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Journal Information

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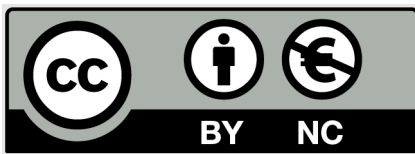
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Editorial

The theme for this issue of the Hillary Place Papers was ***Rising to Contemporary Challenges in Education Research***. With our understanding of the long-term impacts of the Covid pandemic developing, this issue was interested in addressing how the pandemic has affected approaches to research, how researchers are coping with and improving their post-pandemic research processes and the challenges faced by researchers when identifying, recruiting, and working with participants. Papers included in this issue explored various aspects of the authors' interactions with participants, such as positionality and collaboration as well as challenges faced when managing the research process and teachers' experiences of professional qualifications.

The first paper is **Power, Participants and Pandemics – steering a reciprocal path through research methods** by Michael Taylor, a part-time PhD student at the School of Education, University of Glasgow. Michael explores the need to consider reciprocity and power dynamics when working with human participants. He uses his own PhD research, involving interviews with school professionals and national policy influencers, which offers an example of how reciprocity and power dynamics may be employed to help overcome potential obstacles such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper highlights questions about how researchers might consider the power dynamic within interview research and offers suggestions of how this might be considered when planning to conduct interviews honestly, ethically and in a mutually beneficial way.

Our second paper is **An account of presenting a poster at the 16th Research Students' Education Conference (RSEC) at the University of Leeds** by Clare Copley, a PGR at the School of Education at the University of Leeds, who focuses on her personal experience of her research topic, and considers whether her positionality is a help or a hindrance. She reflects upon her personal connection with her exploration of sex and gender differences in growing up with Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) with specific consideration of mental health issues experienced by females with DCD and the impact of this as they transition into higher education. Clare reports that presenting her poster resulted in unexpected but welcome reactions of conference delegates, acknowledging that personal experience can be accompanied by passion, drive, and determination to overcome barriers. Clare's poster is included to complement her paper.

The third paper is about **Hungarian EFL Teachers' Experiences of CELTA**. Gergely Kajos, a Masters student at the School of Education at the University of Leeds, examines the experiences and motivations of non-native speakers of English who have undertaken the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), including their reasons for enrolment, such as seeking a challenge and new inspiration. This qualitative study involved reflective narratives and semi-structured interviews with three teachers, which were analysed using thematic analysis. The resulting analysis highlights implications for CELTA trainers and training providers by identifying key challenges and experiences of non-native teachers.

In our fourth paper, **Entangled Engagement: Getting Started with Lines, Knots and Participatory Theatre**, Hannah Wainwright, a PGR at the School of Education at the University of Leeds,

presents a think-piece reflecting on the challenges that she has faced in the early part of her PhD, during which she spent around 250 hours as a volunteer in the Theatre of Sanctuary programme run by a local theatre. She frames what happens at the theatre as an ongoing work of becoming, in which participants, spaces and methods are characterised as flowing and ongoing lines, which come together to create a fully-realised world. Hannah explores how, by becoming knotted within this ongoing flow of places, practices, and people, she has begun to accept the challenge of mess in her research.

Our last paper is **The challenge of managing the research process: from initial ideas to co-created new knowledge** by Marianne Talbot, a PGR at the School of Education, University of Leeds. This article reflects on Marianne's experiences as a PGR leading a Research England funded project focused on how best to support teachers to engage with professional development (PD), that commenced in summer 2022 and remains ongoing. The focus of this article is not the research itself but the process of bidding for funds, planning for and undertaking the initial research, and building on that research, leading to newly co-created meaning and avenues of investigation. For example, Marianne led a discussion about the project at the AEA-Europe Annual Conference in November 2022, and is now developing 10 case studies of successful teacher engagement with PD.

An exciting addition to this issue was the inclusion of papers and posters from **PGR students attending the 16th Research Students' Education Conference (RESC)** hosted by the School of Education. The conference theme, **Messy Research**, encouraged presenters to share the innovative and non-traditional research methods they used to engage participants in creative and dynamic ways. Anna Harwood, a PGR at the School of Education at the University of Leeds, summarises the conference, which provided an opportunity for Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) and Masters students to showcase their research as well as engage with peers and senior academics from the School of Education in a supportive and inclusive forum.

The editorial team would sincerely like to thank the contributing authors, the staff reviewers, and those who helped by reviewing papers, advertising the call for papers, and contributing in numerous ways to ensure the successful publication of this issue of the Hillary Place Papers. Thank you.

Power, Participants and Pandemics – steering a reciprocal path through research methods

Michael Taylor, School of Education, University of Glasgow

Abstract

This paper explores the need to consider reciprocity and power dynamics when working with human participants.

It classifies the potential costs to participants in research and how researchers can engage in acts of reciprocity to mitigate these and leave participants with a net benefit from participating in research. Using my own PhD research involving interviews with school professionals and national policy influencers, it offers an example of how these considerations may be employed, particularly during the time of extreme pressure placed on these participants from the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this paper, I highlight questions about how researchers might consider the power dynamic within interview research and offer suggestions of how this might be considered when planning to conduct interviews honestly, ethically and in a mutually beneficial way.

Introduction

Conducting research involving participants can offer a glimpse into the perceptions of the lived experiences of groups of individuals that offer differing perspectives of a social event or topic. Participants offer insight into their lived experiences, personal perspectives and struggles in their everyday lives. The delicate nature of disclosures from participants should be respected and protected, following ethical guidelines required of all research. Still, beyond this, the nature of participants giving their worldview generously to the researcher who may benefit should be considered. This window into the world of participants should be valued by researchers not just for the data that it may offer but also for the privileged position it places the researcher, benefiting from the time and openness of their participants. This benefit to the research should be considered, along with the potential for it to place a cost on participants that may need to be considered more subtly than other considerations, such as physical and psychological harm.

This work evaluates these considerations and uses the position of my own PhD research as a context. My research aimed to interview teachers and national policy influencers from both Scotland and England and explore their perceptions of the purposes for which assessment should be used in these two countries. Working with teachers and school leaders, it was necessary to navigate ethical procedures both for my institution and local authorities. These processes ensured that I considered the potential harm to participants. It did not ask me to consider the time cost to participants, however, which was particularly pertinent to school participants at a time when educational institutions were recovering their ways of working following the COVID-19 pandemic. Although different to direct harm, the difficulties that participation may cause should also be considered.

Research involving participants may invite them to become involved with or recall difficult situations, such as recalling areas of tension and conflict in their lives. Ethical procedures for education research should be consulted, such as the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines (BERA, 2018), which stipulate that researchers must minimise harm and consider ways in which researchers might 'protect all who are involved in or affected by a piece of research' (BERA, 2018, p.2). This need to protect from harm is, of course, a vital requirement for education research (BERA, 2018), as is the need to balance any potential harm with potential benefits (Cohen et al., 2018, p.111). Beyond the small discussion of the use of incentives for research and the need to maximise benefits to participants within this literature however, the obligation for researchers to contribute to the lives of their participants is limited and perhaps an oversight. This should be considered as particularly important where pressures on academics to produce publications are exerted (McGrail et al., 2006).

The need for a researcher to positively contribute to the lives of their participants can be termed reciprocity (Cohen et al., 2018) and involves the researcher considering their obligation to improve the lives of their participants. Reciprocity is necessary when there is an imbalance of power between those involved in research, which can be achieved by reconsidering the research methods and any power imbalances or by offering rewards and incentives to compensate for this power imbalance (von Vacano, 2019). Without this consideration, the researcher is taking research data through interaction with their participants, possibly with the reward of publication or research qualification for the researcher, and not offering a contribution to their participants. Research conducted in this way may be said to be exploitative of participants, and the term 'rape research' has been used to describe this form of exploitation (Sikes, 2006, p.112). Working with participants in this way may make any aim of improving the research context problematic, as the first benefit of the research to participants has not been considered. As Paulo Freire outlined, admittedly describing the role of teachers rather than researchers, 'The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves' (Freire & Macedo, 2018, p.44). When there is the potential for researchers to exploit their participants, even when the ethics of mitigating harm have been considered, it becomes of high importance that consideration is paid to what the researcher might do for their participants.

Opportunities for reciprocity may be realised in a number of ways, both informally and through formal incentives. Discussing tensions and strains with participants working and living in difficult circumstances may provide a rare opportunity for them to be heard and perhaps encourage them to continue these conversations about their context. This is especially true in contexts where individuals may be time-poor, or where policy enactment is enforced, such as schools, opportunities to discuss and reflect on such challenges may be discouraged. Where these participants are professionals such as teachers working in environments where accountability may restrict their agency (Buchanan, 2015), these research conversations may be an opportunity to offer trust and agency and a genuine opportunity for professional dialogue.

More formal reciprocity may take the shape of incentives that are offered to participants in exchange for their participation. These can be advertised as part of the initial contact from researchers and on consent documentation. However, the use of such incentives should be considered, as they may encourage participation, on a surface level, from participants just looking to receive the reward. Dockett et al. (2009) relates the use of reciprocity to building trust between participants and researchers due to the mutual benefit of participating in research, which is built on by Brooks et al. (2014) to mean financial incentives to demonstrate the value of the participant's input by the researcher. It may not be the case, however, that these financial relationships always build trust, as some participants may feel obliged to participate and continue within the research when they can ill-afford the negative implications of withdrawing from the research and financial opportunity. The sources of these finances should also be questioned as part of research ethics considerations by researchers and ethics panels, especially where private organisation funding may present a conflict of interest or assert the power to promote positive views around products or services.

The influence of power should be considered at all levels, with the interactions of different groups within the research. It has been argued that ethical considerations should be considered throughout the research process, not just during the initial planning or permission stages (Hammett et al., 2022) and so should the power balances between participants and researchers. As critical researchers attempting to reduce unethical imbalances of power, Foucault's work reminds us to work reflexively and consider how there might be undue influence on participants through reciprocity and incentivisation (Schirato et al., 2020). Readers and research users should also be critical of the role financial incentivisation has played within the research in a similar way to other areas of research, such as climate science communications framed by oil companies (Schlichting, 2013) and research on the effects of smoking from tobacco companies (Bero, 2003). Without this criticality for the research process and its outcomes, any findings cannot be assured to be removed from potential bias. Furthermore, the publication of findings that are less favourable to financial sponsors may be less likely to be published.

When conducting research within schools, it is most often the institution itself that acts as the gatekeeper for participants. However, my PhD research also involved permission to be sought from a local authority's education department and access to teachers was provided through school leaders. This presented ethical dilemmas, whereby recruiting teachers via school leaders was much easier than approaching individuals, but the informal conversations and persuasion of participants by the school leaders was unknown to me as the researcher. It would be commonplace for school leaders and parents to be contacted to arrange research with students within a school, due to difficulty with informed consent from young children; however, this would not be the same with adult professionals in school. A key concern with this is that teachers may, however, feel obliged to participate in the research or feel as though participation was required according to their employment contract. For this reason, it was important, within my research, for further communication beyond the introductions to be made with the teachers themselves

and to ensure they are approached directly once their interview transcripts are produced to ensure they still wish to participate in the research.

When working with teachers, it was common for them to describe our conversation as on a level of professional dialogue that they did not normally engage in. Assessment policies in many schools in England and Scotland are often related to external exams or government policy and enacted in schools on teachers. There is little conversation about how these might look or contributions from teachers to shape them. Each school was offered the contribution of a written report from me, whereby I would write anonymous responses to questions about my findings. This was offered to be useful with school self-assessment and enable schools to use it as evidence of third-party review of policy enactment, which is useful to schools as part of a review and preparation for normal external inspection processes such as Ofsted in England.

Through these themes of power, pandemic and participants, these issues were negotiated throughout the design of my main study. The negotiations were necessary to work for formal ethical processes as a normal part of PhD research and recruit participants as reflexive researchers. Each theme will now be considered in more depth and within the context of my PhD research participants.

Pressures on participants

Working with participants can place demands on them, which can vary greatly depending on the time commitments and the effects on participants' of engaging in the research themes. This work has highlighted reciprocity's significance for these demands, yet a deeper understanding of our research's impact on participants can aid in managing or valuing them. It should be a fundamental aspect of ethical research. However, this may not be explored beyond the level of reducing pressures that may be considered harmful or negative.

Obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, and addressing physical and psychological risks are key ethical concerns in the initial stages of research. I aim to delve into these aspects and advocate for equal consideration of participant costs beyond notions of harm. Notions of harm are currently served within many university ethics processes, although it has been argued that even these are addressed rather superficially (Hammett et al., 2022). Other consequences to participants from taking part in research should be equally considered by the research team before working with participants.

When considering informed consent, participants should be informed of what is required of them and the researchers should have considered this. Any participant information forms should inform the participant exactly what might be required in terms of time and logistics such as the location of the research. Gowen et al. (2019) provide recommendations for researching with individuals from the autism community. One of their suggestions is to talk to members of the community to understand what information would benefit them about the study and how to format this in a manner that can be understood. This recommendation however would help

researchers working with any group of participants to ensure all parties understand what is required.

The requirements of participation might be considered as costs to participants and should be considered as part of the research. Working with participants can help researchers to identify these costs and plan to mediate or compensate for them. This should be a necessary part of informed consent and designing research that aims to at least leave participants in a state that is no worse than prior to the research. Iltis (2004) compares this to people not agreeing to financial costs in other life transactions without a quotation for the costs before work is completed. To enable others to consider the costs of participation to their participants, some categories of participation costs have been classified below in Table 1. This list has been generated through a consideration of potential school participants, informed by my own work with schools during the PhD study. This list is by no means exhaustive but meant to illustrate and broaden more commonplace notions of what researchers might be asking of their participants.

Category of Cost	Description
Loss of privacy and confidentiality	Participants might feel uneasy about sharing personal information, fearing their privacy could be compromised. Even with assurances of confidentiality, the risk of unintentional disclosure or data breaches might cause anxiety.
Time commitments	Participating in research often requires a significant time commitment. This can be particularly burdensome for participants who are already busy with work, family, or other responsibilities.
Financial costs	Some research studies might involve travel expenses, accommodation costs, or time away from work. These financial burdens could deter potential participants, especially those with limited resources.
Stigma and social consequences	Engaging in certain research, especially if it is about stigmatised topics (e.g., mental health, substance abuse, sensitive personal experiences), could lead to social stigma, discrimination, or negative consequences in personal and professional relationships.
Cognitive burden	Studies involving complex tasks, cognitive challenges, or a high cognitive load might be mentally taxing for participants. This can lead to fatigue, stress, and reduced decision-making capacity.
Withdrawal of consent	Participants who experience discomfort or dissatisfaction might want to withdraw from the study, potentially leading to feelings of guilt, regret, or pressure to continue participating.

Loss of control	Some research activities might involve relinquishing control over decisions, such as when participants are exposed to experimental conditions they might not fully understand.
Misunderstanding	Participants might not fully comprehend the study's purpose, procedures, or potential risks, which could lead to unrealistic expectations and later disappointment or distress.
Unintended Consequences	Participants might not foresee all the potential consequences of their involvement, and some aspects might affect them negatively in unexpected ways.

