LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY

Wellbeing Matters: Exploring teachers' experiences of wellbeing in UK Further Education

This thesis is submitted in accordance with the requirements of Liverpool Hope University for the degree of Professional Doctorate in Education

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DECLARATION

This thesis is an original work composed solely by the undersigned candidate in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Professional Doctorate at Liverpool Hope University and has not been submitted previously in support of any degree qualification or course. All sources of information therein have been specifically acknowledged and the content of the thesis is legally allowable under copyright legislation

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I am very aware of how we journeyed together during the Covid pandemic, entering personal spaces of studies and kitchens via Zoom conference calls – changing the student/supervisor relationship in an unexpected but positive way.

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Abstract

The UK Government has expressed a commitment to the wellbeing of teachers in all sectors of education (Department of Education, 2021) and while teachers themselves have a passion for their profession, they also experience symptoms of significant stress and depression (Health and Safety Executive, 2021). This is of particular note in Further Education where they report high levels of anxiety and the lowest levels of positive wellbeing (Education Policy Institute, 2020). Much attention is paid to the professionalism of teachers and the privileging of institutional management systems and government mandates, such as accountability and performative measures. Less is paid to the working lives and wellbeing of those who often work in challenging circumstances. This study therefore sets out to explore the wellbeing experiences of six teachers in one institution of Further Education (UK).

A qualitative, three-phase research is adopted. Phase One: individual semi-structured interview. Phase Two: diary and photo-elicitation. Phase Three: individual semi-structured interviews. The findings show that teachers a) are intensely caring towards their students and that their role goes beyond technical competencies and students' academic achievements b) experience workload stress and loss of agency and c) attempt to navigate what are described as unrealistic expectations of management. The result is a disconnection between college-based practices and wider political policies and legislation in which the commodification of education posits the student as customer rather learner, challenging teachers' integrity and their personal and professional wellbeing. Overwhelmingly, the findings reveal that whilst teachers are exposed to psychic risks as well as rewards, they remain highly motivated to contribute to the wellbeing of students and their academic success. With the UK Government currently concerned about the declining recruitment and retention of Further Education teachers, these findings provide a timely and necessary contribution to a better understanding of their complex, professional lives. The thesis concludes by providing recommendations that address concerns teachers have shared about their working conditions, relationships with managers and the lack of opportunity for their views to be acknowledged and acted upon.

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List of abbreviations

BERA	British Educational Research Association
BTEC	Business and Technology Educational Council
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PMR	Performance Management Review
T-LEVELS	Technical-Based Qualifications
UK	United Kingdom

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.0 Genesis of the study

1.0a Personal genesis

Sitting at my desk, I saw a colleague enter the staff room in the college of FE where I teach. She was pale and shaken and slumped into her chair, deflated and flummoxed. At least one student in each of her previous four lessons had shared personal issues: a fractious relationship with a boyfriend, a family difficulty, an episode of physical abuse and a personal health concern.

The demands on her, in one ordinary day, made me consider how teaching involves emotional practice, a subject under-discussed in FE. I began to consider how a teacher's personal and professional identities are intertwined and that supporting students, with differing, sometimes complex problems, often at the end of classes, is a considerable challenge.

Our students arrive at 16 and leave at 18 as an adult. The vocational courses I teach on mainly comprise females with only an occasional male enrolling. All the courses, BTEC Health and Social Care and BTEC Child Care, Learning and Development are two years in duration and teachers to get to know their students well. The class sizes are not small, usually with 24 or more students. Most are seeking careers in caring professions such as nursing, social work and teaching. Their transformation while at the college, intellectually and emotionally, is often significant.

I have never wanted to be a teacher lacking passion or creativity. I love Friday afternoon lessons, for example, when most students anticipate the events of the coming weekend. They are alive with hope and expectation. Some, however, are facing difficulties at home, or have health, money or relationship concerns. These students will ask for advice, not only about an

essay but also for a variety of sometimes intense personal issues.

I began to recognise how these emotions affect not only my relationship with students and their learning potential but also my wellbeing. Having listened at length to students' difficulties, what are the potential short and long-term effects on my colleagues' wellbeing? These reflections, observations and lived experiences are the catalyst for this study.

1.0b Abstract genesis

Teaching is considered to be a rewarding occupation (Milatz et al; 2015 Tully, 2022). However, the stress teachers experience is fuelled by ever-changing demands to meet more rigorous criteria, work longer hours, comply with managerial expectations and support students, some of whom demonstrate less positive and occasionally aggressive behaviour (Daley, 2015). They feel impotent, hemmed in by dominant political discourses concerned solely with the commodification of education and performative measures. Education is now a single-minded route march, with student retention and success the only pursuit, regardless of the cost to both teacher and student (Avis et al, 2012; Acton and Glasgow, 2015; Balan, 2023). With ideals redundant, and little room allowed for curiosity and transformation, an air of despondency pervades a profession that should be driven by a sense of vibrancy, exploration, anticipation and freedom. Working in such an environment has contributed to issues of stress-related ill health with 'one in four teachers in 2019 leaving within the first year of work' (Mellor, 2024). In spite of this critical situation, teacher wellbeing remains low on the agenda of policy makers. The tokenistic rhetoric of the Department of Education falls short of addressing the pragmatic realities of teaching in the FE sector (Farley and Chamberlain, 2021). The current study highlights how their wellbeing continues to be under researched within the UK.

1.1 Aim of study

The study explores the wellbeing of established teachers who have more than five years' working experience in FE. It does so by addressing the following research questions:

1.1.1 Research questions

Q1: How do established teachers understand the term wellbeing?

Q2: What is the teacher's role in promoting teacher wellbeing?

Q3: What factors do established teachers identify as supportive in promoting teacher wellbeing?

Q4: What are the various professional demands and experiences that affect teachers' wellbeing?

Q5: How might pedagogic experiences/interactions with students affect the personal and professional wellbeing of established teachers?

1.2 Further Education in context

While the FE sector is understood to be the most comprehensive and complex of education institutions in Britain, its fragmented and 'ever-changing' nature has never received the attention it deserves (Hodgson et al, 2015 p.1, Petrie, 2015). Lobb (2017) and Hodgson et al (2015) highlight the resilience demonstrated by FE in meeting the demands of change quickly and effectively, noting how it is constantly subjected to fluctuations in the labour market and a 'bombardment of national policy', bringing about extensive changes in the sector (Hodgson et al, 2015 p.2). Known as the 'middle child' positioned between schools and higher education, its purpose and identity remain unclear (Foster, 2005; Hodgson et al, 2015). For example, the Foster Report (2005) highlighted the need for FE to forge positive links with business to fulfil its primary purpose 'to prepare learners for employment [...] promote social integration [...] [and] achieve academic progress', thus meeting national economic and social objectives (p.13). However, to meet economic imperatives, education has, to a large degree, been reduced to a series of competency-based programmes, its value as a 'project of freedom' (Freire, 1970) diminished. Both student and teacher are left disempowered (Daley, 2015). Moreover, the launch of government qualifications in 2020, governed by a 'rigid focus on teaching towards learning outcomes', has restricted the

curiosity and creativity of teacher and student (Ofsted, 2023, no pagination). As Freire states: 'The more education becomes empty of dreams to fight for, the more the emptiness left by those dreams becomes filled with technique [...] Then education becomes pure training[...] pure transfer of content [...] a mere exercise in adaptation to the world' (2004 p.84).

FE serves a wide diversity of learners (age, culture and experience). It offers a range of subjects (approximately 2,000 identified) and addresses academic, vocational and 'trade' curriculums (GOV.UK 2022/23). Successive governments have attempted to drive up educational standards and achieve policy goals (Lobb, 2017), most notably the Education Reform Act (1988) and Further and Higher Education Act (1992) which introduced a 'framework for accountability' and brought colleges into a new era of independent status (Lobb, 2017, p.188). Incorporation imposed free market principles on FE, encouraging competition between colleges and reconstituting education as a form of 'quasi-business'. FE teachers now work in a culture of business rather education, with the student re-constituted as the customer and the quality of education re-defined from one based on process to one of outcome, measured by retention rates, attendance and exam results (Lobb, 2017; Taubman, 2015; Hodgson et al, 2015). The economising of FE has given rise to powerful mechanisms for both the internalisation of control and surveillance of staff. Response from teachers has ranged from rejection and resistance to compliance, as they filter policies of reform through their existing professional ideologies (Acton and Glasgow, 2015). A fundamental difference in culture now exists between primary and secondary sectors and FE.

1.2.1 Teaching and wellbeing

This study does not suggest teaching in any environment is easy. As Moore and Johnson (2004 p.10) point out: 'Anyone familiar with schools knows that stories about the easy job of teaching are sheer fiction' (cited in Day and Gu 2010, p.38). The current study considers how teachers as people cannot be separated from teachers as professionals. They invest themselves in their work and 'at its best… [teaching] is a passionate affair' (Day, 2004 cited in Day and Gu, 2010, p.181). However, recent research undertaken by the Education Policy Institute (2020) on the wellbeing of the education work force in England, highlights the

disparity of teachers' wellbeing according to their sector. The report states: 'FE lecturers stand out with high levels of anxiety and the lowest levels of positive wellbeing among educators' with 'all educators, with the exception of FE teachers, report[ing] worthwhileness levels well above the graduate average' (p.20). Additionally, although research by Ofsted (2019) found that FE teachers in colleges rated as 'outstanding providers' had higher levels of wellbeing than those working in colleges 'requiring improvement', within education as a whole, FE lecturers remain the lowest-scoring group on the happiness scale and the second highest-scoring group on the anxiety scale (Education Policy Institute, 2020, p.20).

A contributory factor may be attributed to dominant discourses which focus on the marketisation and professionalism of teachers, drawing attention away from their poor working conditions (Daley, 2015, Taubman, 2015). The days are gone when teachers' working conditions, codified in the Silver Book (1983-1991), set clear parameters of service conditions. A '30-hour week [...] teaching no more than 21 hours [...] [and] 14 weeks' holiday a year' have been all but erased…' (Fletcher et al, 2015 p.90; Lobb, 2017). Teachers are now working far beyond their contracted hours and in their lunchtimes, hot-desking and changing sites (Daley, 2015). Woefully underfunded, there is a disparity in pay with other sectors, as noted by DfE workforce data. With 'the average gap between annual salaries of school and FE teachers reaching £9 000 last year' there is an 'increasingly acute staffing crisis' (Mellor, 2024, no pagination). Teachers work in a climate of fear and in environments that pose a threat to their wellbeing. As Taubman (2015) points out: 'Education and learning have been commodified: they are being bought and sold' (p.108).

Moreover, Hoyle, as far back as 1995, noted a shift in how teachers' professionalism had been diminished, highlighting how 'skill is given priority over knowledge and compliance over judgment' (cited in Shain, 1999 no pagination). This view continues to have currency. Daley (2015) and Taubman (2015) consider how there is a residual lack of respect for the values, expertise and commitment of professional staff. Teachers appear to be 'locked in' to a perpetual state of turmoil, in which the polarization of values between teachers and those that manage them is fueled by a 'powerless rhetoric which questions the purpose of education, and the entrepreneurial rhetoric which fails to question it' (Lobb, 2017, pps. 203,

204). FE teachers are expected to be flexible. As a consequence of incorporation, the sector has become 'all things to all people' (Lucas and Crowther, 2016, p.586). The current study considers has this perception cascades down, penetrating FE teachers' working practices on a daily basis. Hoskyns (2004) considers how their role is more diverse than primary and secondary sectors. Hoskyns (2004) highlights the diversity of learners, models of curriculum delivery, subject areas, the supporting of students' university applications along with their career aspirations and involvement in their pastoral care.

Research studies (Bakx et al 2015**;** Al-Mahrooqi et al, 2015; Noddings, 2005**)** highlight that, while students value a teacher's knowledge and skills, they universally identify good teachers as those who care. Good teaching is demonstrated through the 'connectiveness of everyday class-room interactions… [and] concern for [students'] general well-being and achievement' (Day and Gu, 2010 pps.181, 182). Teachers may be regularly exposed to the 'traumas children face: illness, divorce, death of a loved one, victimisation and despair' (Chang and Davis, 2011 p.120). The rise of emotional uncertainties is often attributed to profound social and economic change (Day and Gu, 2010). Students with mental health issues, for example 'depression, eating disorders, self-harm' (Storrie et al 2010, p.2) are a growing global problem with a significant number likely to enter FE. In addition, those who have not experienced previous academic success, may demonstrate low aspirations and poor motivation in FE (Le Gallais, 2004). Such a comment is not intended to problematise individuals. On the contrary, anecdotal evidence from my own teaching suggests that many students view FE as providing a new start, leaving behind their negative experiences of previous schooling. This study considers whether FE teachers' sense of wellbeing is impacted as a result.

Placed in a position of trust, teachers are often the first point of contact for students seeking advice about personal, non-academic issues (Hoskyns, 2004). This is amplified by a greater informality in FE, with students addressing teachers by their Christian names rather than 'Sir' or 'Miss'. Consequently, teachers are placed in a greater caring role, involving moment-to-moment judgements on a personal level (Chang and Davis, 2011), highlighting the importance of well-developed, interpersonal skills. Supporting students with complex problems can be difficult. Some teachers feel ill-equipped, lacking the skills required (Le

Gallais, 2004). As Lasky and Estes (2011) point out, they may experience personal and professional anxieties about giving inadequately-informed advice. Vesley et al (2013) note that teaching is recognised to be high in 'emotional labour' in that it a) requires face to face contact with students and b) produces emotional states (e.g. joy, anxiety) subject to external control (Hochschild, 1983) in classroom and school contexts (p.72). In other words, teachers are required to fulfil professional norms and cultural expectations (Yin et al, 2016).

1.2.2 Initial teacher training: the need to develop competency skills

With these discussions in mind, academic discourses have considered potential problems in initial teacher training for those wishing to enter FE (Le Gallais, 2004; Avis et al, 2012; Husband, 2015; Daley, 2015). Historically, teacher training in FE has lacked coherence. As Barr (1982) highlights (at the time of writing), entering FE required no formal training with suitability of employment left to the judgement of the relevant local authority. Barr (1982) notes that only thirty to forty per cent of FE teachers had received some form of professional training. In 2001 it became mandatory for them to be professionally qualified (Avis et al, 2012; Le Gallais, 2004). However, teacher training has been subject to many changes. As Avis et al (2012) point out, the rhetoric of the coalition government (2011) in which the Prime Minister pledged to 'release public services from the grip of state control', led to a discourse of freedom and local empowerment (Avis, 2011 cited in Avis et al, 2012 p.191). In real terms, expenditure was cut in FE and initial teacher training was relocated from university to school-based provision with emphasis given to 'on-the-job' training (Avis et al, 2012, p.191). Despite government rhetoric, teacher training continues to take many forms and leaves some trainees expressing concerns about insufficient emphasis on vocational skills training and classroom management techniques (Husband, 2015). As one teacher pointed out: 'I feel there was very little on how to handle students… [who] were emotional or had difficulties... In some respects, the training did not get us classroom ready' (Husband, 2015, p.238). This approach reflects the technicisation of teacher training (Avis 2011 cited in Avis et al, 2012) leading to a prescriptive and outcome-based curriculum (Husband, 2015) focused on curriculum design, assessment and being research informed. However, newly-qualified teachers may lack both the skills required to support students who express difficulties (Storrie et al, 2010) and the interpersonal skills to successfully teach a

diverse student community (Russell, 2004). Relational competence is seen as an important aspect of the profession with teachers expected to 'respond to students' feelings' (Rogers, 1982 p.8 cited in Russell, 2004 p.267) and offer 'empathy, sensitivity, self-awareness' to those who lack confidence, break unwanted news and support students emotionally (Russell, 2004, p.268).

As Hagenauer et al (2015) and others (Day and Gu, 2010; Chang and Davis 2011) point out, teaching is an emotional endeavour in which teachers' emotions are understood to correlate with their sense of wellbeing and the quality of their teaching. It involves intensive and extensive use of emotional labour and emotional work (Day and Gu, 2010). However, dominant discourses in education have focused on knowledge and skills, with little research on emotional demands (Yin et al, 2016). FE remains an unexplored terrain compared to schools, with limited studies on factors leading to stress (Kinman, 2001) and even less research on how to actively promote teacher wellbeing (Roffey, 2012). It is presumed FE teachers have the socio-emotional competence to be emotionally responsive to their students. This study considers how interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, the emotional work experienced by teachers and the possible effects on their wellbeing, should be an important component of teacher training and in-service professional development. It explores how teachers understand teacher wellbeing in FE. A review of literature, whilst not exhaustive, reflects a pre-disposition by researchers in i) recruiting large-scale samples ii) employ questionnaire/ survey methods and iii) utilising Likert-type scales to yield statistical analysis (Yin, et al 2016; Parker, et al, 2012; Glomb and Tews, 2004; Klusmann et al, 2008; Hagenauer, et al, 2015; Aelterman et al, 2007). With this in mind, I consider detailed individual experiences of teachers to be under discussed. The current study utilises a qualitative phenomenological approach to gain insight into a time and context-dependent reality undertaken in FE. Being both an insider (teacher) and an outsider (researcher) in an academic community places me in a good position to conduct this kind of enquiry (Su et al, 2010). The cogent foundations of the study have evolved from an interpretive epistemology using an ontology based on a social world of meaning. It therefore seeks to understand not one but 'multiple realities' (Patton 2002, p.134). It acknowledges that participants' interpretations are contextually bound (Cohen at al, 2011) and that human behaviours are best understood in context. It also considers the value of '*petit recit'*

(Lyotard,1984) or mini narratives which capture the multiplicity of participants' experiences thereby avoiding generalisations and closure (Irving, 2015). Such an approach is suited to small-scale research and supports the researcher in generating rich descriptions of teacher wellbeing (Denscome, 2017). In so doing, their voices will be heard.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised in seven chapters. Chapter One positions the thesis in context. It includes the personal and abstract genesis of the study and considers FE as a sector in the wider context of education (UK). It also presents the aim of the study and research questions. Chapter Two presents an overview of relevant literature, developing an understanding of teacher wellbeing in context. It explores teaching as a caring profession, critiquing Noddings' theory of the ethic of care (2005, 2006, 2010, 2018). This is followed by a consideration of philosophical traditions of wellbeing, taking into account the emotional landscape in which teachers work. The chapter ends by considering the importance of building positive relationships with students. Chapter Three discusses the methodology adopted and the philosophical/theoretical underpinning of the study's design. Ethical considerations and method of analysis are addressed with particular reference to insider/outsider research. Chapter Four provides brief descriptions of participant profiles and place of employment. Chapter Five presents the analysis of the study in which the findings are organised thematically. Four themes were generated from the research data: Disconnect from Others, Caring Dimensions, Control and Inter-Personal Relationships. The iterative and reflexive process of using Braun and Clarke's (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis allowed an opportunity to generate links reflecting the similarities and differences from one participant's experiences to another. Chapter Six returns to the aim of the study and the research questions therein. The questions are discussed in relation to the study's findings, alongside academic and political discourses that shape the way teachers go about their daily practice. The final chapter, Chapter Seven, considers the study's contribution to knowledge, reflecting on its strengths and limitations and the implications for further research and practice. The chapter ends by presenting my personal and professional reflection on the research process.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This literature review does not attempt to establish a definitive definition of 'wellbeing'. Instead, it considers the diverse discourses that come together around an understanding of teacher wellbeing and their emotional engagement in FE. The ensuing discussion relates these to other discourses as part of a wider ideological debate concerning the political and cultural values which shape the profession. It explores how FE teachers position themselves in various personal and professional tensions as they address the educational and personal needs of the students they teach. It also connects discourses of emotional wellbeing and engagement of students and teachers through the lens of Noddings' (1984, 2005, 2006, 2010a, 2010b, 2018) ethic of care and the theorisation of teaching as a caring profession.

Research conducted by the Health and Safety Executive (2021), suggests teachers in Great Britain are more prone to experiencing symptoms of stress and depression compared to the non-teaching general population. Teachers in all sectors face a heavy workload of administrative tasks, preparing lessons and marking students' work as well as addressing challenging behaviour. Alongside this the frequent changing of government policies and regulations has led to a poor work-life balance, a salient barrier to wellbeing (Ofsted, 2019). This is particularly noted in FE where high levels of anxiety and the lowest levels of positive wellbeing is reported (Education Policy Institute, 2020). The impact of teacher wellbeing also has implications for a school's culture, particularly in seeking to maintain workforce retention and organisational performance. Research commissioned by the Department for Education (2018) highlights poor experiences of wellbeing as central in teachers leaving the profession (DfE, 2018). As Kennedy (2010) notes, there is often too much blame on individual teacher characteristics and not enough consideration of the power of the environment and the array of situational factors that determine how teachers work.

Moreover, policy makers are prompted to consider the factors that contribute to poor teacher wellbeing and associated outcomes such as sick leave and the increasing reports of poor mental health in teachers (Brady and Wilson, 2021, p.45). The Government has responded to the 2014 Workload Challenge which indicated that administration and management in all educational sectors are burdened with an 'unnecessary and unproductive workload' and accountability (DfE 445, p.17). The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter (DfE, 2021), currently non-mandatory, outlines its commitment to the wellbeing of education staff in England by setting out principles of a shared understanding of wellbeing 'characterised by supportive, nurturing cultures' (p.2). The charter also recognises that a lower level of staff wellbeing not only leads to a demotivated workforce but also negatively impacts students' experience and achievement (DfE, 2021).

This literature review examines teachers' role in FE and considers how many of them demonstrate a caring orientation, empathy with students and 'connectiveness' in everyday classroom interaction (Day and Gu, 2010 p.182). In other words, while they invest themselves in their work, questions are raised about their emotional investment and its possible consequences at an emotional and physical level. For example, Avis et al's (2011) study of UK FE trainee teachers considers the emotional labour expended in supporting students and their expansive role in meeting a range of demands. The study also reflects on the emotional cost, including 'self-blame, involved in their [teachers'] care work with learners' (Avis et al, 2011 p.57). Other studies have shown how much is expected of teachers as they strive to fulfil the expectations of students, parents, managers and stakeholders and how being an FE teacher is not only 'a case of being pushed and pulled in different directions' but involves their investing heavily in emotional labour as a coping strategy (Jephcote et al, 2008 p.170). Similarly, other studies find that emotional demands positively relate to teachers' emotional and physical exhaustion (Yin et al, 2016; Hagenauer et al, 2015; Hargreaves,1998a).

Previous research on wellbeing has focused on stress and burnout, with teaching one of the most vulnerable occupational groups (Liu et al, 2018). Teacher wellbeing is therefore often defined in deficit terms. However, this review considers how, faced with a 'cocktail of challenges' (Day and Qing, 2011, p.16), teachers remain vocationally and professionally

committed to their students. Moreover, whilst much attention has been paid to the 'professionalism' of teachers, and the privileging of institutional management systems and government mandates, such as accountability and performative measures, less has been considered regarding the working lives of teachers and their wellbeing. This review challenges the assumption that teachers can be all things to all people, recognising them to be emotional workers who need to be highly sensitive to the demands of their occupation (Yin et al, 2016) and its potential impact on their wellbeing.

The review also recognises that, above all, teachers are human beings with opinions, emotions, skills and knowledge, embodying a reality shaped by personal experiences (Freire 1970) and habitus (Bourdieu 1984). They are emotional workers who need to be highly sensitive to the demands of their occupation, in particular relation to their emotions and wellbeing (Yin et al, 2016). I am persuaded by the humanistic ideology of education where teaching is understood to be a 'multidimensional and highly-individualised activity' (Lumpkin and Multon, 2013, p.288) in which characteristics and constructs can be identified – notably, the teacher's ability, personality and relationships with students (Bullock, 2015). It is against this ideological backdrop that the current study provides a space in which wellbeing experiences of established teachers may be heard and also where they may be threatened by policy making and regulation under the influence of neo-liberalism.

2.1 The role of the teacher in context

The volume of literature discussing the role of the teacher is substantial. Teaching does not take place in a vacuum but is influenced and determined by political and cultural values shaping education. Part of a wider ideological debate on the management and cost effectiveness of public services, education is governed by neoliberal capitalism and economic pragmatism (Giroux, 2010; Day and Gu, 2010; Ball and Olmedo 2013). It is within this culture that a 'new type of teacher…' is tasked with the responsibility for her own performance and that of others. Indeed, not undertaking responsibility is deemed irresponsible (Ball and Olmedo 2013, p.88). In this 'new' moral system Ball and Olmedo (2013) draw on the ideas of Foucault as they suggest that teachers are seen to be *produced*

rather than *oppressed* (emphasis added). Foucault considers how neoliberalism operates as a form of governance in which political rationality (i.e. forms of reason/ideas) and political technology (practices) are intimately entwined, influencing what happens in educational settings on a daily basis (Foucault 2008). For Foucault the influence of neoliberalism rests on the assumption that 'individuals are inherently economic beings' (Savage, 2017 p.149), competitive, self-interested, striving towards personal improvement and gain. Viewed as 'human capital' by governments, individuals are also expected to self-invest and nourish their productive potentials: a form of self-governance which Foucault refers to as 'responsibilisation' (Savage, 2017, p.149). Within this ideology, teachers are engaged, active, flexible individuals, evolving into a different kind of educational worker (Ball 2003). In other words, they are not merely victims of these processes but are actively involved in constructing a way forward for their practice. Moreover, Simmons (2010) considers the shift in conception of individuals under neoliberalism from one perceiving the individual as *homo economicus* (self-interest) to *manipulable man*, perpetually responsive and created by the state. This notion signifies how teachers are increasingly shaped by pressures of accountability (Bullough 2011), their personal and professional values subordinated to an institution's expectations, their roles governed by some kind of 'living contradiction' (Illsley and Waller, 2017, p.488) in which they hold in tension their own values and those of the institution. In other words'…what it means to teach …to be a teacher [is] …decisively changed in the process of reform' (Ball 2003, p.218).

