referent) but when also comparing it to others (other-referent) in both their immediate and wider teams. However, the impact of this social comparison behaviour was exacerbated by career changers' new occupational environments. In both the HE and school sector the established practice of publicly displaying performance data – student ratings of their teacher/ tutor; outcomes of exams e.g. pass rates, grades, degree classifications – in effect morphed career changers' existing behaviour of trying to work out who to trust into a less psychologically helpful 'sussing out' of the competition i.e. how their performance compared with others and therefore how they might be perceived by others. Of course, this is in line with current literature on the impact of other-referent success on affect (e.g. Abele et al, 2016) i.e. positive comparisons with others improves self-esteem/efficacy whereas negative comparisons result in a decrease in these aspects of self-worth.

For teacher-educators who had experience of school teaching this was viewed as less of a 'shock' since, as teachers, they had become accustomed to the annual display and whole-staff discussion of student exam results data. This group was nevertheless intensely aware of the external scrutiny of their novice teacher-educator performance and, in turn, the need to know how others in their department had performed in order to judge their own standing. For those who had moved from

practice into school teaching, on the other hand and despite being extremely unsettling, in-school 'public' sharing of performance data was used as a metric for personally appraising their success i.e. if they performed better than teacher X they were successful, if they performed worse than teacher Y they had been unsuccessful. A similar picture emerged for those moving from healthcare practice to academia in that whilst recovery rates were spoken about as being in common metric in healthcare settings, performance was generally viewed as a team effort and so moving from a collective to an individual accountability for performance was quite distressing for some, particularly when despite their best efforts their 'ratings' or degree outcomes were not as positive (high) as others in their team/department.

In addition, for some career changers, the particular nature of the knowledge/skill they needed was problematic, particularly in terms of how they might be judged by others i.e. were they as good, or did they have what it takes to be successful. For instance, teacher-educators and healthcare practitioners-turned-academics spoke of the challenge of acquiring higher qualifications (e.g. a master's degree and/or a PhD) as being a stumbling block in terms of feeling successful, which is in line with Czerniawski et al's (2017) large-scale international study of career changers who cited research illiteracy as a major concern. That many colleagues with PhDs had little practice-based knowledge did not seem to count; nor did the fact that they would have also needed to build competence and were likely to have experienced doubt and psychological discomfort on their journey from novice to expert. Instead career changers' own lack of this ultimate symbol of academic success outweighed possession of years of practice-related experience, depth of expertise and prior success i.e. their propensity to compare themselves with others – as with doubting oneself (see *previous sub-theme*) – resulted in an underestimation rather than an accurate view of both progress and actual success (whether OCS or SCS) in the new role.

The negative effects of inaccurate assessments and self-doubt are contentious however. For example whilst Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch (2016) argue that it can encourage individuals to 'try harder' i.e. be more conscientious, Whitman and Shanine (2012) argue it can lead to 'avoidant' coping i.e. disengagement and failing to seek support from others in the individual's attempt to protect their sense of self. In addition, whilst fear of being judged and rejected by colleagues (Kyndt et al, 2016) is known to undermine trust and lead to social isolation (Bravata et al, 2020), these phenomena have not been explored in relation to complex career change. The findings of the current study which show **judgement aversion (Aim A; RQ1 – Dynamics)** to be a particularly powerful protective feature is therefore both an original contribution and important finding. More specifically, and based on their perceptions of being destabilised, it involved career changers taking steps to avoid potential humiliation such as presenting a fake 'competent face' rather than revealing

perceived gaps in knowledge, understanding, skill or competence. According to Argyris' (1982; 2003) 'ladder of inference' this is an inevitable outcome of unchecked assumptions which can lead individuals to come to inappropriate conclusions. On the other hand – as argued by Morvan and O'Connor (2017) – impression management can be used as an effective strategy for coping with cognitive dissonance, and therefore as experts turned novices career changers are merely using it as an acceptable way to maintain their sense of self when under duress.

Judgement aversion also sits at the heart of career changers' decision-making in relation to developing initial levels of competence, and was most apparent during the earlier stages of transition i.e. within the first year of changing occupation. During this time career changers were working out who they felt they could form trusting and positive working relationships with, and the points at which it would be 'safe' to open up to other members of their team i.e. colleagues, mentor(s), line manager(s). This is another original contribution to career change literature and a very important finding since whilst DeFillippi & Arthur (1994; Arthur et al, 1995; 2017) usefully conceptualised the 'intelligent career' and identified the importance of knowing why, how and whom but, with the exception of considering the timing of career activities such as applying for promotions or making lateral moves (Jones & DeFillippi, 1996), 'knowing when' was not considered i.e. at what point (when) particular people or groups are turned to for support and guidance (whom), at what point (when) particular learning methods are used (how), and at what point (when) particular aspects of knowledge are prioritised (what). For career changers in this study, the 'knowing when' element was a crucial determining factor for selection of methods of learning and, by extension, individuals with whom they learnt. This therefore strongly suggests that there is a relationship between perceptions of psychological risk and associated psychological discomfort, and the type of learning that will be used by career changers i.e. that this appraisal determines the particular form of learning used. It also shows that career changers are sensitive to 'whom' during early transition because of the need to manage the impression they give to others and results in greater selectivity in terms of who they trust and what they share. Therefore, whilst knowing why, how and whom is important, it is likely to be inhibited to a greater or lesser degree by 'when' career changers begin to feel competent and amass evidence of success. For career changers in this study this meant that the higher the perceived risk of exposure of 'uncomfortable' levels of gaps in learning or perceived incompetence the more independently they learnt, but as this risk gradually diminished, more open and social forms of learning were utilised i.e. affiliative and interdependent learning.

All of which is understandable. Indeed, Super (1990) recognised that – unlike linear models of career development (e.g. Schein, 1978; Greenhaus, 1987) – re-cycling or re-working career stages previously completed not only requires individuals to re-orient themselves to their new career

reality but to be prepared for or open to the challenges of new learning. This **preparedness to re-orient (Aim A; RQ2 – Imperatives)** – or lack of – is something that was spoken about by all career changers in this study however whilst some saw it as an opportunity others associated it with risk. For some, perceived lack of control over the speed at which knowledge/skill needed to be acquired led them to take steps to protect both their time and ‘headspace’ i.e. to spend more time in independent learning. Pre-experience e.g. Associate Lecturer work (see ‘learning by doing’ in section 9.4), however, was seen as a valuable way to both gain an understanding of the occupation that wanted to change into and helped them to more easily adapt when in their new occupation. For others, however, preparedness to re-orient was about developing greater self-awareness and making psychological adjustments i.e. changing their mindset: being ready for a challenge, for things to be different, and being realistic about the incremental nature of learning. They spoke of the need to embrace rather than resist the change; to adopt an open attitude to their transformative experiences and to recognise that “it’s just another jump” (A:BC). The implication is that ‘preparedness to re-orient’ is about more than simply being prepared and also relates to inner strength i.e. the need to realise that any challenges and setbacks are an integral part of making such a substantial career change.

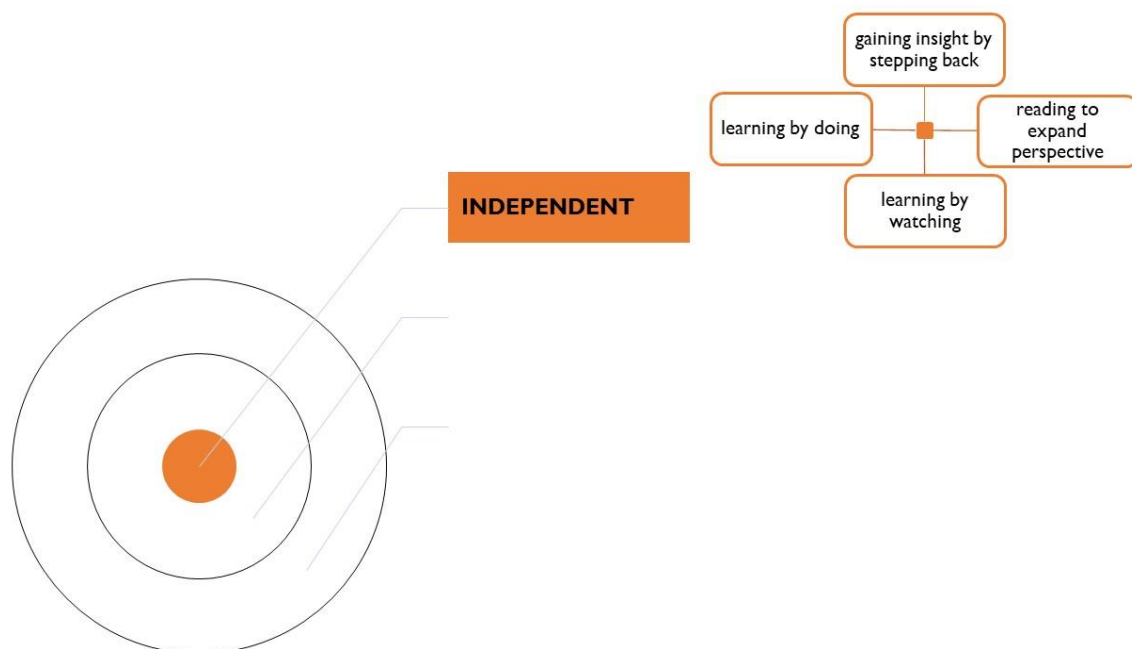
Cumulatively these factors all shaped the ways career changers went about trying to recapture success i.e. their learning behaviour. Rather than selecting learning methods at random or based on pre-existing preferences, career changers chose them for their ability to conceal perceived learning gaps and incompetence from public view. Initially this led career changers to **learn independently (Aim B; RQ4 – Competence and confidence renewal)** and often covertly but over time – and in line with growing confidence and competence – methods were selected that enabled them to gradually reveal more about their perceived gaps in knowledge, skill or competence. This therefore clearly reflects a process of gradual movement from disorientation, to ‘not belonging’, to an ‘in-between-ness’, and eventually a growing sense of identification with the new occupational group/team.

It also reflects a key change imperative for career changers in this study – that of **‘needing to feel in control of the change process’ (Aim A; RQ2 - Imperatives)** i.e. the need for agency in their development. In line with Billet and Pavlova’s (2005) argument that learning is intentional and agentic in nature – whilst control was not a key motivator for their complex change and whilst appreciating the need to temporarily relinquish some control during the early transition period – career changers spoke about their need to establish clear boundaries in terms of who was in charge of/should have responsibility for their learning: themselves or the new line manager/ employing organisation. This, therefore, partially supports Kolb’s (1984; 2014) claim that individuals are in

control of their learning choices, although somewhat undermines the ‘rational’ aspect of his theory in that career changers’ desire for control was as much due to being able to select their own method of learning as it was due to deeper psychological drivers e.g. judgement aversion. On the other hand it fully supports literature (e.g. Mezirow, 1997; Becker & Bish, 2017; Cerasoli et al, 2018) which points to individual predispositions – such as the need for control – affecting exploration of options, plans for action and judgement about the value of particular forms of learning.

Methods used by career changers during this initial ‘inward-looking’ stage (see Figure 24) in their transition included ‘reading/researching’ and ‘learning by doing’, with some use also being made of formal learning methods although there is a high degree ambivalence towards these. The main learning methods used during this period, however, and which facilitated career changers’ need for ‘self’ preservation were ‘learning by watching’ (LBW) and ‘gaining insight by stepping back’.

Figure 24: Career changers’ initial inward-looking orientation to learning



By far the most widely used of these methods was vicarious learning – **learning by watching** (**Aim B; RQ4 – Competence and confidence renewal**) – its value lying in the ability to absorb important information or approaches without the need to expose their own knowledge or skill, but also because it removed any pressure for career changers to identify what knowledge and skills they needed. Of particular interest, however, was informal observation of more able colleagues as opposed to colleagues in general. Its value was attributed to the fact that it offered career changers the opportunity to ‘research’ i.e. see what colleagues were doing and then to select what they

thought most useful and incorporate it into their own practice. As such it can be thought of as a quite a pragmatic approach to learning since it enables career changers to see established and therefore 'approved' or accepted job/role behaviours, knowledge/ skills/ competence; a finding which aligns with literature which argues that learning – especially initial induction – needs to be flexible (Harrison & McKeon, 2008) and can be usefully achieved via 'activity systems' (Trowler & Knight, 2004) which offers learners a lower-risk approach to gaining knowledge and skills.

Eliciting soft i.e. non-technical skills via observation of more able colleagues making decisions, interacting with others, and leading groups/activities was spoken about as holding the most value for career changers however; particularly in terms of gaining better understanding of the reality of their new occupation and, as existing literature suggests (Ping et al, 2018; Tack et al, 2018), when knowledge is contested or learners 'don't know what they don't know'. As apparent in literature, which points to the benefits of adopting a provisional and contingent approach to learning (Trowler & Knight, 2004; Walker et al, 2018) in effect, career changers were immersing themselves but doing so from a safe distance; almost like being the 'fly on the wall', seeing what happens in practice without needing to exercise judgement in the moment. Indeed, learning from an experienced colleague and gradually absorbing examples of skilled practice into their own was seen as a kind of 'quick-fix', whereas learning on their own – via trial and error – could take significant time and may not even result in improved performance; a finding that somewhat undermines Hall's (1996) argument that trial and error is a useful strategy during exploratory (early) stages of career change. The added advantage of LBW to career changers was that in having a greater appreciation of the range of potential responses, they were then able to select a preferred approach ahead of putting it into practice which allowed them to approach new occupational scenarios in a more relaxed way.

Interestingly, however, overt observation also led to career changers experiencing psychological discomfort because of their perception of being a nuisance and the potential to cause distress or discomfort for others i.e. colleagues may feel judged. This tended to be the case later in their transition period, however, rather than the initial 6 to 12-month period. Furthermore, and contrary to literature which advocates having multiple sources of input/support (e.g. Walker et al, 2018) there was also a clear appreciation that LBW could impede their learning in that moulding their behaviour to those of a more experienced or knowledgeable colleague, the career changer may too closely model observed behaviour or attitudes rather than developing their own approach. This therefore suggests that, whilst a useful heuristic, LBW is more appropriate for initial 'independent' learning i.e. within the first 6-12 months of arrival in a new occupation – when there are more gaps in knowledge and understanding of the new role – rather than in the longer-term.

Despite the inherent risk of things potentially going wrong, career changers also valued **learning by doing (LBD)** (**Aim B; RQ4 – Competence and confidence renewal**) because it provided them with the opportunity to try things out alone without concerns about being observed and, therefore potentially, being judged for getting it wrong; a key concern for career changers. They spoke of it in terms of offering them the opportunity to ‘marry up’ disconnected elements of a task or transforming partial understanding to having a fuller understanding. Without connectivity i.e. action-reflection-adjustment-application, career changers said they found it difficult to see and understand the whole or start to make more sense of what they are doing or how particular tasks or elements of their new job role fit together. LBD was also viewed as being an empowering method of learning because it enabled career changers to be in control of what and when they consolidated their knowledge/skills, and to make the necessary fine adjustments to their own practice at a time and pace that felt psychologically comfortable. All of this supports Kolb’s (1984; 2014) argument that both *concrete experience* and *active experimentation* are vital aspects of learning, and that taking a mindful approach i.e. paying attention when learning as well as engaging in deliberate practice, can help to deepen and extend learning. This was an approach also highlighted by Kyndt et al (2016) who found that whilst learning by doing and ‘trial and error’ only used around 20% of the time they were nevertheless part of a valued ‘tool-kit’ of informal learning processes. Indeed, career changers in the current study also valued the incremental nature of LBD i.e. being gradually given more responsibility for particular aspects of their role, which suggests that experiential learning can be a valuable way of assimilating large quantities of new knowledge and skills, especially during the initial and steep learning curve.

A related, independent approach favoured by career changers was to undertake **independent reading in order to expand their perspective** i.e. research/internet surfing etc (**Aim B; RQ4 – Competence and confidence renewal**). One of the main benefits of reading up and gaining more detail or background information about a given topic or aspect of their job was that it enabled career changers to gain both depth and breadth, in other words to develop a more nuanced understanding of a particular task, as well as seeing where something fits in to the bigger picture. In particular, it was valued as a way of ‘staying in the loop’ and suggests that reading/researching is not necessarily only used as a stand-alone activity but to supplement other forms of learning i.e. as a way to verify or follow-up on what they have seen or heard e.g. LBW. As such it appears to somewhat question the extent to which informal learning is unplanned (e.g. Marsick & Watkins; 1997; Eraut, 2000; Cunningham & Hillier, 2013) and, instead, suggests that it can be part of an individual’s broader plan for development.

A key enabler of learning during this stage of transition was **'headspace'** (**Aim B; RQ4 – What helps and hinders**). Career changers spoke of their need for mental or 'headspace' in order to let what they had learnt gradually sink in and be better digested/internalised over time. In effect 'space' can be seen as a kind of 'pause' so that rather than actively reflecting or incorporating, career changers were simply letting the new information 'sit' for a while i.e. it is a more passive than active process. Career changers also spoke of the value of 'space' in terms of alleviating stress – the early stages of transition in particular were associated with feeling saturated and with not being able to fully grasp the interconnections between distinct but linked aspects of their role. In line with learning competencies identified by Passarelli and Kolb (2014) (e.g. learning spaces; metacognition) 'headspace' enabled career changers to begin to notice these connections, especially when then observing colleagues; in effect assimilating the new with the existing in their mental models of the work they were doing. In addition, career changers said that 'space' enabled them to start to develop ownership of their development as well as their place within their new occupation, team and organisation i.e. to consider more fully what they liked and would potentially use, and approaches they did not like or which did not fit with their more established ways of handling situations/events.

Allied to this was **'gaining insight by stepping back'** (**Aim B; RQ4 – Competence and confidence renewal**) i.e. reflection, which was valued by career changers because it moved their need for 'space' to a new phase i.e. from simply noticing to actively engaging with what they were seeing, hearing and doing; an outcome discussed in a wide range of existing literature (e.g. Kolb, 1984; Sullivan, 1999; Marsick & Volpe, 1999). Accepting Schon's (1983) argument that reflection can happen in situ (reflecting-in) or post-hoc (reflecting-on), career changers spoke of the benefit of having time to mull over particular experiences but generally away from the experience itself. This 'distance' gave them a better perspective and enabled them to avoid coming to premature conclusions or moving to action precipitously i.e. to more critically engage (Mezirow, 1997; Selkrig & Keamy, 2015; Phuong et al, 2018). It also enabled career changers to identify which elements of knowledge, skill and competencies could be transferred to specific aspects of their new occupation. This, of course, aligns with much of what is already known about reflection i.e. that as Mezirow & Taylor (2009; Mezirow, 2012) state, it is a learning process that involves reframing and reforming thoughts/understanding of situations and experiences. Indeed, much of the reflection spoken about by career changers in this study focused on cognitive appraisal, 'fact checking' or 'triangulating', which supports both Kolb's (1984) argument that meta-cognition is a vital foundation for deep learning, and Briscoe and Hall's (1999) 'meta-competencies' argument i.e. that both self-awareness as well as learning how to learn were a vital part of adaptability/change. However, as Fleming (2018) argued, not all learning and reflection is rational i.e. it can be quite an emotional undertaking at

times. This is certainly reflected in the findings, where career changers talked about the challenges of trying to incorporate a vast array of new knowledge into existing schemas (not their words) and, as a consequence, feeling overwhelmed and then being self-critical because of perceived weaknesses in not being able to progress more swiftly; subsequent reflection being a way of coping with that stress.