Table 1 Categories of potential cost to participants to be considered in research design

My PhD study also included work with national policy influencers as interview participants. For my policy influencer participants, I provided them all with the agency over when the interviews would take place by providing access to a booking form connected to my calendar. I was mindful to include evenings and weekends to provide flexibility around their other responsibilities. It would also allow them to be mindful of when they participated, as they may not wish to participate at a busy time when the cognitive burden of participation may be detrimental to their other priorities.

As I recruited and worked with participants, I consulted with them before and after the interviews about how the work would be used and how they might like it to be used. Although my teacher participants were concerned with protecting their anonymity as an individual, all expressed hope that my work would be shared with policymakers in their school and nationally to help those making decisions understand the lived experiences of teachers and students. I asked them about whom they would like anonymised statements to be shared with to ensure they had control over this and could inform how the impact of my research might look in communication with policymakers. This also helped them to discuss with me how best to protect their anonymity, especially as this might pertain to the disclosure of certain details that may not be necessary to the research point, they were making but might allow them to be identifiable. Ensuring this happened was particularly important given that I only worked with fifteen participants across two schools.

Although my work was not participatory, as the work was completed by the researcher rather than groups of interested people who may also be participants (Cohen et al., 2018, pp.55–56), it was nonetheless important to consult with the teachers I was engaging with. Often for schools, this involved co-planning with school leaders as well to ensure teachers could be provided with the time needed to participate. However, there is always the potential for unintended negative pressures from the research, and it was important for me to feel that I was able to give something back to the teachers and evidence to them that their participation had made an impact. This led to a consideration of how reciprocity might be used to address any negative effects of

participation beyond the harms which I had considered to remove during the university ethics process.

Working with Participants ethically to ensure reciprocity

Once researchers have considered the costs for their participants of contributing to the research, they should consider how the research might benefit the participants. Reciprocity has been introduced in this paper as an approach to bring tangible and intangible benefits to individuals who contribute to the research process. This paper argues it should not just be the researcher who personally benefits from the research process but the communities who have contributed to it.

Returning briefly to the need to consider the impact of the research on the participants, it is useful to consider their contribution and how this might inform the idea of reciprocity. Baumrind (1964), considering the ethically infamous behavioural study by Milgram, suggests that in some work, the researcher may be detached from the subject, which can prevent them from considering their contribution to the research as an individual. In Milgram's obedience study (1963), participants were asked to deliver electric shocks to fellow participants with increasing levels when they responded with an incorrect answer to a question. The electrical shocks were pretend, and the second participant was actually a confederate who pretended through a microphone to be shocked, causing distress to some participants, although 84% were pleased to have taken part when interviewed as part of a debrief. Baumrind continues to say that 'a debt does exist, even when the subject's reason for volunteering includes course credit or monetary gain' (Baumrind, 1964, p.421). Cohen et al. (2018) suggest this can be resolved if participants are thanked for their contribution in a post-research meeting with the researcher. This suggestion fails to fully consider the true cost of participation and perhaps overvalues the role of the researcher's time as a potential reward (Brooks et al., 2014).

Previous writing on reciprocity, such as Brooks et al. (2014), has provided too few suggestions for how researchers might embed methods to compensate participants for costs involved with research participation. A comprehensive list of suggestions as to how researchers might engage in acts of reciprocity is needed to allow for full consideration when planning research methods and ethics. Whilst the argument of this paper is that the choice of how to mitigate the pressures of research participation is best done with participants, it is beneficial for researchers to have a framework of possible modes for reciprocity to help with this planning.

In this section, I introduce categories of reciprocity that might be considered in the research design phase. The aim is to collate suggestions of how researchers can work with participants to ensure the research process is rewarding for all parties. It is also worth noting here that the activities designated as reciprocity can be considered as a part of the research methodology and have been reported as illuminating to the analysis of other aspects of the study (Trainor & Bouchard, 2013). The suggestions collated in Table 2 below aim to contribute a systematic list but are not, nor can they be, exhaustive. All research and its demands on participants are unique, and

so this list should be used to stimulate a broad consideration of how research works to be mutually beneficial.

Category of reciprocity	Description
Participatory design of research	<p>Inviting participants to identify what should be researched and how a research project might attempt to do this is a fundamental aspect of some epistemologies, including the feminist perspective. For feminist research, it is considered a fundamental principle that ‘research participants should be fully included in the research process; they should help to set the research agenda ... and have an opportunity to influence its design, analysis and dissemination’ (Oakley, 2000, p.18). This aspect of reciprocity can work to ensure that research considers what is most valuable to and for the groups of society they are committed to understanding.</p>
Financial	<p>Financial contributions may be provided to participants in the form of payment vouchers, competitions, or direct payment. This can be a useful way to compensate for the time, and any costs participants face when taking part in research activities. Beyond this, however, it can also offer an incentive for participation that may be more difficult to turn down by potential participants if, for example, they are facing financial hardship. It may be found that participants are engaging in the research for financial gain, which may impact their willingness to participate authentically (Dockett et al., 2009).</p> <p>Brooks et al. (2014, p.97) suggest the use of financial incentives to ‘reduce the power differentials between the researchers and those being researched’. However, there is an inconsistency with this argument in that if some participants feel financially dependent on the research and the incentive offered, the researcher holds power over this resource. Participants may lose the ability to opt out or perhaps say honest ideas that may lead to them being de-selected to participate.</p>
Informative	<p>Through participating in the research process, participants may gain knowledge and understanding in the area of study, or may receive a follow-up conversation with the researcher, who may be an expert in their field.</p> <p>This conceptualisation, however, identifies the researcher as the expert and the participant as lacking knowledge or understanding. This may of course, not be the case, and suggesting this may create inequalities of power (Dockett et al., 2009).</p>

<p>Opportunity for direct impact</p>	<p>Participants may choose to engage with research if there is a prospect of it potentially leading to a direct impact on their lives or situations. The impact may contribute towards better policies and procedures that help to improve their lived experiences or for those they care about. This depends, however, on all parties being aware of what potential impact might arise from the study.</p>
<p>Opportunities to contribute to wider society</p>	<p>Participants may contribute to research to make a difference in the lives of others; this requires the researcher to inform participants of how their participation can make this contribution. It can also be achieved through co-designing with participants how answers to the research questions might help with their own agency or work towards the desired improvements.</p>
<p>Fulfil Professional or Personal curiosity</p>	<p>Some research participants may welcome the opportunity to discuss and co-research aspects of their professional or personal lives. This can bring immediate benefits, such as providing research participants the agency, expertise, or encouragement to look deeper into their personal lives or situations. Some participants, such as employees and students, may lack an opportunity to explore their situation in their normal professional lives or situations.</p> <p>It is worth noting that this time spent considering the problems participants might face can also be detrimental to their experience. This is particularly true where participants may lack the agency to change their difficult circumstances and become further aware of their helplessness within a given situation. Trainor & Bouchard (2013) identify that these conversations might also be challenging for researchers when participants disclose difficult situations where the researcher may act as an advocate or support for the participant, but this help is declined.</p>
<p>Opportunity to voice thoughts and feelings</p>	<p>Offering participants a voice is a core strength of many social research methods and provides an opportunity that may not otherwise be available to some individuals. For example, in some institutions, such as schools and hospitals, where professionals are responsible for the people they are caring for, it is important to take account of the individual’s needs and choices. Hearing the voices of those who do not always make the decisions can help them to feel heard and provides further benefit to them if these views are communicated to those that do.</p>

Table 2 A classification of categories for reciprocity in research design

The opportunities detailed above for researchers to reciprocate the contributions participants can make to their research have the potential to impact all who engage with it. In summary, the framework offers an opportunity to provide ideas for all who participate in research design to

receive positive benefits in response to the pressures described earlier in this paper. By no means, however, should they be considered transactional in their use, and opportunities to provide as many types and amounts of reciprocity should be utilised and provided to participants, where feasible.

In contrast to the above recommendations for applying reciprocal approaches, Brooks et al. (2014) provide a general caution against using a degree of incentives that may distort the purpose of the research. It may also disincentivise participation where the reciprocation portrays participation as needing whatever the incentive may be. An example of this might be teachers receiving CPD for participation in research on teaching and learning, whereby their participation may appear directed by school management.

When considering how to reciprocate within my own research, this was considered before engaging in the ethical review process and before recruiting participants. Although the methods did not follow a true participatory design, teachers were consulted about the methods for the interviews and how they might be conducted. It was important that teachers feel as comfortable as possible to talk about their practice without the feeling of any judgment about competency. The school leadership was asked whether they would value any feedback about the assessment processes within the school and anonymised feedback about where this was working and where there might be tensions between policy and practice. This was taken up, and I was careful to minimise any expectation of assessment expertise on my own part, rather than I would simply provide a narrative of what was working within the school and what could be improved from the perspectives of teachers.

During COVID-19, it felt particularly important to try and offer something to the schools and other participants for this study. Many public sector organisations were feeling particularly pressured as the pandemic created many operational difficulties without any lowering of expectations as to service quality. Kim & Asbury (2020) identified pressures teachers faced from COVID-19, including concerns over pupil welfare, increased workload and even their professional identity. The schools I worked with were coping with the need to recuperate lost learning time, cover teacher absence due to illness, and work with their communities to continue supporting them with other difficulties that were exacerbated by the pandemic. The schools' agreement to facilitate twenty-five hours of interviews with their teachers was a significant gift to my PhD project and, therefore required consideration of how this time could be used for the benefit of the schools and members of their community.

Throughout these considerations, there should be a consideration of power. In the case of working with schools, empowering the participants who can inform and improve the nature of the research and how they are treated as co-designers with benefit to them.

Who has the power in research?

Power in research can be considered in position with the work of Michel Foucault, whose work is useful for us to understand how positions of power are entwined with knowledge (Foucault,

2020). Researchers may possess and shape certain types of knowledge, but so do certain participants, and this can impact how research relationships are initiated. Social science researchers will take the contributions from participants and select, contrast, disagree and reinterpret what is said, and this power should be moderated with the voices of those we are researching (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). By contrast, participants may be chosen because of their position, expertise, and prior experience, which can empower them in some research situations. These relative positions can provide difficulty for the organiser and opportunities to explore the lived experience of actors in their field of study.

Firstly, concerning research with participants with less power in the research process, there are numerous considerations, including the option for participatory methods described earlier. Methods may need to be changed and adjusted depending on the participant's age, abilities, or position (Aldridge, 2014), which is especially useful for working in schools where participants may be of different ages and need adjustments to language. Trying to pre-empt and mitigate all aspects of these can be challenging, especially when potential vulnerabilities are unknown prior to the research planning, making the empowerment of participants a challenging prospect.

The meaning of the term empowerment with participants is rather nebulous despite much discussion over the need to consider participants as more than research subjects. Ross (2017, p.2) uses the term empowerment to identify methods that have the ability to 'dismantle inequalities in researcher-participant relations'. Whilst the various methods of empowerment are beyond the scope of this work, using the previously discussed frameworks of pressures faced by participants and methods to reciprocate their participation would be a good start to ensuring all participants are not only welcome to engage but also reduces the barriers that potential participants might face.

As indicated previously, some participants may be considered to have the reverse position in the research relationship with the researcher. These participants may put the researcher in a dependent position (Elliott, 2023), and this can make it difficult to ensure participation (Goldstein, 2002) and operate on the agenda of the research priorities rather than the priorities of the participant (Morris, 2009). Of course, this final point considers that the participant may not have been part of the research design process; however, when such participants are involved, there needs to be careful consideration that their 'elite' status does not allow them to dominate the research planning in a similar way.

This section has reviewed two possible positionalities that may create inequalities between participants and researchers where they are not the same individuals. For my own research, these inequalities were considered in the design. As a former teacher in England and now a researcher from a known local university, it was difficult to predict how participants may interpret my position. This was true for the teachers in school that I worked with as much as for the participants I referred to as policy influencers who had worked as high-profile academics, civil servants, and heads of organisations.

For the teachers I worked with, it was important to be transparent with these positions, and some teachers seemed to appreciate being able to relate to this in their explanations with phrases such as ‘you know how it is when you are trying to make decisions about a class as you are teaching dynamically’ or ‘you’ll know we all have pressures for certain grades to be produced’. At the same time, I was also aware that some referred to me as ‘the assessment expert’ and other such phrases where I was positioned as the researcher who might be making judgments about practice. I ensured all participant information made it clear that the purpose of the work was to improve the understanding of how assessment policy worked and how this might be improved, not judge any individual teacher or organisation for their practice. In addition, I reassured my participants that I did not consider myself to have any particular expertise in their own context and found myself more perplexed by the difficulties of making assessment work the more I researched it.

Despite my explanation of not wishing to judge participants, many seemed nervous of what would be asked at the start of our interview. Only once I had explained my aim to reciprocate their contributions by anonymously reporting what was working for my participants regarding assessment policy did they seem to relax and enrich their discussion. They were happy to tell me of their frustrations in their role and the barriers and pressures they faced, knowing that my research aimed to understand these mechanisms and report what wasn’t working to policy influencers. Many changes had taken place at a fast pace in these schools, especially since COVID-19 and the restrictions and pressures this applied meant that many felt their views and experiences hadn’t been consulted. Knowing the research aimed to understand and use their suggested priorities seemed to empower the school participants to discuss their most pressing thoughts on the interview topics openly.

In contrast to school participants, the policy influencer group may have understood their role in the research, as they were individually sought to contribute their expertise. Working with these participants as a researcher meant ensuring I could reveal their true thoughts and feelings on the research topic and gain their perspectives on how the policy environments were created. Similar solutions were deployed, however, by framing the interviews as conversations to co-create a shared understanding of how certain policy environments can be created and what the effects of these might be for different contexts, such as schools serving different communities. Inviting the elite policy influencers to create a shared understanding helped to mediate any role of control or expectations they might bring to the interview due to their position and enabled the relationship to be reflexive and based on shared investigation.

Ensuring that both groups of participants could participate in the research with me was a deliberate aim. As a PhD project, it might have been more difficult for the project to be designed in a completely participatory way, especially as the groups of participants were diverse, which may have placed a further burden on them that would have precluded their participation. Whilst it was possible for me to meet with school leaders before commencing the research, as they rightly wanted to gate-keep their teacher’s time and workload, it wasn’t possible to co-plan this

with teachers without asking them to commit to further time and workload. This may have also been difficult due to my participants both working in schools and national policy institutions, as the availability of the groups may not have been possible to work synchronously. This section has attempted to provide a brief summary of how power dynamics in my research were considered, however, and offer an example of how these dynamics can be diverse within the same study depending on the makeup of the participant groups.

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic provided a variety of opportunities for researchers to contemplate how their methods may need to be adapted to continue working with research participants. This paper has considered the power dynamics of research and how participants might be burdened or rewarded through their participation in research. These issues of pressure and reciprocity were particularly acute during the pandemic as the social institutions we work with such as schools, were already facing unprecedented challenges to continue functioning normally. Although the pandemic brought these issues to the fore, it shouldn't be considered that they should not be prioritised as we emerge into a more normal way of working.