Teachers have entered an era of 'heightened scrutiny and performativity' in which Ofsted has 'panoptic control' as the all-seeing eye for 'standard' and 'control' (Gleeson et al 2015, p.82). Surveillance culture (e.g. Ofsted, School Improvement Plan) now permeates practice through the standards agenda. Demonstrated through continuous audit practices, increased surveillance of teaching, monitoring of performances and adherence to curriculum, it is accompanied by strict hierarchical management structures (Avis, 2003). The manager is the 'new hero' of educational reform, encouraging a culture in which teachers must be accountable and committed to the organisation (Ball, 2003, p.219). This has created a technicist construction of teaching (Avis, 2003), diminished the professional judgements of teachers and reduced them to advanced technicians (Biesta, 2010) and 'bodies that are docile and capable' (Foucault, 1979 p.294).

2.1.1 Performativity – the quest for efficiency

The development of one grand narrative of performativity, which seeks to serve economic growth, has set the parameters of performative practices and defined the terrain upon which teachers operate (Avis, 2003). Lyotard (1984) argues that the roots of performativity lie in the decline of grand narratives of modernity. In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, he is particularly critical of the way modernity uncritically endorses 'grand narratives' as a means of ensuring closure and stability, themselves concepts and apparatuses of power and knowledge (Locke, 2015, p.250). In Lyotard's view the decline of grand narratives and their replacement by mini or local narratives, with limited generalisability (Alvesson, 2001), leaves a gap filled by 'performativity' (Irving, 2015). Lyotard also argues that insecurity over value and purpose, another result of the decline, ensure a greater focus on the process or 'means' (Irving, 2015). Put simply, performativity is the 'quest for efficiency: the very best input/output equation' (Locke, 2015, p.248) and is used by the state to satisfy the need for unity left by the disintegration of the grand narratives (Irving, 2015). For Lyotard, performativity is coupled to efficiency, reason and instrumentality that has come to mark modernity (Locke, 2015). This notion of performativity, therefore, suggests that education is no longer concerned with the pursuit of ideals revolving around emancipatory themes such as personal autonomy, but is more concerned with the pursuit of skills. As Locke (2015) states: 'Education through a new vocabulary of performance, simply performs' (p.257). Lyotard demonstrated the rise of performativity where the measure of means towards social ends become ends in themselves (Alvesson, 2001).

Simmons and Thompson (2008) consider how FE has proved to be a fertile ground for performativity with teachers now required to look for external legitimisation of their activity to meet the demands of surveillance apparatus. They are subjected to the performative tool of annually-graded lesson observations, which seek to measure their performance rather than improvement (O'Leary, 2013). These are mediated through staff appraisals, enabling central government and its institutional arm within management structures, to direct how teachers go about their daily classroom lives (Avis, 2003). Performativity not only dictates what learning is valuable but also what kind of student and teacher is valued, giving rise to an ethos of 'good staff get good results' (Donovan, 2018, p.3). Consequently, teachers in FE

feel burdened to ensure the success of students, regardless of their ability or commitment to studies (Illsley and Waller, 2017). This denotes a paradigm shift in students' expectations of FE and their personal responsibilities within it, undermining the established foundations of student/ teacher relationships (Illsley and Waller, 2017). As a consequence, teachers may develop a deficit approach towards students in which both teacher and student are pathologised if deviating from expectations dictated within the environment (Illsley and Waller, 2017). Inevitably, a blame culture is encouraged in which FE teachers may be deemed responsible for their students' lack of success (Avis, 2003). Indeed, accountability has the effect of subordinating the interests of both student and teacher to those of the institution (Gleeson et al, 2015) leading to a reduced culture of care for teacher and student. Even though students' needs may come to the fore, the value of the person per se is eradicated with both teacher and student valued by their productivity alone (Ball and Olmedo, 2013). In many respects, this is redolent of a Fordist culture with work relations bound by the parameters of performative practice, to measure successful or unsuccessful outcomes (Avis, 2003) of both teacher and student. As Ball (2003) states, within the 'mechanics of performativity… performance has no room for caring' (pps. 220, 224). In this culture, teachers express a 'heavy sense of inauthenticity' in their relations with students as they endeavour to a) address the expectations of performative measures, b) make judgements about 'good practice' and c) address students' needs. Relations are changed by the regime of these practices with teachers 'no longer working *with* students but working *at* students' (Ball, 2003. p.222). Commitment, judgement and authenticity are sacrificed for performance at a personal cost to the teacher.

In addition, the grand narrative of performativity is understood to drive out other forms of discourse about education. Transcendental virtues such as truth, beauty and goodness are deemed less significant, leaving students less likely to keep an '…open mind, explore new ways of seeing [and] encourage self-awareness…' (Kristjansson, 2016, p.716). Pedagogical culture has become subordinate to a narrow regime in which the repression of critical thought and imagination has spawned classrooms resembling 'dead zone[s]' (Giroux, 2010, p.715). In this scenario, students are less prone to develop a sense of curiosity. As Ecclestone (2007) states: '… [students are] achieving more but learning less…' (p.324).

This sits in contrast to the vision of a democratic and learner-centred education (Bath, 2009) and Freire's belief that education is part of a project of freedom '…a self-managed life and… particular notions of critical agency' (Giroux, 2010, p.716). As such, it negates a humanistic approach to teaching (Maslow, 1962; Rogers, 1969) in which the notion of human flourishing, aimed to encourage learners to feel good about themselves and their learning (Wilson, 2004), is lost within the framework of educational institutions. For example, the learner-centredness of student voice (Rudduck, 1991) was purposed to empower the learner (Robertson, 2015) and is based on the premise that students have something worthwhile to say and are able to express their views in a meaningful way (Kane and Chimwayange, 2014). This is seemingly diminished within the structure of educational institutions.

2.1.2 The power of Student Voice

The initial concept of student voice acknowledged students' exclusion from conversations about learning and teaching. Cook-Sather (2006) recognized that shared discourses between teachers and students enable students to develop greater self-confidence and self-efficacy, akin to Hart's *Ladder of Participation* (1992) (Hall, 2017). However, following FE colleges' legal obligation to implement a Learner Involvement Strategy (2007), Hall (2017) contends that student voice is reified into something measured through prescribed mechanisms such as student councils, representatives and surveys, all demonstrating a 'collective' approach to learning. Student voice has been politicised, incorporated into 'managerialistic rhetoric', becoming tokenistic and less transformational (Hall 2017, p.180). Some critics suggest that students' voices are oversimplified and essential differences between students, their perspectives and needs are overlooked (Cook-Sather, 2006). Indeed, some may feel unable to voice their opinions without a framework of reassurance that their views are valued by teachers and managers. To some degree, this may portray a romanticised view, positioning students as vulnerable and powerless rather than participators in the construction of their own lives (Nussbaum, 1998). However, some raise concern that student voice is being given more worth than that of teachers (Hall, 2017, p.184), threatening both institution and teacher. As Cook-Sather (2006) highlight, student voice 'calls for a cultural shift that opens up spaces and minds… to the presence and power of students' (p.363). Teachers now experience '…students [being]offered continuous support so that they feel good about

themselves and have high self-esteem' (Avis et al, 2011 p.54). They may also feel guilty if they fail to meet students' needs. Teachers legitimately ask: 'Where is our voice?' (MacBeath, 2019, p.96).

It is also important to note the bottom-up pressure from students and top-down pressure from a culture of performativity, governed by institutional management systems and government mandates. Teachers find themselves caught in the middle and susceptible to a compromised sense of wellbeing. Referring to the FE sector, Rasheed-Karim (2018) and others suggest they experience emotional exhaustion, facing a 'cocktail of challenges', and the threat of burn out in environments hostile to their wellbeing (Rasheed-Karim, 2018; Day and Qing, 2011, p.16). It stands to reason that the themes of emotional work, professional relationships and contextual factors experienced by FE teachers are related to the ideology of neoliberalism. Moreover, the vision of the 'new performative worker' shaped by performance, accountability and responsibility towards students' success (Acton and Glascow, 2015, p.109) may be understood to sustain or threaten teachers' wellbeing. It is with these considerations in mind that established teachers' voices should be heard and reflected to gain a broader understanding of how their experiences may have had an impact on their wellbeing.

2.2 Teachers and teaching: a caring profession

2.2.1 A call to care

In recent decades classroom environments have been recognised as complex arenas (Yin et al, 2016) in which a range of emotions (joy, anger, anxiety) are experienced by teachers. These are triggered by multiple factors as they interact with students, colleagues, parents and carers (Hagenauer et al, 2015). Alspup (2004) considers how teaching is '…more than a job, more… a way of life… a "calling"' (p.36). A teacher is recognised as someone who should go beyond the call of duty, with no expectation of extra reward. Prior to Alspups's (2004) view, Palmer (1997) noted how the teacher as a person is very much at the centre of educational experiences in which their comportment, or way of being, involves a connection

between their personhood and practice. The person and professional are inseparably intertwined, 'join[ing] self, subject and students in the fabric of life' (Palmer, 1998, p.11). In this sense, teachers teach 'out of who they are' (Palmer, 1997, p.14) and possess a capacity for 'connectedness' to those they teach (Palmer, 1998, p.11). Moreover, good teaching is understood to go beyond technical competencies, the teacher's 'selfhood' being made 'available and vulnerable in the service of learning' (Palmer, 1998, p.11). This view still has currency, aligned to the notion of 'altruistic standards' (Shulzhenko and Sayko, 2015, p.93). When asked why they wanted to enter the profession, many teachers expressed a desire to 'make a difference' (Alexander et al, 1994, p.40), helping students achieve their potential (Passey, 2021). Jephcote et al (2008) describe teachers in FE as acutely aware of the need to '…cater for and scaffold the wider realities of learners' lives' (p.166). Attending to students' personal issues is seen as an integral part of the job. Moreover, altruistic teachers have a deeply-caring orientation (Moore, 2004), demonstrating a 'connectiveness' in everyday classroom interactions (Day and Gu, 2010, p.182). As Owens and Ennis (2005) point out: 'The ability to enact an ethic of care… should be an expectation of effective teachers' (p.392). However, the realities of care may lead to some teachers feeling overwhelmed, particularly in a culture where the ability to care is assumed rather than nurtured or taught (Owens and Ennis, 2005).

2.2.2 Noddings' theory of the ethic of care

It is useful to consider this aspect of the teacher's role by drawing on Noddings' (1984) theorisation of teaching as a caring profession. Based on the premise that the act of teaching is relational and situated, tenets central to Noddings' concept of the ethics of care create an opportunity to consider how her contributions position the relationship between the teacher and student as of paramount importance (Chatelier and Rudolph, 2018). In Noddings' view, the act of caring for the other is understood to undergird the role of education per se (Chatelier and Rudolph, 2018), placing care at the heart of the educational system (Owens and Ennis, 2005). This does not negate that 'education seeks multiple aims' (Noddings, 2006, p.339) but recognises that education extends beyond the instrumental and academic. As such, it positions the teacher first in a caring role before being an enactor of pedagogical functions (Chatelier and Rudolph, 2018).

2.2.3 Defining care

Care has been a matter of philosophical interest. Heidegger (1927) considered it as the very being of life. Mayeroff (1971) defines it as a process to support others to develop, self-actualise and embrace qualities such as trust, hope, humility and courage. To care requires empathy without losing one's identity in the process (Katz, 2007). Delaune (2017) considers how care requires a genuine 'opening up to the other, a vulnerability to the affective impact of the object of attention' (p.339). In Noddings' (2018) view, care is rooted in our responsibility to one another, fostering mutual recognition, protection and empowerment. It is essential to human flourishing, occurs within relationships (Katz, 2007; Owens and Ennis, 2005; Noddings 2018) and involves feeling responsible towards someone or something (Chang and Davis, 2011).

2.2.4 Theoretical lens: the characteristics of care

Caring is not merely a technique (Noddings, 2010a) and goes beyond superficial responses. It starts with the needs of the 'cared for' rather than what the 'one caring' should exhibit (Katz, 2007). This brings to the fore Noddings' commentary on the ethic of care which focuses upon caring for the student as a person, not merely as a learner (Katz, 2007). Based on a reciprocal relationship between the 'one caring' (teacher) and the 'cared for' (student), the carer is thoroughly receptive to what the other says, receiving it non selectively and not as 'mere information' (Noddings, 2018, p.71). What is conveyed by the other should not be subject to classroom forms of attention (Noddings, 2010b). In this way, the teacher connects to the cared-for student in an attitude that facilitates attention (Owens and Ennis, 2005), founded on 'at least [being] momentarily engrossed in the other's plans, pains and hope' (Noddings, 1996 cited in Delaune, 2017, p.339). Noddings (2018) describes this as the carer '…feel[ing] [their] energy flow towards the other's predicament' (p.71). Chang and Davis (2011) highlight how teachers engage in different caring behaviours involving moment-to-moment judgements and feeling a sense of responsibility. Noddings refers to this as 'motivational displacement' in which the teacher's energy is 'put to the service of the other' (Diller, 1988, p.329) to support their plans and hopes (Owens and Ennis, 2005). Indeed,

some FE teachers take up the role of a 'mother figure', supporting students with personal issues like housing and benefits (Gleeson et al, 2015, p.87). Gleeson et al's (2015) use of the term implies the caring aspect of the teaching rests solely with female FE professionals. However, notions of care appear to be qualities of both male and female teachers. For example, Gleeson et al's (2015) study of FE professional practice demonstrates how male teachers regard pastoral engagement with students is a pre-requisite of successful teaching. Care is viewed as a cornerstone of their practice rather than a detachable aspect. Noddings (2018) notes the importance of spending time with students, developing trust, so that advice and care is received with appreciation and understanding.

However, this gives rise to reservations about Noddings' commentary on the ethics of care. For example, grounded in a relational view, care is seen as a shared act between the carer (teacher) and cared-for (student) in which *both* parties *contribute* [my emphasis] to the relationship (Noddings, 2005). This pre-supposes that all students wish to build a relationship with their teachers. Indeed, some may prefer a transactional relationship in which there are expectations and reciprocation, as in a business relationship. Slote (2010b) points out that unintentional conflict may arise from an attempt to develop relationships. Anecdotal evidence from my own and colleagues' experiences, highlights that responding positively to students' needs has sometimes been interpreted as intrusive with anxiety, even anger on the part of the student. The teacher's 'prepared to care' mode (Noddings, 2010b, p.10) is perceived as misplaced and patronising. In addition, some teachers view such caring as 'mummying' students, with over-commitment giving rise to a parasitic relation. Others describe experiencing personal and professional anxieties about 'doing the wrong thing' (Lasky and Estes, 2011).

Noddings has critics who consider a) how her care ethic is genderised in its presentation as primarily a feminine ethic (Diller, 1988) and b) how care-ethics may be viewed as anti-rationalist (Slote, 2010b). In the first instance, her innately feminist framework emphasises the differences between the traditional male-dominated views of rules and regulations and the more, 'motherly' voice that seeks relationship in interactions and decision making (Owen and Ennis, 2005). This perspective does not appreciate the numerous versions of what it means to be a 'woman' or a 'man' (Diller, 1988). As Diller (1988) and Slote (2010a) point out, imposing gender-sensitive constraints diminishes the notion that society

encompasses nurturant men and single-minded women, and vice versa. Care ethics should go beyond the notion of a feminine orientation and a 'blinkered view of human values one associates with patriarchy' (Slote, 2010a, p.189). They pertain to men and women (Slote, 2010a). To this end, the findings of Gleeson et al's (2015) research on professional practice in English FE suggests both male and female tutors view care as a central aspect of their daily practice, placing tutor-student relationships as 'the most important link in the whole process of FE' (p.88). Noddings' (2013) more recent literature introduces the term 'relational' rather than 'feminine', emphasising a broadening of the ethics of care no longer allied to a specific gender (Bergmark, 2020, p.335).

Secondly, her care-ethics places emphasis on emotional connection that does not depend on 'axiomatic rules and principles' (Noddings, 2010a, p.148) but regards the relationship between the teacher and student of paramount importance. At first glance, it may appear that her approach lacks a sense of rationale, positioning empathy and cognition as mutually-exclusive activities. This begs the question as to whether her care-ethic relies too much on human feelings and emotions and not enough importance on reason and cognition (Slote 2010b). However, in Noddings' view care-ethics require a well-developed capacity for reasoning because they do not depend on rules and principles (Noddings, 2010a). What this suggests is that practice is more complex than rules might imply, not negating the notion that reason and action are not influenced by ideals and principles (Bergmark, 2020). This approach resonates with Aristotle's position on ethics which focuses on 'phronesis' (practical wisdom) rather than the development of universal ethical rules (Aristotle *NE*). In other words, phronesis 'allows [individuals] to judge rightly what a situation calls for and to do it' (van Hooft, 2006, p.81). In order to demonstrate phronesis, teachers in their value-laden contexts develop the capacity to understand individual events in order to make ethical decisions. Indeed, in my professional capacity, I have been privileged to observe colleagues in a 'prepared to care' mode (Noddings, 2010b, p.10). This has involved their becoming engrossed in a student's needs, seeking advice from a colleague to support them further. In line with Noddings, 'moral action is motivated by *feeling*, not by mere understanding' (Noddings, 2018, p.97).

In summary, Noddings (1984) notes that the ideal of caring evolves from sympathy that human beings innately feel for one another (Owens and Ennis, 2005). Caring is conceptualised as a process: it is something teachers do rather than feel, an ethic communicated though the curriculum, classroom norms and interactions with students (Chang and Davis, 2011). It is marked by a reciprocal relationship between the one caring, in which the needs of the other are motives for actions (Bergmark 2020). Noddings' care-ethic does not rely on a set of essential attitudes or character traits, nor does it depend on 'axiomatic rules and principles' (Noddings, 2010a, p.148) but opens up critical spaces, allowing freedom and creativity as carer responds to cared-for. In this way, the teacher's responses are situational, varying across time, cultures and personalities (Owens and Ennis, 2005). In relation to this study, it is important to consider whether engaging in caring activity affects teachers' experiences of personal and professional wellbeing. As already discussed, some teachers take up the mantle of care, while others are concerned about 'mummying' students, or 'doing the wrong thing' (Lasky and Estes, 2011). In a free market culture, in which teacher performance, student achievement, retention and funding are considered of paramount importance (Gleeson et al, 2015), caring is often devalued and displaced. Teachers are, nonetheless, expected to build caring relationships with students. Bullough (2011) highlights how 'they [teachers] still continue to do the best they can for their students' (p.33). Indeed, we need to consider whether philosophical rhetoric bears any relation to the pragmatics of everyday interactions between teachers and students and the possible implications for wellbeing, particularly in FE.

2.3 Wellbeing in education

Wellbeing as a construct often gives rise to broad and vague definitions (Dodge et al, 2012). Even the spelling of the term remains largely unresolved. Wellbeing constructs are often multifaceted rather than equated with a single concept, such as life satisfaction or absence of stress (Dodge et al, 2012). A narrow emphasis is likely to omit important aspects and lead to a restricted understanding. However, interpretations are wide ranging and include, for example, a fluctuating state between challenges and resources in which an equilibrium is

experienced (Dodge et al, 2012) or a mastery of experiences and personal growth (Tay and Diener, 2011) to 'optimal human functioning' (Ryan and Deci, 2001, p.142).

These considerable variations have led to research into teachers' wellbeing defined in deficit terms. For example, Roffey (2012) and others, highlight how the determinant of teachers' wellbeing often focuses on the presence of stress and burnout (Spilt et al, 2011; Collie et al, 2015; Kiltz et al, 2020). It is therefore frequently framed as the *absence* [my emphasis] of stress rather than an innate desire to reach one's potential (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Similarly, much educational literature on the subject is dominated by deficit-based terms, for example 'challenging circumstances, the harsh reality, the demands of…, burdened, stressful, frustrating, forced fun, fire-fighting' (Milatz et al, 2015; Ball and Olmedo, 2013; Illsley and Waller, 2017; Brady and Wilson, 2021; Jephcote et al, 2008). Wartime metaphors are also evoked with narratives focusing on individuals who 'make it to the end' [of a college day], 'manage conflicts', 'surviving', (Margolis et al, 2014 p.395). Bullough (2011) suggests vulnerability is a dominating mood in teachers who are open to 'easy wounding by students, parents and administrators…' (p.37). That said, whilst some teachers may become cautious and withdrawn, others sense the need to grow. As such an 'openness to wounding is experienced… as a readiness to learn' (Bullough, 2011 p.37) and used as an effective strategy to maintain their wellbeing.

Framing teachers as a vulnerable workforce is a powerful cultural narrative and begs the question as to how educational rhetoric meets the reality of teachers' everyday classroom experiences. If they feel vulnerable, how does this affect their wellbeing? As Ecclestone (2007b) points out, pervading discourses concerned with 'risk, danger and vulnerability' (p.464) can lead to an erosion of agency and resilience. Cultural images of a 'diminished self' affirm vulnerability, negating empowerment and resilience (Ecclestone, 2007b, p.457). Considering the positive emotions teachers may experience and the role these experiences may play in sustaining their sense of wellbeing, would naturally broaden the field. As Hargreaves (1998b) points out, 'good' teachers are 'charged with positive emotions… connect with their students… and fill their work and classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy' (p.835).

2.3.1 Philosophical traditions of wellbeing

Research on wellbeing has considered the philosophical tradition of hedonism which places a focus on an individual's sense of satisfaction, emotions and 'pleasure in a given moment' (Mairitsch et al 2021, p.2). For example, the Greek philosopher, Aristippus conceptualised hedonism as a maximisation of pleasure and minimisation of pain (Disabato et al., 2016). Thus, from a hedonic perspective, wellbeing can be achieved through the pursuit of enjoyment and comfort which, in broad terms, range from those derived from physical pleasure to others which are emotional-cognitive in nature. For Aristippus, the 'goal of life is pleasure, regardless of its source' (Huta and Ryan, 2010, p.736). By contrast, Aristotle *NE* viewed pleasure seeking as a vulgar way of life (Joshanloo, 2014, p.476).

> The many, the most vulgar, seemingly conceive the good and happiness as pleasure, and hence they also like the life of gratification. Here they appear completely slavish, since the life they decide on is 'a life for grazing animals'
>
> (Aristotle *NE* in Irwin, 2019, p.7).

For Aristotle, virtues such as 'integrity, courage, justice, forgiveness and compassion amongst others' (Bright et al, 2014, p.446) are character traits necessitous for individuals to approach the ideal state of wellbeing and live a 'good' life (Gaskarth, 2011, Back et al, 2018). The concept of virtue is therefore central to Aristotle's notion of *eudaimonia* or 'human flourishing or reaching ones' potential' (Arjoon, 2010 p.7 in Bright et al, 2014, p.446). Albeit specific virtues may vary by context, in essence virtue is about living as an honourable and moral being (Bright et al, 2014). Aristotle's conceptualisation of wellbeing represents human flourishing as actualising one's potential and working towards personal growth, i.e self-actualisation (Joshanloo, 2014, p.476). Examples of eudaimonia include acting to the best of one's ability, exercising virtues like kindness and gratitude (Huta and Ryan, 2009). Hursthouse (2007) highlights how Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* begins by discussing the highest good for man, and focuses on how one can achieve *eudaimonia,* live happily or well. In other words, a virtue-based approach to ethics begins not with the question 'What is the right thing to do?' (more akin to ethics of duty) but considers the question 'What is the best way to live?' (Russell, 2013, p.7). Moreover, being virtuous is less concerned with fulfilling

moral obligations towards others, although exercising virtues may have this benefit, but rather embraces how the individual flourishes in various ways (Hursthouse, 2007). However, van Hooft (2006) considers how flourishing also entails going beyond just fulfilling one's own aspirations. It also involves living up to the standards of excellence that we not only set ourselves but also those of our communities. It is to be at 'peace with ourselves… to be in harmony with our communities… to have an understanding of what our lives are about and what is important to us…' (van Hooft, 2006, p.10). The essential hypothesis: how does one achieve the 'good life' (*eudaimonia*) and contribute to society by focusing on the cultivation of a virtuous character? As Ryan and Deci (2001) further point out, when an individual's life activities are truly congruent with deeply-held values, they become fully engaged with their authentic self – their 'daimon' (p.146).

For Aristotle *NE* a person living a fulfilled, virtuous life experiences a sense of wellbeing in which character traits of justice, integrity, compassion are virtues to be sought. Similarly, a virtuous life encourages good works that are intellectually and morally praiseworthy (Bright et al, 2014, p.447). The impact of this world view can be seen in the pedagogical disposition of some teachers who express a desire to support students to reach their potential (Passey, 2021; Alexander et al, 1994; Jephcote et al, 2008). This approach highlights the notion that, whilst virtue ethical agents are not obliged to seek or strive for eudaimonia (they do so because they want to experience personal wellbeing) it does, however, consider the flourishing of others (Stonehouse, 2021; Russell, 2013). In addition, Russell (2013) reminds us that a crucial part of our humanity is our sociality with others. Put simply, wellbeing cannot be decontextualised. Teachers' experiences are situated and relational, collaboratively constructed through interactions in the social space of educational environments. As Acton and Glasgow, (2015) point out: 'Albeit teacher wellbeing may be defined as an individual sense of personal professional fulfilment, satisfaction, purposefulness and happiness, [it is] constructed in a collaborative process with colleagues and students' (p.102).