Career changers also spoke about the value of co-reflection i.e. being able to discuss thoughts and feelings with colleagues. This tended to be something that occurred after the initial transition period however i.e. when career changers had started to amass evidence of gradual development of competence in their new role. This is something that is reflected in the small quantity of existing career change literature on reflection (e.g. Grier & Johnson, 2009; Auhl & Daniel, 2014); its value being higher during the first 2-3 years (Gardner, 2014). On the other hand, literature also suggests that written reflection is valued whereas career changers in the current study spoke about this aspect in negative terms, much preferring the flexibility of inner reflection of ad-hoc discussions with colleagues.

9.4 AS TIME GOES BY – TENTATIVE EXPOSURE

Over time career changers began to feel less incongruous about their new occupational identity and as a consequence to experience less psychological discomfort (see Figure 25 opposite). This was based on having put in place some foundations of knowledge and skill, and having gained tentative evidence of developmental progress. Discrete examples of success, such as achieving a particular performance outcome (e.g. delivering a lecture or gaining positive feedback) further helped to reinforce growing confidence. On the other hand, despite these ‘gains’ career changers continued to experience doubt – albeit gradually diminishing – and to still feel somewhat judgement averse.

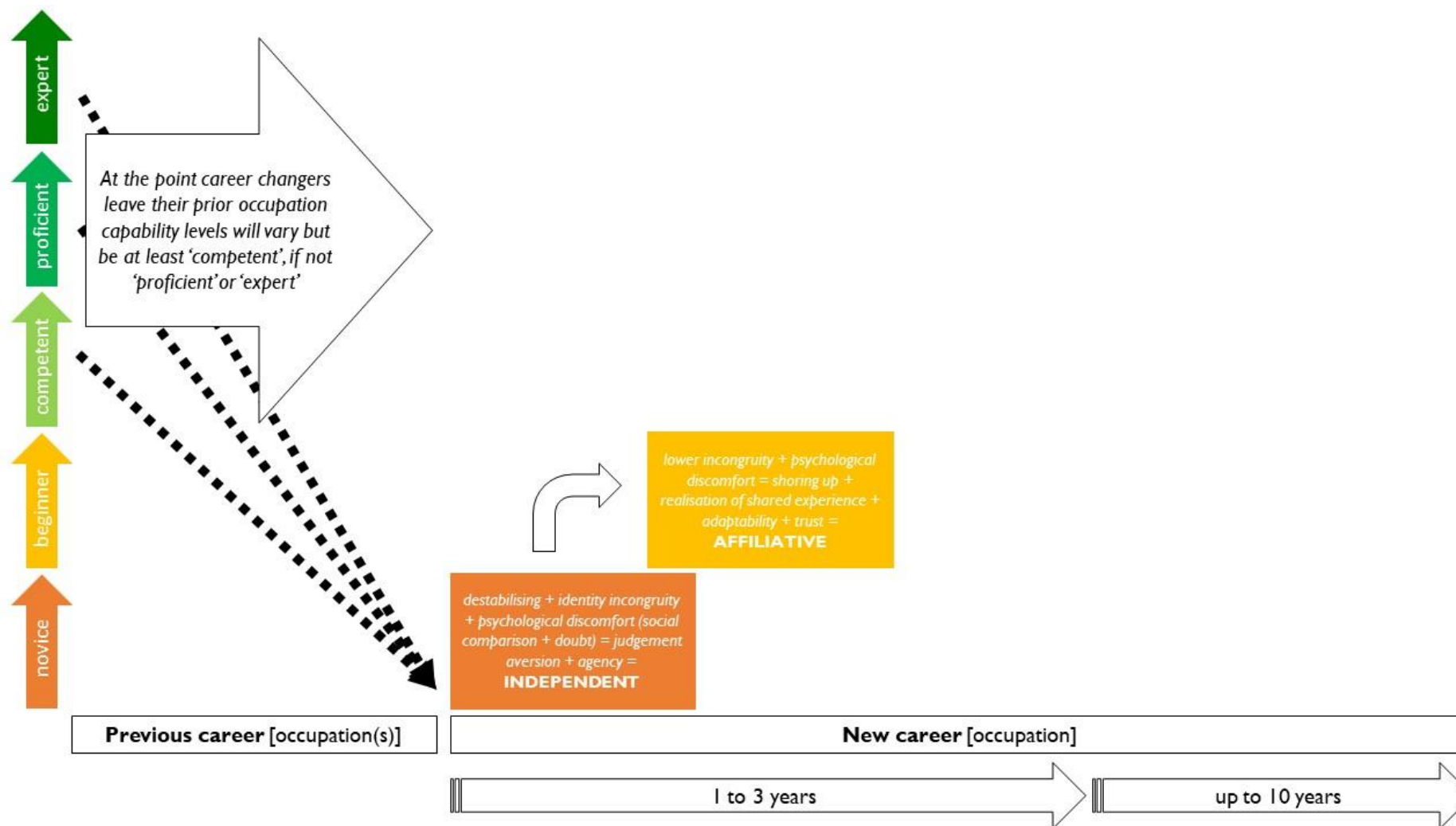
One important early source of individuated success that career changers used to cope with concerns about being judged and to counter ongoing doubts about having the potential to succeed in their new occupation was thinking **“I can do this”** i.e. shoring up (**Aim B; RQ3 – Sources of success**). A form of self-referent boost – in effect, bolstering their self-esteem through self-talk – it involved career changers noticing and keeping an informal tally of aspects of their new role in which they felt more confident and competent (or less incompetent). In line with current literature which conceptualises SCS as being introspective and about personal meaning (Solowiej, 2014; Nicholson & De Waal, 2005; Dries, 2011), rather than being focused on hard-evidence of measurable success ‘shoring up’ relates to intra-personal affect (Dries et al, 2008) i.e. to career changers’ self-awareness

(Heslin, 2005) and how they felt about their progress and the mini-successes they experienced. Having said which and in line with Shockley et al's (2016) argument that OCS can have a positive effect on SCS, objective measures such as exam success, student recruitment, strengthened career changers' emerging 'success picture'; the more examples they amassed the better they felt about having made the move to a new occupation. This, therefore, further reinforces the argument (e.g. Heslin, 2005; Shockley et al, 2016) that definitions of success are multi-dimensional i.e. success is not only seen in a variety of ways but OCS and SCS are also not applied in a blanket manner. Instead, an individualised and idiosyncratic approach can be applied within a single element of a role/job. For example, taking on external examiner work may be done for the prestige and associated pay, but other than a sense of achievement is not perceived as SCS, whereas internal examiner work may be categorised as SCS rather than OCS because outcomes of support and guidance are apparent.

Developing a sense of belonging and being valued for holding dual identities is recognised in current career change literature (e.g. Williams et al, 2012; Boyd & Harris, 2010) as helping to mitigate the destabilising effects of career change but what had not been understood until now was how career changers develop during the transition process, become comfortable in their new professional identity and start to recapture success. However, the current study provides evidence to suggest that an imperative for successful transition is career changers' realisation that they are not alone i.e. that both colleagues in general as well as other complex career changers are able to offer valuable support and guidance; in other words **that recapturing success is a shared experience (Aim A; RQ2 – Imperatives)**. This is something that took career changers time to recognise – circa 6-12 months into their new role – but knowing that others had experienced similar challenges and had nevertheless succeeded offered reassurance. The implication here is that whilst changing career is stressful, looking outside their own experiences can be valuable for career changers, particularly in terms of maintaining or enhancing self-esteem. Of course the benefits of seeking social support is widely understood in stress management and coping literature (e.g. Lazarus & Folkman, 1987; Schlossberg, 2011; Vogelsang et al, 2018), but because little attention has been given to the impact of stress in career change research the link between this quite basic coping strategy and complex career transition has not been recognised although a recent study by Czerniawski et al's (2017) did highlight that lack of support as a key developmental concern amongst career changers.

For complex career changers in this study, however, opening up to others about learning gaps, failings, worries and concerns about the new role presented a major challenge, especially given their preoccupation with judgement aversion. What made the difference to career changers was threefold: amassing evidence of progress and tentative success, starting to feel more competent and confident, and **learning adaptability (Aim B; RQ4 – What helps and hinders)** i.e. their

Figure 25: As time goes by – tentative exposure



preparedness to be flexible about how to learn and from whom. As already discussed, their initial preference was for independent learning however over time they came to recognise that this could only advance their development so far and that as they progress in their new occupation the specific needs of their new work role(s) would potentially require a change of approach in the ways they accessed and processed knowledge. This meant moving from a reflective style of learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2009) to learning alongside and via colleagues. Indeed, like Briscoe and Hall (1999) – who saw learning ‘how’ to learn and becoming adaptable as important meta-competencies which could help individuals to transcend short-term performance improvement and make broader developmental gains – career changers said that the realisation of both the need to adapt their approach to learning as well as the benefits (e.g. gaining an others’ perspectives; being able to cross-check others’ approaches with their own) was an important turning point in their transition from novice towards gaining at least competence if not proficiency and expertise. This trajectory, of course, is something that aligns with Benner’s (1982) novice-to-expert scale where, as ‘advanced beginners’, career changers in this study had real experience of their new occupation, were starting to see the bigger picture and draw conclusions, but also needed support.

Underpinning this adaptability was career changers’ **need to trust (Aim B; RQ4 – What helps and hinders)** the individual(s) with whom they shared concerns/doubts/progress. As already discussed this was partly due to feeling like an imposter i.e. not believing that they were capable of performing effectively or being successful in their new occupation, which in turn led to a certain degree of social isolation (Bravata et al, 2020; Kyndt et al, 2016). Interestingly, however, in all of those interviewed for this study the consensus was that the person they most needed to avoid revealing gaps/concerns to was their line manager. This was due to career changers’ ongoing, ‘self protective need to avoid judgement i.e. not wanting to lose face or expose any signs of incompetence or uncertainty to their boss; fearing that this could impact on future career progression. This is a phenomenon already recognised in career change literature. For example, in discussing transformative learning Taylor (2007) said that opening up requires individuals to feel psychologically secure enough to engage in critical discourse i.e. to discuss strengths, weaknesses, learning gaps etc. Given that career changers were highly sensitive about revealing perceived weaknesses or gaps in knowledge/ skills/ competence this, therefore, further reinforces the practical consideration of ‘knowing when’ to learn. In other words, decisions about learning method are inextricably linked to thoughts about the timing of their use, with ‘higher protection’ being sought in the earlier period of transition (i.e. independent learning) and ‘moderate protection’ being sought once competence and confidence has increased sufficient to lead the career changer to feel more secure about opening up/seeking out support. The need to be able trust who they turned to for support/guidance and learning input added an additional dimension to their decision-making,

however, namely 'knowing why' i.e. career changers needed to know what made a colleague trustworthy; what it was about their experience, personality or behaviours that made them a good match. As with 'knowing when' this is an important finding since as with career changers' experiences in this study – e.g. where mentors/ buddies were simply assigned on the basis of being available rather than being selected by the career changer themselves – current situated learning literature focuses mainly on the benefits of shared learning (e.g. Mercer, 1995; Wood, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Burgess et al, 2019) but does not consider the psychological needs of career changers making use of these approaches. Having said that, whilst focusing on joint peer learning rather than career change, Eisen (2001) does highlight that effective learning relationships are based on trust and the need for voluntary partner selection.

As someone entering not only a new organisational context but a new occupation too, career changers valued both honest feedback and guidance and, as Mezirow (1997) argued, trusting the person this was gained from helped foster a more open working relationship and one from which potentially significant learning gains could be achieved. For career changers taking part in the current study, this mostly revolved around the more able/experienced other (MAO) needing to be someone who could offer reassurance and acknowledge career changers' feelings of psychological discomfort and doubt. Indeed, A:BC added that, for them, there was a direct relationship between trust and confidence; other career changers spoke of their preference for 'equivalence' i.e. that trust was more easily established with an MAO who had a similar experience base – either in prior occupational terms or who had themselves changed career. This is based on the assumption that they have a clearer understanding or appreciation of the career changer's experience, mindset and learning and/or coping behaviours. It is something that works both ways too, of course, in that the career changer could also relate to what the 'other' was saying (or not saying) and was therefore more willing to accept their input, advice, support. Both the voluntary and symmetrical nature of these relationships is recognised as being important (Eisen, 2001; Harrison & McKeon, 2010; Murray, 2006) because the balanced power dynamic (Nowell et al, 2017; Gardner, 2014) results in greater openness and maintains both parties' agency. The implication is that working with someone who has personal experience of complex career 'change' can provide someone entering a new occupation with a more comfortable access point for gaining insight into the challenges of transition and possible ways of handling this, as well as instil a more optimistic outlook of what is achievable.

Career changers were equivocal about '**formal learning**' (Aim B; RQ4 – What helps and hinders) however, in that they valued some types of formal learning but not others. For instance, formal qualifications and associated workshops/ seminars/ working groups were valued but not formal short-courses; a finding which aligns with existing literature which shows that training

workshops hold little value (e.g. Walker et al, 2018). In particular – as with LBD (see 9.4) – career changers valued the ability to ‘marry up’ theory and reality, especially the ability to incorporate learning into practice rather than to attend potentially quite passive and disconnected learning events such as in-house training. This is something that has also been found across both career (e.g. Manuti et al, 2015; Becker & Bish, 2017) as well as career change (Boyd & Harris, 2010; Harrison & McKeon, 2010) literature which points to the benefits of qualifications when developing factual and procedural knowledge. The implication is that there is a value in some types of formal learning but that it needs to have vocational relevance and be timely i.e. coincide with early stages of development in a new role when it offers the opportunity to gain a broader but nevertheless practical/applied perspective. In addition, career changers also spoke positively about the chance to network whilst studying for their Pg Cert qualification and particularly in terms of being able to find out what others were confident or not confident about – which feeds into their need to engage in social comparison in order to gauge their relative position on the competence/incompetence continuum. This is also something that has been noted in career change literature (e.g. Fuller & Unwin, 2004; Boyd & Harris, 2010; Harrison & McKeon, 2010; Opreescu et al, 2017) which highlights the ability to share concerns and gain reassurance.

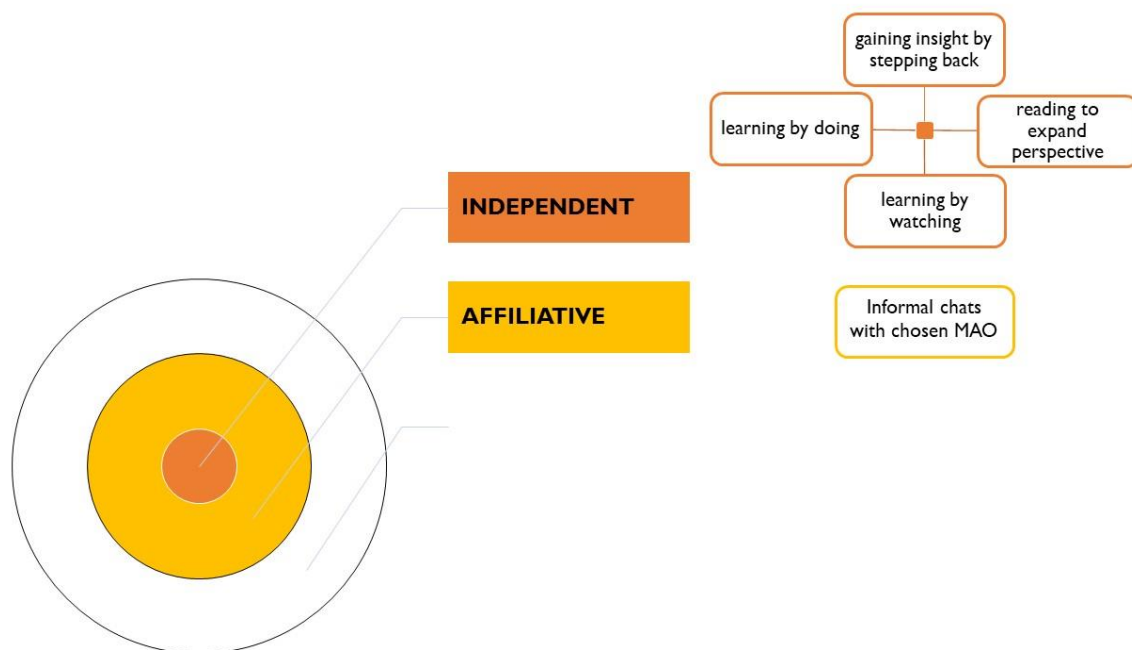
For some career changers, being funded by their new employer may have played a role in uptake of formal qualifications. On the other hand, it is worth noting whilst those who became Science and Business/Economics teachers obtained government funding for ITT, other participants did not but were nevertheless sufficiently motivated to either self-fund or take out a student loan to pay for their PGCE. This suggests, then, that some forms of formal learning have an intrinsic value which can lead complex career changers to flex their approach to learning away from their preference for informality. It may of course also be related to prior experience i.e. having worked in organisations where professional qualifications were accepted/expected.

On the other hand, unlike the merits and applications highlighted in mentoring literature (e.g. Clutterbuck, 2005; 2007; 2014; Woolnough & Fielden, 2017; Nowell et al, 2017; Shapiro, 2018; MacPhail et al, 2019), complex career changers found ‘buddy’ systems of little value, particularly in terms of formal relationships imposed on them by line managers. Indeed, they spoke of rarely utilising an assigned mentor/buddy and if used at all, only at a superficial level e.g. to ask about basic, easy to obtain, information; a finding that aligns with the ‘scathing criticisms’ (Watters & Diezmann, 2015) of the approach raised in other career change literature, in particular when delivered on a one-size-fits-all basis. In addition, there was a belief that there was a hidden agenda or a drive to control and direct individual learning i.e. that the ‘buddy’ would report back on progress or how receptive the individual was to accepting advice. This sense of unease also extended to the

perceived quality of mentors and individuals leading their induction, with those career changers who had previously held senior positions having an acute sense of ‘being taught to suck eggs’, which in turn made them more susceptible to experiencing frustration or anger. For example, Teacher-Educators spoke of attending HE skills sessions led by individuals with far less than their own considerable classroom/teaching experience, albeit with children rather than adults. This clearly points to the need for mentoring/buddying provision to be based on learner needs and, where possible, offered on a bespoke basis, or at least to acknowledge prior expertise and enable individuals to self-select what they need; a finding with accords with other career change literature (Griffiths, 2011; Green, 2015; Walker et al, 2018) which points to the need for it to match career changers’ development needs.