Just as some methodologies, such as online tools, have continued in their use since the pandemic, considerations, and ethical processes to reduce the burden of research should also continue. This paper aims to contribute to this endeavour by providing a framework for planning the potential pressures that may be placed upon those participating in research and potential methods by which they may be incentivised and rewarded for their participation. Whilst ethical processes and guidelines support researchers to consider examples of physical and psychological harms that may arise from research, the consideration of other costs and the corresponding need for reciprocity has not been classified. Whilst these examples may apply differentially depending on the participant and their context, they offer a framework to initiate conversations between the researcher and their participants to ensure that research rewards all those who participate.

This paper also used my own doctoral research to illustrate how some of these themes and considerations may be applied. I recognise the potential, however, for my own methods to have been improved to ensure a more democratic process to the considerations of pressures and reciprocity for my participants. If this is true, it serves as evidence for the further need for the frameworks within this paper to be incorporated into the processes of ethical planning. These frameworks should be further developed and incorporated into ethical guidelines to ensure that research methods' pressures and power dynamics are considered beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

Biography



Michael is a year 6 part-time PhD student at the University of Glasgow. His work has meandered through various topics before finally settling on an exploration of how national policy attempts to create change in Secondary schools in England and Scotland through assessment processes. He originally planned to conduct the majority of his methods within schools but had to diversify his participants and conduct all of his interviews on Zoom. He works as a professional tutor in Initial Teacher Education at Liverpool Hope University.

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An account of presenting a poster at the 16th Research Students' Education Conference (RSEC) at the University of Leeds

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Personal Experience of a Research Topic - a Help or a Hindrance?

This year's Research Students' Education Conference (RSEC) held at the University of Leeds on 19th July 2023 focussed upon the theme of 'messy research'. Considering my own PhD research challenges and 'messy research', I chose to reflect upon my personal connection with my chosen area of study. My PhD is concerned with exploring sex and gender differences in growing up with Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) with specific consideration of mental health issues experienced by females with DCD and the impact of this as they transition into higher education. Traditionally, there has been male bias within neurodevelopmental research (Santos et al., 2022). This has implications for missed or misdiagnosis for women and girls, who tend to present with complex co-occurring conditions, which can hinder diagnostic processes and limit access to support within health and education settings (Young et al., 2018).

As an occupational therapist by profession, I work with young adults within higher education, many of whom are neurodivergent and some experience difficulties specifically relating to DCD. In addition to my professional experience, I have always been vocal about being the proud parent of a child with DCD and how, like many mothers before me, this led to some self-realisation about lifelong difficulties I have had, resulting in my own diagnosis of DCD in recent years. Both my clinical practice and personal experiences have undoubtedly driven me professionally and instilled a passion and determination to contribute to making positive change – which ultimately is why I began on my PhD journey. However, I have sometimes considered if there is a negative aspect to these experiences. I have questioned if I am at risk of jeopardising my own research with a personal bias relating to DCD, which could blur boundaries within my professional relationships. When exploring the conference theme of 'messy research', I began to consider if I am conscious enough of how my own experience of DCD differs from that of others due to the heterogeneous nature of the condition. It is important to ensure that my personal connection with DCD does not limit my knowledge and understanding of how diversely the condition can present.

I am well versed with the concept of self-reflection, it forms a crucial aspect of my working practice and guides much of my clinical judgment (Krueger et al., 2020). However, completing this poster enabled discussions with my academic supervisors who encouraged a process of reflexivity. Unlike reflection, which is largely completed retrospectively to consider what could be done differently to enhance practice, reflexivity encourages consideration of your positionality. Positionality within research requires an acknowledgment of the position that an individual adopts within their research based upon personal identity and world views (Holmes, 2020). Within research, reflexivity can be used to consider beliefs, judgements, and bias throughout the whole process, guiding a theory of knowledge and approaches (Jamieson et al., 2023). This was

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Personal experience of a research topic – a help or a hindrance?

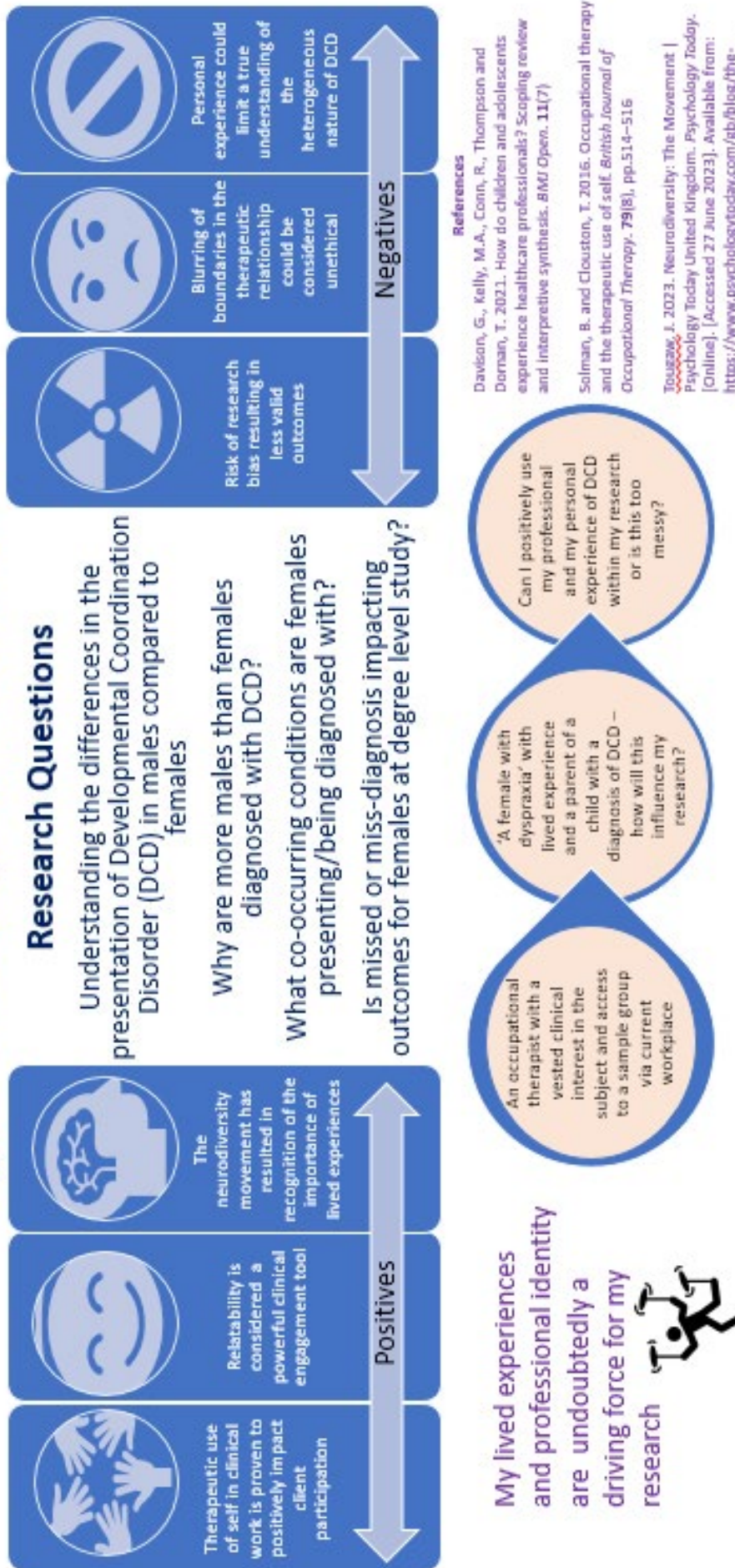


Figure 1 - Clare Copley's Poster

helpful in reframing my concerns and to consider how using my knowledge and lived experience can potentially help rather than hinder my research practice. I am reassured that transparency about my personal experiences could enrich my study design through a process of thoughtful engagement (Jamieson et al., 2023). Open and honest discussions with myself, my academic supervisors, peers, and stakeholders at different stages of my research could help me to gain a deeper understanding of my position, enriching my study and therapeutic relationships.

Presenting my poster resulted in an unexpected and welcome development within my research. The overall reaction of peers and conference delegates to my poster seemed to echo much of the findings about the importance of lived experiences when considering neurodivergence (Tougaw, 2023). There was a general acknowledgement that with personal experience can come passion, drive, and determination, which many felt was an essential component of postgraduate study. It was encouraging to hear from other researchers with a personal experience or connection to their own research. This once again demonstrated the motivation and undeniable insight that can be gained from lived experience.

Biography



Clare Copley is an occupational therapist and a second year PGR. Clare's research is concerned with young women's experiences of Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) and the impact upon mental health and academic outcomes. Clare has lived experience of DCD and is keen to consider how this might make her research 'messy'.

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Hungarian EFL Teachers' Experiences of CELTA

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Abstract

The Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) is widely recognized as the most prominent English language teaching qualification. Although originally aimed at Native Speakers (NS), CELTA has become popular amongst non-native speaker (NNS) teachers in recent years due to its worldwide reputation. There is limited research focusing on NNS teachers' CELTA experiences, which is why this study explored the CELTA experiences of Hungarian English as a Foreign Language teachers.

This qualitative study involved reflective narratives and semi-structured interviews with three teachers, which were analysed using thematic analysis. The obtained data revealed that participants had similar perceptions of CELTA to teachers from other parts of the world (Anderson, 2016, 2018, 2020; Aydin et al., 2016; Tang, 2020). For instance, they found CELTA useful for enhancing their teaching skills and improving job prospects. Additionally, this study helped identify new reasons for enrolment, such as seeking a challenge and new inspiration. It also had implications for CELTA trainers and training providers by highlighting the challenges and experiences of non-native teachers.

Introduction

CELTA is an internationally recognised teaching qualification that trains candidates to teach English language without any teaching experience/background within one month. CELTA has become one of the most widely recognised qualifications in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), which is shown by its presence as a minimum requirement in three quarters of ELT job advertisements worldwide (Cambridge University Press and Assessment, 2018). Historically, CELTA has been associated with being a course for native speakers of English (Ferguson and Donno, 2003), and therefore has been mostly researched by focusing on trainees from Western anglophone countries (see Jenvey, 2022). However, limited research has focused on the CELTA experiences of trainees in non-native English-speaking countries. Two studies have focused on non-native trainees' experiences globally (Anderson, 2016, 2018), whilst some studies explored the Turkish (Aydin et al., 2016), Egyptian (Anderson, 2020) and Japanese (Tang, 2020) contexts. Given the scarce literature in the European context, it was found worthwhile to explore the CELTA experiences of trainees in this area. This study was specified on the Hungarian context due to the importance of quality English language teacher training in Hungary. As the local language (Hungarian) is not widely spoken outside of Hungary, it is crucial that English language education is at a high standard to encourage international connections via the use of English as a lingua franca.

In order to improve CELTA, which is having growing popularity amongst Hungarian teachers; the aim of this research project was to gain further insight into the experiences of Hungarian CELTA graduates by looking at their reasons for taking the course and how useful they have found it. It aimed to explore the efficiency of CELTA from Hungarian teachers' perspective, by looking at trainees' motivation and challenges in relation to CELTA.

Literature review

Foreign language teacher training

Up until the 1970s, Teacher Training (TT) in foreign language education in Western countries focused primarily on the teaching content, which meant knowing the subject language well (Graves, 2009). Since then, foreign language TT curricula have gradually become more inclusive of pedagogy, which meant equipping trainees with not only content-knowledge, but with the practical skills to transmit that knowledge to students (Farrell, 2021). With the globalisation of English, different teaching contexts started to require different approaches to training and qualifications. For instance, in a primary school context in Europe, teachers are generally required to have gained state-recognised qualified teacher status through a university degree, whilst adult courses in language schools may only require a short-term qualification (Barduhn and Johnson, 2009). These different contextual expectations of teachers have influenced TT curricula due to the different needs in such diverse teaching settings (Freeman, 2009). Farrell (2021) states that the level of emphasis on theory and practice varies according to different kinds of TT.

Although various scholars discussed the irrelevance of "nativeness" in foreign language TT (Farrell, 2021; Moussu and Llorca, 2008), some research show that English language proficiency is considered as a crucial factor for Non-Native Speakers' (NNS) professional training (Berry, 1990; Murdoch, 1994). Consequently, academics have found that TT for NNSs may lack sufficient training on the pedagogy aspect of the content-pedagogy dichotomy due to the crucial need for achieving proficiency in the language to become successful language teachers (Moussu, 2006; Randal and Thornton, 2001). For instance, Tang (2020) found that qualified non-native English-speaking teachers with many years of experience may seek additional courses to improve their methodological knowledge through pedagogy-focused courses, such as CELTA.

In Barduhn and Johnson's (2009) review of the issues around certification in the English Language Teaching (ELT) industry, an array of qualifications was evaluated with their relevance to professional aspects (such as TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), CELTA, DELTA (Diploma in English Teaching for Adults), BA, MA, MEd, PhD, etc.). One of their conclusions was that many teachers begin their journey in the ELT industry after completing 1-month introductory courses, which are usually referred to as TEFL certificates (Barduhn and Johnson, 2009). In the next section, I will review one of these TEFL courses, namely the CELTA.

CELTA

According to the official syllabus (Cambridge University Press and Assessment, 2022), CELTA is

an introductory course for candidates who have little or no previous English language teaching experience. It may also be suitable for candidates with some experience but little previous training (p.3).

It is a 120-hour long course, completed full-time in four/five weeks or part-time over 2-3 months. The minimum requirements to enrol include 1) having English language proficiency at least at Common European Framework for Reference for Languages (CEFR) C1 level (proficient), 2) being at least 18-years-old, and 3) having an education that would be required to enter higher education.

The syllabus covers the following five main themes:

- A - learners and teachers, and the teaching and learning context
- B - language analysis and awareness
- C - language skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing
- D - planning and resources for different teaching contexts
- E - developing teaching skills and professionalism.

(Cambridge University Press and Assessment, 2022)

Assessment is carried out throughout the whole duration of the course, and it includes written assignments and six hours of observed Teaching Practice (TP). Overall, it is a course that approaches TT in practical and dynamic ways to accommodate the trainees, who have diverse backgrounds and reasons for taking the course (Scott, 2007).

CELTA has both positive and negative aspects, which have been highlighted by researchers (Barnawi, 2016; Borg, 2002; Hobbs, 2016; Kanowski, 2004; Mackenzie, 2014; Stanley and Murray, 2013). On the one hand, CELTA addresses the content-pedagogy dichotomy in a disproportionate way. In the syllabus, four themes (A, C, D and E) focus on pedagogy and only one theme (B) focuses on language. Hobbs (2013) pointed out to the superficiality in language knowledge and awareness in TEFL courses, arguing that 120-hour courses are not suitable for equipping trainees with sufficient understanding of linguistic knowledge, despite it being crucial for second language teachers. Moreover, Stanley and Murray (2013) concluded that CELTA may deliver what can be expected from a 4-week course, but it does not provide sufficient content knowledge about the language, which would be crucial for both NS and NNS candidates. In this vein, it is worth re-mentioning that CELTA was originally designed for NS of English language (Ferguson and Donno, 2003) in an era when a NS language knowledge was considered the ideal (Phillipson, 1992). CELTA's Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which is defined as an approach to teaching EFL with a focus on building communicative competence in students (Littlewood, 1981), emphasises an English-only classroom policy, which is particularly suitable for monolingual English NSs (Howatt, 1984; Anderson, 2020). However, due to the spread of English as a lingua franca and the disputed ownership over English language nowadays, such arguments are less relevant and in fact disputed (Houghton and Rivers, 2013).