As previously stated, this literature review does not seek to establish a definitive definition of 'wellbeing'. Instead, it considers the wellbeing experiences of teachers in FE and seeks to encourage a broader understanding of the various personal and professional tensions they

face, the educational and personal needs of the students they teach and the constraints and opportunities they encounter within a neoliberal political environment.

2.3.2 Do definitions matter?

The importance of these academic discussions has both theoretical and practical implications. For example, Ryan and Deci (2001) note the importance of how we define, conceptualise and frame wellbeing, acknowledging its pervading influence on government practices, parenting, caring for others and, in the context of this study, the teaching profession. It is within the culture of academic discourse that the lack of clarity over defining what wellbeing *is* or *means* stems from the way the word is used, which is found to be particularly broad (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008). Indeed, due to concerns over the inconsistency of the term and its implied meaning, the Department for Children, Schools and Families, tasked by the Government (2008), found that the discourse of wellbeing, featured strongly in policy and delivery documents, was 'unstable in the UK' (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008, p.1). Their findings highlighted the 'holographic' quality of the term, in that, 'different meanings are being projected by different agents.' Moreover, what is apparently meant by the term depends on where you stand (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008, p.5). For example, Ereaut and Whiting (2008) consider how different versions of wellbeing are constructed. Is it a permanent or temporary state, a process or place, an individual or collective experience? The tension between an individual and collective experience is particularly relevant for educational institutions. Does responsibility for wellbeing lie solely with teachers or is it shared, with colleges acknowledging their role of supporting the wellbeing of their workforce? These considerations are useful if we are to understand the term as being both instrumental in and an outcome of personal development (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008). The matter is addressed, in part, in The Staff Wellbeing Charter (2021), published by the Department of Education. Addressing all educational sectors, the charter begins by stating:

> We believe that everyone working in education should have the opportunity to enjoy the highest possible standard of wellbeing and mental health (Department of Education, 2021, p.2).

In addition, the charter highlights the need to 'embed wellbeing in training and professional development [of teachers]' (2021 p.4) whilst recognising wellbeing as both an individual and

collective phenomenon and the need to 'give staff the support they need to take responsibility for their own and other people's wellbeing' (2021, p.6). What this draws attention to is the individual capacity to care for another individual as noted by Noddings (2005, 2006, 2018). Wellbeing is understood to be a comprehensive construct, embracing conflicting ideas. It is seen as 'delivered' to people, as well as something for which the individual is ultimately responsible (DfE, 2015). However, whilst the above statements pertain to all sectors of UK education, it is teachers in the FE sector that 'stand out among educators as having high levels of anxiety and the lowest levels of wellbeing' (Education Policy Institute, 2020, p.4).

For the purpose of this research, the term 'wellbeing' is considered to be both a psychological and social construct because it encompasses the personal as well as the professional. It is a dynamic state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively, and build positive relationship with others (Day and Qing, 2011). Wellbeing is 'the balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges faced' (Dodge et al, 2012, p.230). In the context of the present study, this definition affords a universal application of the term, pertaining to all individuals regardless of gender, culture and age. It also recognises the agency of individuals, viewing them as 'decision makers with choices, preferences and the possibility of becoming masterful, [and] efficacious' (Dodge et al, 2012, p.231). In addition, this places an emphasis on positivity and offers significant information to support and enhance teacher wellbeing, instead of emphasising stress and burnout.

2.4 Emotional landscape of teaching

Glomb and Tews (2004) highlight that emotions are a pervasive part of human experience, shaping perceptions, directing behaviour and influencing interactions with others. Teaching is high in 'emotional labour' in that a) it requires face to face contact with others, especially students b) it produces emotional states (e.g. joy, anxiety) and c) teachers' emotional activities are subject to external control (Hochschild, 1983). In school contexts teachers are required to fulfil professional norms and cultural expectations (Yin et al, 2016). Moreover,

attempts to understand emotional wellbeing requires our recognising it as a relational process, a dynamic interaction between circumstances and activities in which teachers engage their psychological and emotional resources (Day and Qing, 2011).

2.4.1 Discourses around emotions

In social psychology discourses, emotions are deemed universal and innate, regardless of culture and experiences (Berent et al, 2020; Elfenbein and Ambrady; 2003). The implication is that emotions have a biological basis: they are happening to you rather than as a skill to be learned. The notion of universal recognition of facial expressions to communicate basic emotions such as joy, sadness and anger gives some credence to this view. Regardless of culture, individuals are able to interpret how others may be feeling (Elfenbein and Ambrady, 2003). Hegemonic discourses also view emotions and reason as separate entities with the privileging of reason over emotion. As von Scheve (2012) notes: 'passions and emotions have often been considered as disturbing and irritating occurrences… particularly in domains requiring calm deliberation and rational thought' (p.1). By contrast, emergent discourses are a negation of hegemonic discourses, no longer contending that emotions are disruptive forces to rational thinking. Instead, emotions are viewed as highly adaptive to both cultural and social conditions, with reason and emotion no longer perceived as separate entities. Emotion is understood to be integrally connected with and permeating reason (von Scheve, 2012 and Hargreaves, 2000). For Hargreaves (2000) emotion enables individuals to judge and act by using a bias in the values that guide them. In this sense, decision making is enhanced by emotion, while the use of cognitive reflection guides the moderation of emotion. Other advances in the understanding of the role of emotions include emotional intelligence (Mayer and Salovey, 1997) defined as the ability to understand and express emotion, assimilate emotion into thought and regulate emotion in the self and others and subjective wellbeing (Diener and Suh, 1997) consisting of three interrelated components, pleasant and unpleasant emotions and life satisfaction.

Both hegemonic and emergent discourses are useful in understanding teachers' experiences of wellbeing. For example, assumptions that emotions are universal has given rise to policies

and procedures in educational settings that have spawned a unilateral approach to how teachers should respond to their pedagogic and relational experiences with students, parents, colleagues and managers. This approach, however, portrays teachers as somehow disembodied and fails to take into account how emotion is socialised from culture to culture. Teachers can and must fulfil professional norms (Yin et al, 2016) both inside and outside their educational contexts. Hargreaves (2000) argues that 'emotions are an integral part of education' (p.812) and notes the lack of attention paid to the emotions teachers experience in responding to educational policy, administration and the educational research community. Conversely, administrators and reformers are encouraged to manage teachers' emotions to offset their resistance to change, using them as a 'gentle sedative' through team-building activities, professional development sessions and wellbeing days (Hargreaves, 1998a, p.280). Hargreaves' (1998a, 2000) findings are useful in relation to this study. For example, although greater legitimacy has been given to emotional displays and management (Oplatka and Arar, 2019) the same issues continue to lack attention. How teachers in FE use emotions to maintain their wellbeing is rarely discussed. Similarly, their experiences of poor wellbeing, e.g. exhaustion and burnout, and how they can be best supported in this context, are also under researched (Rasheed-Karim, 2018).

2.4.2 The emotional work of teachers

As already discussed, classrooms are complex emotional arenas, in which teachers are constantly exposed to emotional demands (Yin et al, 2016). Often working in crowded conditions, (Day and Gu, 2010) they engage in intensive personal interactions, seeking to promote the collective wellbeing of students (Day and Gu, 2010; Avis et al, 2011; Hagenauer et al, 2015). For example, in the study of Avis et al (2011), teachers in FE describe how they support students who display 'emotional outbursts.' In terms of emotionality, they may initially experience 'confusion and irritation' which often shifts to concern about the students' welfare and wellbeing (Avis et al, 2011, p.52). Jephcote et al (2008) confirm this view, referring to the complex lives of students and the way in which these complexities impact on teachers' work. Students' wider lives can pervade classroom interactions with their accounts of 'alcoholic parents… sexual abuse, attempted suicide…' (Jephcote et al, 2008, p.166). Other studies refer to feelings of anger experienced by teachers, evoked by

student misbehaviour (Hagenauer et al, 2015). Indeed, Avis et al (2011) note how teachers operate with an expansive understanding of their role. The discipline of addressing the learning requirements of students cannot be detached from their past and current life experiences: the act of teaching cannot be separated from the teacher. However, this open-ended role may lead FE teachers to experience compassion fatigue (Hagenauer et al, 2015, p.11) and emotional dissonance in order to fulfil cultural and institutional expectations (Glomb and Tews, 2004). Such an approach can lead to a discrepancy in the emotional display of teachers and genuinely-felt emotions (Glomb and Tews, 2004). They may feel obliged to *appear* caring towards students, while suppressing negative emotions. In so doing, they observe the social expectations and professional norms of teaching (Yin et al, 2016). Researchers agree that emotional dissonance may lead to 'an estrangement between self and true feelings' (Glomb and Tews, 2004 p.2; Hochschild, 1983) with teachers alienated from the 'part of our self that does the work' (Winograd, 2003, p.1647). Faced with these issues, teachers' day-to-day interactions involve them in 'emotional labour' (Jephcote et al, 2008) which Hochschild (1983) describes as:

> the induce[ment] and suppress[ion] [of] feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others… this kind of labour calls for co-ordination of mind and feeling, and sometimes draws on a source of self that we honour as deep and integral to our individuality (p.7).

Hochschild understands our feelings as presentations of self, recognised as social expressions of our emotional state. Surface and deep acting, as emotion-regulating strategies, are discussed in relevant literature (Hochschild, 1983; Nair, 2019; Avis et al, 2011; Yin et al, 2016; Glomb and Tews, 2004). Surface acting occurs when teachers only alter their outer expressions of emotion to comply with organisational expectations and rules (Nair, 2019; Yin et al, 2016). For example, surface effects, such as smiling, laughing and frowning are 'put on' and do not reflect how the teacher is really feeling (Winograd, 2003). By contrast, deep acting requires the manipulation of inner feelings, to match the outward display of emotion appropriate for the setting (Nair, 2019; Hochschild, 1983). In this way, a teacher's inner emotions are more in agreement with their emotional display than in surface acting, producing an 'authentic' response. Referring to cognitive techniques used by

teachers, Yin et al (2016) describe how one teacher, in dealing with inattentive students, distracted himself by concentrating on his teaching. In both surface and deep acting, teachers are understood deliberately to manage their own emotions (Yin et al 2016; Winograd, 2003).

For Hochschild (1983) emotional labour is largely a negative phenomenon, although in her seminal work she contends that 'emotional labour is potentially good' (p.9). Hochschild (1983) considers how no-one would choose to be taught by a surly teacher. However, this does not suggest that teachers who appear distant towards their students are not 'good' at their job, but rather recognises the value of positive teacher-student relationships and how they contribute to students' motivation to learn (Koca, 2016). In this sense, an understanding of emotional labour goes beyond the view of being merely negative and draining. Emotional labour can be both 'pleasurable and rewarding' (Hargreaves, 2000, p.814). Rather than being alienating, emotional labour can lead an individual to enhancing their involvement in a task. By this token, the more values intrinsic to the work role are internalised, the 'more likely emotional labour will lead to a sense of personal wellbeing' (Winograd, 2003, p.1648). For Hargreaves (1998a) emotional labour constitutes an important part of teaching. It is 'a labour of love' (Hargreaves 1998a, p.281) given that the ethics of care are an integral professional norm of teachers' work and role (Yin et al, 2017).

In summary, teaching is an emotional practice (Nair, 2019; Avis et al, 2011; Yin et al, 2016; Glomb and Tews, 2004; Hargreaves, 1998a) and emotional labour is experienced by teachers as they fulfil the cultural expectations of an institution, work with colleagues and teach students. However, the interaction between students and teachers is regarded as the main touchstone for emotional labour (Yin et al 2017; Avis et al, 2011) and this aspect requires more detailed consideration.

2.5 Building relationships with students

Emotions are not only located in the individual mind, they are expressed in interactions and relationships with others (Hargreaves, 2000). Moreover, the use of emotions can be helpful

or harmful by building collegiality or keeping others at a distance. Roffey (2012) notes that teachers are involved in about a thousand interpersonal contacts each day. Although these often include interactions between colleagues, management, parents and students it is the quality of teacher-student relationship that is understood to be an important source of teacher wellbeing (Milatz et al, 2015; Spilt et al, 2011). Indeed, wellbeing is strengthened by a greater understanding between teachers and students (Liu et al, 2018) in which trust and reciprocity prevail, forming the basis of mutual respect and connectivity.

This echoes the findings of Noddings who noted that, although the student-teacher relationship is unequal in terms of power differential (e.g. the teacher is positioned as the more knowledgeable other), their relationship is marked by reciprocity in which both parties contribute to the relationship (Noddings, 2005, Delaune, 2017). In the shared space of a classroom, for example, a notion Hargreaves (2000) refers to as 'the emotional geography' of a classroom, teachers are now seen to gain positive feedback from students in the process of teaching rather than at the end of it. Hargreaves (2000) considers this to be a valuable reward for teachers. Indeed, those who develop meaningful relationships with their students are found to be less prone to experiencing burn out than others who establish more distant relationships. Thus, teachers' wellbeing may be enhanced by close relationships with their students (Milatz et al, 2015).

However, the nature of teacher-student relationships involves both the teachers' and students' beliefs about the nature of classroom relationships (Chang and Davis, 2011). Knee et al (2003) argue that individuals hold different beliefs about 'what makes for a good relationship' (p.41) and contend that beliefs are characterised by destiny or growth beliefs about relationships. They describe how individuals who hold destiny beliefs determine the success of a relationship based on minimal information and, in general, view potential relationship 'partners' as inherently compatible or incompatible (Knee et al, 2003; Chang and Davis, 2011). Moreover, because the basis of destiny belief is founded on assessing a relationship's potential, the need for positive experiences is especially important (Knee et al, 2003). In comparison, individuals who hold growth beliefs are 'primarily interested in developing [and maintaining] the relationship' and are more likely to believe 'that relationship challenges can be overcome' (Knee et al, 2003, p.41). This understanding has

important implications for teachers responsible for developing productive relationships with their students (Chang and Davis, 2011). It stands to reason that the views teachers hold, and the judgements they make about students, shape their emotional experiences and quality of relationships. As Chang and Davis (2011) point out, teachers' 'beliefs about relationships and their ways of judging students' behaviour [for example] can leave them prone to frequently experiencing unpleasant emotions' (p.96).

Concerns about student behaviour is highlighted in Avis et al's (2011) study. They describe how, during focus group discussions with English FE trainees, teachers drew upon conceptualisations of the 'good' and 'bad' student, frequently drawing on student behaviour as a reference point. One participant commented on the 'difficulty of controlling young adults whom she believed "mostly didn't want to be there" whilst other participants explained that when this is the case "you're completely powerless"' (p.51). Negative emotions (e.g. anger, frustration) are frequently linked with students' misbehaviour and as a consequence may threaten a teacher's sense of wellbeing (Hagenauer et al, 2015), particularly if negative emotions persist. Indeed, some teachers believe their wellbeing to be under threat when dealing with difficult and sometimes abusive students (Roffey, 2012). Moreover, experiences of high teacher-student conflict are seen to undermine teachers' belief in the success of their classroom performance (efficacy beliefs) and evoke feelings of helplessness (Spilt et al, 2011; Avis et al, 2011; Roffey, 2012).

Relationships between teachers and students in FE are often the length of at least one academic year – which poses a difficulty. Disharmony or conflict may arise in the public and shared space of a classroom, rather than in private. Conversely, teachers who develop positive interpersonal relationships with their students appear less anxious. As Roffey (2012) states: 'Friendly professional interactions with pupils can simply make teachers feel good about their job' (p.14). This illustrates the value teachers attach to personal relationships with their students and how conflict gives rise to both teachers' professional and personal negative wellbeing (Spilt, et al, 2011). There is evidence that personal relationships with students not only gives meaning to teachers' work but also affords internal rewards. Hargreaves (2000) conducted interviews with 60 primary and secondary teachers and found that the most important source of enjoyment and motivation came from their relationships

with students. Commenting on secondary teachers' experiences, Hargreaves (2000) highlights how teachers appreciated student displays of 'acknowledgement, respect, appreciation and gratitude' (p.819), valuing, for example, how regularly they were greeted in the corridors. Students spontaneously buying them a gift at the end of a course was also appreciated.

Secondary teachers tended to characterise relationships with students more in terms of acknowledgement and respect, compared to primary teachers who reported more emotionally intense relationships. This, however, was attributed to the organisational structure and formality of secondary education rather than any lack of desire on the part of teachers (Hargreaves, 2000). Hargreaves also notes how secondary teachers sought to be aware of students' feelings, acknowledging that some come to school having faced problems at home, or simply arrive hungry. As one teacher stated: 'Sometimes you get a feeling it's just a bad day for them [students]…' (p.821). Teachers were therefore prepared to make individual allowances for emotional disturbances within the classroom. That said, teacher-student relationships are important for the wellbeing of both teacher and student (Roffey, 2012). Several studies document the value of positive relationships with teachers regarding students' attendance, behaviour, achievement and self-belief (Owens and Ennis, 2005; Jephcote et al.; 2008; Roffey, 2012; Dziubinski, 2014; Noddings, 2018). As a teacher in secondary education, Dziubinski (2014) notes the achievements students can make if enjoying a positive relationship with their teachers. Moreover, students' reported experiences of wellbeing in an educational context concern being cared for, connected with and confirmed by others. They describe how much they value teachers who listen to their ideas and take an interest in them, both in and out of an educational context.

This is illustrated in Dziubinski's (2014) study in which FE teacher-student relationships in the UK were explored. By gathering data from 16 students, via questionnaires and focus group discussions, students revealed how teacher-student relationships can influence their motivation to succeed. Mediated through positive and regular interactions with teachers, they commented on feeling more connected as student-teacher power imbalances were, to some degree, ameliorated through their being on first-name terms. For students, this enhanced feelings of informality and friendliness and provided a more secure learning

environment in which students perceived the use of first names as a powerful symbol of a more authentic relationship (Salisbury and Jephcote, 2008). One student summed up it thus:

I think the relationship with teachers is much better here compared to secondary school because there's no 'sir' or 'ma'am'. It's just the names, so it's much more casual and calm and it's much more relaxing. So I feel more comfortable talking to them and learning (Megan) (Dziubinski, 2014 p.473).

In addition, this relatively informal teacher-student relationship appears to support students' sense of feeling valued and affords them greater confidence in approaching teachers to ask questions or talk about their wider lives. Other students stated:

Even if it's, like, questions that I think are really stupid… she'll like go over them with me and, like… help me out (Jess)

Some of the teachers you can even talk to about stuff that is not to do with education, just a normal chat (Callum) (Dziubinski, 2014, pp.473,474)

The 'openness' of FE in terms of teacher-student relationships is partly attributed to the cultural expectations within colleges providing a more student-centred environment that embraces 'the wider benefits of learning', such as students gaining confidence and developing a greater awareness of their work futures. FE is understood to provide a space for students to mature and take more control over their lives (Jephcote et al, 2008). It is the quality of teacher-student relationships that fosters wellbeing or contributes to a toxic context which may impact on both teacher wellbeing and student outcomes (Roffey, 2012). Personal relationships with students are understood to afford teachers internal rewards. As Noddings (2018) states: 'As teachers, we are as dependent on our students as they are on us' (p.237). Moreover, teacher-student relationships are often mentioned as one of the core reasons for staying in the profession (Hargreaves,1998a). That said, the value of interpersonal relationships between teachers and students has been largely overlooked as a significant factor in teacher wellbeing. In addition, the need for teachers to form personal and positive relationships with their students has received little recognition (Spilt et al, 2011). It therefore stands to reason that a closer understanding of teacher-student

relationships provides new insights into teacher wellbeing and a deeper appreciation of these relationships as a central aspect of teachers' professional and personal lives.

2.6 Chapter summary

This literature review illustrates the complexity of teachers' working lives. Far from being mere technicians, void of feeling and opinion, they are emotional workers, sensitive to the demands of their occupation. The review also explores how some teachers experience a vocational calling, encompassing altruistic standards, in their desire to make a difference to students' lives and contribute to the common good, a notion that aligns with Noddings' (1984) ethic of care. Questions have been raised about the way such an emotional investment affects their emotional and physical wellbeing. The review suggests they engage in emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) as a coping strategy in order to fulfil the cultural expectations of managers, colleagues and students. This perspective challenges current neoliberalistic ideology of performativity which dominates teachers' working lives and frames teachers as a vulnerable workforce. I contend that affirming feelings of vulnerability leads to a 'diminished self' (Ecclestone 2007b, p.457) making teachers more exposed to the demands of government mandates and educational rhetoric. The review also highlights the importance of positive relationships with students, which strengthen teacher wellbeing, making them less prone to physical and emotional burn out. Finally, the review suggests that the wellbeing of teachers and how they can best be supported, is under discussed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach to the study and discusses the theoretical foundations of the methods used and how they are applied. Organised in five sections, the first discusses the philosophical, ontological and epistemological underpinning of the study, positioned in a qualitative paradigm and interpretivist framework. In the second section, the methodological approach and design are discussed. Section three justifies the research methods chosen and how they were applied. The legitimation of the research findings is also discussed. The fourth section takes into account ethical considerations. In the final section, methods of analysis are discussed.

3.1 Philosophical and epistemological basis of research methods and design

Each research study is shaped by the researcher's beliefs. These are usually referred to as paradigms or theoretical frameworks in which the researcher's assumptions about reality and view of the human world and social life within it, are determined by their ontological perspective or paradigmatic position (Crotty, 1998; Scotland, 2012). In addition, Hodgson and Standish (2006) consider how a study's orientation is influenced by academic communities that are part of a 'broad education research culture' (Stone, 2006 p.9 in Hodgson and Standish, 2006 p.566). That which is understood to be 'normal' within research traditions can be limiting if it does not involve 'learning to reconceptualise problems and all that this entails '(Stone, 2006 in Hodgson and Standish, 2006, p.565). Research practitioners should consider the paradigm in which their study is situated, leading them to inquire what kind of reality exists, specifically 'a singular… reality and truth [or]… socially constructed multiple realities' (Patton 2002, p.134). Debates about truth and knowledge are fundamental to educational research. The researcher's choice of paradigm, epistemology and methodology reflects what they perceive as legitimate and worthwhile knowledge, a notion referred to as axiology (Hartas, 2010).

Principle paradigms of enquiry are described as positivism, critical inquiry/theory, interpretivism/constructivism (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Positivist approaches usually involve scientific enquiry, directed towards establishing facts and law-like generalisations, premised on the central components of 'objectivity' and 'free from [researcher] bias' (Swain, 2017, p.61). The basic tenet of a positivist ideology, therefore, assumes a stable reality and gathers facts to make 'truth claims' (Gray, 2009 p.201). Such an approach focuses on the notion that 'truth is out there' (Robert-Holmes, 2005, p.39) and views the researcher and researched as independent entities (Crotty, 1998).

By comparison, interpretivism 'looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world' (Crotty 1998, p.67). Interpretivists believe in socially-constructed multiple realities and adopt the view that truth and reality are created, not discovered (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016; Swain, 2017). The social world is viewed as a nuanced, multi-layered phenomenon, best understood through the process of interpretation. Primarily concerned with developing and understanding people's beliefs and their lives, interpretive research aims to understand the interpretations of individuals about the social phenomena in which they interact rather than seeking universal and value-free knowledge or truth experiences (Denscombe, 2017; Swain, 2017). Within this subjective interpretive epistemology, 'researchers are inextricably part of the social reality being researched, i.e. they are not "detached" from the subject they are studying' (Grix 2004, p.83).

However, positivist and interpretive paradigms of enquiry can complement each other. As Denscombe (2017) points out, traditional dualisms in philosophy and science are often seen as unhelpful, noting that research should not be judged by how neatly it fits into either positivist or interpretivist paradigm but should be based on how 'useful the methods are for addressing a particular question, issue or problem' (p.172). A good 'question-method fit' is an essential criterion for any research project (Punch, 2009, p.27). This study considers the wellbeing experiences of teachers in FE, placing it within the interpretive paradigm in which a phenomenological approach, grounded in people's experiences of social reality, is undertaken. Viewed through this lens, the social world exists in the way we experience and interpret it. Moreover, the same event may be perceived and understood differently, at

different times and in different contexts by individual people or groups (Denscombe, 2010). This position is adopted in two ways. Firstly, by assuming 'not one but multiple realities' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and secondly, by acknowledging that participants' interpretations are culturally and contextually bound. Human behaviours take place in context and are best understood within it (Cohen et al, 2011). The current study seeks to explore the experiences of participants and understands that 'people interpret the world through the perspectives of their own lives' (Swain, 2017 p.63).