Unlike the range of ‘independent’ learning methods used during the earliest stage of their transformation journey then this new stage led career changers to adopt an **affiliative (Aim B; RQ4 – Competence and confidence renewal)** approach to learning i.e. to spend considerable time in **informal chats with a chosen more able other**. Most importantly, this was not only a more experienced individual but someone self-selected rather than assigned to them by their line manager. This, too, is an important finding because as yet existing literature on career change relating to learning has not identified that career changers vary their approach to learning according to their stage of transition.

Figure 26: Career changers’ emergent outward-looking orientation



Career changers' preference for 'affiliative' informal learning is largely attributable to its versatility and flexibility, in that it enabled them to take tentative steps towards more openly acknowledging gaps in knowledge, skills and experience, whilst having the 'safety net' of knowing that their MAO could be trusted not to reveal these gaps to others. In effect the MAO provided a form of psychological 'cushion' from potential mistakes or repercussions of errors and, in turn, gave the career changer more freedom to take informed risks when trying new things in their new job role; a finding that is in line with Vogelsang et al's (2018) argument that seeking social support from colleagues is a helpful coping strategy for dealing with the stress of complex career change. It also captures the tentative nature of learning something new and across a variety of new situations: as with the 'stabilisers' metaphor (see Chapter 8.2.2.1, p. 180) career changers can ride their metaphorical bike but need initial support, if removed prematurely they might 'fall off' i.e. struggle to perform as well/effectively or make expected progress gains. In particular, career changers spoke of valuing being able to discuss 'horror stories' with a MAO i.e. experiences of when things went wrong. The MAO's acceptance of these 'horrors' or mistakes made whilst learning seeming to 'normalise' the career changer's perceptions about their work or the challenges of their professional development. This suggests, then, that the practice of opening up and sharing starts to bring about psychological benefits in that the career changer no longer feels as isolated and can put their own experiences into perspective; a finding which supports Wood's (1998) assertion that sensitive and contingent support (where the MAO adjusts their scaffolding in line with an individual's confidence and competence) empowers the learner. In turn, this acts as a form of reinforcement for the career changer – a way for them to start to recognise that they are making progress and able to work ever-more independently.

Informal chats were also valued by career changers because they enabled a reactive approach to learning i.e. when they felt they needed to learn or in response to particular challenges/obstacles. Added to this, informal chats were valued because of their bespoke nature; with a MAO offering insights, suggestions, advice and scaffolding learning in a way that recognised their individual needs as well as the context in which their learning was being applied. For example, when preparing to do something for the first time such as delivering a lecture related to something they perceived to be challenging at this point in their professional development. The value of role-models is also apparent in existing career change literature (e.g. Cleary et al, 2011) and therefore suggests that informal chats are more conducive to revealing 'what is' rather than 'what should be' and to working through work-based scenarios/sharing practice experiences in a developmental rather than defensive way; a finding that is in line with Mercer's (1995) argument that co-creation results in learners being less likely to cover up deficiencies. It also suggests – as found in both generic (e.g. Eisen, 2001) and career-

change-specific literature (e.g. Fullerton & Gherissi, 2015) – that interprofessional communication can be symbiotic, in that both the career changer and the MAO can bounce ideas around/learn.

This is not to suggest that informal chats are a perfect learning method for career changers. Some spoke of colleagues' helpfulness in identifying development tools e.g. referrals to useful internet sites or reading materials, but that these could sometimes be quite overwhelming. Others said that the 'pace' of informal chats negatively affected their learning and confidence i.e. too much and too soon was more off-putting than enabling. Simply reaching out to colleagues for feedback or confirmation can therefore sometimes be a challenge; whilst the informal chat may be welcomed and invited on some occasions, at other times or under other circumstances, career changers may prefer to work independently. In other words, this type of learning relationship may, on occasion, be used for only 'confirmatory' purposes i.e. to check that an approach or idea works or is acceptable within the new professional context. This is a finding similar to that which featured in Goodrich's (2014) research which showed that individualised support can be preferred or viewed as more helpful in certain circumstances e.g. in relation to tasks where their self-efficacy is low(er).

9.5 LATER ON – THE BIG REVEAL

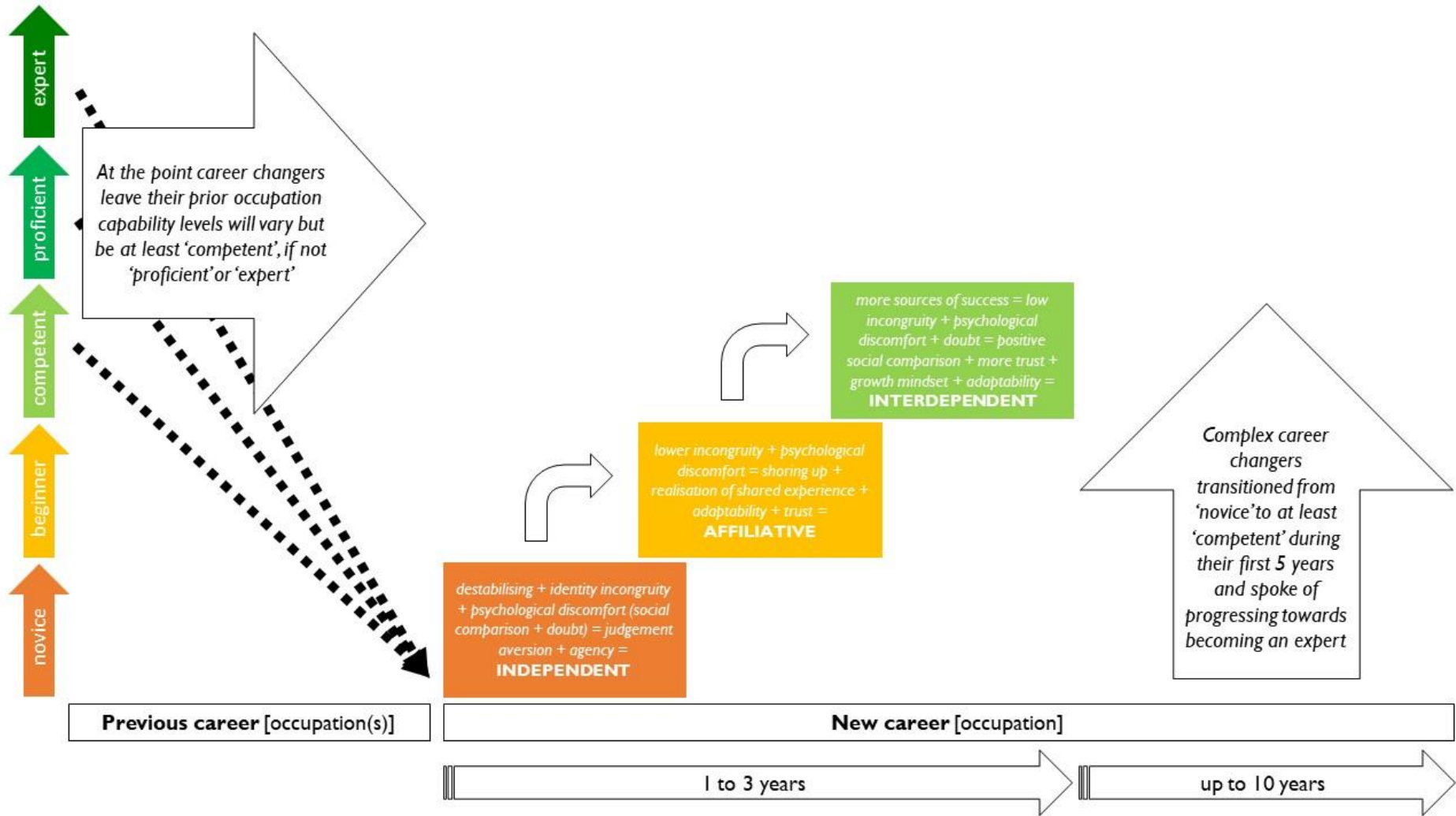
Over time, career changers amassed success from more sources, which led to them experiencing lower levels of occupational identity incongruity (i.e. they started to feel a greater sense of belonging in their new occupation), less psychological discomfort and less doubt about their potential to be successful again. In turn, they also started to make positive social comparisons i.e. to see their own progress/ performance in a positive light when compared against more experienced colleagues and, therefore, to feel more trusting in terms of opening up and revealing learning gaps. A key aspect of this next stage in their transformation, however, was their growth mindset i.e. their outlook on learning and development and their openness to expanding their ideas about what forms of learning are or can be valuable. All of this culminated in career changers adopting an '**interdependent**' (Aim B; RQ4 – **Competence and confidence renewal**) approach to learning (see Figure 27: Later on – the big reveal).

Career change – particularly when occurring later in life – does not happen in isolation of course; the rest of an individual's life is also going on and, therefore, it is not simply a case of making adjustments in order to re-orient to the new work role, but also to fit this in to their wider personal life. Indeed, one participant likened career change to "learning a new language" (TE:RS) i.e. that despite being 'fluent' in their prior occupation, accumulated knowledge and skill did not necessarily

help. This is something which ran through all of the interviews with career changers i.e. the recognition that even though they knew and were able to do a lot – **as judged by their prior success (Aim B; RQ5 – Contingent success)** – trading on this would not be sufficient to recapture success in their new occupation and that thought would need to be given in terms of how pre-existing knowledge and skills might be ‘tweaked’ and applied. Teacher-educators, for example, spoke of the misplaced assumption that prior school teaching experience could be used as a proxy for teaching adults but that the two – whilst still teaching in the broader sense of the term – are very different and called for a longer-term and gradual exposure to work regimes and accumulation of expert knowledge/ skill; in particular the need to carry out educational research and write for publication. This therefore aligns with Briscoe et al’s (2006) protean career attitude argument i.e. that agency and improved self-knowledge lead to more informed career development. However, suggesting that an ‘open’ attitude towards growth and being amenable to change alone underpin success is a somewhat simplistic argument. Indeed, it is clear that being ‘further down the road’ in terms of their transition played an important role in career changers recapturing success i.e. that ‘impostorism’ no longer hindered their development and, in turn, they no longer felt the need to avoid being judged by others. Furthermore, and similar to De Vos and Soens’ (2008) finding of a link between insight and satisfaction, the implication here is that career changers’ optimism about being able to handle challenges associated with complex career change contributes towards recapturing success. However, in line with Sultana and Malik’s (2019) findings, career changers’ success was more subjective/intrinsic i.e. based on a sense of satisfaction, feeling proud of having made progress etc, than objective/extrinsic.

Adaptation, of course, does not just refer to the global, personal changes that a career-changer is willing to make, but to how they approach the day-to-day aspects of their new job. In other words, having a ‘**growth mindset**’ (Aim B; RQ5 – Contingent success) – a way of thinking about career change and the potential for renewed career success that is positive and views challenges and opportunities – is key and enabled career changers to feel psychologically stronger and more capable; reinforcing emerging perceptions of being someone who can be successful again. Whilst initially appearing to be latent i.e. not manifest in the earliest stage of transition – where doubt and judgement aversion were the main focus (see Chapter 9.3) – gradual development or application of a positive mindset helped individuals to handle the ongoing challenges of occupational change. This delay or holding back from being open until this point in their transition could be due to a multitude of internal and external factors such as personality, identity and socialisation (both primary and secondary) however, and is something that has been recognised in career success literature although not explicitly focused on in career change research. Ng and Feldman’s (2014) review of 200 articles, for example, highlighted the role of dispositional traits in hindering (e.g. low emotional stability, low

Figure 27: Later on – the big reveal



work engagement) subjective success. This therefore suggests that feeling successful after a complex career change may not be as straightforward as following a simple change; the enactment of personal growth inclinations moderated by an incremental and tentative approach to feeling successful that career changers in this study adopted. This finding accords with Shockley et al's (2016) argument that individual differences along with salience determine what is perceived to be of value and when.

Interestingly, despite being a dispositional aspect of learning and success i.e. a way of orienting to career change and development, having a growth mindset for career changers in this study was closely associated with a situational antecedent i.e. making greater use of/being open to facilitators in their work environment. Indeed, partnership seemed to be a key aspect of their learning and success at this point in their transition i.e. being receptive not only to new colleagues' inputs and enacted behaviours but to those of their new 'customers' i.e. students. Again, whilst not specifically relating to career change literature, this ties into what a range of career success studies have found (e.g. Gubler et al, 2020; Solowiej, 2014; Ng & Feldman, 2014; Hall & Chandler, 2005) i.e. that occupations and organisations can colour individuals' perceptions of and attitudes towards success.

This also ties into the additional sources of success that career changers are beginning to notice at this stage in their transition: **'individuated'** (**Aim B; RQ3 – Sources of success**) i.e. based on their own performance and achievements, and **'distributed'** i.e. outward-focused or vicarious success and based on the success of others.

In terms of 'individuated' success **'objective success was still important'** (**Aim B; RQ3 – Sources of success**) and career changers' increased confidence and competence meant that they now actively sought acknowledgement; being congratulated or noticed by others acted as an official stamp of approval or validation of a job well done. This did not necessarily need to come from a colleague or line manager, however, positive feedback or comments from students was also valued and taken as a clear signal of success, which demonstrates that another way career changers measure success is through others' eyes. Clearly then, whilst expert knowledge and skills, measurable outcomes and credibility are important so too is reputation or the impression an individual makes on others (Goffman, 1963; Goffman et al, 1997). It suggests that success, for these groups of career changers is based less on the number of instances of success and more about being known for being successful i.e. knowing that colleagues rate them gave them satisfaction; therefore contradicting arguments (e.g. Hennequin, 2007) that professionals are less interested in 'social success' i.e. status, recognition and reputation, and focus more on upward mobility, but supporting research which points to success being associated with pride and self-worth (e.g. Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Dries, 2011).

This may be due to the nature of this group of individuals of course i.e. as complex career changers moving in to the education sector they may be more outward-looking than individuals whose development is linear or who change careers into other non-education-related sectors/occupations. In other words, gaining the respect and acceptance of the new 'club' or 'gang' is an important aspect of fitting in and beginning to feel a sense of belonging in the new occupation. Therefore it could be argued that impression management may have less to do with career changers saving face and more to do with being recognised as a face i.e. someone who is a valued member of the new team/organisation. Again, this is something that has not been considered in career change research to date – and is therefore an important contribution – but is recognised in career literature per se e.g. Bourgoin and Harvey's (2018) recent finding that building and achieving credibility at the same time as learning in the new role is important in terms of reducing psychological conflict/tension.

Having begun to accrue personal and visible successes in their new occupation, career changers also spoke of their drive to **make a difference (Aim B; RQ3 – Sources of success)**. This is an aspect of success which repeatedly appears in career changers' responses and suggests that they are motivated and perceive themselves to be successful when they are not only doing their own job well but when doing their job well for others. In other words helping, facilitating and improving others' outcomes. For all of those interviewed, contributing to others having a good experience as well as supporting their development was a key occupational/job purpose. For those changing occupation to become Teacher Educators and Academics teaching across a range of health-related programmes this is undoubtedly connected with their prior occupation and may, in fact, be an aspect of their intrinsic motivation for changing to a new professional occupation which still affords them the opportunity to pursue this agenda. Being able to see or hear how others feel in relation to being supported, too, may be a reason why helping people and having a positive impact on attitudes and behaviour features so highly and could – as with these occupations – be the rationale driving individuals changing occupation from a variety of commercial background to enter the Teaching profession. Of course, personality and individual levels of emotional intelligence may also play a role in this drive to make a difference in that career changers may share capabilities that enable them to connect more readily with people, and absorb or synthesise information which they can then use to provide even more focused support.

Making a social contribution is a prominent motivator within career motivation research (e.g. Price, 2019; Evans, 2018; Wilkins, 2017; Varadharajan & Schuck, 2017) however, for career changers in this study, making a difference was also driven by the need to extend their reach and achieve a 'bigger bang for their buck' i.e. to create something bigger than themselves. In other words, in sharing their knowledge and skills, and helping to equip others, career changers seem to believe that they can

create change more broadly i.e. go beyond themselves and their own sphere of influence or achievement of outcomes. This, again, ties into the Kaleidoscope model (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005) which argues that challenge is a key motivator for career change and in the same way that August (2011) found that authenticity was more important than challenge in later career, complex career changers in this study said that working in a field which provided more opportunities to actualise (Maslow, 1943) was important. This might be linked to Super's (1990) concept of re-cycling too, in that complex career change – despite generally taking place when an individual is older – results in a return to an earlier career stage, where exploration and a focus on career goals has a greater pull. Interestingly, the motivation here also seems to have some small 'p', political overtones in that career changers spoke of seeking to pass on wisdom and/or open others' eyes and minds to alternative approaches. This is something that is captured in the words of T:AB who talked about wanting to pass on what he took for granted and had benefitted from personally i.e. confidence and a risk-inclined attitude.

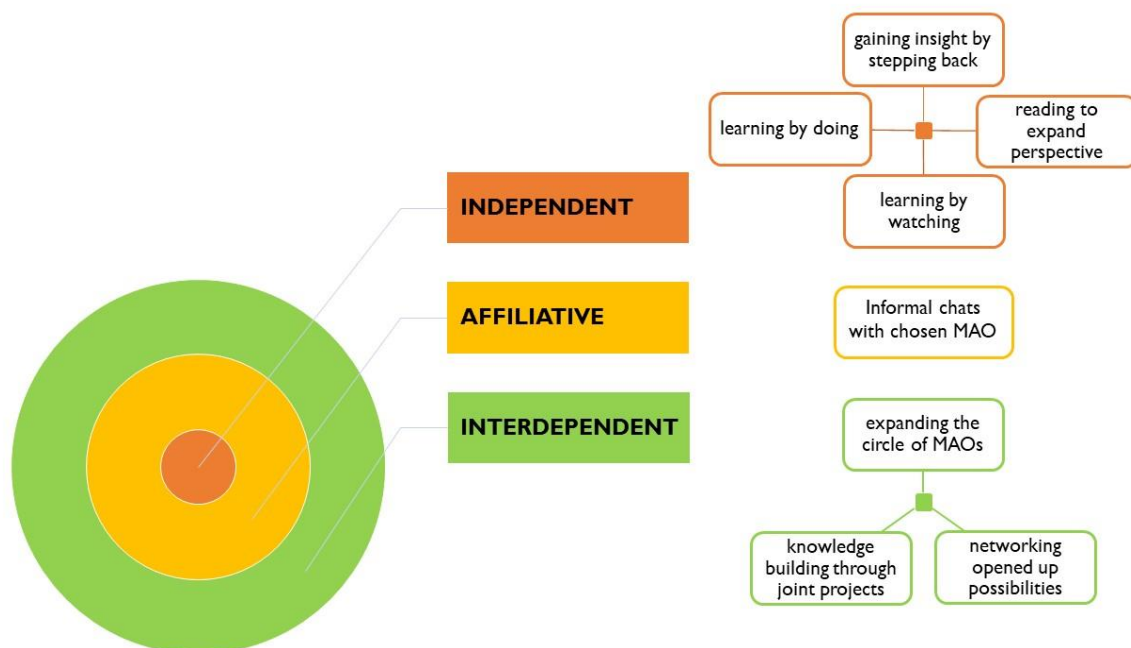
The other side of the coin from the career changer being the engine of others' development is **'others doing well' (Aim B; RQ3 – Sources of success)** i.e. that through their intervention, adults and children have been able to achieve something that they might otherwise not have achieved. This simply highlights – as is recognised in career success literature (e.g. Shockley et al, 2016) – how complex and multi-faceted a phenomenon career success is i.e. that being successful is not simply about doing well or helping others but, for this group of career changers, is very much focused on the need for others to achieve success. This is a viewpoint shared by all occupational groups. For instance, Teacher-Educators spoke of not being successful if others were not successful, ex-Physiotherapists spoke of success being about others' improvement and of the collaborative nature of success, and an ex-nurse talked about 'lightbulb moments' for trainees being a key sign of her own success. In fact this was such a commonly held perspective on success that it calls into question the extent to which individuated success e.g. recognition, personal achievement, could fulfil career changers' needs and lead, as argued by Stumpf and Tymon (2012) and Abele et al (2016), to greater satisfaction. This finding is more in line with Abele and Spurk's (2009) earlier work which highlighted the temporary nature of objective measures and the longer-term effects of subjective success, particularly in terms of influencing individuals' confidence and motivation. Indeed, it accords with Heslin's (2005) view that OCS is often deficient in that it does not motivate everyone.