Furthermore, arguments remain that CELTA does not provide suitable preparation to be considered a TT leading to a teaching qualification due to its brevity and highly procedural approach (Stanley and Murray, 2013). Although CELTA's learning outcomes may help trainees become English language teachers, the acquired teaching skills may only be useful in contexts similar to the TP sessions of CELTA (Barnawi, 2016). In various subfields of the ELT industry, such as EAP (English for Academic Purposes) or CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), CELTA qualified teachers may not be able to successfully deliver lessons in the environments that require more in-depth understanding of both language and teaching methodology (Ferguson and Donno, 2003).

Nevertheless, CELTA has some beneficial components and aspects. Research about CELTA trainees' experiences found that the TP is a highly beneficial and much-valued element of the course (Borg, 2002). Kanowski (2004) added that the real value behind those six hours does not necessarily lie in the teaching itself, but in the self-reflection on trainees' professional behaviour, which therefore creates a bridge between professional practice and pedagogical knowledge. Consequently, with a sensitive consideration of its position on the wide spectrum of teacher education and teacher development, CELTA could be regarded as a useful course (Mackenzie, 2018).

Non-Native Speakers experiences of CELTA

The first study that explicitly considered NNS teachers' experiences of CELTA was conducted by Anderson (2016) who explored the difference between NS and NNS in their perceptions of initial training courses (ITCs), such as CELTA and Trinity College London CertTESOL. The study found that NNSs tend to complete ITCs for improved job prospects, but they receive less relevant support than NSs. NNS participants mostly hoped to learn about innovative methodology, which may be incompatible with their future teaching contexts in their home countries. Also, it was found that experienced NNSs benefit less from ITCs' language awareness component due to their previous teaching and TT experiences. Consequently, Anderson (2016) concluded that ITCs are not suitable for the majority of NNS candidates and suggested that an alternative course could be more beneficial to them, despite the overall satisfaction demonstrated by NNSs. Overall, although this was a pioneering study due to researching NNSs in relation to CELTA, it did not provide in-depth explanations for some findings, which Anderson (2016) acknowledged by recommending further qualitative research.

Anderson (2018) further investigated NNSs teachers' experiences of ITCs with a focus on professional development. In this study, he found that participants' main reasons for taking an ICT were to improve their career prospects and their classroom practice, which is consistent with his previous findings in 2016. Reflecting on native speakerism (the ideology that considers NSs superior in language teaching), participants thought that a widely recognised ITC, such as CELTA, could be a qualification that somewhat removes the barrier between NSs and NNSs in hiring practices. In addition, Anderson found that the most useful element was the TP in conjunction with reflective feedback sessions. These findings could be connected to the strengths of CELTA

discussed by Borg (2002) and Kanowski (2004), such as the focus on practical teaching experience via reflective practice. However, some experienced teachers reported that incorporating new elements into their internalised teaching style was challenging (Anderson, 2018). The incompatibility of monolingual and highly communicative CELTA methodology with participants' future teaching contexts was another issue for some participants (Anderson, 2018), which was one of CELTA's limitation argued by Barnawi (2016) and Ferguson and Donno (2003). Moreover, although ITCs led to career promotions in some cases, participants felt that it did not help to obtain roles that were impacted by discriminatory NS-only policies (Anderson, 2018). It is worthwhile mentioning that participants had not heard of Cambridge's in-service courses, which might have been more useful (Anderson, 2018). These courses, however, have since been discontinued and replaced with courses, such as DELTA (Cambridge University Press and Assessment, 2023). Overall, Anderson (2018) provided multiple recommendations to tailor ITCs to become more suitable for NNSs (such as to be more inclusive of experienced teachers' expertise). He also concluded that despite its limitations, CELTA remained a positive experience for NNS trainees, who agreed that CELTA is "like a passport" in the international context of ELT (Anderson, 2018, p.6).

Contrastingly, a study in the Middle East has come to different conclusions. Aydin et al. (2016) investigated how CELTA is perceived by Turkish teachers with different teaching experience and with ELT and non-ELT-related educational background. This study, which involved 44 participants, revealed that CELTA is beneficial for trainees with different educational backgrounds. Although the study found that candidates with non-ELT education background and little teaching experience benefit the most from CELTA, the six hours of TP remains insufficient for them. For experienced teachers, however, the TP provided an opportunity to evaluate and reflect on their existing teaching style. Experienced teachers had previous knowledge about ELT theories, and therefore could focus more thoroughly on the improvement of their teaching style (Aydin et al., 2016). All participants reported that CELTA's feedback and reflective approach makes it a useful course, and that it was an internationally valuable certificate. These findings seem to oppose Anderson's (2016) conclusion by demonstrating that CELTA can indeed be a suitable choice for professional development for experienced NNS teachers. Aydin et al.'s (2016) results are persuasive because an in-depth explanation of the participants' experiences is provided through looking at the influence of their teaching and education backgrounds. However, the contextual specification makes it difficult to draw strong conclusions for NNS teachers because depending on each country/region, teachers might experience different approaches to teacher training, which then impacts their practice (Darling-Hammond and Lieberman, 2012).

Anderson conducted another qualitative study looking into NNS teachers' perceptions of changes in their classroom practices six months after completing CELTA (Anderson, 2020). In contrast to his previous studies involving a global cohort of participants (Anderson, 2016; Anderson 2018), he focused this project on Egyptian teachers. The study revealed that CELTA graduates intend to incorporate communicative and learner-centred approaches into their teaching. However, it is crucial that the application of CELTA's teaching approach on specific teaching contexts is

accounted for during the training, which is a finding that continually emerged in his previous studies (Anderson, 2016, 2018). It was also found that teachers' self-confidence both in the classroom and in the international job market was increased further due to completing CELTA (Anderson, 2020). This study provided an insight into the Middle Eastern context previously initiated by Aydin et al. (2016).

Another study by Tang (2020) explored three Japanese teachers' perceptions of CELTA in terms of usefulness and implementation in their teaching practices. By interviewing teachers, who had experience with both young learners and adults; it was found that their perceptions are consistent with previous studies (Anderson, 2018, 2020; Aydin et al., 2016) for three reasons: 1) CELTA's most valued element is the TP, 2) the relevance of linguistic knowledge teaching during CELTA is not significant due to the trainees' previous teacher training, and 3) they aimed to incorporate CELTA's core teaching techniques into their teaching settings by applying a more inductive approach. This is a crucial study because it explored NNS teachers' experiences who had previous training in East Asia.

Research Questions

Based on the existing literature about the CELTA program, it has been found significant to look at teachers' experiences in a European country (Hungary) to contribute to the holistic understanding of NNSs' experiences of CELTA. Therefore, this research aimed to contribute to the globally available research on NNSs' experiences of CELTA by answering the following Research Questions (RQ):

RQ1: What were the participants' reasons to take CELTA?

RQ2: How useful did the participants find CELTA?

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach because it aimed to investigate in detail people's experiences of teacher training. Two research methods were used. Participants were asked to write a reflective narrative, which is a method that can provide a written account of people's personal perceptions about their experiences. This was followed by individual, online, semi-structured interviews, which is a method that involves engaging conversations with participants to gather in-depth qualitative data. The reflective narratives were used to gain a general understanding of participants' pre-CELTA TT and teaching backgrounds. This research method helped develop the interview questions, allowing the researcher to collect even more in-depth data.

The research involved three participants, who were chosen via purposive sampling to ensure the relevance of the data collection to the RQs. There were three sampling criteria:

To self-identify as Hungarian and as a user of English as a foreign language,

To have completed CELTA successfully and

To have at least six months of EFL teaching experience after completing CELTA.

Table 1 providing information about the participants can be found below.

Participant pseudonyms	Year of CELTA	Educational background	Teaching experience (context)	Teaching experience (years)
Erzsébet	2015	Teacher training in EFL	Primary, Secondary, Further Education, Adults, Business English, Teacher training	Over 20 years
Margit	2018	Teacher training in EFL and Geography	Primary, Secondary, Higher Education	Over 20 years
Ilona	2012	Teacher Training and MA in EFL	Further Education, Higher Education, Business English, Exam Preparation, One-to-one Tutoring	Over 25 years

Table 1. Information about participants.

Data collection began with participant recruitment via social media. Participants were first asked to write a reflective narrative on their previous TT and teaching experiences in no more than 300 words. Once the reflective narratives were received by the researcher, a time was agreed for the interviews. The interviews lasted approximately 25 minutes. Interviews were automatically transcribed by Microsoft Teams software and then reviewed and edited by the researcher to correct transcription errors, as well as to improve readability by removing false starts, repetitions and unnecessary fillers. When the researcher identified an ambiguous comment during the editing process, follow-up emails were sent to the participants for clarification. The researcher wrote up the findings and sent the corresponding section to the participants to conduct member checking, which is a crucial process in qualitative research to ensure the credibility of the findings. After member checking, all sensitive data was permanently destroyed. The collected data was manually analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2006). Through engaging with the narratives and transcripts and identifying codes, the following themes were identified: seeking novelty, better career prospects, teaching methodology, teacher training methodology and collaboration.

Ethical Considerations and Challenges

This study was guided by the British Association of Applied Linguistics Good Practice Guidelines (2021) and the Association of Internet Researchers Ethical Guidelines 3.0 (2019). Some of the key

ethical considerations were obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and storing all sensitive data on an encrypted cloud space.

One ethical challenge was encountered by the researcher. Some interview questions could potentially bring up memories of negative experiences due to discriminations faced by NNSs in the ELT industry (Selvi, 2011). To avoid this risk, the researcher emphasized to participants at the beginning of the interview that they did not have to answer any questions that would make them feel uncomfortable.

Findings and Discussion

Seeking Novelty

Some participants recalled looking for new inspiration and/or a new challenge as a reason to take CELTA. Firstly, Erzsébet stated in her reflective narrative that “[she] wanted to gain first-hand practical experience on how to find inspiration again”. She further expanded on this reasoning in the interview:

‘I had been teaching for some 14-15 years at the time and felt that I didn’t really have the same drive I had when I started teaching, and I really wanted to find new ways to get back this inspiration again [...] to get back to teaching because that was a period in my life when I was contemplating giving up teaching or doing something else’

(Erzsébet, interview).

This could potentially be explained by experiencing teacher burnout. Khani and Mirzaee (2015) found that EFL teachers may experience burnout due to low self-efficacy in their teaching by failing to engage students. In Erzsébet’s case, CELTA was a tool to tackle demotivation after over a decade of teaching; and resulted in acquiring new classroom management techniques, which increased student engagement.

Secondly, Margit decided to do CELTA due to its reputation of being a challenging course. She recalled hearing about CELTA being a particularly difficult and demanding programme from her co-workers, and as she described herself as an audacious person, she wanted to experience it herself:

‘I actually wanted to do [CELTA] because I heard so much about the fact that it's so hard. So, I was wondering what can be so hard’

(Margit, interview).

Such reputation may have stemmed from her co-worker's experiences of CELTA, as various studies identified the high level of challenge associated with CELTA (Anderson, 2018; Borg, 2002). Margit further explained her challenge-seeking character, which suggests that this finding may be regarded as a personal reason to take CELTA.

Better Career Prospects

A crucial finding of the data collection was CELTA's role in having better career prospects. This was both a reason for and a result of obtaining CELTA. Furthermore, it elicited perceptions about the value of CELTA in the ELT job market.

Firstly, teaching abroad was the mostly associated notion with CELTA amongst the three participants. For instance, Ilona recognised that CELTA was considered a certificate with which “you can become an English teacher anywhere in the world”, which is a perception that emerged in Barnawi's (2016) research as well. As one of her dreams was going to the UK to teach on a pre-session summer course, it seemed that CELTA would help realising her ambitions of getting hired abroad. Further to completing CELTA, she taught on multiple summer courses, which she then associated with a sense of achievement in her career as demonstrated by the following extracts:

‘[CELTA] was good for fulfilling my dream. I have been to these pre-session courses three summers...’

(Ilona, interview)

‘...how can you be [prouder] of yourself than by saying that I have taught English language in the United Kingdom?’

(Ilona, interview).

Although one of Anderson's (2018) conclusions was that CELTA is not useful for finding employment abroad for the majority of NNS teachers, the findings of this study, despite the small sample size, can question this conclusion because not only Ilona, but Margit also reported success in securing EFL teaching jobs outside of Hungary. Margit recalled CELTA as a key to securing jobs in the international labour market. In her experience as a foreign teacher in the Middle East, the employers are “[keener] to keep you as a teacher” if you have CELTA, regardless of other qualifications and experience. This was especially relevant because around the time when she was considering CELTA, she noticed a tendency towards hiring local teachers over foreign ones. Although CELTA was not a reason for finding a job abroad, it was deemed beneficial in keeping her job. Participants in Anderson's (2018) research reported being made redundant unless they take CELTA, which is similar to Margit's experience towards the CELTA-dominated certification for securing a job. The experiences of Ilona and Margit provide an example for CELTA's usefulness for better career prospects for NNS teachers.

CELTA was considered as a tool for international job opportunities by Erzsébet too. The first time Erzsébet had considered doing CELTA was when she had plans for moving abroad and was looking at ways in which she could be hired as an English teacher in the Middle East. Ilona also mentioned that by getting CELTA-certified, she had anticipated a higher salary both for having the opportunity to move abroad and for being able to apply for vacancies with better remuneration locally. These findings confirm the conclusions of CELTA being strongly associated with improved job prospects in Anderson's (2018) and Barnawi's (2016) research findings.

Nevertheless, when asking about better career prospects, different forms of discrimination were mentioned in several responses. Margit felt that by having completed CELTA, she could now apply

to more vacancies than before with her master's degree only. She continued explaining that the main requirement has become to be CELTA-certified in the international EFL job market. However, she highlighted that “in many places they look for CELTA-certified teachers as only natives, which is [something that is] always going to be there”. Additionally, Ilona witnessed that even in the pool of CELTA-certified teachers, you can get hired because of your gender and your appearance, instead of for your knowledge and experience. This shows that the discrimination NNS teachers face can go beyond native speakerism and extend to sexism (discrimination based on gender) and lookism (discrimination based on physical appearance). This finding supports Fithriani's (2018, p.741) conclusion of racist policies, such as “recruiting White English teachers”, accounting for an additional challenge NNS teachers face in ELT professionalism. Consequently, this episode left Ilona questioning the actual value of CELTA:

‘If we say that [CELTA and DELTA are] the top English teaching industry qualifications, then if such things happen, it loses its value.’

(Ilona, interview).

12 of the 19 participants in Anderson's (2018) research also reported that having an internationally recognised teaching certificate cannot counteract hiring practices dominated by native speakerism. Therefore, the findings of this research project suggest that CELTA's value is questionable in the global job market as the interviewed Hungarian EFL teachers report experiencing unjust employment screening despite being CELTA-certified.