3.1.1 Researcher positionality and phenomenological approach

Crotty (1998) reminds us that at every point in our research – 'our observing, our interpreting, our reporting… we inject a host of assumptions about human knowledge… and realities encountered in our human world' (p.17). Put another way, within each phase of research stands the 'biographically-situated researcher' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p.16). This aligns with the views of Heidegger (1927) and Gadamer (1975) who emphasise the need to recognise the subjective horizons of experience and understanding (Finlay, 2009). The researcher must acknowledge they cannot totally escape their historicity, and 'take' on the world, viewing their subjectivity and pre-understanding as resources (Finlay, 2009 p.14). Being critically 'aware of one's own bias... the text can present itself in all its otherness and... assert its own truth against [the researcher's] own fore-meanings' (Gadamer in Grondin, 2003 p.112).

By contrast, Husserl's (1927) philosophical positionality (known as transcendental/ descriptive phenomenology) called for the researcher to put aside or bracket previous understandings, knowledge or assumptions about the phenomenon of interest (Farrell, 2020; Denscombe, 2017). Referred to as 'reduction' this process is vital if the researcher is to engage a new way of thinking and go back 'to the things themselves' (the essence), (Husserl, 1965 p.116, in Farrell, 2020 p.2). For Husserl, to be phenomenologically aware the researcher must be aware of everyday experiences and consciously reflect on them – a 'reorientation of the natural mundane attitude' (Husserl, 1954/1970, p.258 in Finlay, 2009 p.14). In this way, 'objectivity is constituted out of subjectivity' by the process of bracketing (Finlay, 2009 p.14). However, the notion of merely setting one's prejudices aside was

contested by Heidegger (1927) and Gadamer (1975). For Gadamer, the '...historicity [of a person] was not [understood] to be a restriction but the very principle of understanding' with the researcher 'recognising and working them [their prejudices] out interpretively' (Grondin, 2003, p.111).

Moreover, Heidegger's phenomenology (hermeneutic/ interpretive phenomenology) was more concerned with what it means to be in the world (*Dasein*), addressing the ontological question of existence itself rather than Husserl's focus on what we can know about the world (epistemology) (Farrell, 2020; Denscombe, 2017). For Heidegger, the concept of Dasein (meaning 'being-there') denotes that we cannot be separate from the world we inhabit. We exist inside our historical and social context, not outside it (Crotty, 1998). Meaning is inherent within the lived experiences of individuals rather than the subject-object divide of Husserl (Farrell, 2020). Heidegger therefore maintains that our current understanding is grounded on our prior understanding. Termed as 'forestructures of understanding', Heidegger argues that even the most 'presuppositionless interpretation of "what is there" is nothing else than the self-evident, undisputed prejudice of the interpreter' (Farrell, 2020, p.4). Prejudices and presuppositions are not to be bracketed out but carefully examined (Finlay, 2009). Although one should attempt to achieve epoché, this can never be fully realised. Heidegger's understanding of phenomenology lends itself to exploring individual, subjective experiences of participants and the interpretive methodology undertaken in the current study. The researcher inevitably brings herself into the research process and her pre-conceptions and understanding evolves as the research progresses. As Finlay (2009) states: 'Our pre-conceptions both blinker us and enable insight' (p.14).

My philosophical view of education is therefore central to my ontological, epistemological and methodological position rather than at the margins. Fulford and Hodgson (2016) make a convincing argument that philosophical assumptions not only determine the way I choose to proceed but are 'integral to research as it proceeds' (p.35). My approach aligns with Freire's (1970) view of education as 'the practice of freedom – as opposed to the practice of domination' (p.54). Education is characterised by growth, transformation, risk-taking and notions of critical agency for teacher and student. This humanistic methodology encapsulates the concept of human flourishing, self-actualisation and eudaimonia, reflecting

notions of wellbeing (Aristotle *NE*). Within this culture, learners think autonomously, making informed decisions about their lives (Pring, 2001) and teachers engage in a 'liberating education… acts of cognition, not [mere] transferrals of information' (Freire, 1970 p.52). Education is deemed more than the pursuit of qualifications and socialisation, a position set against a neo-liberalistic culture in which much educational research produces data to provide definitive answers to questions and to recommend measurable outcomes, benefitting those working in education (Fulford and Hodgson, 2016). Attempts to determine 'what works' pedagogically and in terms of management and governance, are driven by evidence-based practice (Biesta, 2010), premised on the notion that positivist models of research best serve the interests of educational outcomes and practitioners. Within this paradigm, I contend such an ideology views education as a means of serving economic growth and addressing the shortage of skills within the UK labour market. Designed to meet a 'functionalist' view of education, the introduction of T Level courses for post-16 education, launched in September 2020, aims to 'strengthen [the] progression pathways [for students] ... to further study, and/or skilled employment' (GOV.UK, 2022), fulfilling society's need for a skilled workforce and the business needs of the economy. However, this may negate teachers and learners as individuals with a range values and beliefs.

Moreover, as an active educator in FE, the notion that I omit the influence of my values on the type of questions I ask, or the methods I employ, negates my 'humanness' (Guba and, 1989). As Andrade (2009) contends, in interpretive research 'the researcher becomes the vehicle by which reality is revealed' (p.43). Through '[authorial] voice, the researcher leaves her/ his signature on the project' (Bourke, 2014, p.2). My identity as both educator and researcher is therefore inseparable from and interwoven with the research process (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, this study acknowledges that as the author and researcher, I will bring my personal experiences of teaching in FE into the interpretation of participants' experiences. The current study is therefore exploratory, although I am mindful that there are alternative ontological positions that could offer similar or different outcomes. However, by employing qualitative methodologies, I intend to explore the wellbeing of experienced teachers in depth and capture their subjective narratives. The purpose here is to be inductive, generating data that seeks a deep understanding of the research problem in its unique context, orientated towards discovery and process (Swain, 2017). Moreover, the

study does not seek to measure, quantify or judge the wellbeing experiences of teachers. It is concerned with eliciting their in-depth accounts, affording them room to select aspects of wellbeing experiences they wish to emphasise.

It is argued that a qualitative/ interpretive framework enables the researcher to ask the 'how' and 'why' questions, to understand the nuanced nature and complexities of wellbeing experiences (Cohen et al, 2011; Denscombe 2017). I therefore employ different methods: open-ended, semi-structured interviews, participant diaries and photo elicitation.

3.2 Methodological approach and design

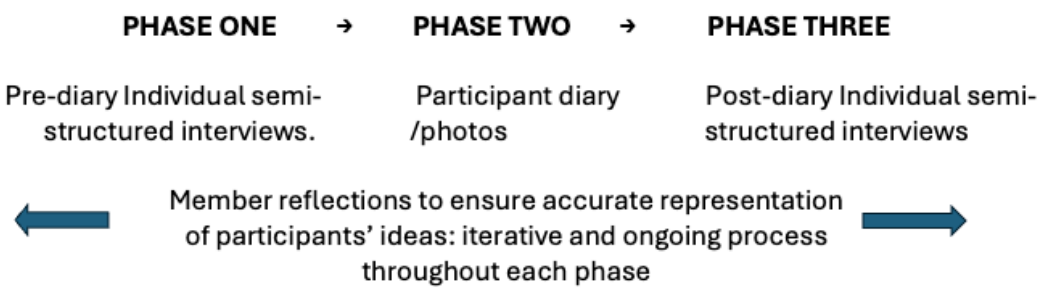
3.2.1 Data collection rationale

The study employed a longitudinal design with three phases of data collection. Each phase was sequential (see Figure 1, page 55). Phase One (pre-diary interview) was used to map out the territory for Phase Two (participant diary and photos). This provided an opportunity for participants to consider factors which may contribute to or diminish their wellbeing. The results of Phase Two informed the development of the final phase (post-diary interview). This approach assumes that development and refining occurs between each phase as the researcher's exposure to the phenomenon increases (Wimpenny and Gass, 2000). As Guba and Lincoln (1989) point out, the interpretative researcher's epistemological assumption is that 'findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds' (p.111).

In addition, this exploratory and iterative process considers the way participants may reveal complexities of views and experiences and appreciates the accounts generated are personal. They were expected to disclose multiple perspectives. It was also assumed that combining interviews and diaries would be a valuable way to capture the fluid nature of participants' subjectivities, providing a means for them to exercise influence over Phases Two and Three (Spowart and Nairn 2014). The diary-interview method therefore provided a temporal dimension. Although the diary offered a longitudinal insight into participants' experiences, the diary-interview method allowed me to return to aspects recorded therein and discuss them at length with the relevant participant (Spowart and Nairn, 2014). This encouraged a

discussion on the written content and its contextual significance. Participants described 'lived experiences' in detail and in their own words (Usher and Jackson, 2017). To ensure an accurate representation, transcripts of data were returned to them at the end of each phase. Throughout the study, member reflections (MacAllum et al, 2019) enhanced the trustworthiness of the study and reflected its interpretivist theoretical position. Such an approach acknowledges an open mindedness and flexibility on the part of the researcher (Denscombe, 2017) and represents the interaction between substantive and methodological issues. In other words, both content and methodology are deemed dynamic and shifting (Dunne et al, 2005). Data was generated from August 2022 to May 2023 and the inductive methods employed are outlined in Figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1: A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE DATA COLLECTION PLAN



The Principal Aim of Each Phase		
Phase One: Pre-diary individual semi-structure interview.	Designed to provide an opportunity for participants to initially reflect on their wellbeing experiences. To consider the possible 'factors' that may contribute to or diminish their wellbeing experiences. This also provided an opportunity to introduce the diary phase of the research.	Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes in duration. Member reflections. Interviews were conducted in August and September 2022.
Phase Two: Participant reflective diary and photographs.	Designed to capture detailed accounts of participants' 'in the moment' wellbeing experiences. A semi-structured design was adopted. Participants were invited to take photographs of items, places etc they felt contributed to or diminished their experiences of wellbeing. They were encouraged to write a sentence to explain the significance of the photograph. Diary entries determined the questions for Phase Three interview questions.	Participants were asked to complete at least one diary entry each week. This was over a six-week period. Diaries were completed during the period: October 2022 to the beginning of March 2023. Participants were contacted by telephone or whatsapp messaging during week three to ensure that the task was not too onerous.

Phase Three: Post-diary individual semi-structure interview.	Designed to explore and gently probe the contents of diary entries (written and photographic). Aimed to provide additional and deeper insights into participants' wellbeing experiences.	Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes in duration. Interviews were conducted from the end of March 2023 until the end of May 2023. Member reflections.

3.2.2 Sample design

The current study draws on a purposive sample of six participants who teach on vocational courses (e.g. health and social care and engineering) within the same educational institution. They are familiar to me, as researcher and colleague and to each other. By adopting this approach, I considered that purposive and 'homogenous sampling' (Cohen et al, 2011, p.219) was appropriate in selecting participants: they all share teaching as an occupation, have real life experience of the phenomenon explored and were positioned to offer detailed insights into teacher wellbeing. It was assumed that this sample would garner 'information-rich cases for study in depth' (Patton, 2002, p.169). A purposive and homogenous sample was employed through each phase of the study.

The size of sample, as well as type, required careful consideration. According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), if a sample size is too large, extracting 'thick, rich data' may become too difficult (p.242). With six participants, such reasoning is pertinent. In gathering rich detail of their experiences**,** the study aims to meet the criterion of applicability rather than seek generalisations (Noble and Smith, 2015). In addition, there are those who advocate participants in small sample research should have access to researcher interpretations so they can 'confirm the accuracy of the researcher's portrayal' (Sleka, 2005, p.82). Such an approach contributes to the trustworthiness of the study. This notion is incorporated in the research methods and reflected in iterative cycles in each phase. It was possible to gain the authentic voices of participants and guard against their voices being lost and meanings 'flattened' (Dunne et al, 2005, p.96). This may also have contributed to the

participants' strong sense of ownership.

3.3 Data collection methods

3.3.1 Individual semi-structured interviews

Interviews are often presented as the 'gold standard' of qualitative research, involving in-depth exchanges between researcher and researched which can generate a wealth of focused and nuanced data (Barbour 2014, p.111). It is a powerful way of exploring people's perceptions, meanings and constructions of reality (Punch and Oancea, 2014, Cohen et al 2011). As Jones (1985) states '…to understand other persons' constructions of reality, we would do well to ask them […]and to ask them in such a way that they can tell us in their own terms… '(p.46). Interviews allow the researcher to explore thoroughly how and why people frame their experiences in the way they do, helping them understand the complexity of the processes taking place and giving space for spontaneity (Cohen et al, 2011).

Within qualitative methodology, individual semi-structured interviews raise the awareness of the issues in the study, producing nuanced understandings which, from an interpretivist point of view, provide 'thick' descriptions (Dunne et al, 2005, p.89), meaning that to understand the world is to be in it (Swain 2017). It was also assumed that semi-structured interviews would encourage the emergence of new topics during the conversation. It would also provide a way to gently explore participants' experiences, beginning with the least-threatening questions and moving to those that may reveal more detail at apposite moments (Barbour 2014; Flick, 2015). Cohen et al (2011) refer to a 'funnelling process' as the researcher moves from general to more specific questions (p.488). Individual semi-structured interviews, compared to a group interview, enhance a sense of trust and afford participants a personal space in which they may feel more at ease to express their thoughts and ideas (See Appendix A).

The hallmark of interviewing in qualitative research is the use of open questions, which allow interviewees to focus on the issues of greatest importance to them, rather than the researcher determining a set agenda and assuming a 'one-size-fits-all' approach (Mason,

2018; Barbour 2014). As Mason (2018) notes, in qualitative thinking interviews are best understood as social interactions, in which standardised interview questions give rise to a form of tunnel vision and diminish the complexities of the interaction, placing less emphasis on generating in-depth data. By comparison, opened-ended, unstructured interviews may risk not eliciting the data most closely related to the research questions under consideration (Cohen et al, 2011). The use of semi-structured interviews offers researcher and participant opportunities to engage in an interactional richness, providing a valuable means to lay emphasis on the complexity of participants' lived experiences (Barbour, 2014). It was therefore assumed that using interview questions as an 'aide memoire' allows the interviewer to gently probe the interviewees' views and reduce researcher assumptions. As Wimpenny and Gass (2000) note, the researcher's conceptual map of the phenomena already exists, potentially limiting the interview and reducing the depth of data. This study therefore views interviewing as a process which begins in an open, broad manner, seeking the overall perspective of the interviewee and acknowledges that, although semi-structured interviews ask participants to discuss specific aspects of their experience, they also allow for open conversation between the researcher and the participant with new insights emerging (Wimpenny and Gass, 2000) (Appendix A).

3.3.1a Interviewer's style and personality

In common with Maxwell (2002), the study acknowledges the interview process as a social situation that inherently involves a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. Interviews are performances, involving a two-way encounter (Barbour, 2014) in which 'the story… being told… may take a different form if someone else was the listener' (Riessman, 1993 p.11 in Miller and Glassner 2004, p.127). Different interviewers will get different answers, depending on what emphasis is placed on certain words in questions (Gray, 2009). The credibility of the study is threatened by the personalities and interpersonal dynamics between interviewer and interviewee (Hobson and Townsend, 2010). In light of this, informant interviews, understood to be a feature of qualitative studies (Cohen et al, 2011) were employed, affording the interviewee more control over the conversation compared to 'respondent interviews' (Hobson and Townsend 2010, p.226). However, this does not negate

the notion that 'the interviewer uses him or herself as a research instrument, drawing upon an implicit bodily and emotional mode of knowing that allows a privileged access to the subject's lived experiences' (Kvale, 1996, p.125). I am mindful that a phenomenological approach to research may be over-reliant on research participants' perceptions and neglects the situatedness and embodiment of the researcher (Vaccheli, 2018). As Cohen et al (2011) argue, the interview is not merely concerned with generating data about life 'it is life itself; its human embeddedness is inescapable' (p.506). Similar to Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty emphasised the interpretative quality of our knowledge. According to Merleau-Ponty there is no hard separation between bodily and intelligent conduct. As humans we are 'embodied-beings' (Moya, 2014). He posits that the inside and outside are inseparable, that the '...world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside of myself... in so far as, when I reflect on the essence of subjectivity, I find it bound up with that of the body and that of the world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1962 p407 in Felder and Robbins, 2011, p.358).

Such an approach indicates how an individual's experience is fundamentally situated. Moreover, one's existence includes an interplay of 'temporality... biology and cultural codes' (Felder and Robbins, 2011, p.360). Similar to Merleau-Ponty, Hobson and Townsend (2010) consider how interviewees respond to researchers based on who they are in their lives, as well as the differences and similarities such as ethnic origin, age, gender etc. This is particularly relevant to the current study: I am older with more teaching experience than some of the participants. Proponents of interviewing in educational research view the human characteristics of the interviewer as an advantage in gaining 'an empathetic access to the world of the interviewee […] [generating] the natural flow of a conversation' (Kvale, 1996, p.229).

3.3.1b Piloting the interview

Piloting the interview questions (prior to Phase One) was useful in ensuring that the questions elicited the sort of data required and also deepened my appreciation of any difficulties which could develop during the interview (Barbour, 2014). For example, interviewees may feel obliged to give the interviewer the response they want, using familiar

narrative constructs instead of providing meaningful insights (Miller and Glassner, 2004). During the piloting of the interview, I found this view to have some legitimacy. At the end of the interview the participant asked if her responses to my questions were 'the right ones?'. In line with Barbour (2014) the interviewer is cast as the expert, the 'all-powerful researcher' (p.121) rather than facilitator giving 'voice' to multiple perspectives (Guba and Lincoln, 1989), emphasising the inherent imbalance between researcher and researched (Raheim et al, 2016). Employing a semi-structured interview helps the participant to steer the conversation and acknowledges that 'the participant is the experiential expert on the topic in hand' (Smith et al, 2008, p.58). This brings to the fore the need to carefully develop interview questions that a) answer the focus of my research and b) create a space which enables interviewees to describe 'lived experiences' in detail and in their own words (Usher and Jackson, 2017; Zahavi, 2019).

In conclusion, my ontological and epistemological position acknowledges that people's knowledge, interpretations, experiences are meaningful properties of the social reality this study is designed to explore. I was privileged to listen to participants' stories and articulations, seeing them as 'witnesses on the world' (Mason, 2018, p.111). In common with Rubin and Rubin (2005), the study assumes that qualitative interviews, built on an interpretive philosophy, are extensions of ordinary conversations in which the interviewees are partners in the research rather than subjects to be examined (Punch and Oancea, 2014). Although this method relies on people's capacities to articulate and express themselves (Mason, 2018, p.112), I consider employing individual, semi-structured interviews to be a legitimate, meaningful way to generate data that is situational and contextual.

3.3.2 Participant diary

Diaries are a commonly understood artifact taking multiple forms across different cultures, the purposes of which range from private personal journalling to the keeping of dates and times of activities (Cao and Henderson, 2021a). However, the use of diaries in research has been relatively underutilised as a sociological/educational research method (Spowart and Nairn, 2014; Cao and Henderson, 2021a, 2021b). A flexible, heterogenous method, diaries

have the potential to yield rich qualitative data, produce insightful research into the mundane happenings of participants, as well as capturing more personal thinking and experiences (Hewitt, 2017; Spowart and Nairn, 2014). The diary method has the potential to capture and explore the participants' world and gain a 'view from within' (Zimmerman and Wielder, 1977, p.484). In common with other authors, Williamson et al (2015) note how diaries often provide a fuller picture of the day-to-day changes and fluctuations in a person's experience, facilitating a more attentive recording of the 'mixed experiences of ordinary life' (Burford 2021, p.164). They can provide meaningful clues to the importance of events for participants and their attitude about those events, capturing the subjectivity of the moment. In addition, they provide a broader picture illustrating what Plummer (1983) refers to as an 'ever changing present' (p.18). As Foucault would suggest, subjectivity is never a finished product but something continually re-constructed – an active 'process of becoming' (Ball, 2013, p.125).

Diaries offer a longitudinal insight into the day-to-day activities of participants and capture a temporal dimension of their life worlds (Spowart and Nairn, 2014). They document life as it is lived and challenge the snapshot view of social practice that other research methods may offer (Cao and Henderson, 2021b). As Hewitt (2017) notes, the 'one-off' nature of interviews can prevent the researcher from gathering more intimate, introspective aspects of participants' lives. The choice of a diary method for this study was therefore based upon the methodological assumption that it could access detailed accounts of participants' lived experiences as they are written a) closer to the time of an event/experience and b) in privacy without the presence of the researcher (Spowart and Nairn, 2014). Such an approach is more participant-led, offering participants more control over the process and affords a greater sense of autonomy (Burford, 2021; Cao and Henderson, 2021a). Participants can disclose at a time of their choosing, a valuable facet when researching a potentially sensitive topic. Notwithstanding the fact that diaries have proved useful for qualitative researchers whose theoretical framework critiques the notion of objective, rational subjects, the current study does not assume that all participants' representations of 'what really happened' are truly 'accurate'. With interviews or diary data, Harvey (2011) notes how participants continuously engage in a process of self-editing. In this sense, unlike personal diaries, solicited diaries are produced specifically at a researcher's request (Cao and

Henderson, 2021b). Written with the researcher in mind, they are therefore interpreted by another person (Mittelmeier et al, 2010). For the purpose of this study, solicited diaries are viewed as 'records of researched phenomena, produced under a researcher's guidance, based on events or recorded at regular intervals… containing participants' perceptions and reflections on their experiences' (Cao and Henderson, 2021b, p.4).

3.3.2a Diary format and diary keeping behaviour

It is with this intent that the format and design of the diaries aimed to be participant-friendly, to achieve a balance between gaining the desired data collection and reducing what Cao and Henderson (2021a) and others refer to as 'respondent fatigue' (p.7). The semi-structured format therefore incorporated guidelines to a) focus diary entries, thus covering issues relevant to the research and b) provide an open space for participants to record their experiences without any guidance. It was anticipated that this would facilitate a more nuanced and richer production of experiential data, enhance a sense of autonomy and empower participants by affording them a freedom to articulate their story in their own way (Lawther, 2021) and develop insight and understanding of their experiences (Hewitt, 2017) (See Appendix B).

A semi-structured diary format was therefore adopted with participants encouraged to create a diary record when experiencing an event that contributed to and/or diminished their sense of wellbeing. They were expected to make a minimum of one diary entry each week, to alleviate participant fatigue and/or 'diarist burden' (Hewitt, 2017, p.350) and to sustain the quality of experiences recorded by participants. As Mittelmeier et al (2021) point out, data quality may deteriorate over time due to declining motivation by participants. However, by contrast, in Jacelon and Imperio's (2005) study, which used participant diaries to explore strategies used by older adults to manage their chronic health problems, researchers found the comprehensiveness of entries increased as participants became more comfortable with the discipline. Moreover, other studies refer to the possible therapeutic effects of participating in diary research as participants document their experiences and engage in self-reflection (Cao and Henderson, 2021b).

The current study seeks to capture the wellbeing experiences of FE teachers over a period of six weeks based on the assumption that the phenomenon being studied occurs frequently. The period chosen aims to lessen the possibility of diary-keeping becoming an onerous activity (Henderson, 2021), acknowledging that teachers are busy and need time to write and reflect (Hewitt, 2017). As noted in the data collection rationale, the diary phase of the study was undertaken in Phase Two, positioned between pre-diary (Phase One) and post-diary (Phase Three) interviews. This strategy recognises that diaries, alongside other methods, can be viewed as a reliable means of gaining a range of perspectives and lead to a more comprehensive exploration (Flick, 2009) of FE teacher wellbeing.

3.3.2b Diary - Interview method

The advantage of using a diary-interview method is the temporal dimension that it offers (Spowart and Nairn, 2014). Following Zimmerman and Wieder (1977), the diary-interview method affords opportunities to explore events recorded and discuss them at length with participants leading to deeper understandings of the FE teacher wellbeing (Harvey, 2011, Spowart and Nairn, 2014) (See Appendix C). However, unlike Zimmerman and Wielder's (1977) approach, employing a diary-interview method focuses on encouraging reflexivity of participants rather than checking for 'truth'. This sits more comfortably within the interpretivist paradigm in which the study is positioned and recognises that the fluid and complex nature of participants' subjectivities (Spowart and Nairn 2014) are best understood from a phenomenological approach and the possible similarities and variations in participants' wellbeing experiences are of value in themselves.

In conclusion, diaries are a flexible and useful tool for qualitative research especially within an interpretative and phenomenological paradigm (Williamson et al, 2015). When combined with pre-diary and post-diary interviews, they provided additional insights into the lived experiences of participants. Regarded as a kind of performance of subjectivity, diaries combined with interviews offered participants a 're-performance or re-enactment of subjectivity' (Spowart and Nairn, 2014, p.329), a means for them to reflect on and recount both their current and historical experiences - making the diary-interview method an

iterative process of subjectivity. In addition, the temporal dimension that diaries offer enables detailed and 'closer to the experience' data to be captured. I am therefore persuaded that diary-based studies are well placed to capture the particulars of everyday life and are a valuable means to broaden the understanding of FE teacher wellbeing.

3.3.2c Photo-elicitation

Visual methodologies such as photography, painting and sculpture are used in research, providing valuable insights into the everyday lives of participants (Barbour, 2014). They evoke feelings about the subject matter in which different layers of meaning can be discovered (Richard and Lahman, 2015) which may not come to the surface in traditional qualitative methods. Photo-elicitation is a qualitative research method widely described as the process of using photographs to generate discussion in which visual images are taken by the participant or researcher (Glaw et al, 2017). It involves research participants taking photographs of a particular subject and reflecting on them through semi-structured interviews (Briggs et al, 2014). The process is often referred to as 'reflexive photograph' or 'photo-interviewing' (Cohen et al, 2011, p.630). Harper (2002) describes photo-elicitation as a method of combining participants' images with the 'words people say'. Used to aid an interview, photographs are typically considered secondary to the verbal data, as Briggs et al (2014) state, 'pictures are a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves' (p.158).