What research had not identified prior to the current study however – and is therefore an important original contribution – is that career changers move from an inward-to-outward-looking approach to learning and appraisal of success i.e. over-time, and in line with increasing competence and confidence, they gradually expand their pool of potential support from a selected MAO to

working with a wider group of individuals. This suggests that as career changers start to make more developmental progress and feel both more confident and competent, that the need to save face or behave in a self-protective manner becomes less necessary. Indeed, for Hobfoll (1989; 2011) adopting a shared or ‘caravan’ approach to ‘resource replacement’ ‘is highly effective since it enables individuals to benefit from a common ‘marketplace’ of knowledge and skills, but to also select/use learning that has pedigree i.e. is widely used and valued. As such, this therefore enables career changers to take a form of ‘short-cut’ to deeper forms of learning and to speed up integration of ‘expert’ knowledge into their now, at least, ‘competent’ state.

A key but quite broad theme that emerged was that career changers’ knowledge sharing initially took the form of **expanding the circle of more able others (Aim B; RQ4 – Competence and confidence renewal)**. This involved building learning/ working relationships further afield but initially began with colleagues in their immediate team (see Figure 28). As established in previous research (e.g. Cleary et al, 2011; Cooley & De Gagne, 2016; Fullerton & Gherissi, 2015), social relationships with more colleagues helped career changers not simply share their sense of occupational purpose and extend their knowledge base, but also helped them to develop their voice in a new occupational context and prompted them to realise that what they brought to the new organisation/role was valued.

Figure 28: Career changers’ changed orientation to learning ‘interdependently’



In the same way that they spoke of their preference for selecting a MAO (see section 9.5), career changers also showed a clear preference when initiating informal relationships; this being to talk with colleagues with a similar occupational background (past and present), and especially with others who had made a career change. This aligns with literature which highlights the value of relationships with those who are more experienced (Shapiro, 2018) but also that having access to a more diverse pool of people may not always be helpful (Tack et al, 2018; Stillman et al, 2019) i.e. appraising advice can be important. Career changers in this study wanted the flexibility to reach out to colleagues and to tailor the person and advice to their learning need. In other words, outside social or very loose meetings (e.g. when chatting with colleagues during lunch or breaks) career changers wanted to be able to decide for themselves who they spoke with or asked for advice from. This, again, reinforces the 'agency' argument which features as a key dynamic within contemporary career change literature (e.g. Briscoe & Hall, 2006; De Vos & Soens, 2008) i.e. the desire for self-direction. It also reflects research which highlights the need for career changers to be aware of the symmetry – or asymmetry – of relationships given the seniority of some colleagues with whom they interact (Harrison & McKeon, 2010; Murray, 2006). Furthermore, the current findings also add what is otherwise missing from existing research on the use of relationships in learning (e.g. Varadharajan et al, 2018) i.e. that learning relationships for career changers are not random but planned and clearly related to their on-going need for judgement aversion.

In addition, whilst acutely aware of not wanting to inconvenience or over burden colleagues, the importance and value attributed to these informal relationships largely stems from being able to discuss complexity and how others might do things differently; a finding which supports existing arguments (e.g. Grier & Johnston, 2009; Walker et al, 2018; Maaranen et al, 2019) that having multiple sources of support is beneficial. Also in line with previous research (e.g. Tack et al, 2018; MacPhail et al, 2014), this sort of 'reasoning', especially with 'more able others' enabled career changers to talk about what they might do or not do and to benefit from mutual encouragement, and points to the fact that developing a sense of 'community' – being nurtured, supported and jointly constructing knowledge – is valued. This therefore further reinforces the argument (e.g. MacPhail et al, 2014; Murray, 2006) that relationship-based informal learning contributes towards career changers' sense of progress, and development of competence and confidence in their new setting and role. Allied to this was the added benefit of being able to control these relational connections which aligns with Harrison and McKeon's (2008) 'apprenticeship model' in that career changers in this study found it helpful to have a low-risk strategy for learning on the job. This helped because in being able to decide what was learnt when they were able to more gradually increase their cognitive load i.e. accommodate larger quantities or more complex new knowledge into existing schemas.

This therefore suggests that being able to check understanding, follow up and clarify aspects of their new role with colleagues can aid internalisation of learning.

A sense of connection and an increased sense of belonging to their new occupational group via knowledge sharing is not the only 'social' way that career changers learn however. For some career changers in this study this web of work-related contacts expanded further: from a trusted MAO, to people in their immediate team, to those outside their team and, over time, outside of their organisation i.e. to **inter/intra-organisational networking (Aim B; RQ4 – Competence and confidence renewal)**. This finding adds to the small amount of existing literature on career changers' use of this form of informal learning (e.g. Murray et al, 2014; Boyd & Harris, 2010). Being able to seek out like-minded individuals and gain clear and honest advice on ways to approach key aspects of their work e.g. how to work through publication protocols, was highly valued. This suggests, then, that the need for on-going psychological/emotional support is just as valued as career changers become more established in their new occupation as in the early(er) days of their change experience. Perhaps not so much in terms of offering a 'bolstering' facility, whereby career changers' purpose is to feel accepted and, therefore, more confident stepping out into their new occupational field, but in terms of reinforcing or validating the career changers' perspectives/ experiences/ views that might now be in the process of settling and firming up. In effect, then, career changers may seek out a broader group of others' views/support as more of a final 'tick' in the 'I'm ok, I know what I'm doing' box rather than as an underpinning layer upon which they would base their formative ideas or approaches to working in their new role. The 'network' possibly provides yet more support and potentially offers even more developmental value when its members possess expertise that is not available (or recognised/ known about) within the career changer's new occupational team.

Another valued form of informal learning comes from **knowledge building through joint projects (Aim B; RQ4 – Competence and confidence renewal)** i.e. collaboration and reciprocal learning, where both the occupational changer gained but so too did the more experienced other(s). The value of these interdependent relationships was also based on the career changer being both able to call upon prior knowledge, skill, experience and expertise whilst starting to get a foothold in their new occupation. Unlike MacPhail et al's (2019) findings, career changers in this study were not reluctant to share and neither did they speak of joint project work in terms of competing with other group members. Instead, they spoke of knowledge building through joint projects as a way of extending their developmental trajectory i.e. of being able to amass a wider range of knowledge and skills through working with a broader group of individuals. This therefore supports previous research (e.g. Ping et al, 2018; Kelchtermans et al, 2018) which points to the value

of collaboration in terms of enabling individuals to re-think their own approach towards completing tasks on the basis of discussion with or observing more experienced members of the group. Its particular value in relation to the current study, however, lay in being able to combine four informal learning processes i.e. gaining insight by stepping back, learning by doing, learning by watching and collaboration, and potentially make even greater gains in practice. In other words, rather than focusing on one particular style (e.g. Lai et al, 2015; Ming & Armstrong, 2015) they conformed to Peterson et al's (2015) description of the 'ideal learner' and to Passarelli and Kolb's (2011) 'learning way' in that they applied all aspects of Kolb's (1984; 2014) learning cycle.

Career changers in this study – still having less than 5 years' experience in their new occupation – also acknowledged the novice nature of their 'standing' in working/project groups but also spoke about valuing the opportunity to try things out when in the presence of a colleague who could scaffold the direction taken by the new member of the team or step in if something was missed/done incorrectly. This therefore adds to the existing, albeit sparse, literature base relating to collaborative working (e.g. Walker et al, 2018; Fullerton & Gherissi, 2015). Career changers' experiences of collaborative practice also connects to their perceptions of career success i.e. that group success can contribute to personal success. Career changers were quite clear about the extent to which collaborating on joint projects helped to embed learning and to gain a more realistic – then idealistic – appreciation of their new occupation, particularly in terms of those aspects which take place less frequently e.g. academic writing as part of joint research projects.

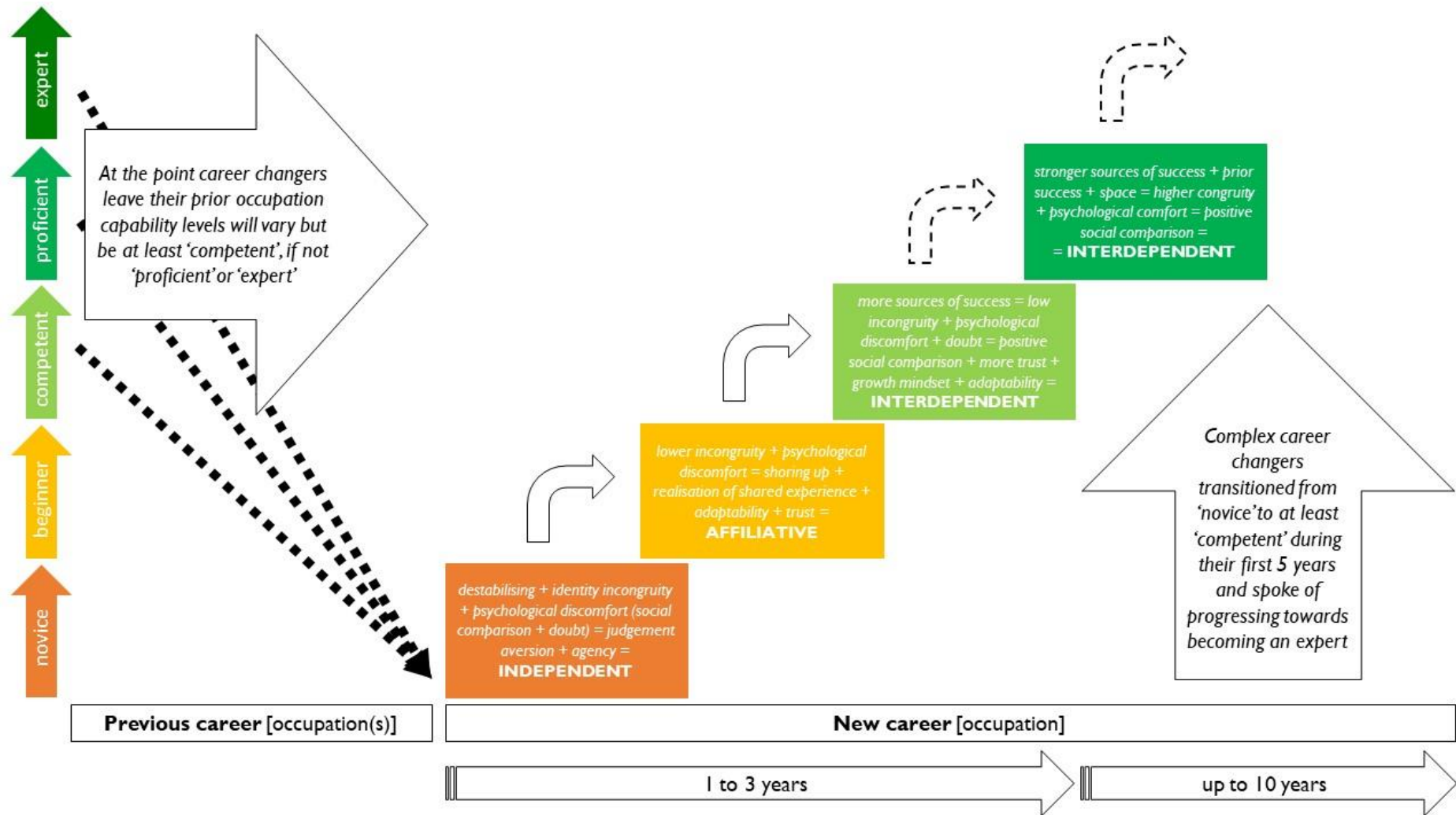
9.6 LATER STILL – CONTINUED PROGRESS IN RECAPTURING SUCCESS

Ultimately – whilst evidence has not been collected beyond 5 years' experience point in this study – complex career changers who took part in this study indicated that they were developing beyond being 'competent' (see Figure 29). Indeed, for those who were approaching or at their 5-year post-change point, 'proficiency' (Benner, 1982; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980; 2004) felt quite real in that they could see for themselves – as well as via comparing their performance with others' – that they were now entirely comfortable in their new role i.e. they knew what they were doing and could do it easily, and were now starting to see the bigger picture. In terms of learning, this manifested in continued interdependent learning i.e. adopting a largely shared approach such as knowledge building through joint projects or reaching out to close or more widespread professional networks.

This therefore ties to a facilitating factor which runs throughout this thesis i.e. **accumulation of new experience (Aim B; RQ5 – Contingent success)**. Career changers spoke about this in

positive terms i.e. that, with time, they would continue to amass more experience, knowledge and skills and, that this would translate into success in role which, in turn, clearly evidences that success can be recaptured. It also points to career changers needing to stick with their new occupational choice in order to persevere. In other words, for career changers to perceive that they are recapturing career success, individual 'wins' need to be accumulated over time i.e. be sustained in order to really count as success. This is something that is also reflected in existing literature (Goodrich, 2014) i.e. that having time to gradually develop confidence and competence is key to career changers developing perception of being capable of recapturing success. The implication being that success is something that can be recaptured by career changers but is not a speedy process and requires patience, and both cognitive and emotional stamina. Indeed, what is evident throughout the findings of this study is that learning following a complex career change is a convoluted process; with developmental gains occurring only after a significant amount of reinforcement – whether practice/application and/or reflection – the more time the career changer invests (Hobfoll, 1989; 2011) the greater their perception of recapturing or being a success.

Figure 29: Later still – proficiency and the potential for expertise



9.7 LIMITATIONS OF METHOD

One limitation relates to reflexivity i.e. the potential influence of the researcher before, during or after data collection (Willig, 2001). The researcher in this study has both experience of working in teaching and academia, and of changing occupation, and may have inadvertently channelled follow-up 'probes' which may have then encouraged participants to extend their thinking in connection with perceptions and memories of experiences of career change that might otherwise not have arisen. Having said this, participants were also given latitude in terms of what they shared. For example, those wanting to engage in deeper personal reflection on and exploration of career change experiences were allowed to do so with minimal intervention. Indeed all commented positively on the cathartic nature of the interview process. Furthermore, in light of the sensitive nature of some questions (e.g. relating to achievement of success, psychological discomfort of changing occupation, or the challenges of learning), it is not known how far participants may have withheld experiences or perceptions.

A further limitation relates to the challenge of deriving accurate data about what is known or believed by an individual. The fact that RP images were hand-drawn and prone to reconstruction as they emerged for conscious inspection, may have resulted in some level of distortion in relation to experiences/perceptions of career change or recapturing success. Schneider and Shiffrin's (1977) work on attentional selection, for instance, highlighted that individuals select or deselect sensory inputs and information emerging from long-term memory based on how it fits or is salient to the current situation, as well as what they feel comfortable revealing/discussing. However, the researcher took steps to control this potential confounding variable by asking additional probing questions, asking participants to clarify the meaning of their sketches and to confirm researcher interpretations.

A related limitation concerns some participants' discomfort with RP. Whilst reassurance was given in terms of there being no expectation of precision, artistic ability or a full and detailed 'capture' of experiences/emotions three participants (3, 8 and 14) opted not to complete RP. All three confirmed that they had understood that RP was part of the study – based on reading the PIS (see Appendix 2) – but wanted to take part in order to share their complex career change experiences. As a consequence they gave only verbal responses. Of the fifteen participants who were comfortable with RP, the majority sketched in order to clarify verbal responses to interview questions. For example T:DE (see p. 152) drew the “wooooo” image

after speaking about her experience of teacher training, and T:MN (see p. 182) drew stabilisers on a bike to illustrate her point about scaffolding offered by a MAO. Some participants drew RPs at the same time as answering questions; for instance T:PQ (see p. 175), whilst others – for example TE:IJ (see p. 165) and A:EF (see p. 187) – turned first to drawing i.e. verbalised what their sketches depicted. Overall, however, as a way to augment/ crystallise interview data, RP helped participants to clarify and expand their responses and, in particular, to capture experiences that were difficult to articulate. For example, A:BC's (see p. 135) representation of the point at which she would open up to others, A:EF's (see p. 119) sketches of “being shot down in flight” and feeling “hammered”, and TE:OP's (see p. 130) depiction of psychological discomfort. This therefore suggests that experiences or reflections on complex career change that might otherwise not have been expressed were captured in this study but that in future research some individuals may benefit from additional guidance, encouragement or clarification about the role and value of RP.

9.8 ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

9.8.1 ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Based on gaps identified in the literature review this study set out to address two key research aims: to explore career changers' perceptions of the transformation process and to explore how they recaptured career success following their change of occupation. The following outlines original contributions made by this thesis in relation to the research questions.

The first original contribution relates to why individuals chose to change occupation (RQ1, 2 and 3) and is a critique of existing career change literature which suggests that high 'change costs' (Cortes & Gallipoli, 2018) inhibit complex career change. The findings of this study indicate that risk of failure and loss of human capital investment are not inhibitors and that prior career success was perceived as a positive indicator of the ability to recapture success; expert knowledge in particular – whilst not all transferable – was seen as a key enabler in relation to handling complex and challenging situations in their new occupation. Furthermore, the primary motivators for leaving an established and successful career were the need for challenge and a desire to extend personal reach; both of which complex career changers acknowledged differed from early career motivators i.e. what was important had changed. This provides an important insight into the mind of a 'career changer' i.e. their willingness to engage with uncertainty and relinquish expert status in order to work in an occupation which they believe more closely aligns with personal values, offers opportunities for personal/professional development and ultimately increases their human capital.