Teaching Methodology

Teaching methodology has been found as a controversial topic associated with CELTA. On the one hand, as a reason to take CELTA, Erzsébet and Margit recalled looking for the most up to date teaching methodologies. The following interview extracts demonstrate what they had hoped to gain from CELTA:

‘I've been already teaching for more than 10 years, and I wanted to brush up on my knowledge, to get to know more about what is up to date, what is more relevant to what I'm doing in the classroom’

(Margit, interview)

‘I wanted to find and explore new practices for methodology because I felt that I got to the end of my resources and even though I was reading a lot online and trying to discover new things, I just felt that on my own I wouldn't be able to implement those’

(Erzsébet, interview)

Erzsébet continued by explaining that she needed “proper guidance” on how to make her methodology more up-to-date and effective, which is why she chose CELTA. Based on the internet research she had done on the course provider's website, she concluded that CELTA would give her what other trainings, such as masterclasses or local language schools' training courses, have

failed to do. In addition, another participant, Margit, wrote in her reflective narrative that her reason for taking CELTA was her "desire to improve [herself] as a teacher and add to [her] existing teacher toolkit". Asking her about CELTA's usefulness, she went into more detail about how CELTA fulfilled her hope to improve her teaching methods. For example, with the help of CELTA trainers, she could properly acquire teaching techniques, such as Instruction Checking Questions (ICQ) and Concept Checking Questions (CCQ), which she has been using in her teaching ever since. As she does not speak the native language of her students, it was crucial that she applies the "CELTA way" in her classes every day:

'[ICQs and CCQs] are actually working. Even though I don't speak Arabic, I can understand whether my students understand me or not because of these questions'

(Margit, interview)

The notion of identifying and working on professional difficulties as a teacher, such as low student engagement, has similarly emerged from Erzsébet's views on CELTA. She considered the experience of "[facing] your own weaknesses as [an experienced] teacher" as a significant contribution to why CELTA was a positive experience for her. Despite the high workload she experienced during the course and having to prepare for the TPs with different levels, she enjoyed that she had to apply a new approach to teaching, which was different to what she had experienced in Hungarian state schools. Therefore, learning about a new teaching methodology was deemed beneficial and highly applicable in her post-CELTA teaching, which is demonstrated by the following interview extract:

'Before CELTA I was always giving an explanation [to the students]. After CELTA I was trying to make them work out things on their own because they can [do most things]. I was just not familiar with this method [of student engagement]'

(Erzsébet, interview).

Erzsébet also mentioned how certain CLT techniques, such as ICQs and CCQs, help her ensure that her students understand grammar. This may mean that, for Erzsébet, CELTA was the key in shifting from a deductive to inductive teaching. These findings are consistent with the findings of other studies that focused on NNS teachers' experiences of CELTA (Anderson, 2016; Anderson, 2018; Aydin et al., 2016, Anderson, 2020; Tang, 2020). Therefore, this study supports the argument that one of CELTA's most appreciated features is its potential to provide trainees with efficient teaching methods.

On the other hand, Ilona concluded that as a one-to-one EFL tutor, she does not use the typical activities which they practiced during the CELTA course, such as pair and group work. This finding supports the argument about a limitation of CELTA discussed by Barnawi (2016), and Ferguson and Donno (2003). The four-week training cannot account for the diversity of ELT contexts, which was confirmed by Ilona's perception of CELTA's usefulness in relation to teaching methodology.

Moreover, such concern emerged in Anderson's (2020) findings too, in which it was reported by Egyptian EFL teachers that CELTA did not prepare them for specific teaching contexts. Anderson's (2020) findings combined with Ilona's comment emphasise that although CELTA can be useful for acquiring teaching methodologies, providing adjustment strategies to tailor the CELTA-way to fit specific teaching contexts may be desired to be incorporated in the CELTA curriculum.

Teacher Training Methodology

CELTA's training methodology received both positive and negative comments in the data collection. On the one hand, one of the reasons why Margit found CELTA useful was its practical approach to training. She highlighted that implementing the training input in her TP sessions was a crucial factor in improving herself during the four weeks of CELTA. She concluded that the trainers make you face your weaknesses as a teacher. She recalled that CELTA had a significant impact on herself from the very beginning:

'For me it was like I went to Budapest one day and the next day I wasn't myself... You fall fully apart and then you put [yourself] back together [piece by piece]'

(Margit, interview).

Additionally, she stated that trainers provided feedback in "such a smooth mode that it gets under your skin". They are not instructing you but "guiding" your development. To demonstrate, with the help of the trainers, she could acquire how to use the course material "for [her] own advantage". She also pointed out that she had never finished a class without acquiring something new: "you always have something to take away. There is no lesson that you walk out without a takeaway". This is a perception that is likely due to CELTA's reflective approach to training teachers. This has been highlighted as an advantage of CELTA in Kanowski's (2004) work by arguing that CELTA can be successful in only four weeks due to its reflective training methods.

On the other hand, Ilona had some negative experiences in relation to CELTA's training. She recalled facing humiliation due to being a qualified teacher with years of teaching experience. She remembered the training as an unpleasant interaction:

'I was humiliated, sort of oppressed every day [during the TPs], when I put such things in practice that I had seen before on methodology courses in the UK. You were told that 'no, no [don't do that, do this]'

(Ilona, interview).

She argued that trainers would not tolerate teaching techniques that were inconsistent with the CELTA curriculum. Therefore, she concluded that she would not do the course again, although she admitted the usefulness of being CELTA-certified later in her career as discussed above.

It is relevant here that when Copland et al. (2009) investigated post-observation feedback in CELTA and other TEFL courses, they concluded that many trainers do not receive sufficient training in how to provide reflective feedback and called for more support and resources from training

organisations. Whether Ilona's negative experience was a result of one of the CELTA trainer's training style or similar incidents have occurred with other trainees is a question that cannot be answered within this research, and therefore calls for future research.

This experience could also be connected to Anderson's (2018) and Aydin et al.'s (2016) contrasting findings about the effects on training experience of being an experienced teacher on CELTA. Although the usefulness of such a notion was found to be questioned in Anderson (2018) and confirmed in Aydin et al. (2016), it was unanimously found that it can be difficult to incorporate new methods into internalised teaching skills. Therefore, this may suggest that CELTA trainers should receive training to be more inclusive in training experienced teachers. However, this may be conflictive due to CELTA being advertised as an introductory course and not as a professional development course.

Collaboration

Firstly, another reason for enrolling in CELTA for Margit was to meet native speakers of English. She wanted to meet speakers of English who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to the people in her work environment:

'I was hoping to get trainers from England... because I hear English speakers from all around the world, but not natives. I meet Indian, Pakistani, Moroccan, Egyptian, Sudanese and Saudi English speakers, but none of them are native. So, I really wanted to get in touch with native speakers and hear their voices actually'

(Margit, interview).

For Margit, CELTA was a tool to meet native speakers due to the general perception of CELTA being a course for NSs as described by Ferguson and Donno (2003). It is notable that despite native speakerism being a key topic in TESOL research in the past four decades, there has not been a significant shift in how society thinks about NS and NNS teachers beyond academia (Tupas, 2022). Although Medgyes (2017) discussed that NSs have an undeniable role in ELT, this finding may also be understood as an example for the consideration of NS superiority as a pertaining issue due to their accents and associated ownership over English.

Secondly, it must be acknowledged that for some trainees, interacting with English speakers with different accents may pose an additional challenge. For instance, Ilona found it difficult to communicate with fellow trainees and trainers from Australia and Scotland for the first weeks due to their accents. In addition, as explained above, Margit considered CELTA as a course for NSs due to the traditional association of CELTA being designed for NS. She enjoyed this as a challenge, however it also caused communication difficulties that at times left her feeling that she was "lagging behind because of the language". NNSs' experiences of CELTA in relation to collaboration with NSs has received little attention in research. However, research on MA TESOL programs have identified similar perceptions to these findings. An example is demonstrated by international students on MA TESOL in Canada reporting the negative impact of the level of their English

language proficiency on their social engagement (Faez and Karas, 2019). Liu (1999) suggested that MA TESOL courses accommodate NNS students by providing more support to improve their English language proficiency. Consequently, although one of the requirements to enrol in CELTA is to have C1 level of English, it may be desired to provide additional language support on CELTA courses. As a conclusion, it is crucial that trainees are supported for their specific learning needs. This may mean further support in linguistics and grammar for example, which can be a crucial need of NS CELTA trainees too (Borg, 2002), or additional help with the improvement of trainees' English language proficiency.

Lastly, Erzsébet valued the collaboration with other trainees from different countries including the US, China, the UK, Germany and Russia. Although generally preferring to work independently, she enjoyed helping her British friend with the assignments by using her previous experience in learning linguistics. This relates to Barratt's (2010) recommendation about fostering collaboration amongst trainees by sharing their previous linguistics knowledge with each other. A similar idea of collaboration is recommended by Medgyes (2017) who emphasized the importance of reciprocal support in using NSs' and NNSs' individual strengths and weaknesses. He suggested recognising teachers' own highlights and challenges and complementing each other to create a better educational environment. Although this recommendation is for NS-NNS collaboration in teaching, it could be applied to training scenarios, such as CELTA.

Conclusion

The aim of the present qualitative research was to investigate Hungarian EFL teachers' experiences of CELTA. Firstly, a common reason of the participants for taking CELTA was for better career prospects. Each participant highlighted how the possibility of teaching abroad was a motivating factor in enrolling on CELTA. Secondly, participants also reported seeking a way to acquire a more up to date EFL teaching methodology in CELTA. It was viewed as a course that equips trainees with innovative teaching skills, which was a key factor in seeking professional development after over a decade of teaching. Moreover, an additional reason to take CELTA was the participants' aspiration for a challenge and new inspiration. Due to the role and perception of CELTA in the ELT industry, CELTA can be a way to achieve professional satisfaction and validation. Furthermore, one of the participants decided to enrol in the CELTA course to meet NS of English. This can be viewed as an additional benefit of CELTA for those seeking to interact with NS speakers. Overall, CELTA is useful in finding employment abroad. However, its value in the ELT job market was questioned due to native speakerism, sexism and lookism hiring policies. Furthermore, CELTA was considered useful for acquiring teaching skills that improve students' engagement. Particularly, ICQs and CCQs were highlighted by the participants. It is notable though that CELTA's usefulness in terms of teaching methodologies is highly context specific, which is why it is recommended that CELTA incorporates adjustment strategies that allow teachers to tailor the "CELTA way" to trainees' specific teaching contexts. Finally, it was found that the availability of language support may be desired for certain trainees. This is crucial in making CELTA more inclusive and effective for all trainees.

The key contribution of this research is that it provided valuable insight into trainees' perceptions of CELTA in the Hungarian context. The findings are relevant to CELTA providers for creating a more inclusive training space and helping trainers to recognise and adjust to NNS trainees' additional needs.

Limitations

The researcher identified two limitations of the research project. Firstly, the small sample size could be viewed as a limitation as to how strong the conclusions can be made for a broader (Hungarian/European) context. Secondly, participants had completed CELTA over five years ago. CELTA is continuously undergoing quality-control, which may suggest that certain aspects of this study's findings on CELTA have been improved over the past years.

Biography



Gergely Kajos is a postgraduate student in TESOL at the University of Leeds. He also works as an Academic Writing Mentor with the Learning Development Team at the University of Leeds. He has previously worked in various English language teaching contexts (EFL, CLIL and ESOL) in Spain, Hungary, Indonesia and the UK. His current research interests include learning development in HE, EAP and social justice in TESOL.

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Entangled Engagement: Getting Started with Lines, Knots and Participatory Theatre.

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Abstract

This think-piece reflects on the challenges that I have faced in the early part of my PhD, during which I have spent around 250 hours as a volunteer in the Theatre of Sanctuary programme run by a local theatre. Drawing on the work of Tim Ingold (2007;2015), the paper rejects metaphors that see humans as bounded and separate individuals which might be characterised as blocks or blobs (Ingold, 2015, p.3). Rather I frame what happens at the theatre as an ongoing work of becoming, in which participants, spaces and methods are flowing and ongoing lines (Hayes et al., 2021, p.514), which come together to weave the world from “ever unspooling strands” (Ingold, 2015, p.15). Using illustrations drawn from Ingold’s work and from my experience at the theatre, the paper explores how, by becoming knotted within this ongoing flow of places, practices, and people, I have begun to accept the challenge of mess in my research.

Introduction

I suspect that I am not alone in bringing a desire for order to my PhD studies. When I began my doctoral studies in 2021, I pictured my PhD a bit like a block tower in which the bricks represented my ideas. According to this metaphor, each idea would each fit neatly with those surrounding it and would be combined into a solid wall of knowledge, which I could write up, submit, defend, and move on from! I think I can forgive my slightly younger self for picturing my research like this, because the building-block metaphor is deeply entrenched in our culture (Ingold, 2015, p.14). A cursory google yields over seven and a half million results for the phrase “atoms as building blocks of the universe” for example, and we often hear DNA described as the “building blocks of life” (Ingold, 2015, p.14). Nor am I the first to use it epistemologically, as was illustrated by statistician Douglas Altman who, in 2012, collated hundreds of examples from PubMed, Google and Google Scholar of papers describing themselves as the building blocks of knowledge (Altman, 2012).

What I have learned in the early part of my PhD, however, is that my project is much messier than my initial imaginings allowed. The purpose of this paper is to consider my emerging and continued dissatisfaction with this architectural metaphor and its failure to accurately describe the research process in which I am engaged. I will discuss some of the theory that has been helpful to me in making sense of what I have found, my discomfort with the messiness that I have experienced in my work, and my ongoing quest to reconcile myself to it.

A Messy Project

My PhD grew out of my teaching career, and specifically my unmet desire to adequately support refugees who were seeking sanctuary in the UK. The terms ‘Migrant Crisis’ and ‘Refugee Crisis’ have been used in the British and European media since 2015, when large numbers of people started dying when attempting to travel to Europe by boat (Balabanova and Balch, 2020, p.413).

Between starting teaching in 2010 and leaving the profession in 2020, I welcomed increasing numbers of children with refugee backgrounds into my classroom against the backdrop of the ‘crisis of hospitality’ (Balch, 2016), which saw legislative measures designed to make staying in the UK very difficult (Simpson, 2020, p.489) and a media campaign of misinformation about migration (Simpson, 2020, p. 489), which positions migrants as a threat to the nation’s prosperity and security (Cooper et al., 2021, p.196). At the same time, my teaching practice was impacted by austerity-driven financial cuts, which impacted language support, classroom assistant time, and staff training (Granoulhac, 2017). I had something of a lightning-bolt moment when I realised that the African drumming sessions that my class took part in once a week seemed to be a particular moment of connection for a newly arrived member of my class, and embarked upon my PhD with lots of partially formed ideas about how performing arts might be useful as an educational tool for children with refugee backgrounds.

As a part-time student, I have not yet begun the process of data generation, but I have spent around 250 hours volunteering in the Theatre of Sanctuary programme run by a local theatre. It is within this context that I intend to conduct my research. The programme runs every week, with one session catering for adults and the other for pre-school children and their families. The sessions are facilitated by theatre practitioners, a member of staff from the theatre and a team of volunteers, and they involve storytelling, drama games, conversation, and the sharing of food, amongst other things. It has become increasingly evident to me, during my engagement in these sessions, that this research is not going to be as neat and orderly as I imagined at the project’s outset.