Researchers use participant-driven photographs to understand the experiences (including emotions and ideas) of participants rather than imposing their own perception of a topic. They are a valuable way to promote dialogue and discover new dimensions not known by the researcher (Bates et al, 2017). The use of photos during interview opens up a space in which the participants' thoughts can be explored in ways that verbal exchanges may not (Bates et al, 2017). For example, photos discussed during an interview have prompted emotive connections to memories, altered the tone of the interview (Kunimoto, 2004) and contributed to the reliability of participants' interview responses (Briggs et al, 2014). Harper (2002) highlights how visual images evoke deeper parts of human consciousness than words and elicit a different kind of information during an interview (Glaw et al, 2017). Adding sight

to sound increases sensory awareness and reflective processes (Padgett et al, 2013). As Rose (2016) contends, taking and discussing photographs involves a reflective process, encouraging participants to articulate that which may 'remain implicit', making the 'invisible visible' (p. 316).

Much of the work and outcome of photo-elicitation interviewing is a collaborative effort between participant and researcher (Cohen et al, 2011). The interviewer helps the participant frame their responses and therefore joint theorising occurs during the interview (Glaw et al, 2017). As Richard and Lahman (2015) point out: 'Images serve as a common ground for meaning sharing and meaning constructing between the participant and the researcher' allowing deeper and broader understanding of the topic (p.12). They consider how, from the researcher's perspective, an added visual dimension enables them to 'fuse participants' language to establish… meaning and understanding' (Richard and Lahman, 2015 p.12). Photo-elicitation interviewing can offer cathartic and therapeutic aspects (Glaw et al, 2017; Briggs et al, 2014) and an inherent dimension of participant empowerment. However, in this study participants took photographs without the presence of the researcher and were tasked to take them around the subject matter set for them. In this sense, the images are a product 'of the task set and how it was framed' (Cremin et al, 2011, p.601). As Briggs et al (2014) contend, researchers may find some difficulty explaining a photo-elicitation exercise so that it does not influence participants' decisions about what to photograph.

In conclusion, photo-elicitation interviews were used as a valuable way to access participants' lives, provide shared meaning between participants and researcher and alleviate the potential strain of extended questioning that verbal-only interviews offered. Photo-elicitation is described as inductive research when coupled with more traditional methods such as interviews and sits well with the philosophical and epistemology underpinning the current study. In exploring the potentially sensitive subject of wellbeing, photo-elicitation coupled with more traditional research methods can 'mine deeper shafts into different parts of human consciousness than words do alone' (Harper, 2002, p.23).

3.4 Methodological legitimation

In the positivist tradition, which views the world as stable, objective and rational (Cohen et al, 2011), research findings are required to be reliable and objective. Validity necessitates that research instruments accurately reflect the data they are measuring and prove stable over a period of time. By comparison, in qualitative research the notion of a single, stable reality or truth is contested. The researcher explores 'multiple realities' (Patton 2002, p.134) in context-specific settings, undertaking 'real-world' research with the aim of illuminating and understanding the phenomenon explored and producing findings where 'phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally' (Patton, 2002, p.39). A qualitative approach to research therefore requires different criteria for legitimation (Newby, 2014; Gray, 2009). Although there is no universally accepted terminology to evaluate qualitative research (Noble and Smith, 2015), Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer 'truth value' as criteria for demonstrating trustworthiness. Under this approach, researchers consistently outline their personal experiences and points of view so their decisions are transparent, with consideration given to the applicability of their research results in other contexts (Noble and Smith, 2015). This study therefore recognises that qualitative research offers a different type of knowledge to quantitative research with interpretive rigour employed to generate understanding rather than explanations (Golafshani, 2003). In so doing, the researcher moves away from positivist language towards terms such as 'illumination' and 'exploration' (Golafshani, p.561). In addition, the conceptual framework of qualitative research privileges the research process in which meaning is negotiated through interaction and dialogue between researcher and participant (Brown, 2018). Such an approach recognises that researchers are part of the 'social world they study' (Brown, 2018, p.73). By researching in an interpretive paradigm, the current study seeks to explore a subjective realm in which reality is understood to be 'fluid and constituted in and of the moment as it is lived' (Shaw, 2010, p.234). Its qualitative approach is undertaken on the grounds that only situated activity, which locates the researcher in the natural educational setting (college, classroom) will make sense of educational phenomena in terms of the meaning teachers bring to their experiences (Bradley, 2004). In summary, the study is assessed on the basis of trustworthiness and authenticity rather than positivistic rigour that attempts to represent a population.

Furthermore, it is assumed that the findings may contribute to understanding the wellbeing experiences of teachers in other FE settings with similar institutional characteristics.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Educational researchers are tasked to become cognisant of the ethical dimensions of their research (Pring, 2001). The qualitative research undertaken in this study invokes ethical complexity as it explores the personal and subjective experiences of people's lives. In addition, Williams (2010) highlights how research is rendered morally vulnerable in that it is 'not only about something or someone but *for* someone' (p.256). The study was therefore conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) and those of Liverpool Hope University's Ethic Committee. Approval was obtained from the university's ethics committee on 15.04.21 before primary data was collected (See Appendix D). Strong arguments have been presented, however, which suggest that although official ethical codes provide necessary orientation, they are not sensitive to the research context. Therefore, in addition to adhering to official codes, the ethical challenges emergent from qualitative research also rely on the character of the researcher as 'trustworthy' and possessing moral virtues such as honesty and concern for the wellbeing of the other (Pring, 2001; Small, 2001). The ontological emphasis on character rejects the reduction of ethics to a 'process of competence' (Costley and Gibbs, 2006 p.96 in Williams, 2010, p.258). Good ethical behaviour is viewed as an ongoing reflexive process rather than a 'one-off' event, requiring the researcher to exercise ethical judgements which university procedures cannot anticipate (Williams, 2010). As the researcher and author of this study I am required to foresee unusual ethical challenges as well as those anticipated.

3.5.1 Informed consent

Lindsay (2010) places informed consent 'at the heart of ethical research practice' (p.118). I was undertaking research in an educational community with which I am familiar and mindful that prospective participants may feel obliged to participate in the study. By email, I

approached them with information about the study and an open invitation to join it, respectfully affording them time to consider whether they wished to take part (See Appendix E). They were invited to attend a briefing session at which the study was verbally explained and questions addressed, enabling participants to consider if they have a genuine interest in the research topic (Lindsay, 2010; Barbour, 2014). They were made aware their participation was voluntary and that strict adherence to anonymity and confidentiality would be adhered to, including the right to withdraw at any time. It was important to establish a sense of trust between myself as researcher and the participants. Written consent was gained from the participants before the commencement of research activity (See Appendix F).

3.5.2 Avoiding harm

Research is expected to minimise the risk of causing physical or emotional harm (Punch and Oancea, 2014). Guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association (2018) state:

> 'Researchers should immediately reconsider any actions occurring during the research process that appear to cause emotional or other harm, in order to minimise such harm' (p.19).

However, arguments have been presented to support the view that ethics in educational research are best understood as relative, situational and contextual rather than universal and abstract (Mason, 2018; Pring, 2001; Small, 2001). When designing the study, I was aware the danger of physical harm was low with face-to-face interviews conducted at locations chosen by participants. However, the topic of wellbeing is sensitive with both positive and less positive events and encounters recalled or re-lived. Optimising the comfort of participants, rather than avoiding discomfort, became a key focus. I related to participants not just as a researcher but as a person, with concern for their health and wellbeing (Lindsay, 2010; Barbour, 2014). For example, broader questions provided a safe and supportive space for participants to express their views more freely. In this way I remained sensitive to participants' views and reactions, adapting my questions accordingly.

This methodology was advanced further during face-to-face interviews in which participants were advised that the interview would be stopped if they requested it. Throughout the study, any positioning of a powerful self was not deliberate and I was mindful of how power is understood to flow universally through discursive exchanges (Dunne et al, 2005). Williams (2010) reminds us that the research space may be constructed as belonging to the researcher in which the use of personal pronouns such as 'my' or 'I', potentially diminishes the agency of participants. The authorial voice of the researcher is self-positioned, suggesting ownership and authority (Williams, 2010). This assessment was brought to the fore during initial interviews in Phase One. Unconsciously, I used the phrase '*my* research', amplifying my position as researcher and potentially adopting the role of expert rather than novice (Swain, 2017). On reflection, I adjusted my dialogue during the remaining Phase One and Phase Three interviews, ensuring my function as a facilitator gave voice to multiple perspectives (Guba and Lincoln, 1989), thus enhancing the natural flow of conversation and participant agency.

In addition, at the end of each phase, I was aware that participants may ruminate about the topic, contributing to feelings of discomfort. Before the commencement of each phase, it was therefore agreed that there would be an opportunity for participants to debrief at the end of each phase. This allowed for further discussion about the research, interviews and diary keeping. My contact details were available and I emailed participants at regular intervals to ensure they were happy to remain part of the project. Furthermore, they were invited to receive transcripts of their interviews to engage in 'member reflections', opening up a collaborative space where participant and researcher ensure all contributions are accurately represented (McAllum et al, 2019, p.370).

3.5.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

It is incumbent upon the researcher to ensure that participants' anonymity and the confidentiality of research data is not compromised (Lindsay, 2010). Each participant was allocated a code known only to researcher and participant. In addition, they were also given a pseudonym. However, as Punch and Oancea (2014) point out, a wide range of contextual

clues may arise, which hint at and even disclose the full identity of participants, their colleagues and families. This is particularly true in qualitative research where the personal experiences of participants are explored (Mason, 2018). The fragility of anonymity was apparent in the flow of conversational interviews. Participants compromised the protection of their own anonymity, their partners and the site of the research, so breaches of anonymity were anonymised by the insertion of 'x' where identifiable and idiosyncratic material was included. This was completed during the transcription of interviews (Phase One and Phase Three) and Phase Two.

The right to confidentiality of personal data (UK) comes under the Data Protection Act (2018). The regulations protect the right for individuals to know how their data will be used and to whom it is made available. They also have access to personal data that is stored (BERA, 2018). To this end confidentiality of all data was maintained by storing hard materials, i.e. consent forms and hand-written diaries, in a physical folder. These were kept in a locked unit known only to me. In addition, electronic data, such as interview recordings and photographs, were saved on the researcher's private and password-protected computer.

It is universally acknowledged that ethical behaviour is an essential cornerstone in meaningful research (Denscombe, 2017; Dunne et al, 2005; Cohen et al, 2011). I am therefore persuaded by the arguments presented by authors who contend that although codes and committees provide vital expectations and compliances for researchers to adhere to in accordance with BERA (2018), ethical conduct goes beyond conformity and inevitably calls upon the character of the researcher, the values that underpin their research and their judgement in identifying ethical concerns that may arise (Pring, 2001; Small, 2001; Williams, 2010).

3.6 Method of Analysis

Given the exploratory nature of the research, I considered two interpretive qualitative methods: thematic and narrative. Both embrace the view that the social world is nuanced and multi-layered and adopt an interpretivist/constructivist position, acknowledging that human experiences are subjective. The research focused on emic perspectives, that is the

meaning participants give to their experiences, which accommodate the researcher's interpretations and place emphasis on the process by which themes may be developed (Cohen et al, 2011).

3.6.1 Narrative analysis

In the first instance I considered how a narrative approach to analysis offered qualitative researchers an epistemological toolkit that explores how people 'communicatively experience and make sense of their world' (McAllum et al 2019, p.365). I was mindful that employing this method presented opportunities to 'capture [the] multiplicity [of participants' experiences] without drawing up absolute boundaries' and thereby resisting the 'compartmentalisation of experience' (Penketh, 2011, pps.161,162). As Colley (2010) and McAllum et al (2019) note, a narrative approach to data involves a process of synthesis, a 'putting together' rather than a 'taking apart' (Colley, 2010 p.191), temporally and sequentially linking 'events, actions and actors', seeing the text 'as whole and in context rather than separate elements' (McAllum et al, 2019, p.366). In this sense, narrative analysis 'not only conveys information but brings information to life' (Cohen et al, 2011, p.664).

3.6.2 Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA)

By comparison, reflexive thematic analysis is a versatile method for identifying and analysing meaningful patterns or themes within data, through the processes of coding (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Its flexibility affords a comprehensive list of potential data sources such as letters, photographs, diaries, interviews and field notes (McAllum, 2019) thereby capturing approaches in line with the values of a qualitative paradigm (Braun and Clarke 2022). This aspect is pertinent to the current study with qualitative methodologies of individual interviews, diaries and photo-elicitation employed to explore the wellbeing of participants in depth. McAllum et al, (2019) consider how thematic analysis approaches data in a way which categorises, summarises and reconstructs data to capture salient concepts. This process positions the researcher as an integral component of the analysis, enabling a rich picture to be generated in a systematic way (Braun and Clarke, 2022). I considered how, in

common with a narrative approach, thematic analysis is conceptualised as '...an art not a science...' (Braun and Clarke, 2022 p.8) relying on the creativity of the researcher to present results in terms of a 'story line, a map or model' (Vaismoradi et al, 2023 p.402).

After consideration, I determined Reflexive Thematic Analysis best suited my research, aligning with my paradigmatic underpinnings, research questions and methodology. Coherently linking all the parts of the study, it served to strengthen the research design (Trainor and Bundon, 2021; Braun and Clarke, 2020). In addition, reflective thematic analysis afforded an opportunity to explore participants' individual experiences, thereby drawing meaning and generating links and similarities from one account to another (Trainor and Bundon, 2021). I decided this approach would emphasise the participants' subjective realities (Flick, 2009) and help me gain insight in context-dependent reality, an important aspect in exploring their experiences of wellbeing.

Both narrative and thematic approaches value the subjective situated researcher (Braun and Clarke; 2022, McAllum et al, 2019; Penketh, 2011; Colley, 2010). In common with these authors, I understand that analysis is not a passive process, in which themes reside in the data and simply emerge but one in which the researcher plays an active role (Braun and Clarke, 2022) (See Section 3.1.1).

3.6.2a Using RTA to develop codes and themes

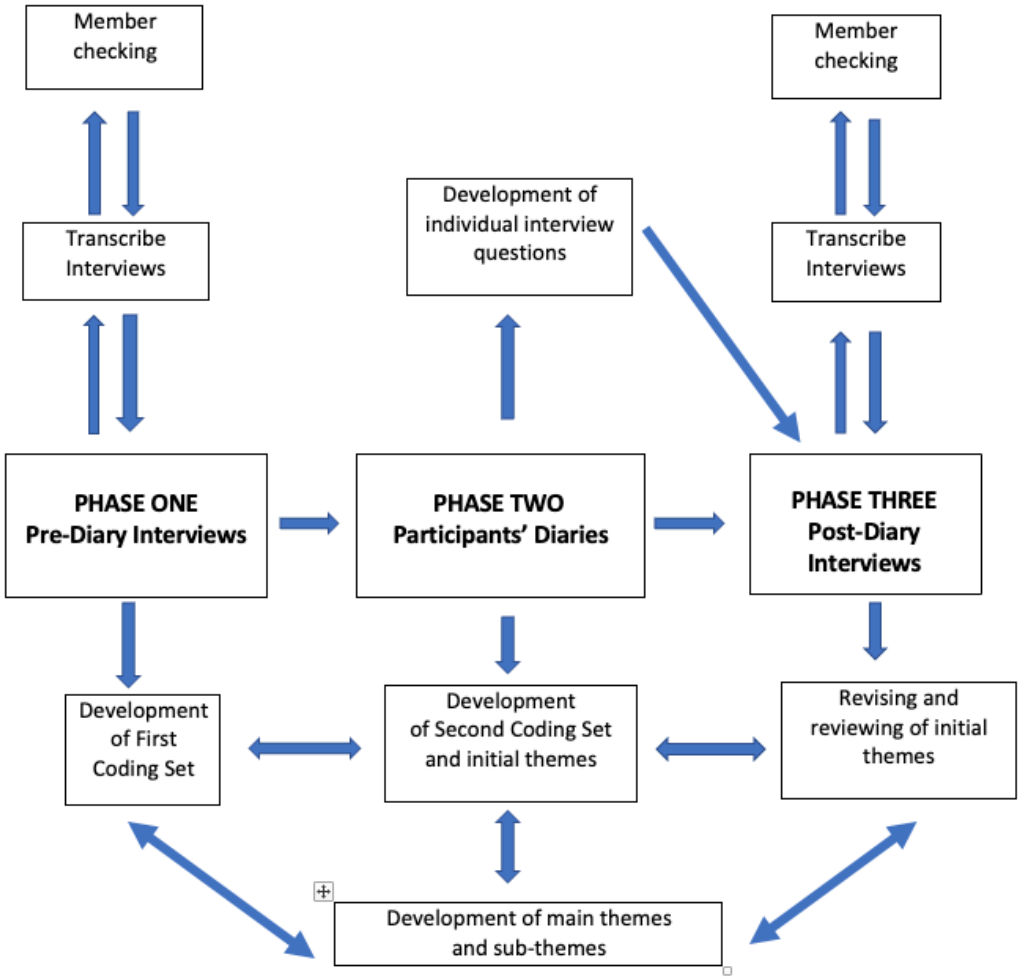
To this end, after each interview phase (Phase One and Three), member reflections were sought to ensure transcripts of the interviews were an accurate representation of their ideas (see section 3.2.1), a process that enhances the trustworthiness of the study (McAllum et al, 2019). The interviews were transcribed verbatim and non-verbal cues noted to ensure the participants' authentic voices were not lost and their possible meanings 'flattened' (Dunne et al, 2005 p.96).

Braun and Clarke (2006) advocate a six-stepped approach to thematic analysis (See Appendix G) as a means of generating initial codes, defining and naming themes, then reviewing and developing them. Although presented in a linear format, it is an iterative and reflective

process, with the researcher moving back and forth between phases (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2020, 2022). I immersed myself in data from Phase One, re-reading interviews to consider potential patterns. Coding (semantic and latent) was data-driven (inductive) and I worked through each interview transcript, focusing on the explicit and implicit meanings of what each participant said (see Appendix H). I then recorded my findings in a Word document format with the first round of coding generating 40 codes (see Appendix I). However, I considered this to be 'over coding', with too little subtlety and depth and mindful that good codes evolve and are 'sharpened [and/] or expanded, so that the meaning they capture is associated with more than one segment of data' (Braun and Clarke, 2022 p.54). I therefore began a second round of coding by re-reading the participants' diaries, reflecting on the images they recorded (Phase Two), delving deeper into what they had written to help simplify and refine the codes. This provided an opportunity to begin developing initial themes (See Appendix J).

The process helped me to develop individual, tailored interview questions for the final phase of data collection (Phase Three) (See Appendix C). Having interviewed each participant, with the process of transcribing interview data now complete, I sought to gather their reflections to maintain the integrity and accuracy of the data. I revised the initial themes by constantly moving back and forth from each data set to check the developing themes were grounded in each phase of the data. The process of reviewing themes further helped me understand broader 'pattern[s] of meaning... possible connections, interconnections and disconnections' (Braun and Clarke, 2022 p.86). This led to the generation of main themes and sub-themes (See Appendix K). The process of analysis is presented in visual format (see Figure 2 below).

FIGURE 2: Showing coding and theme development of the study using Reflexive Thematic Analysis



3.7 Chapter summary

Positioning this study in an interpretive paradigm yielded a holistic perspective on FE teacher wellbeing. It focused on their experiences in context, to gain insights into their working lives. The study's design was based on the understanding that '[social] realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts, nor can they be fragmented for separate study of their parts' (Lincoln and Guba,1985 p.39 in Denscombe, 2017 p.6). The participants' situations and experiences are unique, holding multiple interpretations of events and interactions, a notion that highlights the complexity of the social and educational

world (Cohen et al, 2011). Based on a three-phase design, their views and feelings were captured by employing pre- and post-diary, semi-structured interviews (Phases One and Three), written diaries and photo-elicitation (Phase Two). The chapter includes a brief discussion on the chosen method of analysis in which narrative and reflective thematic analysis are compared, with the latter being selected as best, aligning with the paradigmatic underpinning of the study, research questions and methodology. This method of analysis provided an opportunity to pay attention to the subjective realities of participants in addition to considering the respective similarities and differences of their experiences (Trainor and Bundon, 2021). Underpinning the choice of methods and analysis was an awareness of my own influence as a teacher in FE and my philosophical view of education. The importance of ethical considerations was discussed, demonstrating sensitivity to the participants' health and wellbeing throughout the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH SITE AND CONTEXT

4.0 The college

The study takes place in a post-16 education institution, situated in a suburban area of north England. Though experiencing low levels of unemployment there are pockets of deprivation. The college has approximately 4 000 full-time students, aged 16 to 18 years, of which more than four per cent are from minority ethnic groups. The college offers both A level and vocational courses and is rated 'outstanding' by the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED).

4.1 The participants' profiles

Including participant profiles provides the reader with a deeper understanding of their experiences. By focusing on their education and employment histories, they also help to contextualise my analysis of the data. NB: Extracts from pre-diary interviews are included.

4.1.1 Yvonne

Motivated by a sense of vocation to '*always want to help people'*, Yvonne enrolled at the age of 16 years as a cadet nurse, gaining a state registered nurse (SRN) qualification before becoming a midwife. There is a sense of pride about how she developed her nursing skills. '*I did my nursing the old fashion way,'* she explains. In her view, this sits in contrast to the way nurses are trained today and acted as a catalyst for her decision to enter teaching. *'I wanted to help… future generations because they [Government] changed the way that they taught the nurses.'* She regards teaching as a mixture of joy and frustration and staying in the profession is sustained by her love of students and how '*they keep you questioning things'*. She has been a teacher on vocational courses (Level 1 to 3), personal tutor and course leader

for Health Studies (Level 3) and currently holds the positions of teacher and course leader for Health Studies (Level 3, 16-18yrs). She is Caucasian, in her mid-fifties and married with grown-up children.

4.1.2 Diane

Diane never imagined herself as a teacher, describing herself as '*a kid who sat in class and never put my hand up to volunteer*.' During a successful career as a midwife she found herself enjoying the mentoring of student midwives. '*The more I sort of did it, the more I liked that element of it,'* she explains. Based on a love of learning and a desire to share her wealth of health knowledge and experience*,* she '*wanted to use it and [teaching] was… an ideal way.'* However, Diane shares how being a teacher involves far more than just sharing knowledge. A pervading sense of responsibility towards students' welfare motivates her always to be considerate to the needs of the other. This has sometimes contributed to displacement of her own needs. Coupled with an intense workload and pressure to conform to management expectations, her physical health has declined, leading to her reducing her hours of employment*.* She modifies her lessons if she is *'not feeling 100%*' and practising mindfulness techniques has helped her to be '*more savvy […] so that I can get through the lesson.'* Having completed a degree in midwifery and a PGCE in post-16 education, Diane has taught on health care courses (Level 1 to 3) for 10 years. She currently holds the position of teacher for vocational Health Education Studies (Level 3). She is Caucasian, in her late-forties and married with several older children.

4.1.3 Kath

Kath explains how she '*fell into it [teaching]'* after completing a degree in social science. She deliberated between social work and teaching, finally choosing to teach because of the holidays FE colleges offer, being conducive to family life. After 13 years in teaching, she cannot see herself doing anything else. Being in education all her life contributes to feelings of being disadvantaged compared to colleagues with former careers in nursing, social work and early years. '*They're older, everyone's got like a different background with a different*

occupation. I've got none […]' Since completing a Master's degree and PGCE in post-16 education, Kath has held several roles. These include being a teacher on vocational courses (Level 1 and 3), a personal and professional tutor. She currently holds positions of teacher, course leader for Health Studies (Level 1 – 16-17 yrs) and professional tutor. She is Caucasian, in her mid-thirties and married with young children.

4.1.4 Nikki

Nikki shares how a previous career as a production manager in the engineering industry had contributed to her feeling she was '*just taking and not giving anything back'*. Encouraged by family members who were teachers, she entered the profession and explains how it provides an opportunity to '*pass on a lot of caring…'* which is fundamentally linked to her Christian faith. She tearfully shares how she is *'quick to talk about my faith if they [students] ask about it.'* This sense of caring extends to her being concerned for the wellbeing of colleagues, too. She enjoys being an advanced practitioner, taking great pride in supporting colleagues in their professional development. It provides her with an opportunity to listen to them when they are *'struggling for whatever reason.'* However, due to her age, she thinks her connection with students has lessened. *'Teaching 16 to 18-year-olds, the age gap is just too big now. I don't feel like I'm connecting… in the way I used to 10 years ago.'* In addition to ongoing health issues, this has caused her to consider early retirement.

Since completing a PGCE in post-16 education, Nikki has taught in FE for 18 years and has held several roles on vocational courses (Level 1 and 3) as a personal tutor and an advanced professional. She is currently a teacher, course leader for engineering (Level 3 16-18 yrs) and advanced professional. She is Caucasian, in her early fifties and married.