Another original contribution relates to differences in how complex career changers think about success in their new occupation (RQ1, 2 and 3) compared to their prior occupation and the link between this and their motivations to change. Career changers in this study no longer focussed on objective measures but viewed career success as multi-dimensional and in subjective terms i.e. about gaining satisfaction, being authentic, and having a sense of purpose. This suggests that for complex career changers career success is a process i.e. that over time it moves from being inward- to becoming outward-focused: from an initial need to 'shore up' in order to bolster tentative and emergent evidence of success, to the need for recognition (to be noticed and acknowledged as competent (or more) by colleagues, friends and family), through to externalising their focus, where the focus is no longer on personal achievement or attracting tangible rewards but channelling their success in order to facilitate the success of

others i.e. extending their personal reach. This therefore suggests that complex career change does not have to be disruptive but can – as Lange (2004) argued – be restorative i.e. enable an individual to get closer to something that is or has become important to them.

The third original contribution relates to career changers' perceptions of transformation (RQ1, 2 and 3) and clearly shows that recapturing career success following a complex career change revolves around career changers' need to manage risk. 'Status loss' resulting from their dramatic shift from expert in their prior occupation to novice in their new occupation led to a multiplicity of psychological processes being enacted; all of which were utilised in order to reduce psychological discomfort associated with feeling destabilised (occupational identity incongruity; judgement aversion; doubt), to mitigate stress, and provide a form of 'protective buffer' from which they could begin to gradually move through developmental levels i.e. from novice to advanced beginner, to competent and potentially beyond.

At the heart of this is another original contribution – that trust acted not only as an inhibitor but also as an enabler during complex career change (RQ 2, 4 and 5). Its initial absence led complex career changers to withdraw from public engagement in learning and to invest in private or independent forms of learning but later in the 'competence and confidence renewal process' it was key to underpinning learning adaptability i.e. career changers' preparedness to share concerns, doubts and perceptions of progress. Allied to this is another original contribution which relates to what hindered career changers in recapturing career success. Self-doubt and concerns about being 'found out' i.e. revealed as being incompetent, were surprisingly commonplace. Despite having prior career success career changers focused on the negative which tended to blur their self-referent perceptions of early success and was compounded by a tendency to engage in social comparison. The negative effects of their inaccurate self-assessments led career changers in this study to be more 'avoidant' i.e. to disengage and fail to seek support from others. Fear of being judged and rejected by colleagues was the primary driver for this behaviour.

A further original contribution relates to how complex career changers made use of informal learning to recapture career success (RQ4 and 5). Absent from existing literature, the findings of this study show that 'knowing when' was an important element in how complex career changers recaptured success; it was not enough to 'know why', 'know how' and 'know whom' (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Arthur et al, 1996; 2017), the timing of what was learnt is also crucial. This therefore suggests that there is a relationship between perceptions of risk,

associated psychological discomfort and learning, and that career changers' appraisal of these determines the particular form of learning used. Findings also shows that career changers were sensitive to 'whom' during early transition because of the need to manage the impression they gave to others and that this resulted in greater selectivity in terms of who they trusted and what they shared. Therefore, whilst knowing whom, how and what is important, it is likely to be inhibited to a greater or lesser degree by 'when' career changers begin to feel competent and amass evidence of success. For career changers in this study this meant that the higher the perceived risk of exposure of 'uncomfortable' levels of gaps in learning or perceived incompetence the more independently they learnt, but as this risk diminished and they began to trust others, more open and social forms of learning were utilised i.e. affiliative and interdependent learning. This process involved career changers using double-loop learning (Argyris, 1982; 2003) in order to test the water and establish points at which it felt safe to reveal the extent of their competence and/or gaps in their learning. More specifically career changers took some form of learning action (e.g. learning by doing) and then carried out an appraisal of how competent and confident they felt.

These new insights culminated in a further original contribution: the development of a new model (see Figures 21 – 29) to explain complex career changers' learning trajectory (RQ4 and 5) i.e. the competence-confidence renewal process. This is the first model to explain this process and draws exclusively on the findings of this study. More specifically, the findings show that 'Independent learning' (*learning by watching/doing, gaining insight by stepping back, reading*) took place during the early stages of transition when trust was low and perceived instability and judgement aversion were at their highest. As psychological discomfort began to subside and foundations of knowledge and skills, along with evidence of developmental progress began to accumulate, career changers started to use informal learning methods which involved a greater degree of exposure of perceived competence and learning gaps i.e. 'affiliative' learning (*informal chats with a chosen more-able-other*). The final part of this process – and based on greater belief in their ability to perform in their new occupation and measurable progress towards recapturing career success – saw career changers reveal their learning needs to a broader group of colleagues and adopt an even more open approach to their development i.e. 'interdependent' learning (*expanding the circle of MAOs, networking to open up possibilities, knowledge building through joint projects*).

A final original contribution relates to responding to calls to illuminate this "least understood and most complex type of change" (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2001, p39) and to

recognise the limitations of using single data collection methods (e.g. interviews) in terms of not necessarily capturing (Manojlovich et al, 2015) the lived experience of individuals. In addition to semi-structured interviews this study therefore adopted a novel approach to qualitative data collection i.e. use of the rich pictures method (Bell & Morse, 2013b; Berg & Pooley, 2013). This was a valuable, supplementary way to collect tacit data and enabled new discoveries to be made through deeper exploration of career change, success and learning. As a consequence it helped the researcher to respond to points in the interview where career changers found it difficult to articulate feelings or experiences as well as in expanding on points made. The RP method was also invaluable in helping participants to consciously inspect their own thoughts and assumptions about experiences, events and/or feelings associated with these, and to identify, discuss and synthesise patterns that emerged. Indeed, many participants commented on the cathartic nature of experience which helped them to explore and gain a better understanding of their complex career change experiences, the emotional roller-coaster associated with temporarily reverting to novice status and their journey towards recapturing career success. In particular they spoke of RPs ability to bring – sometimes painful – memories, perceptions and beliefs to the surface but that this helped them to clarify what they had been through and to take a step back in order to observe themselves in a more objective manner and make connections that they had not previously recognised.

9.8.2 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Completing this thesis has been both a challenging and deeply fulfilling experience. I have learnt a huge amount about research as well as my specialist field. Combining both a traditional (interview) and innovative (RP) approach to data collection extended my understanding of how to conduct qualitative research and cemented a conviction that crystallising evidence adds a valuable layer of depth and helps to reveal complexity. As a currently under-utilised method, RP provided both participants and myself with a more tangible way to articulate tacit information, and to explore and clarify findings that might not otherwise have been found or been as easy to make sense of. As a consequence the somewhat ‘messy’ experiences that participants had of complex career change and their journey towards recapturing success were easier to access.

Carrying out the research for this thesis has also been helpful in terms of clarifying and extending my understanding of my own complex career change experience – having changed career from working in HR to becoming a teacher and, more recently, an academic. There were clear points during the data collection process where I felt that my own career change

experiences resonated with those of my participants i.e. helped me to realise the journey I have been on in switching to a research student identity. The research process has also helped reinforce my career choice and motivated me to become involved in other research and academic writing projects.

As part of the process of becoming an independent researcher I have also had the opportunity to gain feedback from my supervisory team. This has been invaluable: it has helped me to reflect on and revise my approaches both to initial design of the study, how to collect data, ways to think about writing and revising chapters, and how to bring together this behemoth of a project. I have been able to extend my communication and presentation skills, and hone my interview skills so that participants have felt comfortable revealing and sharing personal and sometimes deeply emotional – and even raw – memories of experiences. That they trusted me was a real privilege.

Finally, the support, encouragement and words of wisdom that I have received along the way have also helped reign in my sometimes-over-zealous approach to writing, need to be overly-prepared or worries about what ‘might’ happen. Added to this, taking part in – giving oral and poster presentations – and organising a number of post-graduate conferences had enabled me to clarify my aims, research questions, approaches to data collection and analysis, and explain my findings. These ‘talks’ have been extremely useful in helping me to organise and arrange my thoughts and, consequently, articulate them more clearly and convincingly.

9.9 RESEARCH AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

9.9.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current study explored complex career change in relation to three occupational groups which already feature prominently in the somewhat limited career change literature. This was done in order to both extend what is currently known about these groups as well as to deepen understanding of complex career change, career success and informal learning. Going forward, it would therefore be interesting to explore occupational groups about whom little is currently known, and especially in terms of applying the new model developed in this study. For example, whilst some research exists in relation to individuals who have changed occupation after serving in the military (e.g. Price, 2019; Vigoda-Gadot et al, 2010) this is generally limited to looking at career change motivations or effectiveness post-transition, but has not looked at how career success is recaptured. Similarly, investigating those who have changed career from occupations similar to the ‘forces’ would be interesting e.g. ex-/retired-police officers. In addition, given that existing research – including the current study – has focused on profession-to-profession career change, it would be interesting to investigate whether similar perceptions, experiences and processes apply to non-professionals, to individuals who pursue less-mainstream occupations when changing career e.g. those who leave a corporate career for self-employment, as well as to professionals who change to an occupation outside the education sector. Furthermore, given the number of disillusioned complex career changers (Perryman & Calvert, 2020; Zhou et al, 2017; Wilkins, 2017; Reybold & Alamia, 2008) it would be interesting to explore what happens next for these groups i.e. whether they change occupations again and what impact, if any, ‘repeat’ changing has on perceptions and experiences of career success.

Another potential avenue for future research would be to investigate the types of individuals who make complex career changes. The findings of this study point to individual career changers as potentially possessing high internal locus of control i.e. perceiving themselves as being in control and having ownership of the change process as well as how and when they learn. Whilst research has already identified the impact of personality or dispositional factors e.g. Briscoe et al’s (2006) and De Vos and Soen’s (2008) studies of the PCA scale, which showed that agency is correlated with perceived career success and expectations of future employability, it is not clear from this or the current study whether locus of control can hinder i.e. exacerbate feelings of being destabilised, as well as help i.e. empower.

A further recommendation relates to how particular occupational groups are labelled. For example, the current study builds a clear case for categorising Teacher Educators as complex career changers (see Chapter 5 – Method) but much of the existing research on this group labels them simply as experts who have become novices rather than as complex career changers. In other words, similar to Zacher et al's (2019) critique of the way that articles relating to career development are "scattered" and calls for "conceptual integration" (p. 358) this thesis would recommend that literature relating to teacher-educators is re-badged so that a clearer understanding can begin to emerge about why – in common with other complex career changers – they experience particular challenges.

Another recommendation relates to the approach taken to briefing participants about RP i.e. whether being asked to 'draw' or to 'sketch' has an impact. For instance, whilst being asked to 'draw' might suggest the need to present a finished picture, being asked to 'sketch' might communicate a looser expectation e.g. that disconnected and incomplete RPs are acceptable. Furthermore, it would be interesting to assess whether being asked to simultaneously sketch and describe RPs elicits more detail. The findings of this study show that, in agreement with Bargh's (2011) unconscious thought theory, more detail and greater clarity was gained. This may have been because use of dual modalities (auditory/visual) acts as a kind of distraction from potentially restricted/censored, conscious thought and, therefore, enables participants to access unconscious thought. This then enables greater insight into experiences/perceptions i.e. as participants clarify particular points or marks on the page and add additional imagery they are able to see links/connections/patterns and/or explore meaning/implications.

9.9.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

One recommendation relates to the need for recognition of boundary crossing. The findings of this study – and some others e.g. Hunter et al (2019); King et al (2018) – showed that complex career changers believed that colleagues, but more importantly their managers and employers, did not recognise that they had made a significant change i.e. that complex career change is distinct from simple career change. Career changers in this study spoke of wanting these groups to more clearly understand – as well as make some (unspecified) allowances for – the fact that unlike people moving 'within' the same occupation where knowledge, skills and competences are potentially more easily transferable, occupational changers come to a new organisation with none or else very little of the underpinning professional knowledge. This is not to suggest that organisations or line managers set out to fail to appreciate the sheer scale of the change and associated new knowledge and skills that need to be developed, or on the

other hand to create road blocks for their new employees, but failing to appreciate the specific and unique learning and support needs of occupational changers may exacerbate an already challenging re-orientation. As a consequence they require a more personalised approach to establishing their needs and putting together both an initial orientation as well as a medium and longer-term development plan.

Another recommendation is that since psychological discomfort can potentially lead career changers to hide their perceived incompetence there is a need to put in place a range of learning methods which support this behaviour. For example, online learning methods and 'learning maps' which provide career changers with details of the availability of particular forms of learning both inside and outside the organisation.

Finally, given that complex career changers in this study were ambivalent about formal learning, including being assigned a mentor or 'buddy', it is recommended that organisations consider establishing a voluntary partner selection process so that individuals have a say in who they work with or how this working relationship might work in practice. It would also be worthwhile offering complex career changers the option to 'opt out' and, instead, to determine their own learning needs and/or to have the opportunity to discuss their needs and potential plans for addressing them (including learning preferences) with an impartial third party such as an external learning and development advisor.

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APPENDICES

1. Advert
2. Participant Information Sheet (PIS)
3. Interview Schedule
4. Learning processes prompt sheet
5. Summary of codes extracted from interview transcripts
6. Rich pictures
7. List of publications

Appendix I: Advert



What does taking part involve?

I am researching [people who have changed occupation to become a TEACHER, TEACHER EDUCATOR or ACADEMIC.](#)

You would take part in a single **one-to-one interview** about how you have made use of informal learning and development (e.g. *relationships/interactions with colleagues, networking, informal mentoring/coaching, online or independent learning*) during your 'career journey' (from leaving your previous occupation to the current time in your new occupation) and how this has helped you to recapture success in your new role/career.

The interview would last around **60-90 minutes** and take place at a mutually convenient time and location, such as the University of Worcester.

The research has been approved by the University of Worcester Research Ethics Committee and your identity will be anonymised and all discussions will be treated confidentially.

Want to know more or have questions?

Email Alison Gisby from the University of Worcester at: a.gisby@worc.ac.uk

Know others interested in taking part?

If you know others who may be interested in taking part, please share the details of this advert with them!

Images credits: <http://loanpride.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Career-change.jpg>



Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Title of project: *An exploration of career changers' perceptions of the transformation process and how they recaptured career success*



Invitation

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this carefully and if you have any questions please ask me. Talk to others about the study if you wish. You will have at least ten days to decide if you want to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to *explore the value of informal learning and development to career changers and the extent to which these support the development and achievement of their career success.*

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have received this invitation because you have changed your occupation within the last five years to become a teacher or academic (including teacher-educator and nurse-educator). I am hoping to recruit approximately 24 participants for this study.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. Please take your time to decide; I will wait for at least 10 days before asking for your decision.

You can also decide not to take part or to withdraw from the study up to 10 days following data collection. If you wish to have your data withdrawn please contact the researcher with your participant number and your data will then not be used. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What will happen to me if I agree to take part?

If you agree to take part you will be invited to an **interview** where you will answer questions about your prior and new occupation. More specifically: how you make sense of the term 'career success', your experiences of career success, your awareness and use of informal learning and development (e.g. *relationships/interactions with colleagues, networking, informal mentoring/coaching, online or independent learning etc.*) and the extent to which the specific types of informal learning and development you have used have helped or hindered your career success.

As part of your interview you will also be invited to develop a diagram/rich picture which captures your perceptions of your career success (prior and current) and use of various types of informal learning and development.

The interview will last **60-90 minutes** and will take place at a mutually convenient time and location such as The University of Worcester.

Your verbal responses will be recorded using a digital voice recorder and via hand-written notes taken by the researcher.

Are there any disadvantages risks to taking part?

- In thinking about and discussing career success and informal learning and development that you have taken part in you may find that emotional memories are brought to the surface which may lead you to experience some level of psychological discomfort or distress.
- If this should happen the researcher will provide details of where you might access support services.

Will the information I give stay confidential?

Everything you say/report is confidential unless you tell me something that indicates that you or someone else is at risk of harm. I would discuss this with you before telling anyone else. The information you give may be used for a research report, but it will not be possible to identify you from the research report or any other dissemination activities. Personal identifiable information (e.g. name and contact details) will be securely stored and kept for up to two years after the project ends in October 2020 and then securely disposed of. The research data (e.g. interview transcripts) will be securely stored.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

This research is being carried out as part of the researcher's PhD in Occupational Psychology at the University of Worcester. The findings of this study will be reported as part of their thesis and may also be published in academic journals or at conferences. If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings please contact the researcher.

Who is organising the research?

This research has been approved by the University of Worcester Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HASSREC). If you would like to speak to an independent person who is not a member of the research team, please contact Louise Heath at the University of Worcester, using the following details: Louise Heath, Secretary to Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HASSREC), University of Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ [ethics@worc.ac.uk]

Thank you for taking the time to read this information

What happens next?