One obvious inadequacy of the building block metaphor is that it fails to take account of the fluid nature of my role in the sessions. I do not arrive at the theatre, execute a neatly classifiable task that can be encapsulated within a tidy framework and then leave. Rather, my involvement includes a range of activities including conversations, moving furniture, supporting crafts, occasional piano playing, and the celebration of birthdays and other special events. As part of my volunteering, I have distracted small children from too-bright lights in a projector, cleaned dirty floors, poured juice, made tea, supplied food and become greetings-card-buyer-and-writer-in-chief. The edges of my role are wobbly and stretch and move to accommodate what is needed in each session. This flexibility is not accommodated by my building-blocks picture.

Furthermore, I occupy a dual role within the sessions, as both a volunteer who is genuinely committed to the theatre’s objectives, and as a beginning researcher – constantly on the lookout for things that might shape the direction of my project. This duality is particularly evident in my relief at the theatre’s recent procurement of more funding for its Theatre of Sanctuary projects, which is coloured by my own, slightly selfish questions around whether this funding will last for long enough for me to complete my data generation. Even before starting the data generation process, I have begun to experience the “role confusion” identified by Jenifer Hagan in her work on ethnography and volunteering (Hagan, 2022, pp. 1180-1181). I anticipate that this will become even more pronounced as I start my data generation, when I will face the challenge of remaining

a helpful member of the team, who is fully engaged in the session, whilst also keeping my eyes, ears, pen, and camera on things that speak to my research questions (Garthwaite, 2016, p.64).

My position as a volunteer also troubles the insider-outsider dichotomy (Merton, 1972, p. 21; Saidin and Yaacob, 2016), because I am simultaneously an insider (in my role as a volunteer) and an outsider (because there is no forced migration in my background) (Holmes, 2020, p.7). What's more, my position at the theatre means that I have a very definite impact on the sessions. I cannot claim to be an objective observer who arrives, watches, and leaves the sessions, returning to my desk to transcribe what I have witnessed. While in that picture the researcher might be a block who can be easily removed from the setting in which they are working, my volunteering role means that I am inevitably a part of what happens during the sessions, and any knowledge that is created later in my project will come about through embodied interactions (Watson and Till, 2010, p.126), rather than distant and objective observations. My relationships at the theatre do not fit easily into a block either. They are messy, multi-faceted and complicated. My professional background is as a primary school teacher, and this has left me with a strong inclination to maintain professional distance. I recall, for example, my initial anxiety when an adult participant in one of the sessions added me on Facebook, because the management in my former school was very clear that staff members should avoid interacting with parents on social media. What I have found at the theatre, however, is a very different world from the fierce professional distance expected in my teaching career, where hospitality is crucial (Turner-King, 2018), and relationships are a fundamental part of the practice in a different and freer way to a primary school.

I have already suggested that the edges of my research are flexible, and as I near the end of my second-year volunteering, the relationships that I have built are stretching out beyond the confines of the theatre sessions into other parts of my life. I've recently had an invitation to the wedding of one of the theatre practitioners, for example, and went out to eat with the staff and volunteers from one of the sessions during the summer. There is talk of a road-trip to visit a family who were very involved at the theatre until they moved into dispersal accommodation elsewhere in the country, and we are currently rallying friends and family members to help to furnish the flat of one of the participants who has recently come to the top of the council's housing waiting list.

What's more, the messiness that I have found in my relationships at the theatre makes the ethics of my project feel particularly complicated. I am acutely aware that, while I have been a regular fixture at the sessions for the past 18 months, I have not yet begun formal data generation, and the participants in the sessions have not yet consented to being part of my research. It is vital, therefore, that I do not exploit my "undocumented historical knowledge of the people and cultural phenomenon being studied" (Taylor, 2011, p.9), and that anything that I have seen prior to ethical clearance and participant consent does not make an appearance in my PhD.

I am struggling even to put hard boundaries around my language choices. Very early on in my PhD, I decided to abandon the term 'asylum seekers' because of the negative ways in which it has been used by right-wing media and a certain brand of politician. Along with terms like 'Small

Boats', 'Migrant Crisis' and 'Economic Migrant', 'Asylum Seeker' has been used to reinforce binaries and highlight difference (Jackson, 2005; McKay and Bradley, 2016). It has been employed to depict some humans as "a threat to the nation, its culture and the livelihood of its people" (Yuval-Davis, 2007, p.567). In an attempt to distance myself from this rhetoric, I have tried out a number of alternatives, none of which I am entirely happy with. After a recent meeting with representatives from the City of Sanctuary initiative, I came to appreciate their use of 'Sanctuary Seekers', which lacks some of the negative connotations of 'asylum seeker'. Unfortunately, though, it also lacks its clarity. I have been testing it out over recent months and have been met with puzzled looks and questions about whom, exactly, I am working with. For the moment, I have chosen to adopt refugee or, where appropriate, refugee seeking sanctuary, as a middle ground. While less loaded than 'Asylum Seeker', the term 'Refugee' does carry some stigma and negative associations. I have started to use different terms in different circumstances, so that rather than being independent blocks about which I have made a decision and built into my theoretical wall, my language choices are contingent and provisional, and are subject to ongoing revision.

Turning to Theory – Blocks, Blobs or Lines?

In the light of these messy engagements, it is clear that the building block metaphor discussed above does not work for my research. Anthropologist Tim Ingold suggests that the problem with it and other dominant metaphors of containers and chains is that they do not allow for life (Ingold, 2015, p.14). According to Ingold's theory, a wall of blocks does not genuinely interact, rather they are stacked next to or on top of each other. Ingold extends this 'building block' thinking to argue that what this understanding of the world does is characterise people as blobs. In his book, *The Life of Lines*, he argues:

It is... usual to think of persons or organisms as blobs of one sort or another. Blobs have insides and outsides, divided at their surfaces. They can expand and contract, encroach and retrench. They take up space ... They may bump into one another, aggregate together, even meld into larger blobs rather like drops of oil spilled on the surface of water. What blobs cannot do, however, is cling to one another...For when they meld internally, their surfaces always dissolve in the formation of a new exterior

(Ingold, 2015, p3).

Unlike building blocks, blobs can come together, but, as Ingold points out, when they do so, they forfeit their own surfaces and integrity, forming something entirely new in the same way that copper and tin combine to make bronze when mixed in the right proportions (Ingold, 2015, p.3). This model of interaction seems to offer more than building blocks, but I am not sure it accounts well for the end of our interactions. Are we forever melded with every person or thing with whom we interact? Or might we temporarily or permanently be separated from them to interact with other people? And do we always become something completely new in our interactions? I'm not sure.

I have not found either the building block nor the blob metaphor to give an accurate or entirely helpful picture of my experiences so far in my PhD. Ingold's suggestion is that, rather than being about stacking blocks or melding blobs, life is about clinging. As he sees it, we are designed to cling – first to our mothers, then to other people. And what is essential for clinging is found in neither blobs nor blocks but in the emergence of lines (Ingold, 2015, p3). Ingold goes so far as to argue that “life began when lines began to emerge and to escape the monopoly of blobs” (2015, p4) and points to lots of examples of lines emerging from blobs, which facilitate the vibrancy of life.

Picture for a moment a bacterium, for example, a blob-like cell with a wispy flagellum. Ingold characterises this as a blob and a line – whereby the blob contributes energy and line mobility (Ingold, 2015, p.4). Similarly, a potato in a sack ready to be eaten is a reservoir of carbohydrates but put it in the soil (or leave it in the vegetable rack for too long) and threadlike roots start sprouting from the blob – moving out from it to seek water and nutrients (Ingold, 2015, p.4). Or consider the example of a tadpole – starting as a decidedly blobby piece of frogspawn and being transformed by the emergence of lines, first in the form of a tail, then limbs, which endow the frog with the ability to swim and jump (Ingold, 2015, pp.4-5). For Ingold, it is the presence of lines that allow for both movement and clinging together.

For me the idea of stickling bricks is helpful here. While building blocks just sit on top of each other, the lines built into the structure of the bricks allow them to cling to each other. In building with the stickle bricks the lines reach out to each other, inter-locking and intermingling to allow the bricks to temporarily combine to form something new, whilst retaining their own integrity.

And not only do lines enable us to reach out and cling to each other, but for Ingold, humans and other elements are constantly engaged in the practice of drawing lines (Ingold, 2007, p.1) because, as he puts it, lines represent our “most fundamental mode of being in the world” (Ingold, 2007, p.83). This means that, for Ingold, all elements in a scenario, including people, methods and physical spaces, can be thought of as an already-flowing line, coming from somewhere and flowing somewhere else (Hayes et al., 2021, p.514). Ingold calls this process of us drawing lines ‘wayfaring’ and argues that the wayfarer lives their life along the trails of their journey, which are “typically winding and irregular, yet comprehensively entangled into a close-knit tissue” (Ingold, 2007, p.81). He describes the close-knit tissue forged as a result of this kind of being-in-the-world as a meshwork. According to this metaphor, life itself is imagined as “a manifold woven from countless threads spun by beings of all sorts, both human and non-human, as they find their ways through the tangle of relationships in which they are enmeshed” (Ingold, 2007, p.3). This picture is truly a messy one, but it feels more honest than imagining myself as a building block which can be extracted from the others as in a game of Jenga.

In thinking about my engagement at the theatre as wayfaring, I imagine everyone involved in the sessions as being woven and knotted together like threads in a piece of cloth. A glance at our clothing reminds us that threads in a piece of cloth cannot be easily untangled. Indeed, any attempt to do so would be destructive of both the cloth and the individual strands which make it

up. Ingold argues that, for the wayfarer, knowing is found along the way of walking (Ingold, 2007, p.91) and that “the knowledge we have of our surroundings is forged in the very course of our moving through them” (Ingold, 2007, p.88). If the line of my walking through the world is the path of my knowing, then trying to disentangle myself from the setting of my research and the people that I am researching with would also disentangle me from the knowing that I am seeking. While this research might be messy, Ingold’s theory has helped me to reconcile myself to the entangled nature of my work, and to adopt a different perspective from notions of professional distance and remaining separate from my participants in the pursuit of more objective knowledge.

Becoming Entangled in my Research

I am still very much in the process of understanding the complexities of Ingold’s ideas about lines and wayfaring and how they relate to my own research. That said, I am going to close this paper with some examples of the ways in which I have experienced the drawing of lines in my volunteering at the theatre so far.

The line that I am drawing through my research grows out of my practice as a primary school teacher. I started out on my PhD journey because of my frustration at my inability to provide adequately for children who had recently arrived in my class. It was fuelled by my frustration at the lack of resources that I had at my disposal and my dissatisfaction with my own practice. It will not end when my fieldwork does but will go into my analysis and writing up and then into the rest of my life and career. This line became entangled with the theatre through a suggestion by a friend that I find out about the theatre’s work, and an email introduction which set me on the path of collaboration with them and with the refugees with whom they work. The lines that I am drawing are mingling with the lines drawn by other people who are involved in the sessions, and many who are not. As I interact with people at each session, the lines that we are drawing become increasingly enmeshed and knotted together, through our interactions, as we build shared experiences and make art together.

Other lines come from elements in the sessions that are not attributable to an individual. Religious festivals intervene, altering the content of the sessions or the number of attendees, as does particularly good or bad weather. Other organisations contribute to the meshwork as they send people to us or keep them away with other activities. Even a late dinner service in the initial accommodation centre draws lines which interact with those drawn at the theatre. Lines are drawn by food that is shared in the sessions, stories that are offered and problems that are solved. They are drawn by government policy, media rhetoric, news stories, phone calls from family members or an infestation of bedbugs at the initial accommodation centre.

Lines that have been drawn by individuals unspool in other directions as people “get their postcodes” and are moved onto dispersal accommodation around the UK (Home Office, 2023), and new lines are drawn by people arriving at the initial accommodation centre. Lines become more enmeshed and knotted as the participants, staff and volunteers become involved in each other’s lives – supporting with medical appointments, offering informal translation to each other,

loaning out carpet cleaners, celebrating each other's milestones and commiserating with each other on bad news.

Conclusion

While the metaphors of blocks and building bricks might look tidier, I am increasingly coming to find value in the messiness of my engagement with those that I will research with. I was fortunate to have been at Professor Awad Ibrahim's CLAIR Conversation session in Leeds during the last academic year. During this session, Professor Ibrahim spoke very convincingly about research done 'as an act of love' (Ibrahim, 2014, p.15), which requires that, as researchers we "place ourselves...completely into a relationship, to truly understand and "be there" with another person, without masks, pretences, even without words" (Ibrahim, 2014, p.16). For me, this notion chimes completely with Ingold's ideas about wayfaring because there is knowledge to be found in drawing lines in relationship with other people. This kind of thinking is helping me to stop seeing messiness as a problem to be solved, but to recognise that there is knowledge to be found along the way, as I allow myself to become entangled with all those engaged in the drawing of lines alongside me.

Biography



Hannah Wainwright is a PGR in the School of Education at the University of Leeds. Following a decade-long career as a primary school teacher, Hannah's PhD research looks at the ways in which participatory theatre is being used to support belonging for refugees seeking sanctuary. She is particularly interested in the role that place has in belonging, and the impact that participatory theatre might have on how place is produced and experienced.

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The challenge of managing the research process: initial ideas to co-created new knowledge

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Abstract

This article reflects on the experiences of a PGR leading a Research England funded project that commenced in summer 2022. The project is being carried out under the auspices of the University of Leeds Research Culture Crucible. The project remains ongoing and focuses on how best to support teachers to engage with professional development (PD). The main activities from which data has been sourced were three online roundtable discussions, each held in July 2022, supported by pre- and post-event surveys.

However, the focus of this article is not the research itself but the process of bidding for funds, planning for and undertaking the initial research, and building on that research, leading to newly co-created meaning and avenues of investigation. For example, the researcher led a discussion about the project at the AEA-Europe Annual Conference in November 2022, and is now developing 10 case studies of successful teacher engagement with PD, based on the original findings.

Structure and background

Firstly, I will outline the methodology used to develop this paper, which is intended to be an autoethnography based on my own personal experiences of managing a research project between spring 2022 and summer 2023. Secondly, I will use alternate 'chapters' and 'reflections' to recall and reflect upon the progress of the project from its inception to its current state. Finally, I will endeavour to reflect on the process of developing this paper and my experience of using autoethnographic techniques for the first time.

I was inspired to experiment with autoethnography by reading a pre-print paper authored by a friend and colleague, who delved deep into their own past to uncover repressed memories of perceived failure (Tissington, 2023); I was intrigued to see if I could capture my experiences of becoming a PGR using a similar method. According to Adams et al (2017) "Autoethnography is a research method that uses personal experience ("auto") to describe and interpret ("graphy") cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices ("ethno")." I have very much relied on my personal circumstances, interpretations of situations, exposure to contexts, and real first-hand experience to inform my recollections and reflections.