4.1.5 Connor

'*It wasn't in my head to come into education!'* said Connor at our initial meeting. Spending 20 years as a technical engineer, he had enjoyed being 'hands on' with the day-to-day practicalities of working in the engineering industry. Made redundant, however, he spent

several months out of work. Given the chance to become a classroom technician at a local college enabled him to continue using his practical skills and knowledge. He then gained a Certificate in Education in post-16 education and has spent more than 20 years teaching large classes of 16 to 18-year-olds. He takes pride in being a part of their development, going the extra mile to ensure they are academically successful*. 'I always offer my time at the end of a lesson or tell a student "Come in at this time, and I'll sit down with you."'* Early on in his teaching career he concluded that *'...the easiest part about teaching is actually being with the students*.' However, his teaching career seems tarnished by his belief that working at 'x' college '*you're either the right person to be a good teacher or you're the kind of person what will never be a good teacher, because... you haven't got that something.'* His experiences may have contributed to a sense of vulnerability. In turn, they may have shaped the way he views himself as a teacher. Recalling how self-doubt became stressful, he said: *'I've worried about that […] am I doing well... doing wrong. I were* (sic) *always questioning myself.'* Coupled with an ever-increasing workload he decided to reduce his hours of employment. *'That's why I went on four days… I wasn't coping well...'* When the recording stopped, Connor wiped the tears from his cheek as he recounted a former student thanking him for giving him self-belief*. 'I went to university,' he said, 'and now I'm working at Silverstone… I followed my dream and that was because you believed in me'*. Reflecting, Connor said: '*…and that's what teaching is all about*.'

He has been a classroom technician, a teacher for vocational courses (Level 1 and 2) and course leader for technical engineering. He currently holds the position of teacher for vocational courses (Level 1 and 2) for technical engineering. He is Caucasian, in his early sixties and married with a grown-up family.

4.1.6 Stuart

'They [students] think you live on a teacher cloud... you've never really been anywhere.' That is how Stuart summed up his 15+ years' experience teaching vocational students on engineering courses. Long before he '*fell into tutoring people'* he had enjoyed 20 years in the rubber and plastics industry making complex machinery. Threaded through those two

decades, Stuart described how a significant and enjoyable aspect of his role was becoming an apprentice training manager. He does not explain why he left the industry that he loved and entered the world of education but several times during our initial meeting he referred to how he gained *'satisfaction of being able to er... help people, effectively... yeah... I enjoy the students.'* Notwithstanding his enjoyment of 15 years' teaching, Stuart shares how he has felt vulnerable, finding onerous the administrative tasks and volume of marking. He mentions the importance of '*good peer support'* and effective mentoring that addresses the ongoing needs of teachers.

Since gaining a PGCE in post-16 education he has held several roles, as a teacher for vocational courses (Level 1 to 3) and personal tutor. He currently holds the position of course leader (Level 2) for engineering. He is Caucasian, in his late fifties and married with a grown-up family.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an interpretive account of the research findings, following the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Phase One: transcripts of individual pre-diary interviews. Phase Two: participants' diaries and photographs. Phase Three: transcripts of individual post-diary interviews. Four main themes were developed: Disconnect from Others, Caring Dimensions, Control, Inter-personal Relationships. These themes were common to all six participants. The foundation of each main theme was developed from several sub-themes with shared meaning, to show their connection. Main themes and sub-themes are presented in a table below.

Main Theme	Sub Theme
Disconnect from others	• **Clash of values** Disharmony with managers Everyone passes Students as customers • **Teaching is labour intensive** Workload Administrative tasks
Caring dimensions	• **Vocational calling** • **Caring for others** Students as people Role of confidante • **Feeling vulnerable and resilient**
Control	• **A compromised and fulfilled self (emotional labour)** Teaching is more than a performance Emotional labour enhances wellbeing Emotional labour with students • **Contextual influences on wellbeing** Defining teacher wellbeing

	Wellbeing as a shared responsibility Opportunities to talk about wellbeing
Inter-personal relationships	• **Professional relationships** With colleagues With students • **Impact on family relationships**

I considered it important to present the chapter in a way that captures the voices of participants and illuminates the nuanced and personal nature of their experiences, thus enriching the data for the reader. In addition, when the participants are the focus of the sentence, my own voice is heard, acknowledging my active role when selecting data to illustrate analytical points. Presented in a thematic style, the analytical narrative presented discusses, in turn, each main theme and related sub-themes. A table format of participants' contributions to sub-themes has been created to guide the reader. I have included the table below to demonstrate participants' contributions to the main and sub-themes. For the purpose of anonymity, pseudonyms are used.

Participants' contributions to main and sub-themes

		Yvonne	Kath	Diane	Stuart	Connor	Nikki
	Main theme – Disconnect from Others						
Sub-theme	Clash of values	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Teaching is labour intensive	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Main theme – Caring Dimensions						
Sub-theme	Vocational calling	*					*
	Caring for others	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Feeling vulnerable and resilient	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Main theme – Control						
Sub-theme	A compromised self and fulfilled	*	*	*	*	*	

	self (emotional labour)						
	Contextual influences on wellbeing	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Main theme – Inter-personal Relationships						
Sub-theme	Professional relationships	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Impact on family relationships	*	*	*			*

5.1 Disconnect from others (Theme ONE)

This main theme describes how participants' professional and personal identities are often compromised and illustrates how the personal and professional values teachers hold are subjected to the cultural expectations of general educational norms and those in their specific educational setting. Participants described a deep loss of autonomy and agency in the college's management processes and in how they went about their day-to-day teaching practices.

Table: Disconnect from others

Sub-theme	Yvonne	Kath	Diane	Stuart	Connor	Nikki
Clash of Values	*	*	*	*	*	*
Teaching is labour intensive	*	*	*	*	*	*

5.1.1 Clash of values

5.1.1.1 Disharmony with managers

Five of the six participants experience disharmony with the college ethos in regard to the way in which the principles of education per se are conducted. They appear to feel burdened

by the need to be seen to tow the party line and demonstrate a united front with senior managers, referring to them as 'the establishment' rather than by their first names. For example, when asked why she stays in teaching, Yvonne said:

> *'It's the students not the establishment or the staff that I work with, it's only the teenagers that keep me'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

A similar sense of separation between self and management resonated with other participants. For example, when referring to being unable to complete marking of students' work within a specific time frame set by the college, Connor shares the following:

> *'I didn't think it was my fault …I thought it was the fault of the establishment'* (Connor: Pre-Diary Interview).

In experiencing disharmony, participants perceive their line and senior managers as faceless, a distancing based on mistrust. Additionally, participants suggest the management lack respect for their personal values and as experienced practitioners in the FE community.

> '*...we are under recognised. We feel… used and abused on a daily basis. Not by the students, but by the establishment. I don't think that they value real expertise and real-life experience …they think that anybody can do the teaching. They think that anybody can slot into any of the roles, and... it's not true […] I think we're very hard done to'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

5.1.1.2 Everyone passes

Feelings of constraint are experienced by five of the six participants. This is founded on the expectations of management, with all students expected to be successful, often achieving high grades for coursework regardless of effort or ability. As a result, some participants experience a loss of agency and a desire to step outside the dominant ideological context in which 'everyone passes.' They articulate a desire to preserve an understanding that learning at its best is achieved by students' efforts and ability rather than a '*fudg[ing] of grades'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview) by teachers**.** This is a moral dilemma for Nikki.

> '*...but I don't want to reward ones [students] that haven't put the effort in and don't have the ability'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

Nikki's experience resonates with Ecclestone's view that '...students are achieving more but learning less' (2007, p.324). The following extract illustrates how the sense of responsibility to ensure students are successful, and therefore meet the expectations of management,

comes at a cost to teachers. Connor describes how he went to great lengths to ensure the success of a student who had refused to complete their course work.

> *'This student we dragged in and we sat with him on a computer to get the work done... And I said: "Right... you're not going home now..." He said: "You can't make me stay..." He went on the [college] bus. I went to Head of Studies and to another member of staff […] to pull him off the bus, and he sat there with his mates. We said [names student] "You have to come with me. You have to complete this work." He says: "I'm not doing it." "So... you are going to fail the course." "Well," he said, "I'm gonna fail the course and I couldn't care less"'* (Connor: Post-Diary Interview).

During the same interview Connor recalls how, on the return to college in September, the student's lack of success was understood to be his fault rather than that of the student.

> *'September, we got back I had the meeting and because it was down [recorded] as a fail, the Head of Studies blamed me'* (Connor: Post-Diary Interview).

Connor's story gives an insight into how teachers feel the pressure to conform to a prevailing culture that every student is successful, with the onus of success or failure placed on the teacher not the student, a view echoed by other participants.

> *'Like that's not a reflection on them... on them students […] that's a reflection on you the grades that they come out with and you do take it personal and when you know that you're consistently putting EVERTHING in and this student is not trying that's like a personal insult because you know that what they achieve at the end of that is not just a reflection on them, it's a reflection on you*' (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

> *'Management always believe that if students aren't achieving the top grades, it's the teacher's fault because they haven't taught it. They haven't done the job properly'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview)**.**

In a later interview, Yvonne demonstrates her own resilience to management expectations and highlights how some teachers seem to absorb a culture of blame.

> *'I've had other members of staff saying that if they [students] don't pass they will […] quit their job and I said, don't be so soft. I said if the student fails, they fail, not you'* (Yvonne: Post-Diary Interview).

However, the view that a student's lack of success is the teacher's fault is not the opinion of all participants. Stuart describes how a student's failure was apportioned by himself and senior managers to the student rather than the teacher.

> *'Erm... on those occasions there was no blaming apportioned by the management, it's all the student had had because of their own... erm... failings. There was no blame attributed to any of the teaching team or indeed me as the course manager. So, so it was a very fair...'* (Stuart: Post-Diary Interview)**.**

Overall, the pervading culture to ensure the success of students appears to undermine the ethical foundations of the participants' professional practice. It seems the pressure to conform to the single paradigm that every student succeeds not only compromises participants' personal values but also curtails opportunities to relate to students more holistically, rather than adopting the binary position of success or failure. Moreover, it may contribute to teachers developing a deficit approach to students if they are seen to deviate from the expectations of senior managers, a notion highlighted by Illsley and Waller (2017).

5.1.1.3 Students as customers

Some participants feel the trend towards the commodification of education challenges the ethical basis of their practice. It appears that participants enjoy a strong rapport with students and highlight the importance of seeing them as individuals rather than simply names on a register, a student number or a unit of monetary value. In the following reflections, the perception of education as a business is questionable.

> *'I'm not interested in the business not interested in the finance […] my focus is teaching… and giving these students the best experience and the best qualification that they're capable of and that is a complete clash and conflict of interest with the way the management seem to be coming at it' (*Diane: Pre-Diary Interview).

Diane further explains how she understands her role and the role of teachers *per se.*

> *'...we're there to educate. Our business is teaching and learning we're not interested in the numbers'* (Diane: Pre-Diary Interview).

This sheds light on a potential conflict of interest between participants and management. In the extract below, Kath feels caught in the middle as she attempts to simultaneously balance a duty of care towards students whilst acknowledging the college is run in a 'business-like' manner. Her frustration to meet managerial pressure to retain students compromises her integrity.

> *'But realistically, it's a business. So, it doesn't matter that they're on a third stage warning, it doesn't matter that they've got really low attendance. It doesn't matter that they've been rude in class. It doesn't matter that they've got these concerns, it doesn't matter they've not handed work in. If you get rid of a student at this time, a year, the financial cost of the college is too much so you have to get them through'* (Kath: Post-Diary Interview).

This feeling is echoed by another participant when asking for support from his line manager to divide a large group of twenty students on a BTEC Engineering course into smaller groups. This was to ensure their health and safety when teaching the technical skills of using a lathe. Connor recalls how his line manager thought this request was '*over the top'* (Connor: Post-Diary Interview) and how in the end nothing changed, leaving him to manage a large group of students in what he believed was an unsafe environment. Talking about the possible reasons why his line manager didn't fulfil his request, Connor explains:

> *'They [management] probably wouldn't be able to do it. I suppose... it's all down to finance...really'* (Connor Post-Diary Interview).

When asked if he felt his line manager was under pressure from more senior managers, Connor says his line manager was more concerned with '*trying to impress his superiors'* than the health and safety of students or his own wellbeing.

> *'He might have been... it's all to do with him trying to impress superiors, I'm doing this, my staff are doing this, and I'm getting my staff with this size of class in the workshop and er... I don't need to halve the class. So, him looking at it, is a brownie point, for him, he couldn't care less about the stress and anxiety for me and my wellbeing, couldn't care less about that'* (Connor Post-Diary Interview).

In line with Gleeson's (2015) view, what is noticeable here is the care of both student (health and safety) and teacher (wellbeing) is subordinate to that of the institution. The implication here being that student and teacher are valued by their productivity alone (Ball and Olmedo, 2014).

5.1.2 Teaching is labour intensive

All six participants express concern about increasing 'challenging' and 'exhausting' demands placed on teachers without their ever being consulted about how these demands may affect their sense of wellbeing.

5.1.2.1 Workload

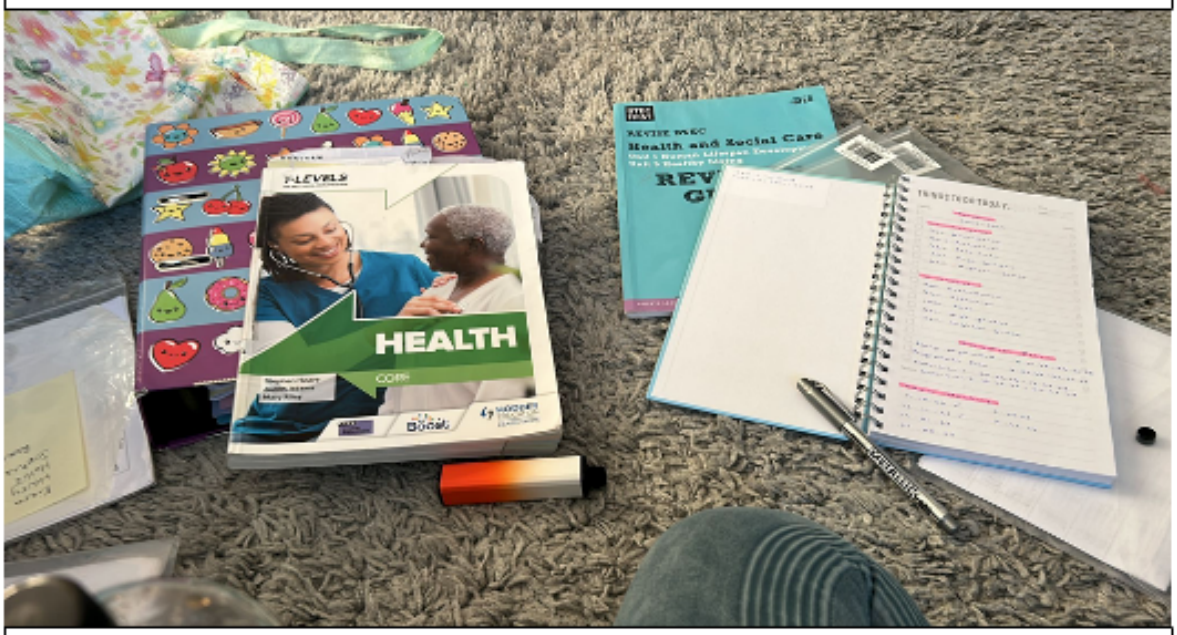
Kath shares how she experiences excitement at the beginning of another academic year, taking part in the enrolment of new students. However, this is dampened by a sense of

anxiety as she begins to anticipate the workload ahead and the uncertainty of not knowing which subjects she will teach in the new term.

> *'The stress starts to build as you keep an eye on the numbers of each course, not yet knowing what units you will be teaching and the pressure to know that everything is planned and ready within an inch of its life is anxiety overload!' (*Kath: Diary Entry One).

This anxiety is amplified as Kath considers the never-ending list of tasks teachers are expected to fulfil.

A picture of a participant's text book and notepad



'Who allowed me to be a teacher? I can't keep up with the workload'
(Picture included by Kath: Diary Entry One)

> *'You can always do more in teaching - that check list will never be empty' (*Kath: Diary Entry One).

For Kath, teaching and administrative activities have become onerous. She reflects on how her workload cannot be completed during her contracted hours and is often carried out during her evening and weekends, a situation that appears to overwhelm her. Comparisons are made to people she knows in other professions.

> *'Teaching consumes every inch of your life you cannot help but feel envious of other people in your life that come home from work and finish'* (Kath: Diary Entry One).

This is by no means an uncommon experience for participants. Similarly, Yvonne describes how teaching impacts on almost every aspect of her life.

> *'[It] impacts on your evenings, your weekends, your family life, your personal life, your wellbeing time, and I've stopped allowing it to impact because... I refuse to do it now... I won't spoil every weekend. I won't spoil every evening because it's me time... erm**...'*** (Yvonne: Diary Entry One)**.**

By refusing to allow work to impact her evenings and weekends Yvonne seems to take control and be resilient to the demands at work. However, the lines between work and home seem blurred for other participants who describe their workload as 'horrendous', 'exhausting', 'stressful'. Participants drew attention to the time demands placed on teachers, highlighting that this may be an isolating aspect of their working lives.

> *'My workload is horrendous – I am working 50-60 hr weeks I have had no support from college systems and procedures...'* (Diane: Diary Entry One).
>
> *'Contracted to work 3 days a week but still accumulating 60-65 hours a week has taken its toll...I feel burnt out and managers I have discussed this with don't care' (*Connor: Diary Entry Six).

In the following extract, Connor describes a typical working day, involving face-to-face teaching on a BTEC engineering course, and how this compromises his wellbeing. He is teaching five groups of 20-25 students with little or no break during the day.

A picture of a participant's car after work

'I feel like I exist in the dark, I go to work in the dark, come home in the dark and it is dark at the weekend by the time I have completed everything I need to do to prepare for the next week' **(Picture included by Diane: Diary Entry One)**

> *'Stressful mentally and physically, only 5-10 mins between each class swap... Only drink water from a bottle, before starting again with the next class and not having an opportunity to sit down'* (Connor: Diary Entry Five).

This is by no means an isolated incident. The intensity of a day's teaching causes him to feel physically unwell.

> *'At this point in the teaching year (October) arriving at college every morning, I feel exhausted and physically sick whilst walking across the car park into the college. Occasionally so bad is the feeling I have to leave the staff room and go to the toilet and be sick. Then I have to compose myself and tell myself everything will be OK today' (*Connor: Diary Entry Five*).*

It seems that participants' wellbeing is workload dependent, involving the marking of students work, leaving Stuart feeling exhausted and encouraged.

> *'The marking burden this week has been very intense, with huge volumes of assignments to mark, moderate and track – exhausting! The work was high quality and learners have generally demonstrated excellent levels of effort and competence – So... a very rewarding and exhausting week'* (Stuart: Diary Entry One).

These comments are punctuated by more positive aspects of teaching such as encouraging feedback from students, making Connor proud of the job he is doing. Connor is heartened by students who share how they've been '*waiting for this [his lesson] all week'* (Pre-Diary Interview) or the *'good feeling that my teaching and instruction is paying off and I am doing something right'* (Connor: Diary Entry Five). They also recount a deep sense of satisfaction when former students tell them the impact they made in their lives (Connor: Post-Diary Interview, Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview). This illustrates the need to balance their day-to-day frustrations and tensions with the joy of knowing that students value them.

5.1.2.2 Administrative tasks

A high administrative workload is commented on by all six participants. The wide range of administrative tasks (e.g. emails, phone calls, student monitoring, reports, preparation for performance auditing), appear to have an adverse effect on their wellbeing.

> *'...there's very little time to recuperate and to be on top form… for the next class, because we've got no time between lessons, it's been boom, boom, boom [clicks*

> *fingers]. And there's always somebody wanting something, phone calls to be made, people to see, questions to be asked, questions to be answered, pieces of paper to be filled out - they [management] make you fill out'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

Moreover, the burdensome nature of completing administrative tasks diminishes the joy of teaching. This causes Stuart to relinquish his role of course leader at the end of the academic year – not an easy decision.

> *'After many months deliberating I have requested to reduce my managerial responsibilities and stand down as course leader... I have become increasingly concerned by the admin workload, which negatively impacts on planning for teaching. I thoroughly enjoy teaching and look forward to not having the burden of the admin'* (Stuart: Diary Entry Three).

5.1.3 Summary of theme

Teachers feel burdened by unrealistic expectations placed upon them by their line and senior managers. They are required to fulfil directives set by Government mandates and college culture, often at the expense of their own values and beliefs. In a consumerist paradigm, with students perceived as customers and all must be successful, teachers' agency and autonomy are compromised. This leads to distrust of the management agenda. Teachers' administrative workload (e.g. emails, phone calls etc.) have become onerous, often leading to anxiety and stress. The difficulty of achieving a work-life balance contributes to their diminished sense of wellbeing.

5.2 Caring Dimensions (Theme Two)

This main theme describes the vocational aspect enjoyed by some participants. Best described as a sense of calling, it is a positive and motivating factor for participants that encapsulates a perception of purpose and fulfilment beyond work activities or the academic achievements of students. Although a sense of vocation is not the experience of all six participants, what is compelling is their willingness to engage in the complex lives of students and how the discourse of care (Noddings, 2018; Avis et al, 2011) is pervasive within

their narratives. It is within a culture of care that the possible emotional impact (both positive and less positive) on participants is described.

Main theme of Caring Dimensions

Sub-theme	Yvonne	Kath	Diane	Stuart	Connor	Nikki
Vocational calling	*					*
Caring for others	*	*	*	*	*	*
Feeling vulnerable and resilient	*	*	*	*	*	*

5.2.1 Vocational calling

Two of the six participants share how personal factors contribute to their choosing a career in teaching. Personal factors appear to contribute to participants' sense of purpose and pride in the part they played in the development of others. This sustains them in their role and contributes to their feelings of wellbeing. Nikki's Christian faith is an important aspect of her commitment to her professional role, with teaching viewed as an opportunity to *'give a bit back*' (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

> *'I was working in industry, I had quite a lot of responsibility. I was a production manager… I used to earn quite a lot of money, I always felt like I was just taking, not giving anything back'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

Nikki shares how her Christian faith influenced her role.

> *Interviewer: 'Okay ... so your faith is very connected to your role as a teacher?'*
>
> *Nikki: 'Yeah…'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'In what way would you say that?'*
>
> *Nikki: 'I feel like I can pass on a lot of caring… I believe that students feel I genuinely do care about them... I'm fiercely defensive of them' [becomes visibly upset]* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

In a similar vein, another participant recalls:

> *'I always wanted to help people and that was my calling…'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).
>
> *'The rewards are great, you see the students… achieve, you see them go to university… and they send you cards… look at me here at graduation… you see them in Tesco, they run up [to you] two years later. I've just passed my exams and I can remember your lessons' (*Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

For Yvonne, being part of her students' achievements and progression to university, brings personal and professional reward.

5.2.2 Caring for others

Despite the challenges described in section 5.1, pastoral care of students is at the forefront of the participants' practice. All six share stories of wanting the best for their students, sometimes going 'the extra mile' and taking pride in the part they played in their development.

5.2.2.1 Students as people

In Nikki's view, caring for students is fundamental to being a successful teacher. Based on mutual trust, she considers how this supports building relationships with students.

> *'...it's the first role because until they [students] can… well soon as they can see that you care about them, then they start to trust you and they can't learn until they trust you. And so, it's the very first thing that I do'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

In common with Nikki, Diane shares the importance of relating to students as people, not just learners.

> *'Teaching ...it's a personal thing because you care about human beings, right?'* (Diane: Pre-Diary Interview).

For Diane, caring about students extends outside the college environment, supporting students to develop life skills. She feels responsible for their welfare, describing how she engages in understanding personal aspects of their health.

> *'Teaching is not just about the subject, is it? It's about all other life skills you're trying to impart... So, like …erm… when I was teaching the Health Education unit and I've got a group of girls and then they started side tracking and talking about smear tests and how horrific they were. I was in a classroom with… a specular in it. I knew that I*

could explain it to them. So, it was about going off track a little bit… to try and sort of dissipate that fear to promote their personal health going forward. So it's about the other... extra things that you cover because you feel a responsibility..' (Diane: Pre-Diary Interview).

Several participants regard a sense of responsibility towards the welfare of students as a cornerstone of their practice, indicating that this is a common experience of participants, involving a sense of ownership of students. For example, Kath describes meeting students at the beginning of a new academic year.

'…cos I think once they walk through them doors in September, they don't know it at the time but they, they are yours …you refer to as your kids…they are like …so everything that they do well erm… you didn't give birth to them, but you might as well have done for that year' (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

A picture of a college photocopier

'Students often make disclosures when you are at your very busiest. But it's their convenient time.'

(Picture included by Diane: Diary Entry Five)

'My kids' until they venture off in July' (Kath: Diary Entry Two).

It seems participants take pride in knowing every one of their students.

'I know what's what, because I make it my business to… you need to know what's going on in the background in their lives' (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

For Kath, caring for students includes addressing their physical needs.

'...when it's just teaching, that's fine you can do that… but when you've got people turning up hungry and you're running to the staff room trying to scavenge anything around so you can give them something to eat… or they're thirsty... you can't dismiss that the respect you have between each other's gone...' (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

5.2.2.2 Role of confidante

Four of the six participants reflect on instances when students share personal and sometimes intimate details of their lives. They consider responding to their students' needs to be a pre-

requisite to effective teaching and learning. For example, being sensitive at the beginning of a lesson is a daily practice for both Yvonne and Kath.