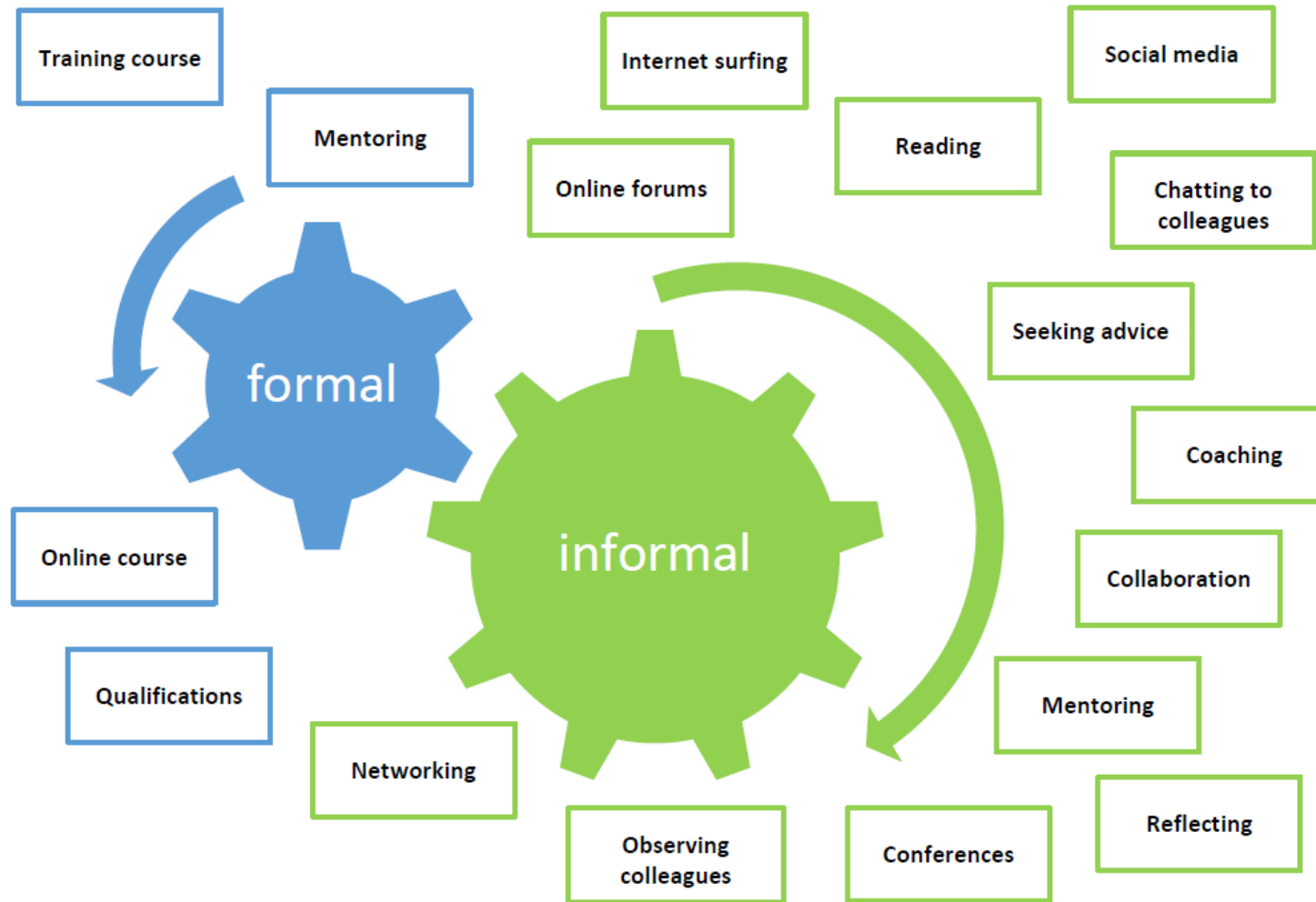
Please keep this information sheet. If you decide to take part or you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study please contact one of the research team using the details below.

| | |
|--|---|
| Student Researcher Mrs Alison Gisby, University of Worcester a.gisby@worc.ac.uk | Supervisor Dr Kazia Anderson, University of Worcester k.anderson@worc.ac.uk |
|--|---|

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

| CAREER PROFILE |
|---|
| <p>Using this blank piece of paper briefly talk me through your career history i.e. from your earliest to your current occupation ... and sketch images to represent your journey. You'll be adding to this as we talk about other aspects of your career i.e. your definition and experiences of success and how you've developed yourself in your new career so that you came to feel competent and confident (successful).</p> |
| PREVIOUS OCCUPATION |
| <p>DEFINITIONS, PERCEPTIONS and EXPERIENCES of Career Success</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you define CS? (e.g. what does it mean to you; is it more than one thing) 2. Using your definition: were you successful across your previous career? 3. Were there times when you felt unsuccessful? (P: how so; how handled; impact) <p>USES/PERCEIVED VALUE of ILDP</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. What ILDP did you use to become competent and confident / successful (P: preferences; effectiveness) 5. Did your employer(s) take any responsibility for your development? (P: did they make you aware of ILDP opportunities; what could they do/have done to make ILDP accessible) |
| CURRENT OCCUPATION |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. How long have you been in your new occupation? (P: enjoyment; settling in period) 7. What was your motivation for changing occupation? 8. What did this involve? (P: process; re-training – where, time, funding; additional qualifications) 9. Did you face any challenges/obstacles? (P: how handled; what helped?; suggestions for e'ers) <p>PERCEPTIONS and EXPERIENCES of Career Success</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Thinking back to the early days in your new occupation, how did you feel, what sense did you have about yourself in terms of your status as 'novice' (<u>how confident/competent did you feel?</u>) 11. Did the change from being 'expert' to 'novice' affect your perception of your career success? 12. Do you define CS in the same way now you've changed occupation? 13. Would you say that you've been successful so far in your new occupation? 14. Have you felt unsuccessful? (P: how so; how handled; impact) <p>USES and PERCEIVED VALUE of ILDP</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. What knowledge and/or skill challenges did you have i.e. what did you need to know or be able to do that you didn't/couldn't or didn't feel all confident about when you started your new job? 16. How did you overcome these i.e. what informal' methods did you use to develop your skills/knowledge (P: did you and do you still have any preferred approaches)? 17. Why did you choose these methods/approaches i.e. what did they give you? (P: how did they contribute to feeling effective/confident/competent, achieving things, feeling the expert 'again?') 18. Did they also help you to avoid anything or protect you in any way e.g. from <i>feeling or looking stupid in front of others (colleagues/boss), out of control, exposing (lack) of knowledge/skill</i> 19. Looking back have there been particular types of ILDP been more or less useful? 20. Are you aware of any other types of ILDP and would you consider using these? (P: why) 21. Has your new employer been involved in your transition/development? (P: did/do they make you aware of ILDP opportunities/routes; what could they have do/have done to be more helpful) 22. If you changed occupation again (or looking back) what advice would you give to yourself (or others)? (P: most effective ILDP; contribute most towards career success) |

Appendix 4: Learning processes prompt sheet



Appendix 5: Summary of codes extracted from interview transcripts

DOMAIN: Occupational re-orientation

| THEME: DRIVERS OF COMPLEX CAREER CHANGE | |
|--|---|
| SUB-THEME | CODE |
| 6.3.1 What is important has changed | Career maturity Prior success is not a sufficient to remain Comparison with where they could be Below the surface Match to values Dissonance Post-hoc validation of decisions |
| 6.3.2 Need for challenge | Stagnation Under-utilised Feeling stuck Being open to returning to novice status |
| 6.3.3 A desire to extend personal reach | Giving and sharing Impact Bigger bang for your buck Passing on knowledge and skills Inspiring others |
| 6.3.4 Others recognise I've made it | Prestige Admiration and respect External validation |

| THEME: THE DYNAMICS OF COMPLEX CAREER CHANGE | |
|---|--|
| SUB-THEME | CODE |
| 6.4.1 Risky and destabilising | Not knowing (what is to come/what is involved) Need to acquire more knowledge/skills Unsure if/how prior experience applies Feeling unsteady/insecure Lack of belonging Steep learning curve Inconsistency and unpredictability Outside own experience/comfort zone Moving away from 'the known' |
| 6.4.2 Occupational identity incongruity | Fraud/impostor Making sense of new reality Private to public sector Need to re-frame Not fully accepted (belonging) Leaving behind previous 'professional self' Doubting colleagues' capabilities/status |
| 6.4.3 Psychological discomfort | Anxiety Natural part of change No longer being the expert Change of pace Less than positive starting points Doing things for the first time |

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| | Feeling exposed Acceptance (instability is normal) Questioning motives Who is the safe base? Discomfort is ongoing |
| 6.4.4 Judgement aversion | Being judged/thought incompetent Concerned with what others might think Choice about who to turn to Need for psychological strength Knowing when to share |

| THEME: IMPERATIVES FOR COMPLEX CAREER CHANGE | |
|---|---|
| SUB-THEME | CODE |
| 6.5.1 Need to feel in control of the change process | Advice perceived as loss of autonomy Personal choice/power Need to be flexible Freedom/choice is motivational Stress (working with others; prior seniority) |
| 6.5.2 Preparedness to re-orient | Readiness to adapt Mental preparation Looking at change as an opportunity Acceptance of status change Adopting an open attitude to change Resilience Welcoming change |
| 6.5.3 Realisation that career change is a shared experience | Recognising that others' support can be helpful Seeing others confront challenge is reassuring Recognising surrounded by like-minds |
| 6.5.4 Need for others' recognition of boundary crossing | Need others to recognise complex isn't simple Need more awareness of their needs/preferences Early transition needs (induction, mentors) |

DOMAIN: Recapturing success

| THEME: DEFINITIONS OF CAREER SUCCESS ARE SITUATED | |
|--|--|
| SUB-THEME | CODE |
| 7.2 | Definitional flux Lack of alignment What is valued changes From objective to subjective Recapturing success is not immediate What is measured by others has an impact |

| THEME: SOURCES OF SUCCESS | |
|--|---|
| SUB-THEME – Individuated | CODE |
| 7.3.1.1 Objective success is still important | Prior expert status/seniority Personal success Unambiguous outcomes Changed priorities/lack of transferability Mastery a better signifier |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| | Visible success |
| 7.3.1.2 Doing what feels right | Some success is intangible Doing the job Deeper sense of who we are/what we stand for Self-discovery Being true to oneself Multi-dimensional |
| 7.3.1.3 I'm thinking I can do this | Shoring up Recognition of uneven development Recognising progress over time Thriving not just surviving Building a track-record Positive re-appraisal Re-framing: a learning opportunity Stepping back |

| THEME: SOURCES OF SUCCESS | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| SUB-THEME – Distributed | CODE |
| 7.3.2.1 Making a difference | Direct help Realising that purpose is important Being a facilitator/catalyst Potential not automatic |
| 7.3.2.2 Others doing well | Vicarious success Conscious awareness |

| THEME: CONTINGENT SUCCESS | |
|---|--|
| SUB-THEME – Facilitating factors | CODE |
| 7.4.1.1 Accumulation of new experience | Success is time-dependent Competence in new role is not automatic Lack of knowledge is part of change Deeper learning/assimilation Time to reflect on success/experiences Negative events can help Consistency/cumulative effect Previous experience of complex career change |
| 7.4.1.2 Prior success | Psychological and measurable Knowing how to handle situations helps Recapturing success is not automatic Picking things up more quickly Wisdom |
| 7.4.1.3 Growth mindset | Optimism about handling challenges Making use of others' approaches Open to change |

| THEME: CONTINGENT SUCCESS | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| SUB-THEME – Inhibiting factors | CODE |
| 7.4.2.1 Doubt | Impostor syndrome Perceptions rather than objective measures Feeling like a fraud |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| | <p>Gaps in ability to teach Doubt does not subside quickly Fake being competent Stress Objective success doesn't result in confidence Question accumulated (prior) knowledge/skills Others' questioning leads to doubt Individual differences</p> |
| 7.4.2.2 Social comparison | <p>Compare settling in to new role Practice not valued – others' qualifications are Need to recognise own strengths/capabilities</p> |

DOMAIN: Incremental learning

| THEME: COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE RENEWAL | |
|---|--|
| SUB-THEME – Independent | CODE |
| 8.2.1.1 Gaining insight by stepping back | <p>Feeling in control of own development Greater insight and clarity Fact checking Triangulating Distance gives perspective Time to think more deeply Co-reflection</p> |
| 8.2.1.2 Reading to expand perspective | <p>Active research Insight into what others think/believe Nuanced understanding Staying 'in the loop'</p> |
| 8.2.1.3 Learning by watching (LBW) | <p>Reinforcer of 'what works' Access to tacit knowledge/skill Segue to informal chats Quick-fix Short bursts are better Observing early versus later in transition</p> |
| 8.2.1.4 Learning by doing (LBD) | <p>Active rather than vicarious learning Discovery learning Growing awareness of new realities Practical versus theoretical understanding Stretched outside comfort zone Parallel learning process (with reflection) Marrying up</p> |

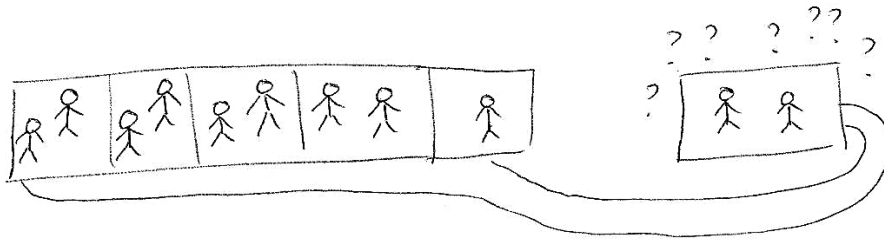
| THEME: COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE RENEWAL | |
|--|--|
| SUB-THEME – Affiliative | CODE |
| 8.2.2.1 Informal chats with a chosen more able other | <p>Trusted colleague = more able Others' experience of complex career change Feel less exposed Gaining feedback on progress Psychological release Value in others having 'been there and done that' Informality = developmental outcomes</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | Mutual respect Return on investment Pace |
|--|--|

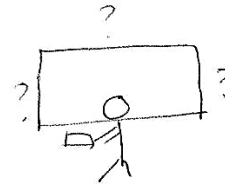
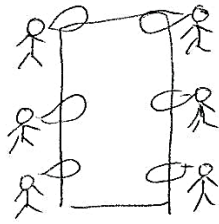
| THEME: COMPETENCE AND CONFIDENCE RENEWAL | |
|---|---|
| SUB-THEME – Interdependent | CODE |
| 8.2.3.1 Expanding the circle of more able others | Others to bounce ideas around with Relationships Prior experience Multiple sources of knowledge Coping mechanism Shared learning/problem solving |
| 8.2.3.2 Networking opened up possibilities | Like-minded Non-specialists also valued Supportive |
| 8.2.3.3 Knowledge building through joint projects | Collaboration Picking up tips from a wider group of MAOs Team success |

| THEME: WHAT HELPS AND HINDERS LEARNING | |
|--|--|
| SUB-THEME | CODE |
| 8.3.1 Trust is the pre-requisite for seeking support | Having faith in the MAO Travelling the same journey Risk versus self-protection Sussing out Time to get to know/trust Progress/evidence = trust more Lower risk = easier to open up MAO sharing helps develop trust Honest but considerate (respectful) Offer own contributions |
| 8.3.2 Learning adaptability | Preparedness to learn in a different way Individual differences Insights from psychometrics Prior occupational adaptability Re-evaluating learning processes Melding theoretical and practical Ongoing flexibility needed |
| 8.3.3 Headspace helps to embed learning | Time to compartmentalise and mentally sort Formal learning events offer time to reflect |
| 8.3.4 Ambivalence towards formal learning | Formal is passive Inability to apply learning Courses don't help skill development Induction fails to embed learning Formal learning limits independence Lack of choice/control Vocationally relevant qualifications are valued Fulfilment of a life aim |

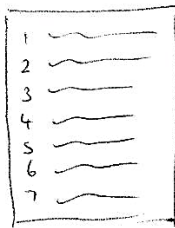
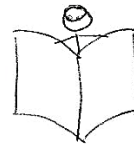
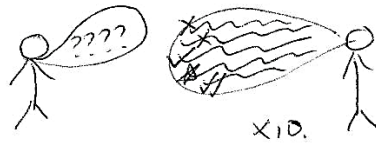
Appendix 6: Rich pictures – participant I



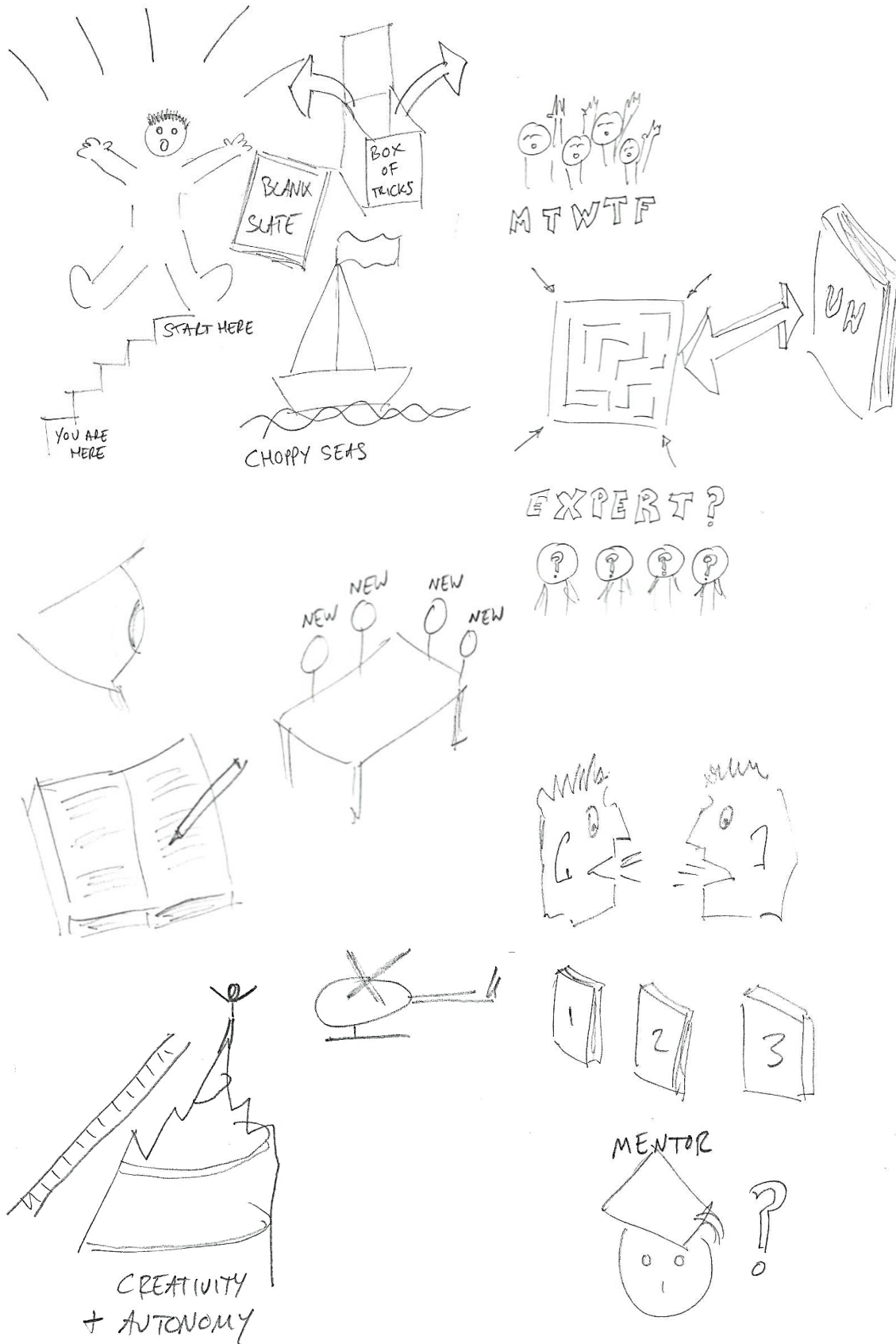
Sharing ideas
each person
valued.