Methodology and motivations

This *reflexive memoir* is mainly intended as an autoethnographic recollection and retrospective analysis of my experience of the process of being involved in a research project, developed from my own notes made during the process, emails and meeting notes, and spending time reflecting on the experience after approximately 12-18 months had passed. Thus, I must acknowledge my own subjectivity and emotional connection with the research project (Ellis et al., 2011), and also

recognise the possibility of straying into a *personal narrative* at some points. I believe the dividing line between a reflexive memoir and a personal narrative is at best blurred and perhaps may not really exist, and I acknowledge that there is debate over the efficacy of personal narrative as a research method (Heidelberger & Uecker, 2009, and Moen, 2006). I recognise that my experience is just that: *my* experience. My central aim is to document that experience and use it to create a connection with the reader to enable them to reflect on their own experiences in relation to managing research and co-creating knowledge. I believe my observations and reflections are valid and reliable, as I am a seasoned member of the research community, with over 30 years' experience of working in and around public sector and academic research. However, I remain cognisant, like Mendez (2013), not just of the advantages of using memoir as autoethnography, such as the opportunity to see into private worlds full of rich data, but also of its limitations, including the personal or exposed nature of some disclosures, which can raise challenging emotions in researchers and readers alike.

I have tried not to be too selective about my remembrances, but to remain authentic and fully mindful of the wider cultural context of the process, whilst documenting it faithfully in a hopefully engaging yet informative way. As Mann & Walsh say, "a record of reflection is the reflection itself" (Mann & Walsh, 2017, p.130), that is that simply writing about experiences forced me to reflect, although they acknowledge the tension when writing becomes the focus rather than the reflection itself. However, I felt quite free to write what I wanted about the issues that seemed relevant, without going into the minutiae of events or decision-making. I have broadly followed the steps in Tummons's framework for reflective writing (Tummons, 2010, p.77), to consider events, my reaction to them, and what I have learnt from the process. I have drafted my recollections in chapters, each followed by a reflection on that chapter, my aim being to tell the story punctuated by conscious, reflexive self-evaluation of the process and my part in it (Tissington, 2023). This interleaving of recollection and reflection also echoes Schön's technique of reflective conversation, where the research "talks to the situation" and the situation "talks back" (Schön, 2016, p.79), contrasting his models of reflection-*in*-action with reflection-*on*-action (Schön, 2016, p.49), leading to what I call my 'call and response' model of alternating chapters and reflections (see Table 1: Call and response model, drawing on Schön, 2016 and Tissington, 2023 below).

Reflection- <i>in</i> -action	Intuitive, tacit, and immediate application of deep-seated and rich knowledge	Broadly corresponding to my chapters
Reflection- <i>on</i> -action	Considered, deliberate, and conscious contemplation without new or additional actions necessarily being undertaken	Broadly corresponding to my reflections

Table 1: Call and response model, drawing on Schön, 2016 and Tissington, 2023

My motivations for writing this reflexive memoir include, but go beyond, a desire to record my experiences before they become overlain with later ones. I also want to learn from those experiences, and to share them with others who might be considering undertaking similar work at a similar stage in their academic careers. I have tried to bear in mind this purpose and prospective audience of readers (Mann & Walsh, 2017, p.133) as I have been reflecting and writing, piecing together a narrative of memories supplemented by what Mann & Walsh (2017, p.146) call a portfolio of notes, emails, and other artefacts.

Ethical considerations

I am conscious that autoethnography always includes reference to and impacts on others, not just the researcher. Building on Richardson's idea of "ethical ethnography" (Richardson, 2000, p.253) and her ideas about ethical reflexivity (Richardson, 2000, p.254), I have taken care to share drafts of this paper with key players in the bidding and research process and taken their comments and feelings into account. I hold myself accountable to meet ethical standards for discussing the people and events I have mentioned. Whilst obtaining upfront informed consent is not a realistic scenario in writing such as this, retrospective consideration of all parties' thoughts and recollections is an important element of being honest and respectful about the events being described, analysed, and evaluated (Edwards, 2021).

Reflexive memoir (or personal narrative?)

CHAPTER 1: ORIGINS

In Spring 2022, less than six months after starting my doctoral studies, I noticed an invitation to a series of three, fortnightly, half-day Research Culture Crucible (RCC) workshops, which offered the chance not only to collaborate with other researchers but also to bid for money to support small projects focused on an aspect of research culture. Coincidentally, I had been speaking with a colleague (Mick) about the possibility of researching barriers to teachers' engagement with professional development (PD) and how some overcome these barriers, which is hugely affected both by the culture in their schools but also by access to funding and high-quality PD opportunities. I attended the workshops and met individually with other fellow 'crucibilists' to discuss their projects and mine. I was supported (and encouraged) in my endeavours by Mick, and we developed a 'teaser' to share at the second workshop, and a set of slides for presentation at the final workshop, to outline our project rationale, plan and bid for funds.

REFLECTION 1

This initial period only lasted about four weeks, but in my mind, it seems much longer. It was a time of intense discussion, reading, learning, drafting, and editing. Working out what we wanted to do and how best to achieve it was exciting and energising. I do work well under pressure, and this felt quite pressured, even though it was entirely voluntary and separate from my doctoral research. I always enjoy working with Mick, who offered sage advice and made some great suggestions about how we could proceed. Meeting with other 'crucibilists' was interesting and encouraging, although not directly relevant to our bid. The teaser and the presentation were

received well, and the bid was successful, which was a huge relief given how much work I had done.

Chapter 2: project planning (co-creation between researchers)

It took about a week after our presentations for ‘crucibilists’ to be told that all our bids were successful. The email informing me of our success is attached at [Error! Reference source not found.](#) It helpfully includes feedback on the bid and suggestions for improvement, which were useful as we entered the project planning phase. As part of the bid preparation, we had developed an outline timeline and research methodology, but now we had to build a much more detailed plan, find, and recruit our participants, and put the plan into action. Firstly, my co-researcher and I agreed to subdivide the required actions. Mick focused on finding participants from amongst his professional contacts, with a variety of lengths and levels of experience as teachers or as professionals supporting teachers, such as teaching union officials or subject association staff, who might be able to attend a roundtable event either in-person in Leeds or online in Microsoft Teams; I sought teachers I knew who I thought might be willing to participate, some of whom I had trained as Chartered Educational Assessors (CIEA, 2023). We decided to run events characterised as ‘roundtables’ rather than ‘focus groups’, as whilst focus groups offer an “opportunity to study the ways in which the individuals collectively make sense of a phenomenon and construct meanings around it” (Bryman, 2001, p.338), we wanted also to promote open, free-ranging, frank, democratic conversations, avoiding hierarchies or preconceived notions of the participants as ‘research subjects’ and encouraging exposure to, consideration of, and reaction to others’ perspectives (Evans & Kotchetkova, 2009).

To complement the roundtables, I drafted pre- and post-event surveys to collect a small amount of quantitative data about participants to establish a general picture of their perspectives on access to and engagement with PD, which was used to help identify emerging themes for further investigation in the roundtables, and to capture participants’ views after the roundtables. More challenging was our application for ethical approval, as I had never drafted one before, and it had to be done very quickly if approval was to be in place so we could send out roundtable invitations in good time.

Reflection 2

Drafting the project plan, finding participants, and designing research instruments were all well within my comfort zone, and are amongst my favourite parts of the research process, as all is anticipation at this point. What I found more challenging was the timescale for the whole project, which was that we had to have carried out the work and invoiced for all expenses by the end of July. This was a requirement of Research England, who were funding the work. Since we were only awarded the money in early April, this was a very tight timescale, especially since ethical approval can take several weeks or even months.

I found Mick’s support hugely important, as he had not only been through the process of ethical approval several times before but had also sat on the relevant ethics committee. Even so, the

project did not receive approval until late June (see screenshot at Appendix B), which was stressful and potentially put the whole project in jeopardy. Whilst we had tentatively approached participants and asked them to hold a date for a roundtable, we were not able to share the Participant Information Sheet, seek informed consent, confirm arrangements, or distribute the pre-event survey until we received ethical approval.

Chapter 3: undertaking the research (co-creation with participants)

It was a significant challenge to find sufficient and diverse participants, who were also willing and available at short notice. We arrived at a total of 15, five for each roundtable, nine teachers and six other professionals. All 15 returned their pre-event survey, but one dropped out of the first roundtable on the day, so the total number of participants ended up being 14. Mick ran the first roundtable online, I ran the second online, and we ran the third one jointly online, having had to pivot on the morning of the last roundtable from an in-person meeting on campus to an online meeting due to the extreme hot weather and the precarity of travel by public transport. Due to the short notice, we still had to pay for the refreshments, although meeting room costs were waived.

The roundtables were recorded and transcribed, with participants briefed in advance that we were hoping to extract case study material from their comments. Mick and I spent several weeks after the roundtables checking and correcting the transcriptions for accuracy; Microsoft Teams does not always catch the nuances of conversation, especially if voices overlap or a participant has a strong regional accent. Mick created an initial coding frame, and we organised the transcribed comments by theme. These themes were developed and refined over the next few weeks, as they were combined or split, depending on the strength of representation and emerging links between them.

I spent some time chasing participants to return their post-event surveys; 11 were eventually returned, the last some six weeks after the roundtables were held. I also spent considerable time liaising with colleagues at the university to get each school, professional organisation, and independent consultant set up as a supplier, issued with a purchase order, so they could submit an invoice, and then get the invoice paid. I had started this process about a month before the roundtables, once our participants were confirmed, but it took so long and so many emails, that it was not concluded until late August. I had to deal with at least five different teams across the School, Faculty, and University.

Reflection 3

Carrying out the surveys, roundtables, and thematic analysis was enjoyable and reasonably straightforward. It was, however, equally time-consuming ensuring that our participants were set up as suppliers and paid for their time. This proved tortuous. It was not clear to me who in the process could do what or who was responsible for paperwork being processed and approved. I had no way of checking what was happening other than emailing individuals and hoping they

would respond. I spent a lot of time chasing for responses, often to be told to ask someone else. This was really stressful on top of an already heavy workload and felt unnecessarily convoluted.

I understand that this period coincided with the university's financial year end, a very busy time for all concerned, and that this probably exacerbated the issue, but it did not feel collegiate or supportive to someone like me who was new to the process and needed help to understand it. I probably made mistakes along the way but believe that was due to insufficient guidance and the lack of a single, simple system that I could access and manage. This is in no way disparaging of the individuals, who by and large were responsive and helpful once I found the right person in the chain of command, but I remain critical of the system and its lack of user-friendliness, which not only drained my time and energy, but also affected those I was contacting and our participants and administrative staff in their organisations, who in turn spent time chasing me.

Chapter 4: next steps in the research process (co-creation between researchers and with participants)

Mick and I had submitted an abstract to the Annual Conference for AEA-Europe, to be held in Dublin in November 2022. In the event, Mick could not attend, and I led a dynamic one-hour discussion attended by about 20 delegates, based on a working draft of our initial findings, derived from the surveys and thematic analysis. This energetic discussion initiated several dialogues and new connections with researchers from around the world, which was exciting for me as a new academic. Notes of the session summarising the lively discussion are attached at Appendix C.

The process for submitting or sharing the working draft of our report to the Research Culture Team or to Research England has never been clear. However, Mick and I have continued to work on it, developing 10 case studies during summer 2023, based on participants' comments made at the roundtables. Draft case studies were shared with each originating participant; many added a few extra details or provided some clarification. We are currently seeking a journal or similar to publish them, ideally alongside the research report, or a version thereof. The case studies cover a range of contexts and strategies which are proving successful in overcoming barriers and enabling teachers to engage in PD. See Appendix D for an index of the case studies.

Reflection 4

I was very much looking forward to presenting at the AEA-Europe conference, alongside Mick, but the reason he did not attend was almost entirely financial. Even though we underspent on the project (largely due to converting the third roundtable to an online meeting) and asked if we could use those funds to cover Mick's conference travel and registration, that change in use was not permitted, despite many, many emails debating it. As a new researcher, having a trusted colleague co-leading a session with me would have felt very much less nerve-wracking. Of course, Mick was adamant that I was more than capable of leading the session myself, and I was, but it did feel scarier and slightly unfair that Mick could not be there to enjoy and develop the fruits of his labours too. The need for intense and frequent liaison with various teams about this and the

participants' payments has put me off bidding for similar funding for the time-being. However, I have learnt a lot about the processes of bidding and budgeting, and writing up and sharing research findings, including that I can hold my own in a roomful of experienced academics, because I know my subject and have a breadth and depth of experience to draw upon.

It feels very much like the work is in our hands now, which might be how it is meant to feel, but to us, the funders seem more focused on the process and do not seem terribly interested in the outcomes. We feel that the relationship could have been much more open and perhaps a bit more flexible or responsive. We are clear that the case studies add value to the report but could also stand alone, so we are exploring ways of publishing them that will expose them and our work to an appropriate audience.

Final reflections

Undertaking and then reflecting on my first-hand experience of the process of bidding for funding, carrying out the research, and now trying to get it 'out there' has proved very instructive. As Tummons (2010, p.105) said "finding some time to think" is vital to understanding my place in the wider academic landscape; he was talking about teaching more widely, but I believe the sentiment is pertinent to my developing identity as a researcher and to this attempt at autoethnography.

Retrospectively, it is hard to disentangle the excitement of planning the project, having the funding bid accepted, and undertaking the research activities, from the slog of the administration, mainly financial in nature; I would have been lost and unable to draft this paper without my notes and other sources of evidence, for example, those attached as appendices. These artefacts helped me to maintain fidelity to the timeline and sequencing of events, and sometimes gave me clues as to my state of mind as I made notes of animated and inspiring conversations or sent excited or frustrated emails.

I have strived to be conscientious and to remain faithful to the autoethnographic process, valuing the story and making it accessible and engaging, by blending my personal experiences with critical thinking (Adams et al., 2017), "making connections between past and current experiences" (Mann & Walsh, 2017, p.147). I like to think I have addressed all five of Richardson's criteria for evaluating ethnography as a method (Richardson, 2000, p.254): "substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impact, and expression of a reality", whilst seeking meaning, to learn about myself and the research process.

Whilst I have been critical of some parts of the process, I hope I have remained respectful of all those individuals involved in it. As Holman Jones (2005) almost said, I see this autoethnography as a highly personal perspective on the process, which might in some small way make the research world a better place. I agree that "by writing a narrative of our experiences we are better able to understand and control them, enabling changes to current and past practices to be made" (Mann & Walsh, 2017, p.148). My experience of developing this paper has led me to believe

autoethnography merits a place in my research canon, as a powerful iterative tool to promote reflexive habits and therefore as a valuable method to support improved research practices.

If you are interested to hear more about this work, or would like to add your thoughts on or experiences of barriers, solutions, and the impact of PD on teachers, please get in touch with Marianne at edmit@leeds.ac.uk

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Biography

Marianne Talbot is a post-transfer PhD researcher at the University of Leeds School of Education. Her area of interest is the impact of professional development in educational assessment on qualified teachers, their assessment practice, and their influence on others around them. Her experience is in qualifications and assessment development and evaluation, project management including impact assessments, and course leadership for the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors, based at the University of Hertfordshire.



Appendices

Appendix A

(Screenshot of email confirming the project funding, including feedback on our bid)

Research Culture Crucible Funding Success
To: Marianne Talbot

Leeds 8 April 2022 at 12:13

Congratulations Marianne

Your Crucible Project application has been successful! [REDACTED] considered the feedback projects received from the panel and the community, and came to the conclusion that we want to fund them all. All projects were viewed positively and we couldn't choose between them.