> *'...they might come in and… because I speak to them all… I might say, are you OK 'suchabody' and no, I can see... I'd say ...is there something I can do? And it might be ...Can I tell you something?... I've had students say 'Oh, this is happening to Mum' or 'suchabody' has been rushed into hospital or 'suchabody' has died. So, I'll speak to everybody… I can gauge how... I'd like to think I can gauge how they are feeling by their responses and how they are'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

> *'...you pick up on that [student's mood] and all it literally needs is one person to take them out and say… Is there anything I can do? Not prying for information, but saying I am here, if you need someone…*' (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

Other participants share stories of students disclosing information about safeguarding issues of abuse and self-harm. Diane reflects on experiencing a range of emotions when, during a busy morning, a student discloses flashbacks to historical abuse from their childhood. As she steps out of class to photocopy resources, a student follows Diane saying she needs to talk.

> *'Initially I felt irritation – one more thing to deal with but then I… looked at the student in front of me. They looked extremely young, vulnerable and earnest, putting their trust and belief in me. I felt honoured... But I also felt sad and worried about what I was about to hear'* (Diane: Diary Entry Five).

Diane's story reflects other participants' experiences. Stuart recalls a student self-harming.

> *'...there was an occasion earlier this year where I had to pass it on to safeguarding because the student was talking about self-harming. Erm… he did it in a very open way and he wasn't upset… but I said to him, I shall have to, we need to get him some support... I went home that night and it played on my mind a bit because obviously, it's not something you hear every day when somebody… thank goodness, but he got the support. Erm… and he's on the right side of things now... So, erm… yeah that's probably the most difficult part of the job'* (Stuart: Pre-Diary Interview).

The above extracts suggest that participants feel they should respond to unanticipated situations in the best interest of the student's wellbeing. In line with Avis et al, (2011) what is noticeable is the way teachers operate with an expansive understanding of their role.

5.2.3. Feeling vulnerable and resilient

Participants responses indicate that caring for students can be both challenging and/or '*engender [a sense of] purpose'* (Stuart: Post-Diary Interview).

5.2.3.1 Feeling vulnerable

In addressing students' needs, two participants reflect on how being engrossed in a student's situation may come at a cost to their own sense of wellbeing. For Yvonne, it often involves mopping up their feelings.

> *Interviewer: 'So ...the relationships, you have with students, does that affect your personal/ professional wellbeing?'*
>
> *Yvonne: '...It can do because you take on board... if they're very sad or they've got some tragic circumstances… I do absorb some of their energy or their negativity, of course I do'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

Although getting to know students is the *'best part of my job'* Kath says it gives her *'an insight into the cruel reality of life'*. The knowledge that a 16-year-old has recently been made homeless creates '*a worry that follows you around'* (Kath: Diary Entry Two) and a sense of guilt if she fails to address their needs.

> *'Then there's an element of guilt... that if there was something going on, you wasn't the one that they [students] told... well, why did they feel they couldn't approach me?'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

However, Nikki recalls how care for students is not always reciprocated. In her attempt to make a lesson stimulating she describes how students have little regard for an activity she has provided for them by ripping up some of her resources, a situation that has a direct impact on her wellbeing.

> *Nikki: … [starts to cry] 'I…just really disappointed…frustrated…'*
>
> *Interviewer: '…I know those feelings…'*
>
> *Nikki: 'Why was I putting in so much effort for this nasty little piece of work?' [still crying]* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

In comparison, students can be sensitive to teachers as well. When feeling under pressure, Connor recalls students showing concern.

> *'Are you feeling alright? You're looking stressed or you're very quiet. You're not having the same banter with us today'* (Connor Post-Diary Interview).

5.2.3.2 Being resilient

One participant considers that his care for students is both a positive and 'galvanising'

experience, providing a sense of purpose.

> *'Yeah, it engenders purpose in me... er…so it doesn't have a negative effect on me. It galvanizes my erm… even if they're… really struggling with their life or their parents or whatever, it may be... I find myself... trying to… offer them solutions. Not solutions for life's problems but strategies, so yeah, it doesn't make me feel like giving up. It makes me feel like I want to work even harder...'* (Stuart: Post-Diary Interview).

In a similar vein, Diane remains resilient to being open to students' personal lives by wearing an imaginary bubble wrap.

> *'I think, erm, I think you're more open to some than others… it's like you've not shut yourself off… like bubbling yourself'* (Diane: Post-Diary Interview).

5.2.4 Summary of theme

Teachers placed great emphasis on the importance of relating to students in a personal way. Based on a sense of mutual trust (Noddings, 2018), pastoral care is at the forefront of their practice. They will demonstrate caring behaviour through concern for their students' welfare beyond the parameters of the classroom, taking pride in knowing them on an individual basis. By addressing their needs, teachers feel both vulnerable and resilient. Positioned in the role of confidante, when students disclose safeguarding concerns such as abuse and self-harm, teachers hold in tension a willingness to absorb and 'mop up' students' feelings, sometimes at the cost of their own wellbeing. They also experience a sense of purpose by 'going the extra mile' and being a significant part of their students' lives.

5.3 Control (Theme Three)

This main theme describes how all six participants understand their teaching practice as more than subject knowledge and pedagogical skill. Their daily experiences of managing students' emotions are in line with what was expected of them, professionally, within an educational organisation. What is noticeable in their narratives is an intense engagement in emotional processes and how these guide their interactions with students. For example, in spite of their own emotions at a given time, participants are disposed to be sensitive to the

moods of their students and understand this to be an integral part of their role. Such an approach often involves both surface and deep acting (emotional labour) and the participants consider the possible impact on their wellbeing, both positive and less positive, and the opportunities they have had to talk about their wellbeing within the college environment.

Main theme Control

Sub-themes	Yvonne	Kath	Diane	Stuart	Connor	Nikki
A compromised and fulfilled self	*	*	*	*	*	
Contextual influences on wellbeing	*	*	*	*	*	*

5.3.1 A compromised and fulfilled self (emotional labour)

5.3.1.1 Teaching is more than a performance

Three of the participants share the view that their interactions with students in a group setting demand a performance, using expressions '*it's showtime'* (Yvonne: Post-Diary Interview), '*a performance'* (Kath: Diary Entry Four) and '*this front came on'* (Connor: Pre-Diary Interview). They acknowledge that adopting such a practice is about maintaining a professional attitude when interacting with students and is not intended to displace any caring aspect (see section 5.2). In the extract below, Connor describes having a dual personality when interacting with students as a group. While helping him maintain a professional attitude it is also shaped by time constraints and the pragmatic demands of getting across the required information, so his students can complete their assignments and prepare for exams.

Connor: 'I have to change. I had to be different and I've always thought that… in my teaching situation at [names college] college, I was a dual person…'

Interviewer: 'Right…OK…'

Connor: 'A dual personality… if the students saw me outside the classroom and in the corridor, you could have a banter with them, but when you're in the classroom… this front comes on because you have that limited time of an hour to get that information across, if you're going to have a lot of banter and… erm… take it easy, I get it in the head, they're not learning' (Connor: Pre-Diary Interview).

Participants' use of the above terminology seems to indicate that they are use to putting on a façade as a means of concealing personal feelings. They regularly display behavioural and facial expressions conveying a positive attitude, thereby fulfilling professional and organisational expectations. This resonates with Jephcote et al's (2008) view that teachers' day-to-day interactions involve them in emotional labour. Notwithstanding that much has been written about the challenges of teachers engaging in emotional labour, involving stress, personal vulnerability and burnout, the participants indicate that engaging in this way is both a liberating or constraining experience, enhancing or detracting from their wellbeing, depending on each situation.

5.3.1.2 Emotional labour enhances wellbeing

Participants express the capacity to be sensitive to students' moods when engaging in classroom teaching. This is particularly demonstrated by Stuart who recalls how he experienced feelings of both frustration and privilege when supporting an engineering student's understanding of a basic construction. In the extract below he engages in both surface and deep acting, to regulate his emotions and convey a supportive attitude.

Stuart: 'Friday last week. I'd explained over and over and over a basic construction. So, it wasn't complex it was a basic instruction do this, then do this, to do that. This was the level three second years. They were fatigued, their focus was off. Erm… and after I'd explained it for, the fifth to sixth time literally over and over and their concentration was very poor, and they were talking and messing with phones… I was speaking to one boy and quite rudely, but he didn't mean to be rude. He was just thinking out loud and said, 'I don't know what today… what am I supposed to do?' He was frustrated and I nearly said, 'REALLY?' cos that was what I was thinking, are you, are you winding me up? I nearly said it and I had to stop myself. It was only my professionalism cos I really did nearly say 'are you winding me up?' But I stopped

myself and I'll finish what I'm doing here, and I'll come over in a minute and I sat with him and then he was OK, but I really, really nearly said it…'

Interviewer: 'So, do you think teachers are responsible for turning students' attitude or behaviour around to be more positive about studying, is that your responsibility?'

*Stuart: 'That's your privilege... You can change people's lives... And you don't think about that all day, every day. I don't think about that unless you're having a conversation like this, but it happens. Yeah… it's a privilege' (*Stuart: Post-Diary Interview).

5.3.1.3 Emotional labour with students

For all six participants, emotional labour is an intrinsic part of their teaching, involving both surface and deep acting. They describe regulating their emotions to suppress negative feelings of anger and frustration. Consequently, a more positive and caring attitude is conveyed towards their students. Moreover, engaging in emotional labour seems to be an active rather than passive process, in which the different emotional experiences of participants are shaped by different circumstances. This highlights the often-complex interactions teachers have with their students. That said, their experiences in the classroom appear to be centred around two main aspects: student behaviour and their emotional needs. The following extracts illustrate the participants' need to present a professional and positive attitude towards students and how this may come at an emotional cost. Yvonne admits to her frustration in wanting to retaliate to students' less positive behaviour. She contains her feelings and puts on her '*game face'*, thereby engaging in both surface and deep acting, a point of frustration for her.

'Oh, fizzing sometimes… fizzing as in… I've really got to be... my game face is on, and I have left the classroom a couple of times to go out and swear or kick a door… because it's on the tip of your tongue to lose your temper. Sometimes you can feel yourself in your head wanting to swear back at them... especially they're swearing at you, you want to swear back at them, but then you've totally lost it […] I've seen teachers shout. One teacher slammed the door so much it nearly brought the door off its hinges and the reaction with the students at first of all is shock… But then, they go quiet momentarily, but then after that, they just erupt, because you give them carte blanche for bad behaviour. So yeah, of course it does. I've never ever cried in front of a student… but sometimes you feel like you want to cry and the frustration, so I removed myself' (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

Yvonne's experience resonates with those of other participants. Diane describes how, when a student directs expletives towards her during a lesson, she responds in a calm manner, using this as a coping strategy to manage her own feelings.

> *Interviewer: 'So, the student directing expletives at you erm, you state, how you, quote 'dealt with this very calmly at the time, did you feel calm?'*
>
> *Diane: 'Yeah…yeah, but actually the madder I get, the calmer I get as well.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'Alright… OK, so it's like a coping strategy?'*
>
> *Diane: 'I don't know because I wasn't even annoyed after.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'So, were you disguising your feelings, then?'*
>
> *Diane: 'No because I wasn't.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'So, when she swore at you did you disguise your feelings? Did you feel calm?'*
>
> *Diane: 'Yeah, yeah… Is that weird?'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'No.'*
>
> *Diane: 'Because I thought you're not going to get the upper hand on me, you're not going to speak to me like that and get away with it, and you're not going to get me annoyed either because then, you'll think you've won' (*Diane: Post Diary interview).

Diane goes on to rationalise the student's behaviour.

> *'But students don't actually get me personally mad because it's not really personal is it? They've just got some other thing going on and decided to vent it at me because the next two weeks later we had a very amicable lesson with that same student'*
> (Diane: Post- Diary interview).

In a similar vein, Kath talks about student behaviour and the possible impact on her wellbeing.

> *Kath: 'Student behaviour for me doesn't have an impact on my wellbeing in terms of negative behaviour because students are humans, we all have bad days. They'll say things, they'll say very nasty things to you, but it's not personal.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'Can you give me an example of a nasty thing?'*
>
> *Kath: 'Oh ...that I've been called... I've been called the number one slag [laughs]. And that was because they'd run out of cannabis that day, and then, an hour later, they were crying in my office… erm... so, I think you have to understand that these are teenagers, they have angry outbursts, they'll say things for a reaction from you, and they'll say things they don't mean and that can be to mask, the lack of understanding, it could be to mask the fact that they are having a hard time at home,*

it could be an argument with a friend, panic, anything but that's not personal to you whatsoever' (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

Both Diane and Kath show concern by trying to understand students' behaviour rather than reacting to it. This indicates how teachers have a desire to relate to students on a personal level, holding their own feelings in tension whilst engaging in the feelings of others. Seeing beyond students' behaviour suggests FE teachers offer 'unseen' support to students to ensure their welfare, a concept referred to as their 'underground' work of teachers (Avis et al 2011; Lobb,2017). However, participants also recall how offering understanding and continuous support to students, to maintain their self-esteem and welfare, may come at a personal cost. Engaging in students' wider lives can bring about compassion fatigue, leading to both surface and deep acting on the part of the participants.

'So, it's draining and physically mentally in every way that you just can't seem to function and then when like a bad day has happened, or you found out some bad news, or someone discloses something to you can say, you shut that off completely because in front of them, you have to obviously remain calm and everything, but it plays on YOUR mind, you can't forget what they've just told you. And if they're going home and are they safe and what's gonna happen to them? And how are they feeling? Then you worry, if they don't turn up that next morning… are they late, has something happened and again...' (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

5.3.2 Contextual influences on wellbeing

5.3.2.1 Defining teacher wellbeing

Participants recognise the term wellbeing as a broad and complex concept, not easily defined. When exploring participants' understanding of what wellbeing meant to them, three of them identified it as holistic, including emotional, social, intellectual and physical aspects.

'It's everything. It's not, it's not just a physical thing. It's emotional, it's social. It's about, it's holistic, isn't it? It's not, it's not just one thing' (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

> *'Well, it's an all-round thing isn't it? …it's about how somebody copes with their life…their emotional wellbeing, their mental wellbeing, intellectual, physical. It's whether they're meeting their needs, whether they feel like they've got a balance, a work life-balance…*' (Diane: Pre-Diary Interview*).*

> *'It's everything, isn't it? It's looking after yourself. Like... if you like... wellbeing is like the holistic definition of health isn't it? it's taken into account the social, your emotional…. every aspect, but ultimately, wellbeing means looking after your mental health more than anything and that's why it doesn't fit in in that work setting because you can't be under that constant pressure...'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

Participants consider how positive wellbeing is gained by ensuring a sense of balance between their personal (family, friends) and professional lives (teaching, marking, professional development, colleagues). However, achieving an effective work-life balance is regarded as a major challenge. Work-based tasks are often completed in the participants' personal time rather than in contracted hours (see section 5.1.2.1) with wellbeing referred to as managing the stress that teaching entails, displacing leisure activities which would support wellbeing.

> *'I think there are two strands to that, really, I think how one feels with regard to er... motivation, mental health levels, managing the stress that the job entails, and then physical wellbeing and, of course, the two are inextricably linked...'* (Stuart: Pre-Diary Interview).

> *'I wasn't getting enough social time ….as in …going to the gym or going for a long walk [...] So, for example, I'd work for five nights of the week, two or three hours at night, I would work over a weekend, half my weekend at work. I've even given up my holidays [...]I had to catch up, so I'd be keeping my head above water'* (Connor: Pre-Diary Interview).

In her role as both teacher and professional tutor, Nikki observes how some teachers were reticent to share the difficulty of achieving a work-life balance and how this compromised their wellbeing.

> *'I think that there are some teachers that are suffering from and can I say its mental instability because they feel like they're locking it up so much. And under so much pressure with a workload that there is, they can't find the balance'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

5.3.2.2 Wellbeing a shared responsibility

Participants identify it as their responsibility, primarily, to maintain a sense of wellbeing.

> *'I think be responsible for yourself ... You've got to...[sighs] … you've got to be responsible for everything that we do for ourselves, haven't we? [...] The workplace has definitely got to ...a bearing on it and things need to change... but I think that, you know, you've got to... a lot of it has to come from within'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

> *'Yeah, because everyone has... has to take responsibility… if you know, you're close to burnout you, there's no one else who's gonna fix it for you...you're gonna have to fix that yourself… erm... so, you do have to find something of... whether that's a drink at a night-time, whether that's going out, you have to find glimpses of looking forward to certain things else you would drive yourself mad…'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

It seemed that a part of maintaining a personal sense of wellbeing also involved a responsibility for the wellbeing of colleagues.

> *'Wellbeing is taking responsibility for self. It also entails caring for others* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

> *'...I think we should work together as team and support each other and then recognise, when somebody's flagging and carry them a bit, because it's somebody else's turn next week...'* (Diane: Pre-Diary Interview*).*

5.3.2.3. Opportunities to talk about wellbeing

Participants were able to identify a number of supportive measures promoting and maintaining teacher wellbeing, some of which had been introduced over the past few years by senior managers. These included PMRs, a health and wellbeing policy, a wellbeing room, a wellbeing advisor/counsellor, a yearly health and wellbeing day involving a range of activities including yoga, chocolate tasting, guided bike rides, flower arranging, knitting, picnic lunches, BBQs, online wellbeing seminars and an end of year fun run. While these were viewed as tokenistic by participants, for example two participants thought a simple day off would be more beneficial, they were appreciative that such activities did, in the short term, support their wellbeing.

> *'...quite frankly the wellbeing day, we would have been quite happy being at home [chuckles] that would have helped my wellbeing… [laughs loudly...] I mean not to go to work' [laughing]* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

> *'...if they [management] cared about our wellbeing, they would give us options. So… stay at home that day, if you didn't want to participate into it... don't get me wrong it's nice that they put things on like that...'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).
>
> '*...the fact that they catered for you... that's, I think that's very nice, very welcoming erm... We had a lovely barbecue, and… we had ice creams and that was lovely. Erm... we were given a voucher... like an appreciation voucher*...' (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

However, some participants believe the initiatives were an opportunity for management to evidence their support of teacher wellbeing rather than coming from *'a place of genuine care for staff'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview). For example, although participants are aware of a health and wellbeing policy, it appears to have little to no impact on their sense of wellbeing.

> *'...there are policies and there are courses but sometimes it isn't a policy or a course that one needs. It's someone... it's a listening ear erm...and ...and that side of it that can be missing sometimes...'* (Stuart: Pre-Diary Interview).

One participant suggests that wellbeing policies and initiatives are in need of revision if they are genuinely to address the needs of teachers. Moreover, it is considered that they are used to manage any unrest felt by teachers, a notion referred to as administering a 'gentle sedative' (Hargreaves, 1998a p.280). For example, when referring to the value of health and wellbeing policies, Yvonne suggests management pay lip service to the issue.

> *'Erm...[pauses] ...let me try and think of a suitable word ... inadequate... in need of revision. They [management] pay us a lot of lip service... and I don't feel that you know... I don't... there's a lot of unrest... there's a lot of unhappiness but nobody is... if anybody is brave enough to speak out, they're quashed then, you know, they're... they're put in a box. So, people stop... saying how they feel...'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

5.3.3 Summary of theme

Teachers engage in both surface and deep acting (emotional labour) as a means of maintaining a professional demeanour and fulfilling the expectations of the educational community. Understood to be an active rather than passive process, it is shaped by different circumstances and interactions. When employed as a coping strategy, teachers mask their emotions by putting their 'game face on' when students exhibit less positive behaviour, such

as using expletives within the classroom environment. Demonstrating a capacity to see beyond their immediate behaviour, teachers provide unseen support, known as underground work (Avis et al; Lobb, 2017). However, concern for the welfare of others can both enhance and diminish wellbeing. Teachers may feel privileged in shaping a student's life but also experience compassion fatigue when providing continuous support. Wellbeing is seen as an individual and shared responsibility, a concept that cannot be decontextualised. The participants share an appreciation of the supportive measures provided by their educational community (e.g wellbeing days, PMRs, wellbeing policy) but describe them as tokenistic, having little or no impact on their sense of wellbeing.

5.4 Inter-personal relationships (Theme FOUR)

This main theme describes the importance of teachers developing and maintaining positive relationships with colleagues and students, thus promoting wellbeing and decreasing devitalising experiences. The participants' descriptive accounts suggest wellbeing is a shared process mediated through interaction with others. A strong network of support is deemed vital in the face of challenging situations that arise in the workplace. In addition, participants describe how working in FE may colonise their lives outside the workplace and impact family relationships.

Table: Inter-personal Relationships

Sub-theme	Yvonne	Kath	Diane	Stuart	Connor	Nikki
Professional relationships	*	*	*	*		*
Impact on family relationships	*	*	*			*

5.4.1 Professional relationships

5.4.1.1 Relationships with colleagues

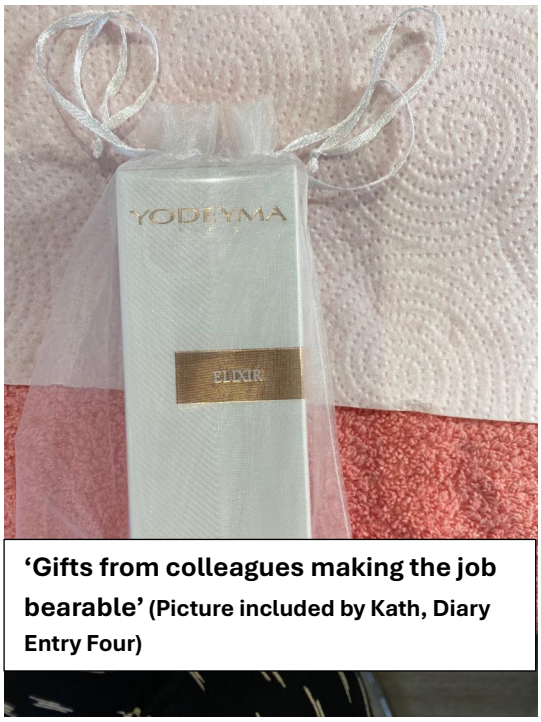
Five of the participants describe the importance of positive and supportive relationships with colleagues. They highlight how this is a vital aspect of maintaining their wellbeing.

> *'Good... good peer support is essential erm... so, of course if that's essential, if that was, if that was missing for whatever reason, that will be a problem'* (Stuart: Pre-Diary Interview).
>
> *'The thing that I find supports my wellbeing... are each people on the team... that you can relate to that you have a genuine like for, and you support each other'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).
>
> *'I think, yeah, I think feeling a part of a team'* (Diane: Pre-Diary Interview).

Kath identifies positive relationships with colleagues as '*the only thing that does support teachers*' (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview). For her, wellbeing is a shared process, as she recounts experiences and feelings about a working day. This appears to provide a sense of camaraderie and belonging.

> *'I think the only thing that does support teachers is colleagues… because it's the only other person that has a glimpse into what you're dealing with. So, somebody else who teaches the same group as you or somebody else who's in the same position as you, there's only them people that can actually say. I know how you feel... erm… not that they give something, some people can give solutions to it, some people will be all hands-on deck and will sort it out together and when everyone's marking, even little messages between each other keeps us going... It makes me like, well, someone else is there doing it as well. So even though you are sat on your own doing your marking, you're not on your own in that situation...'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

Moreover, when faced with the challenges of staffing issues and timetable changes alongside personal matters, Kath takes comfort in the value of supportive colleagues.



'Gifts from colleagues making the job bearable' (Picture included by Kath, Diary Entry Four)

'Wellbeing is at a rock bottom. Not just because of work, but personal life too. There doesn't seem to be any let-up anywhere. I would not last another day in my job if it wasn't for my work friends' (Kath: Diary Entry Four).

For Yvonne, having a strong network of support goes beyond immediate colleagues. It includes teachers from other college departments, teaching assistants, domestic and catering staff.

> *'It's the domestics the... the... erm... support staff. The... erm... the catering staff, you know it's not just teachers. It's other people that ...[...] I will speak to people and stop, and have a laugh and a cup of tea, just to lighten things because it's… it's very full on'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

However, peer support may not always be enough. In the following vignette, Stuart shares how management should take more responsibility for the wellbeing of teachers. Warding off feelings of isolation is the focus of his reflection.

> *'Erm... I've had excellent peer support over the years and continue to... so that, that team working as an ethos... erm... [...] but there are some limitations to that erm... because when things... you know as in life when things are not going a hundred per cent. There needs to be, your peers but they're busy. So there needs to be more than that, within an institution, especially a large institution [...]. Erm... so, so there needs to be a sort of top-down approach to that really, as well, because some people particularly if they're teachers who are more introverted, they might not get that support from their peers because they may sort of fall in the background as it were*' (Stuart Pre-Diary Interview).

Notwithstanding the acknowledged value of peer support, some participants recognise relationships with some colleagues challenges their wellbeing**.**

> *'…erm…. I think it's… [...gasps…] it's managing staff personalities. There's a lot of negativity at the moment and people moaning every day and… and saying [...] I don't know why I'm doing this I want to leave [...] they're bringing my mojo down [...] It messes with me and my positivity. So, I just find myself going into the classroom and getting in there early because then I'm away from that negative feeling'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

This sense of disharmony with colleagues seems founded on a clash of values in that some colleagues appear to place their own needs before those of their students. For Nikki, this is seen as unacceptable, almost intolerable behaviour.