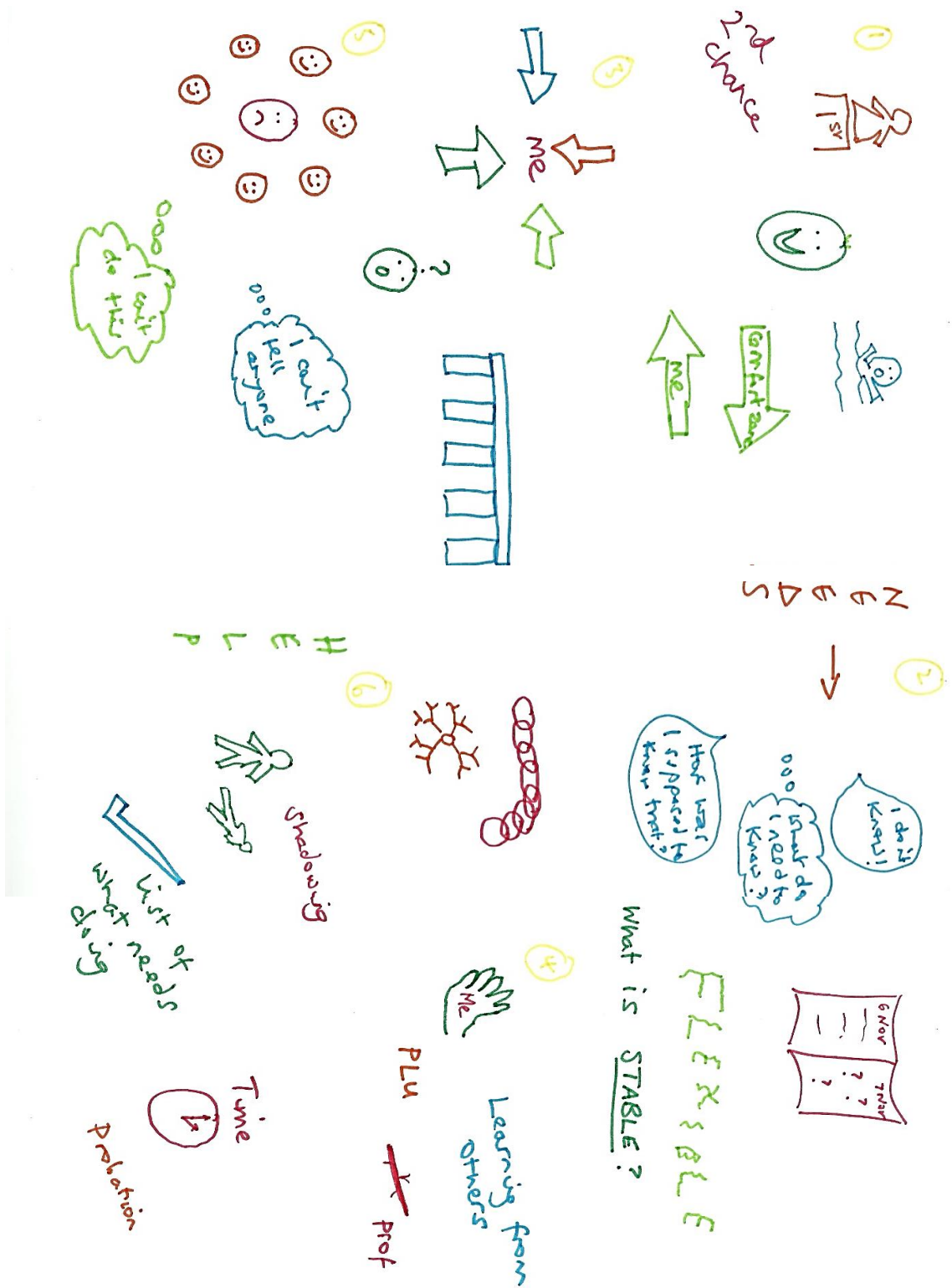
Access - how?



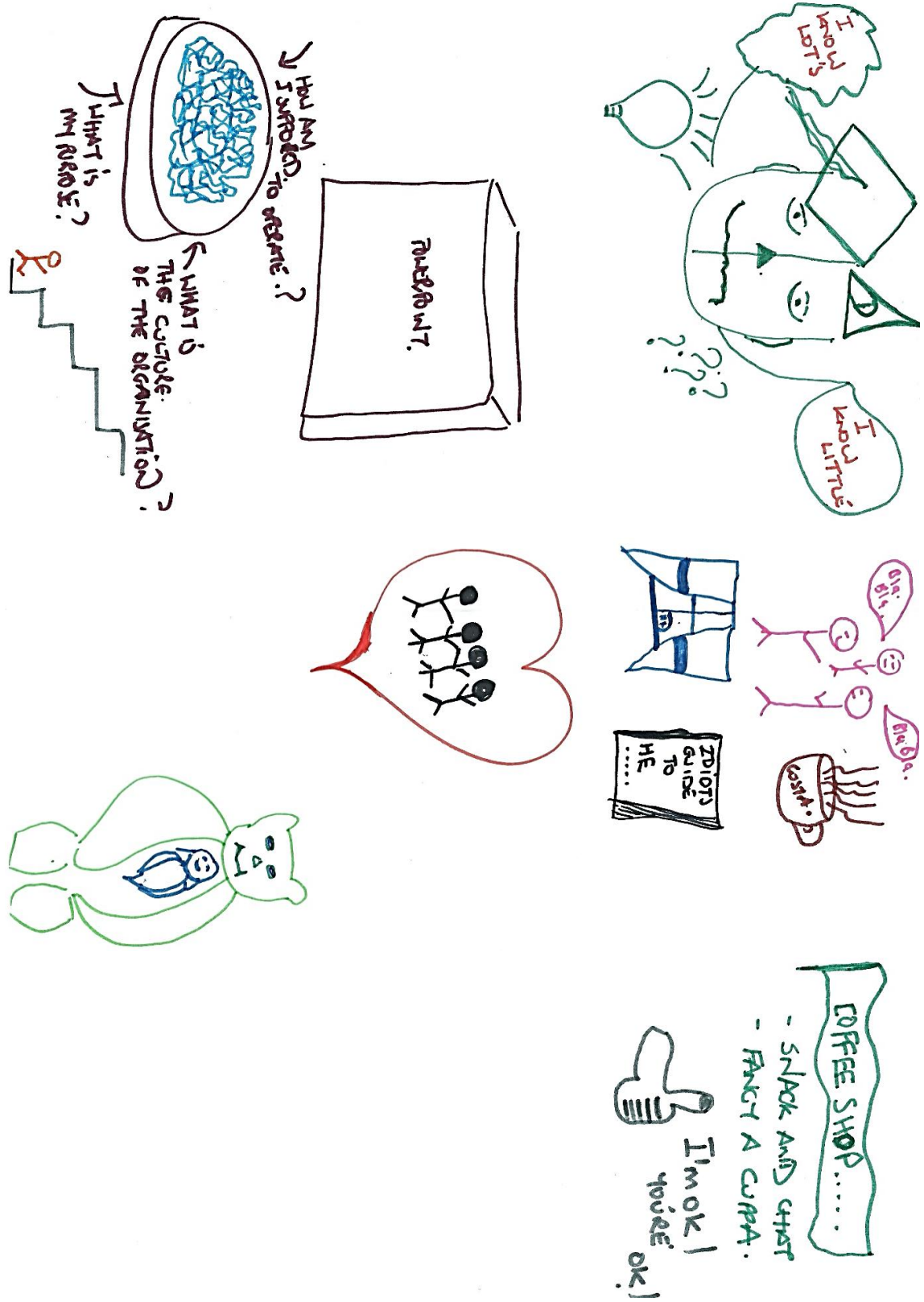
Appendix 6: Rich pictures – participant 2



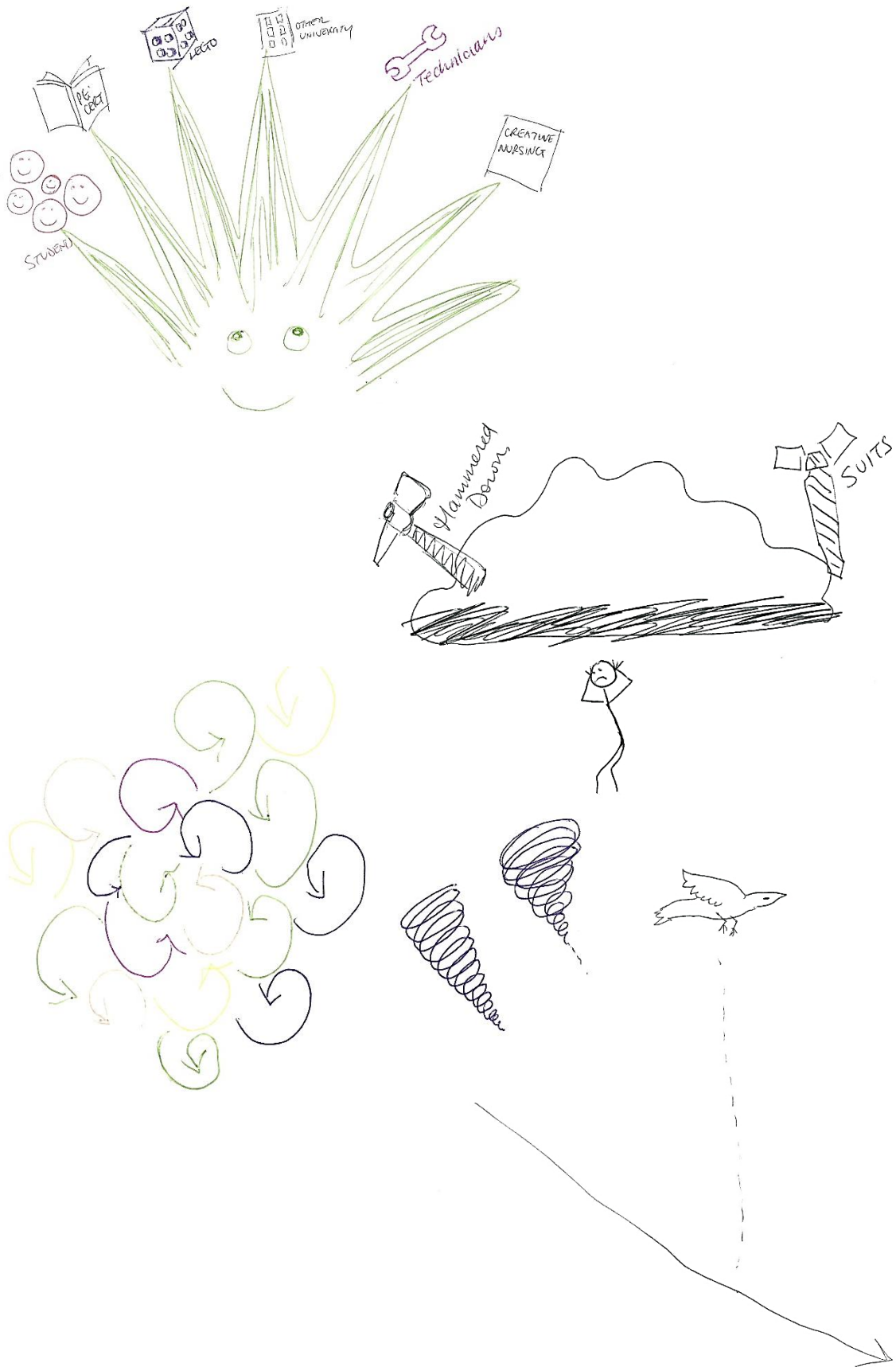
Appendix 6: Rich pictures – participant 6



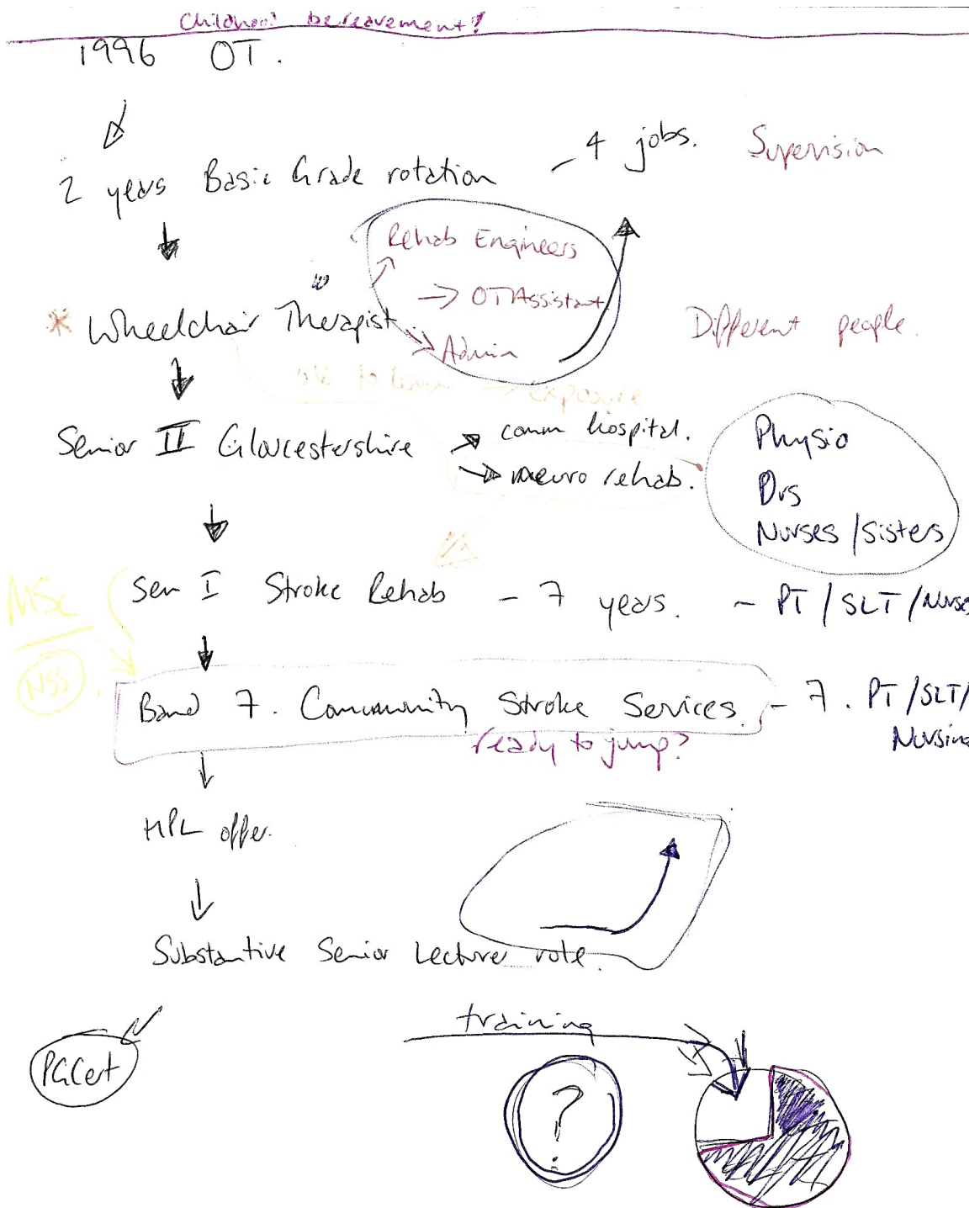
Appendix 6: Rich pictures – participant 7



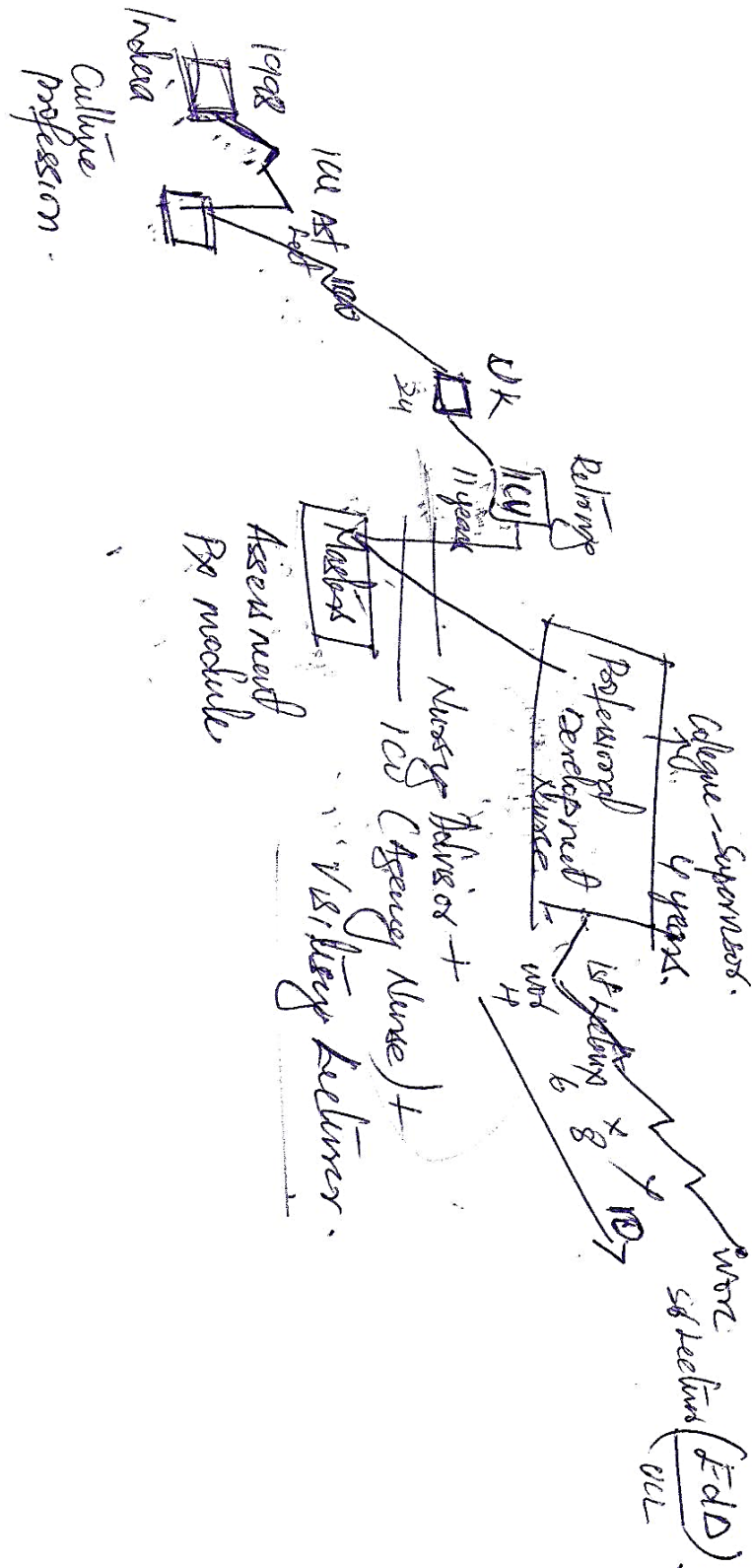
Appendix 6: Rich pictures – participant 9