Please do start planning as we look at how best to handle the awards. If you already have an account at the University at you oversee we may be able to do a direct transfer to it. I am still checking.

We will continue to support you and the projects in the Crucible team channel and will add info as we get it.

Congratulations again and thanks for participating in the Research Culture Crucible.

Selected feedback to help you refine the project:

- The project addresses a pervasive barrier to intersectoral collaborative research, with great potential for advancing both research and practice. I wondered if one challenge might be reaching those difficult to release from their duties for the sessions.
- I see this project as being about engaging a community in the [research] work of the University of Leeds. It has potential to give insights into how to establish what would motivate members of a community to engage with research activity at Leeds. The project meets the funding criteria and the amount requested seems reasonable.
- Although this is an interesting project, I didn't see how this would change or influence the research culture at Leeds - the project seemed to relate to professional development provided by us rather than professional development of our researchers. Can the project team strengthen the link to Research Culture
- This is a really well written and well designed piece of research but I am not entirely convinced it is within scope of this funding. For that to change I would need to see more thought / activity looking to change the way researchers at Leeds research within educational settings e.g. to move our practice to do research with rather than on / about teachers.
- This is an unusual project. I originally wondered why teachers would engage with a project to explore something that they don't normally engage with. However, I think the collaborators know what they are doing and have really thought about the roundtable approach. It could produce something interesting.
- Well presented. Clear objectives that was well scoped with a focus on certification. Looking at barriers and how persons have overcome these barriers. - Chartered Education Assessors. A global approach looking at other stakeholders which is refreshing.
- Not quite sure how the focus group outputs will be generalizable - would like to see interviews with people who haven't accessed funding over a given length of time.

[REDACTED]

Organisational Development & Professional Learning
University of Leeds
LS2 9JT
Tel: [REDACTED]
Ext. [REDACTED]

My working day may not be your working day. Please read, act on or respond at a time that works for you.

Appendix B

(Screenshot of email confirming ethical approval of the project)

From: ResearchEthics researchethics@leeds.ac.uk
Subject: RE: Ethics review request - engaging teachers in professional development, ethics reference LTEDUC-123 - Favourable outcome
Date: 24 June 2022 at 13:25
To: Marianne Talbot edmj1@leeds.ac.uk
Cc:

R

Dear Marianne,

LTEDUC-123 - Engaging teachers in professional development

NB: All approvals/comments are subject to compliance with current University of Leeds and UK Government advice regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.

I am pleased to inform you that the above research ethics application has been reviewed by the School of Business, Environment and Social Services (AREA) Committee and I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion based on the documentation received at date of this email.

Please retain this email as evidence of approval in your study file.

Appendix C

Notes of Engaging Teachers in Professional Development Discussion,

AEA-Europe Annual Conference, 11/11/22

Marianne Talbot, University of Leeds

The discussion followed a 10-minute introduction, presenting findings so far from fieldwork carried out in summer 2022. Delegates were responsive and keen to contribute based on their own experiences and perspectives. They acknowledged barriers to PD, including the difficulty of getting teachers out of the classroom and/or out of school. They also highlighted that, in a model of 'input-activity-review', teachers struggle to fit the 'activity' stage in. Hidden barriers can exist where teachers do not want to engage, for example SLT and staff can have very different viewpoints, motivations, and expectations. It was suggested that, in England, some academy chains have alienated their staff with respect to PD, including teaching assistants.

Helpful solutions suggested included having a menu of opportunities with signposting to a wide variety of PD, although it was agreed that this requires someone to coordinate, organise cover, and ensure the school can function in the absence of the teacher. It was suggested that this could be enhanced by collaboration with the local authority and/or other schools. The use performance management discussions to plant seeds, such as 'what is PD in this instance?' was advocated. It was noted that less experienced teachers probably need considerable guidance – but in a neutral/open way so as not to shut down interests or opportunities. Modelling was recognised as a key method of demonstrating good PD engagement and practice.

It was acknowledged that a shared vision and values can lead to successful engagement which in turn can lead to successful implementation. Reflective practice can benefit students and self-reflection can help identify skills and areas to improve, as part of performance management and talking to colleagues. Keeping PD manageable is key, otherwise it can become overwhelming, but time should be allowed for trialling, reviewing, considering pros and cons, and building bridges between PD and practice, perhaps using communities of practice. PD and its impact can be very individual; it does not necessarily need to be managed or organised or recognised if there is a sound rationale which is communicated and negotiated.

Delegates from Sweden suggested that teacher appetite for PD is higher there, and that

online solutions have been embraced, such as a MOOC for teachers leading on SEND. Norway has a massive online PD programme, used mainly by upper secondary teachers, less by lower secondary, and even less by primary – teachers' capacity to engage varies enormously. Ireland provided online PD for 32,000 teachers during covid-19 and has protected two days per annum to focus on curriculum changes, the hypothesis being that such system-wide approaches can be supportive.

It seems sensible to demonstrate online for teachers teaching online, but this is both a high trust model and potentially a lonely one if teachers have no-one to discuss the PD with, so perhaps a

hybrid model could be more beneficial. In person PD is almost always preferred, if possible, to allow for subtleties of tone and body language, and informal interactions, but supplemented by live remote sessions and asynchronous activities such as forum posts.

Appendix D

(Screenshot of an extract from the project report, showing the range of case study titles)

9 Appendices – Case Studies.....	27
9.1 Saving time and money makes good sense (T3) (Secondary school headteacher, CEA).....	27
9.2 A school approach to quality assurance (T4) (Primary school headteacher, CEA).....	28
9.3 Being clear about the purpose and impact of professional learning (T5) (Secondary school headteacher, CEA)	29
9.4 What works for our school and our context (T6) (Secondary school headteacher).....	31
9.5 Flexing the timetable, focusing on the culture (T10) (Secondary school PD lead).....	32
9.6 Journal clubs, an example of long term engagement (P2) (Head of Research in a professional association)	34
9.7 Flexible and rich PD offer (P2) (Head of Research in a professional association).....	35
9.8 Linking the personal with the professional (P4) (Official in a teaching union)	36
9.9 Challenging teachers to think about their pedagogy (P6) (Assistant Director of a subject association)	38
9.10 Our journey with engagement in our PD program (P7) (National PD Manager in a teaching union)	39

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Conference Report: 16th Research Students' Education Conference (RSEC): "Messy Research"

Graduate School of Education at the University of Leeds 19 July 2023.

Clare Copley, Deepa Ellepola, Anna Harwood, Helen Latka, Siying Shen, Dan Trowsdale, and Hannah Wainwright, School of Education, University of Leeds

Introduction

The conference provided a unique opportunity for Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) and Masters students to showcase their research as well as engage with peers and senior academics from the School of Education in a supportive and inclusive forum. Designed to encourage submissions from students at all stages of their research, the conference welcomed presentations and posters from those who were new to the postgraduate journey as well as work-in-progress, completed and co-authored work.

The conference theme, Messy Research, encouraged presenters to share the innovative and non-traditional research methods they used to engage participants in creative and dynamic ways. Presentations were categorised into two sub-themes.

1. Getting started – discovering innovative and ethical methods of recruiting participants, promoting inclusivity, and reaching underrepresented groups.
2. Fostering positive relationships – creative use of the self as a researcher and engaging positively with participants during the study.

Fifteen presentations from postgraduate researchers in the School of Education at the University of Leeds comprised the conference programme: nine oral presentations and six posters. The presentations explored various aspects of students' interactions with their participants, encompassing topics such as recruitment, researcher positionality, and collaboration.

Poster presentations

Poster presentations were available to view throughout the day in the St George's room with scheduled opportunities to talk to the presenters over lunch and coffee. The six posters reflected the wide and varied knowledge and professional experiences of the exhibitors.

Kubrah Alhawamdeh, University of Leeds

Exploring Early Childhood Teachers' Experiences with Funds of Knowledge
Approach: Innovative and Ethical Recruitment Strategies for
Underrepresented Groups

Mavis Brew and Damian McDonald, University of Leeds

How can collaborative pizza making open our appetite for diverse, critical, and creative curriculum and learning conversations?

Clare Copley, University of Leeds

Personal experience of a research topic – a help or a hindrance?

Helen Latka, University of Leeds

Parents as experts in their child's deafness

Daljit Sehmi, University of Leeds

What barriers to supporting their children do Punjabi and Urdu speaking parents perceive or experience in the English Secondary Education System and how can schools ameliorate these?

Siying Shen, University of Leeds

Exploring Mandarin Learners' motivation in/with their context: the researcher-participants relationship in a longitudinal study

Session 1: keynote

Moderated by Clare Copley, the keynote speech was given by former University of Leeds alumna and programme manager of the Born in Bradford: Age of Wonder research project, Dr Katy Shire. Dr Shire has been working with the Born in Bradford (BiB) research study for over ten years across a variety of projects as well as fulfilling a key role in the BiB's Centre for Applied Education Research (CAER), Bradford.

Since 2007, BiB, one of the largest and most exciting health research studies in the world, has tracked the health and wellbeing of over 13,000 Bradford children from birth. In doing so, the project aims to discover why some people are happy and healthy, yet others are not.

In 2022, Dr Shire took on the new role of Programme Manager for BiB's Age of Wonder research project. This exciting programme intends to capture data on 30,000 young adults over a seven-year period, as they experience the critical period of adolescence and transition to young adulthood. It is hoped that the data collected will enable researchers to answer crucial questions about how we can improve physical health, mental health, and life chances for young people. For the first time, all aspects of the research are being co-produced with young people and a commitment to ensuring data is put back in the hands of the participants and other stakeholders is also paramount.

Dr Shire's presentation reflected keenly on this hugely challenging and ambitious research project and highlighted some of the successes of the project so far. Difficulties and barriers faced by the team were also discussed alongside how these challenges have shaped the team's plans for the future of the project.

Session 2: getting started

Moderated by Siying Shen, Session 2 – Getting Started. This initial Post Graduate Researcher -led session focused on the early stages of the research process. Presenters reflected on how they had recruited participants, promoted inclusivity, and engaged with under-represented groups.

Samson Sofowora, PhD student and high school maths teacher, spoke in his on-line presentation about Problem Solving in Mathematics at the GCSE Level in England (Successes and Challenges). Samson briefly summarised the process involved in selecting, engaging with, and recruiting participants. Central to his presentation was the importance of ethics and the issues that may arise when working with vulnerable groups such as children under the age of 16.

Kubra Alhawamdeh, PhD student, presented on Exploring the Use of Cultural Sources (Funds of Knowledge Approach) in Early Childhood Education: Challenges and Innovations in Participant Recruitment and Inclusivity. Kubra's presentation was a heartfelt expose of the challenges faced when trying to recruit participants in a country that is not your country of birth. Despite her light-hearted and often amusing recount of the difficulties and barriers faced when trying to recruit participants, Kubra demonstrated the important role resilience and tenacity play to successfully recruit participants.

Hannah Wainwright, PGR student in the School of Education at the University of Leeds, spoke about Entangled Engagement: Getting Started with Lines, Knots, and Participatory Theatre. Hannah's presentation was a masterclass in the effective use of slides. Through a series of photographs, Hannah led the audience through the theoretical framework of her research and how participatory drama in informal educational settings might be used to shape and support belonging for those seeking sanctuary in the UK.

Dan Trowsdale, Associate Professor, and part-time PhD student in the School of Education at the University of Leeds, presented on Using Visual Methods for Deep Engagement with Participants. Dan afforded the attendees an insight into his engineering mind. With a focus on design thinking and visual approaches to study and design Dan was able to demonstrate how this approach can pinpoint the time and duration of deep engagement between researcher and participant in a time effective manner.

Session 3: fostering relationships

Moderated by Dan Trowsdale, Session 3 – Fostering Relationships. This session focused on ways in which PGRs maintain good research relationships throughout the duration of their projects. Presenters reflected on their own positionality and how they navigated the challenges and benefits of the research relationships upon which their work relies.

PhD student Deepa Ellepola's research interests lie in Second Language Teacher Training and Teacher Education. In her presentation, Researching from the Inside: Challenges and Benefits in Qualitative Inquiry, Deepa discussed how her professional experience as a Master Trainer in Sri Lanka allowed her to foster deep and meaningful relationships with the teachers involved in her research. Focusing specifically on researcher positionality, Deepa shared some of the possible risks and benefits experienced as an insider researcher.

Johanna Quina, first-year PGR student and former clinical psychologist, presented on Researcher or Research Instrument: A Twist in the Identity of the Researchers in Participatory Approaches. Johanna focused on how participatory research can best be used with young populations.

Specifically, Johanna reflected upon ethical considerations when co-producing knowledge whilst conducting participatory research and the importance of overcoming the researcher-participant division.

In her presentation, *Using a Play-arts Amalgam to Engage Year 6 Children with Democracy*, PhD student, playwright and performance-based poet, Miranda Duffy highlighted the extent to which a play-arts based approach can attract Year 6 children (ages 10-11) to engage with democracy. Utilising her creative experience as a playwright and performance-based poet, Miranda demonstrated how her professional knowledge allowed her to not only engage with her young participants but also the conference delegates.

Vicky Ringer, PhD student at the University of Leeds and co-founder of Levi's Star, shared a deeply personal and incredibly moving presentation, *Exploring Parent and School Collaboration and Communication when Supporting Children Living with the Effects of a Brain Tumour*. Vicky's presentation demonstrated the impact even a small-scale research study can have. Building upon her own experience, Vicky described how important collaboration and communication between parents and schools is when supporting children living with the effects of a brain tumour.

As a practicing specialist teacher for cognition and learning who supports mainstream primary and secondary schools, Joanne Callaghan, part-time PhD student at the University of Leeds, is perfectly placed to observe some of the challenges young people face when transitioning from primary to secondary school. Her presentation, "Be your own shepherd, don't be a sheep": 'Successful Reading' during Primary-Secondary School Transition, demonstrated the importance of identifying, meeting the needs of and developing inclusive practice at this important time in a young person's development.

Session 4 – panel discussion

Moderated by Helen Latka, the conference concluded with a panel discussion led by staff from the School of Education, at the University of Leeds: Professor Alice Deignan, Dr Peter Hart, and Dr Harry Kuchah Kuchah. In a wide-ranging and open conversation, the panellists shared personal insights into their own messy research experiences and discussed ways in which impact may be built into our research relationships alongside providing participants with meaningful feedback.

Acknowledgements

The conference planning committee were Clare Copley, Deepa Ellepola, Anna Harwood, Helen Latka, Louise Williams-Lewis, Siying Shen, Dan Trowsdale and Hannah Wainwright. The conference was opened by Professor Vanessa Kind, Head of the School of Education at the University of Leeds. Dr Paula Clarke, the School of Education's Director of Research and Innovation, provided the closing remarks. The panel discussion was led by School of Education Staff, namely Professor Alice Deignan, Dr Peter Hart, and Dr Harry Kuchah Kuchah.

The conference organisers would like to thank especially our keynote speaker, Dr Katy Shire. We would also like to thank the wonderful presenters as well as the nearly 50 people who attended.



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