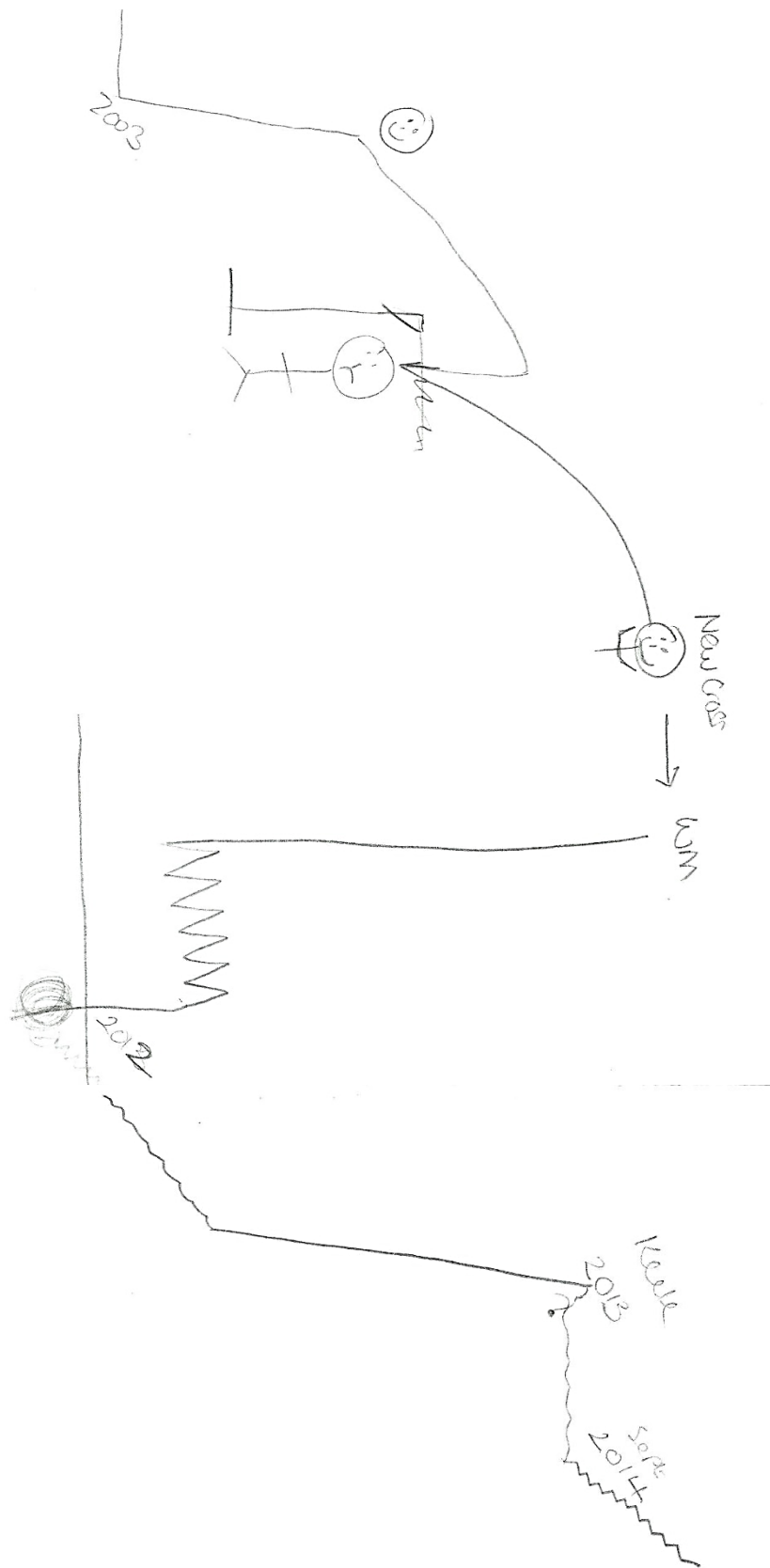
Appendix 6: Rich pictures – participant 10



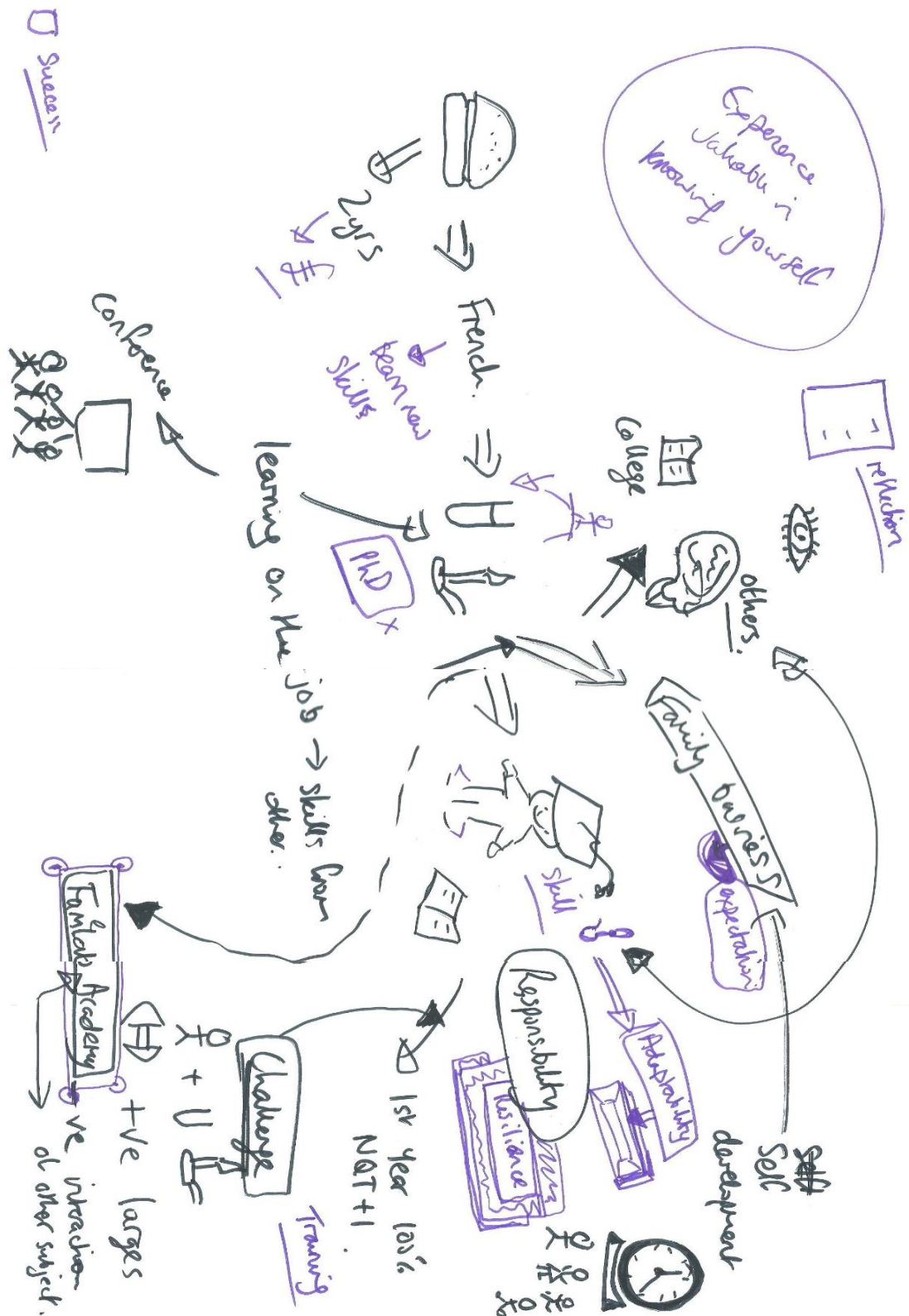
Appendix 6: Rich pictures – participant 11



Appendix 6: Rich pictures – participant 12



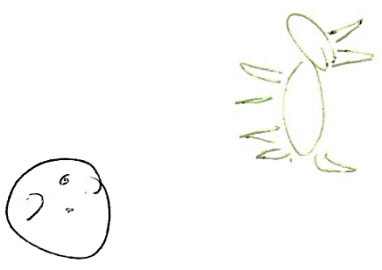
Appendix 6: Rich pictures – participant I3



Appendix 6: Rich pictures – participant 15

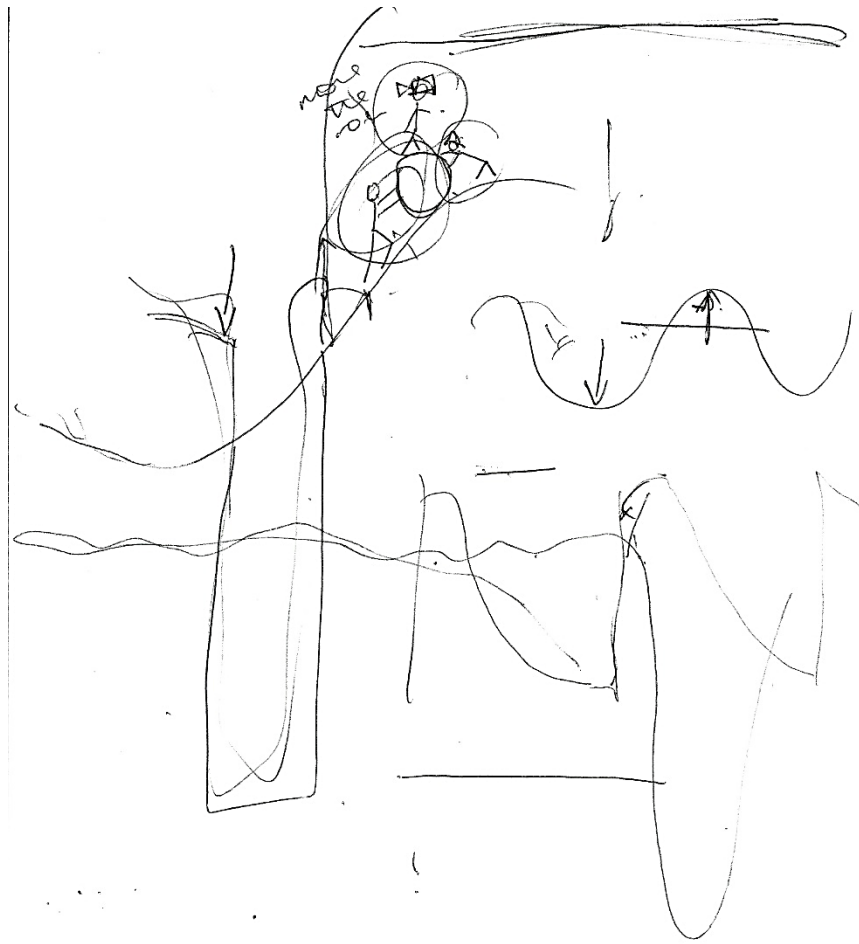
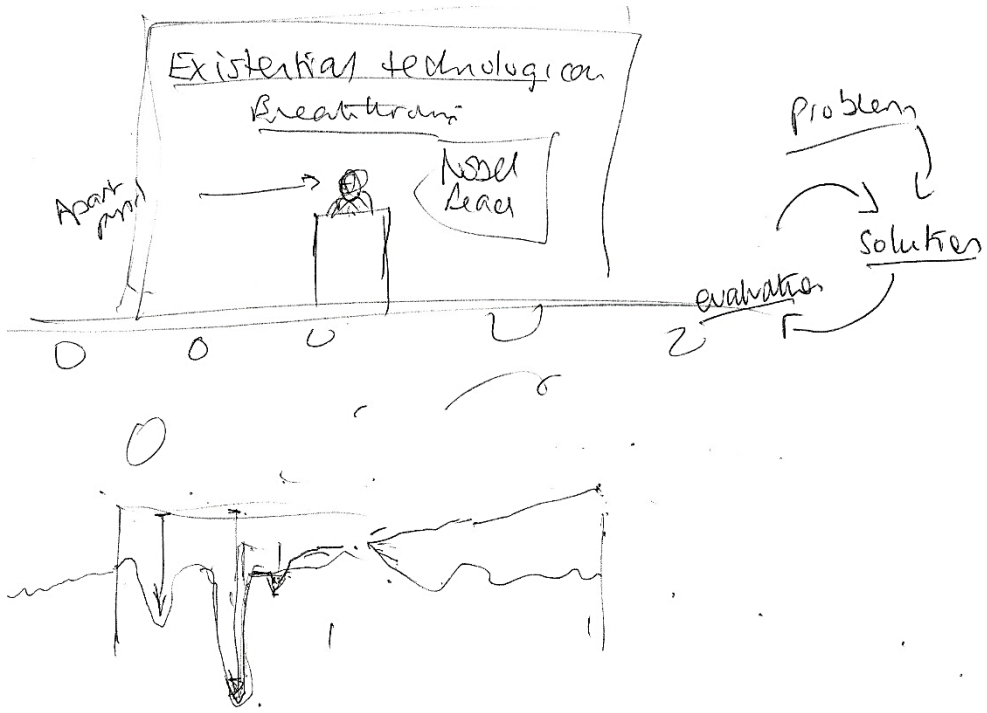


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31/regione
Relationship

Appendix 6: Rich pictures – participant 16

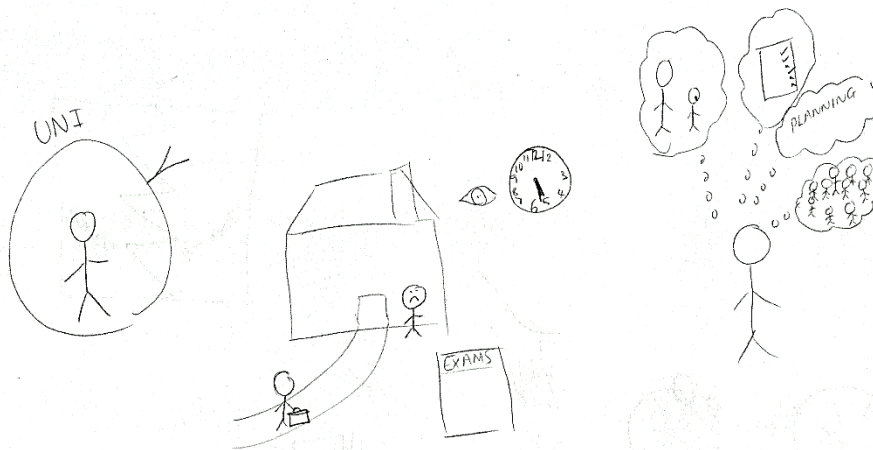
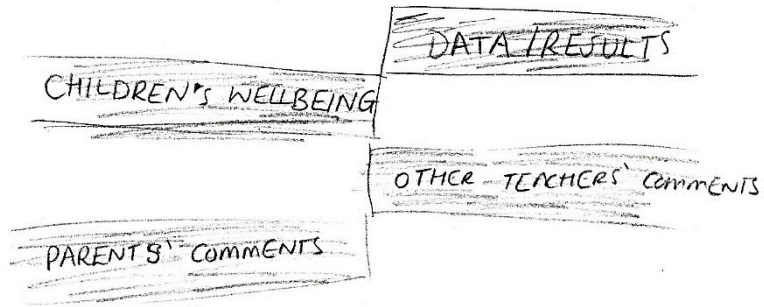


Appendix 6: Rich pictures– participant 17

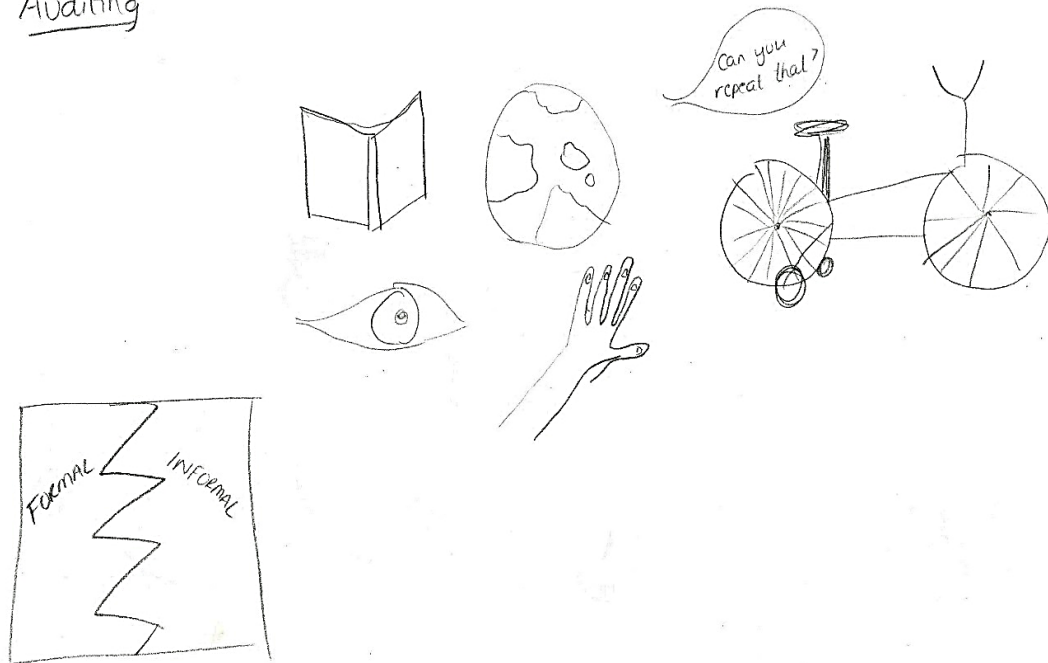


Appendix 6: Rich pictures – participant 18

Success



Auditing



Appendix 7: Publication list

Gisby, A., Solowiej, L., Ross, C., & Francis-Smythe, J. (2019). When did you last make a major change in your life? *Annual University of Worcester Images of Research Competition*. Worcester.

Gisby, A., Solowiej, L., Ross, C., & Francis-Smythe, J. (2019). Career change, learning and success. *Annual University of Worcester Seeds of Knowledge Post-graduate Research Methods Conference*. Worcester.

Gisby, A., Solowiej, L., Ross, C., & Francis-Smythe, J. (2019). It's like learning a new language. *BPS Creative Psychology Seminar Series*. Birmingham.

Gisby, A., Solowiej, L., Ross, C., & Francis-Smythe, J. (2019). Images of career change. *Annual University of Worcester Research Methods Conference*. Worcester.

Gisby, A., Solowiej, L., Ross, C., & Francis-Smythe, J. (2019). Using Rich Pictures to explore transformational career change. *Open University Psychology Associate Lecturer Conference*. Milton Keynes.

Gisby, A., Solowiej, L., Ross, C., & Francis-Smythe, J. (2018). Exploring the use and value of informal learning and development processes to the career success of transformational career changers. *BPS Midlands Conference*. Birmingham.

Gisby, A., Solowiej, L., Ross, C., & Francis-Smythe, J. (2018). Transformational career change. *Annual University of Worcester Seeds of Knowledge Post-graduate Research Methods Conference*. Worcester.

Gisby, A., Solowiej, L., Ross, C., & Francis-Smythe, J. (2018). Career transformation – good things sometimes take time. *Annual University of Worcester Images of Research Competition*. Worcester.

Gisby, A., Solowiej, L., Ross, C., & Francis-Smythe, J. (2018). Exploring transformational career change. *Career Development and Leadership seminar*. Worcester.

Gisby, A., Solowiej, L., Ross, C., & Francis-Smythe, J. (2018). Career change. *Annual University of Worcester Research Methods Conference*. Worcester.

Scheduled but cancelled due to Covid-19 pandemic:

June 2020 *University of Worcester Institute of Health Seminar Series*. Worcester.

June 2020 *Annual University of Worcester Seeds of Knowledge Post-graduate Research Methods Conference*. Worcester.

June 2020 *European HRD Conference*. Budapest.

March 2020 *Open University Associate Lecturer Psychology Conference*. Milton Keynes.