> *'...people are just making things up and you can see them not doing their job properly, just to make their lives easy... if you… don't want to teach, don't do it… you're not here to make your life easier. You're here to impart and that makes me really angry'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

The clash of values with colleagues stirs up in Nikki a deep sense of frustration.

> *'I can go as far as to say I despise my colleagues who don't do their best for our students because I think why else would you be a teacher if you are not going to do the best you can'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

It appeared that the role of a teacher is fundamentally understood as giving the best of oneself involving a sense of vocation (see section 5.2.1). This view is echoed by another participant.

> *'They don't care about other people. They care only about themselves, they're not in the job because they care about people*' (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

5.4.1.2 Relationships with students

In spite of the wartime metaphors included in participants' reflections – a *'battle zone'* (Diane: Post-Diary Interview), '*carnage*' (Kath Pre-Diary Interview), '*fire-fighting'* (Stuart: Post-Diary Interview), '*a chink in your armour'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview) – all of the participants emphasise the importance of establishing positive relationships with students in maintaining their wellbeing. In the following reflections Yvonne, Diane and Kath describe how these contribute to their feeling confident and abate feelings of failure, factors that relate to a sense of wellbeing.

> *'Students make me feel like I am in the right job'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).
>
> *'If you've got a good relationship with students, you own the classroom and that's your safe zone and it's lovely'* (Diane: Post-Diary Interview).
>
> *'...if you can't get through to them with a relationship then you, you have, you have failed them...'* (Kath: Post-Diary Interview).

Furthermore, participants identify how students are a core reason for staying in the profession, a notion highlighted by Hargreaves (1998a). Kath sums up her teaching experience as '*plodding on for the sake of the students'* (Kath: Diary Entry Three). She reflects on how there are some good days and some bad ones but is tipped in favour of staying in the profession because *'the students make it known how irreplaceable you are'* (Kath: Diary Entry Five). Although Yvonne questions how long she can continue to stay in teaching, she is encouraged by end-of-term feedback.

> *'I have had feedback from my students (given by my line manager) [...] they love me and value me. I know, they tell me so – it makes it all worthwhile'* (Yvonne: Diary Entry Five).

The above extract highlights how positive relationships with students may not only promote teacher wellbeing it may also reduce the level of negative emotions and be a source of encouragement. For example, some participants view the teacher/student relationship to be shaped by a sense of mutual trust, gaining personal and professional satisfaction from seeing their students learning and progressing. This seems to suggest that student/teacher relationships are less transactional, generating feelings of excitement and reward. This is of particular note in the reflections of Diane and Stuart.

> *Diane: '...it's just that Eureka moment when someone who's been really struggling suddenly gets it and you ask them and, and they do get it. Seeing the students' enjoyment in the classroom when they're really engage and enjoy something that you're doing.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'And do you think that contributes to your sense of wellbeing?'*
>
> *Diane: 'Yeah, yeah. It makes you smile. It makes you feel good. It makes you feel like you've made a difference'* (Diane: Post-Diary Interview).
>
> *'And the nice thing... you will know are the ones that show huge improvement, so the ones that have been struggling and then they submit an assignment [...]the light bulbs come on and you see it in front of your eyes. And you think, this is marvellous*' (Stuart: Post-Diary Interview).

The importance of positive teacher/student relationships is highlighted by Connor who explains how the lack of respect from students can detract from his sense of wellbeing.

> *'The worst was the lack of respect from the student. I found out that affected me more. And that's because, that type of student doesn't take anything serious, unless it… the repercussions are to them personal' (*Connor: Post-Diary Interview*).*

In the above extract, Connor's inclusion of *'that type of student'* hints that, in his view, students may be characterised as 'good' or 'bad' with regard to their behaviour. This draws on destiny and growth beliefs about teacher/student relationships as discussed by Knee et al (2003) and Avis et al (2011). Connor's experience resonates with both Nikki and Yvonne who refer to how less positive student behaviour can be a source of stress and feelings of vulnerability.

> *'I have in the past taught level two learners that were really, really horrible and really destructive [...] and I didn't want to come to work in that period of time. When I was trying to have to manage these, they were wild. They were absolutely horrible, and they were constantly looking for every opportunity to be disruptive [...] …so yeah, I felt very powerless' (*Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview*).*

Yvonne recalls the difficulties she faces when students enrol on the wrong course, causing them to become disengaged, *'chatting, speaking over you, on their phones… not listening, er… slouching on chairs'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

> *'...it's a battle of wills. You've got to try and think on your toes… you've got to think of some way to try and stop what they're doing and re-engage them... but how do you engage somebody that doesn't want to be sat there in the first place? It's exhausting...'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

Less positive teacher/student relationships can be a devitalising experience but this does not restrict Nikki and Yvonne from being resilient to student behaviour. They are committed to *'drawing a line'* (Yvonne: Post Diary Interview) under it and '*starting again'* (Yvonne: Post Diary Interview). For Nikki, being a '*steady positive influence'* on students is an important aspect of being a teacher.

> *'Well, I always think every single lesson, no matter what happened the lesson before, you have to be a steady positive influence and you have to reset, no matter how much they've annoyed you the lesson before, you have to come in and... and think this lesson is going to be a great lesson because if you come in with any negativity, they feed off it and I always describe learners like mirrors – they reflect what I give them' (*Nikki: Post-Diary Interview*).*

In a similar vein, Yvonne shares how making a fresh start with students may support the wellbeing of both teacher and student. The inclusion of the term 'we' hints at this as a collective activity in which both teacher and student play a significant part.

> *'I always say good morning to them, hello to them. I will give them all my time. I draw a line under it. I don't bear a grudge because it's another day. It could be another lesson. It could be nine o'clock in the morning, they've been rude and at two*

> *o'clock, we start again. We start again. We always start again. You have to start again because if you don't, you'd be [uses soft expletive] wouldn't you?' (*Yvonne: Post-Diary Interview).

Such processes indicate how the reframing of a situation is a coping strategy employed by Nikki and Yvonne, one which seeks to provide a positive outcome for both teacher and student.

5.4.2 Impact on family relationships

Three participants reveal how being a teacher in FE often has a less favourable impact on their family relationships. This is attributed to a range of different work experiences, such as worrying about students' welfare outside the college environment, their own workload and the stress brought about through self-doubt and difficulties in achieving a work-life balance. Kath describes the struggle of leaving her thoughts and concerns about students' welfare at work, ruminating about the ones who have confided in her throughout the day concerning *'difficulties at home [...] the dramas of boyfriends at 16 [...] or some friendship breakdown'*. It can impact her relationship with her partner.

> *'... you can never not take that home, but when you get home and like sometimes like [names partner]. Well, what's up with you? I've been trying to have a conversation with you and I literally can get home some days and I cannot speak and that's not like me. I can talk for England [...] The only way to describe it is like I'm a bit like a zombie, like my shell is home… So, the Friday we broke up [from college]… I walked in, I put my laptop on the table, I lay on the couch and did not move. I even fell asleep on the couch [names partner] woke me up. I ordered a takeaway because I couldn't physically get up to cook. I didn't move though, even [names partner] went to the door to get it… My eyes just felt that heavy. And I was just like... it's like your body knows when to shut down'* (Kath: Post-Diary Interview).

The volume of work leaves Yvonne feeling too tired to speak or wanting to be nice to her husband.

> *'...It has a terrible effect sometimes on myself and the husband because I'm too tired... I don't want to speak. I don't want to be nice. I don't want to pretend that I want to go to a big family party [...] if I've had a terrible week at work, I just want to be on my own because I'm surrounded by people, but you've got to force yourself to or else... I think you could become quite depressed with it all'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview).

Finding difficulty in achieving a work-life balance leaves Diane feeling emotional and inadequate.

> *'At home I am irritable, distracted, often weepy. I find it hard to relax and unwind [...] I find it impossible to keep up contact with my friends and grown-up children[...] nothing I do at work seems quite good enough'* (Diane: Diary Entry One).

In comparison, sharing the events of the day with her partner, who is a teacher in FE, provides ongoing opportunities for Nikki to share her thoughts and concerns with someone who understands the complexities of teaching. This seems to help her 'switch off' from college and is a valuable source of comfort.

> *Nikki: [names partner] 'having done it, been there, I can come home and moan.'*
>
> *Interviewer: 'Okay?'*
>
> *Nikki: 'And he understands'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

5.4.3 Summary of theme

Maintaining positive relationships with colleagues and students is an essential component in promoting teachers' wellbeing. Positive relationships are of particular value when they face demanding circumstances, enhanced by colleagues' awareness of any challenge to their wellbeing. Small acts of kindness, such as the giving of a gift, provide a sense of belonging and camaraderie, emphasising the importance of sociality. However, discordant relationships with peers engendered feelings of dis-ease and frustration when values were not shared, giving cause to consider the need for management to take responsibility for staff wellbeing when it is threatened. Teachers have identified that students are often the core reason for staying in the profession (Hargreaves,1998a). They are perceived as a source of encouragement when a sense of mutual respect and trust is established and a source of stress when neither are demonstrated. Teachers' determined efforts to maintain positive relationships with students is characterised by adopting growth beliefs about teacher/student relationships (Knee et al, 2003; Avis et al, 2011) thus promoting a positive outcome for both parties. The difficulty in achieving a work-life balance due to excessive workload and concern for student welfare has short and long-term implications for the wellbeing of teachers and their family relationships.

5.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter I presented four themes which illustrate the wellbeing experiences of teachers in FE. They draw attention to management processes and the effective support teachers require to maintain wellbeing in their working lives. They express a desire to distance themselves from the unrealistic demands of management, often burdened by a mono-cultural philosophy of education that is prescriptive and undermining of their views, opinions and feelings. The findings show that caring dimensions are an important aspect of teachers' working lives but are overshadowed by the technicalities of teaching, performative measures and market-managed ideology. A strong sense of vocation pervades the teachers' narratives as they put themselves in the service of others (Noddings, 2018), thus fostering positive relationships with colleagues and students. They also express a clear desire to support students beyond academic success, illustrated by a willingness to listen to their personal difficulties and complex lives. Such an approach enhances teachers' moral purpose, strengthening their wellbeing. At its best, teaching is more than just a performance, managed and curated by a top-down culture of educational reform. It is personal, complex, challenging and rewarding. These findings highlight the value of listening to the ordinary voices of teachers, often overlooked by managers, Government policy makers and researchers.

CHAPTER SIX : DISCUSSION

6.0 Introduction

The following chapter considers how the findings of this study relate to existing literature and theories, illuminating the wellbeing experiences of teachers in FE. The focus is on their experiences in one college in the north of England, not on the college per se. This position does not negate the notion that teachers' experiences can be decontextualised. Unsurprisingly, it has found the opposite to be true. References to additional discussions and literature are introduced, supporting a deeper and broader understanding of the subject. The findings are discussed to address the overall aim of the study, organised in a linear format to enhance the reader's understanding. The overarching aim of the study and research questions are presented below. The research questions were structured to explore the personal and professional wellbeing experiences of participants in a way that captures a holistic view of what it means to be a teacher in FE (UK).

6.1 Overarching aim of the study and research questions

The aim of the study is to explore the individual wellbeing experiences of teachers in FE. It does so by addressing the following research questions:

Research questions:

Q1: How do established teachers understand the term wellbeing?

Q2: What is the teacher's role in promoting teacher wellbeing?

Q3: What factors do established teachers identify as supportive in promoting teacher wellbeing?

Q4: What are the various professional demands and experiences that affect teachers'

wellbeing?

Q5: How might pedagogic experiences/interactions with students affect the personal and professional wellbeing of established teachers?

6.2 How established teachers understand the term wellbeing

6.2.1 Conceptualisations of wellbeing

All the study's participants (n=6) understand wellbeing as complex, involving a range of ideas. Whilst some regard wellbeing as an holistic concept, involving emotional, social, intellectual and physical aspects, others consider managing stress, maintaining motivation and finding a work-life balance as vital. Conceptualising wellbeing in these various ways highlights how broadly the term is understood (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008; Day and Qing, 2011; Dodge et al, 2012). In addition, character traits, whether they are confident, resilient or vulnerable, influence their understanding. On the matter of self-confidence, for example, Stuart maintains self-efficacy when apportioning a particular student's lack of success on the student himself rather than doubting his own teaching ability (see page 85). By working during contracted hours only, Yvonne is resilient in not allowing her professional commitments to impact her 'wellbeing time' (see page 89). In comparison, Connor feels vulnerable when teaching a large group of engineering students in what he considers to be an unsafe environment (see page 87). These findings are in keeping with those outlined by Ereaut and Whiting (2008) in that 'different meanings are projected by different agents' (p.5). Our understanding is influenced by our individual experiences and personal characteristics. However, in line with Action and Glasgow's (2015) research, the current study suggests that contextual factors play more of a significant part in teacher wellbeing than personal characteristics. Moreover, too much emphasis is put on teachers' characteristics and not enough on the power of the environment to determine how they perform (Kennedy, 2010). In this sense wellbeing cannot be decontextualised.

The majority of participants (n=5) believe that maintaining a work-life balance is key to achieving a sense of wellbeing. This is consistent with the view that wellbeing is a

psychological and social construct encompassing both personal and professional values: '…a balance point between an individual's resource pool and the challenges faced' (Dodge et al 2012, p.230). By acknowledging the part they play in maintaining a work-life balance, teachers position themselves as 'decision makers with choices... with the possibility of becoming masterful' (Dodge et al, 2012, p.231). It is an active rather than passive process. Framing teachers in a less vulnerable light recognises their agency in establishing and maintaining their own wellbeing. However, this does not negate the challenges faced by the participants when trying to complete work in contracted hours and managing a clash of values with colleagues and managers. As the narratives reveal, these challenges contribute to a climate of disharmony. Furthermore, the capricious nature of wellbeing is emphasised with participants identifying times when they feel it the most and least. Kath shares how, at the beginning of the academic year, she is both excited and anxious when enrolling new students onto their respective courses (see page 87). Wellbeing is a transitory concept.

6.2.2 Wellbeing is a shared experience

Consistent with previous and current literature (Aristotle *NE*; van Hooft, 2006; Acton and Glasgow, 2015), the participants' understanding of wellbeing entails going beyond fulfilling their own aspirations. They express a desire to support others, be concerned for their welfare and exercise kindness and patience. Wellbeing is an individual and collective phenomenon. However, while the participants understand the importance of maintaining their own wellbeing, it appears to be a theoretical notion rather than a pragmatic reality. For example, they tend to prioritise students' wellbeing above their own. Both Kath and Yvonne (see pages 94 and 95) pick up on their students' mood as they enter the classroom. Moreover, concern for their students' wellbeing is viewed as an integral part of daily practice. Contrary to Noddings' view, which initially presented the act of care as a feminine ethic (Diller, 1988; Slote, 2010a), this study contests the notion of a gender constraint. Stuart, for example, takes time to listen to students.

> *'…if they are struggling with their life, parents or whatever… I find myself... trying to… offer solutions'* (Stuart Post-Diary Interview, Findings 5.2.3.2).

Moreover, the findings also accord with those of Gleeson et al (2015) in that both male and female teachers view student wellbeing as a prerequisite of their practice.

In spite of the concern for their own wellbeing (DfE, 2021), teachers are expected to maintain the wellbeing and welfare of their students (Lobb, 2017; Hargreaves 2000a; Noddings 2005). In line with the findings of previous studies (Avis et al, 2011; Lobb, 2017), the present study shows how teachers question whether they are doing enough to support their students, to ensure their needs are met. If their own wellbeing is not addressed, this could prove a difficult task. Teacher wellbeing in all sectors (UK) (DfE, 2021) is of concern. However, teachers in FE 'stand out... as having... the lowest levels' (Education Policy Institute, 2020, p.4). Future research should explore why this is the case and would serve to support constructive outcomes. In addition, further research may provide greater insight into how the lack of teacher wellbeing may be impacting students.

6.2.3 Summary

Wellbeing is both an individual and collective experience, influenced by social and psychological events. Commonly recognised as a complex concept, this study considers wellbeing to be a process rather than a character trait and is associated with both transitory and longer-term experiences. Previous studies (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008) identify teacher wellbeing as an unstable construct (UK), influenced by 'philosophical traditions, world views and systems of knowledge'. In accordance with their views, the current study considers how 'the meaning [of wellbeing] will always be shifting, although more at some times than others' (p.7).

6.3 The teacher's role in promoting teacher wellbeing

6.3.1 '*No one else [is] gonna fix it for you*' (Kath Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.3.2.2)

Concern for teacher wellbeing is at the forefront of The Staff Wellbeing Charter (2021) published by the Department of Education. It states that 'everyone working in education should have the opportunity to enjoy the highest possible standard of wellbeing and mental

health' (p.2). All the participants (n=6) in this study identify how maintaining a sense of wellbeing is primarily their responsibility. They describe personally managing the stress caused by a heavy teaching workload, administrative tasks and disharmony with managers. Aware that working towards a work-life balance is a challenge, they suggest this can be achieved by, for example, going to the gym, taking long walks, socialising with friends and family and making use of 'mindfulness'. While this approach acknowledges how teachers accept responsibility for their own wellbeing, it also underlines how they experience considerable stress.

6.3.1.1 Finding the balance

The participants use deficit-based terms when referring to their wellbeing – for example, 'stress,' 'constant pressure' and 'keeping my head above water' – confirming the intense nature of their experiences, as suggested by several authors (Milatz et al, 2015; Ball and Olmedo, 2013; Illsley and Waller, 2017; Brady and Wilson, 2021; Jephcote et al, 2008). It further indicates the difficult task of maintaining personal wellbeing in an environment that presents considerable challenges (Liu et al, 2018; Brady and Wilson, 2021; Health and Safety Executive, 2021). They feel particularly vulnerable regarding their mental health (Bullough, 2011).

> '*...ultimately, wellbeing means looking after your mental health more than anything and that's why it doesn't fit in in that work setting because you can't be under that constant pressure...'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings: 5.3.2.1).

There are hints, too, of the isolation they feel, with one participant sharing how colleagues were '*locking up so much'* (Nikki: see page 103). Although they identify how it is their responsibility to be open about the difficulties they may face, there is a reticence to share these for fear of being judged negatively. Even though the provision of a wellbeing room is appreciated, Kath reflects on the camera outside the door.

> '…*are you being watched [and] how long you are staying in this room...?'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

While these findings align with pervading discourses concerned with 'risk, danger and vulnerability' (Ecclestone, 2007b, p.464), the participants' narratives also contain positive

expressions, such as '*feeling honoured*', '*engendering purpose'*, '*galvanising*', '*feeling good'* (see pages 102, 103, 104, 118). These imply resilience, as an intrinsic part of wellbeing (Day and Gu, 2010). Moreover, they reveal how teachers experience self-efficacy and are seen to shape and be shaped by the world in which they live. Although the participants acknowledge wellbeing as primarily their responsibility, this study suggests educational communities (culture, environment, policies, practice) should consider how best they may support teachers to work towards personal growth and wellbeing.

6.3.2 Working together

Wellbeing as both an individual and collective phenomenon is particularly relevant in educational communities, if we are to understand it as instrumental and an outcome of personal development (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008). In this sense, the blurring of *where* the responsibility lies conveys powerful signals regarding *when* and *how* the provision, professional delivery and responsibility for teachers' wellbeing rests, at both an individual and organisational level. This study does not seek to argue for a dualism of teacher agency and organisational procedures but suggests teachers wish to work in partnership with senior management to promote a positive outcome.

6.3.2.1 The value of supportive measures

The participants are well-versed in supportive measures that include a wellbeing room, a health and wellbeing policy, performance management reviews and wellbeing days. However, they are viewed as prescriptive and tokenistic, evoking feelings of mistrust in their senior managers' motives. As highlighted in an early work by Hargreaves (1998a), teachers are inclined to perceive wellbeing measures as a means of managing unrest. Critically, the participants feel excluded from any policy-making decisions about how their wellbeing could best be supported. They feel obliged to attend wellbeing days, taking part in activities that have little relevancy to the improvement of their wellbeing. Moreover, as noted by Brady and Wilson (2021), teachers have reported feeling resentful of initiatives prescribed by senior managers, thereby 'infringing on their personal autonomy' (p.54).

> *'...quite frankly the wellbeing day… we would have been quite happy being at home [chuckles] that would have helped my wellbeing… [laughs loudly...]' (*Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.3.2.3).

Research has documented the benefit to teacher wellbeing if their views are heard, acknowledged and actively promoted (Gleeson and James, 2007). Several participants share this opinion. Indeed, many of the initiatives are regarded as box-ticking exercises for senior managers to demonstrate a commitment to Government rhetoric and not coming from a '*place of genuine care'* (Yvonne: see page 105) or serving the complex realities of teachers' working lives. Unwittingly, this may have undermined their trust in senior managers' motives and contribute to diminished wellbeing, giving them cause to consider whether their views really count.

The participants suggest frank conversations with line and senior managers about their wellbeing would be helpful. Both informal and ad hoc conversations would generate an opportunity to reflect on aspects of practice, such as celebrating key moments in their practice, sharing unresolved tensions about student attendance and achievements and their own working conditions. These conversations would offer a more personal approach to wellbeing than the formal biannual staff appraisals, which are perceived as a means of measuring their performance against a centralised, target-setting agenda (Simmons and Thompson, 2008; O'Leary, 2013). This highlights the importance of establishing and maintaining trust between teachers and senior managers and in so doing build strong professional communities (Hargreaves, 2000b).

A shared focus reminds us that a crucial part of our humanity is our sociality (Russell, 2013). Wellbeing is a process, involving individual and collective experiences 'characterised by high-quality social relationships' (DfE, 2021 p.2) in which character traits of integrity and compassion are sought, virtues conducive to individuals experiencing a state of wellbeing (Aristotle *NE*; Gaskarth, 2011; Back et al, 2018). Future research should consider how engaging in collaborative interventions between teachers and managers would be advantageous to both parties' wellbeing, as opposed to the imposition of prescriptive measures.

6.3.3 Policies

6.3.3.1 Tokenistic

In the Phase One interviews the participants were reluctant to share their experiences of how wellbeing policies support both their practice and relationships with colleagues and students. The policies were perceived at best tokenistic, at worst irrelevant. They are determined elsewhere, privileging the values of central government and a means by which the management determine how they go about their working lives (Avis, 2003). The participants perceive their role as passive implementers of policy rather than agents of change. This sits in contrast to the rhetoric of The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter (2021) which positions them in an active role, fashioning their own future and wellbeing (Bell and Stevenson, 2006). When asked about policies which may influence their practice, the participants responses are vague and tinged with disdain.

> *'I don't know, not that I'm aware of, I'm sure they'll have one [policy]somewhere' (*Diane: Pre-Diary Interview).
>
> *'Policies as in... the establishment? Not as far as I know… I can't remember anything about wellbeing' (*Connor: Pre-Diary Interview).

6.3.3.2 Policy as product, process or manipulation?

With reference to the above quotes, it is worth noting the use of the past tense, signifying that the participants view policies as a product rather than a process, something that 'gets done' to people by a chain of implementers (Bowe et al 1992 in Bell and Stevenson, 2006) rather than a process of continuous re-generation in which policy is 'made and re-made, as it is being implemented' (Bell and Stevenson, 2006, p.17). The limitation of seeing policy only as a product risks de-coupling it from the context it seeks to serve. It also highlights how the goals of policies are not always achieved in practice, a notion referred to as the 'policy/practice' gap (Rizi and Lingard, 2010, p.4). Viewed as a product, they conjure up images of power conveyed not only by their content but 'expressed in silences either deliberate or planned' (Rizi and Lingard, 2010, p.4). The value of the teacher as interpreter and implementer of policies is deemed subordinate to those of government and the

institution. As Doecke et al (2010) point out, the ideology of state seems impervious to critique. The voices of teachers in policy making are overlooked and they find themselves 'outside the ideological space in which [...] reforms are located' (p.83).

> *'...if anybody [...]speak [s] out, they're quashed… so people stop... saying how they feel...'* **(**Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.3.2.3).

Taking a unilateral approach to views, values and needs of teachers risks dehumanising a workforce embedded in the lives and welfare of others. The concept of policy as a process is sadly defunct, with participants' voices lost. Senior managers are tasked to reconcile external demands from Government and internal organisational pressures to make sense of policy-making processes. Recognised as a complex process, academic discourses highlight the need to understand policy making as a product of negotiation, renegotiation and compromise, positioning educational leaders with the responsibility of making sense of the policy demands 'from above […] and aspirations from those below'(Bell and Stevenson, 2006 p.19) However, regardless of perceiving policies as a product or process or indeed both, they were still regarded by the participants as having little to no impact on their wellbeing.

> *'It isn't a policy [...]that one needs…. It's a listening ear...'* **(**Stuart: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.3.2.3)

6.3.3.3 Surveillance and control

Kath associates policies with management control. Uncertain of the college's '*sick and absence policy*', she shares how it was implemented when she was ill.

> '...*obviously when you are off sick and they'll [manager/HR] ring to check on you… to check if you are okay... but then there's the flip side to that. Why are you checking on me... to see if I'm genuinely ill...?'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

This observation indicates how policies may be understood as a means of surveillance and control rather than the exercise of genuine concern, the repercussions of which may inadvertently contribute to an 'us and them' scenario, legitimately achieved through institutional norms and practices (Bell and Stevenson, 2006). If the purpose of policy making is to endorse teachers' efficacy and agency (see The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter 2021) and, at the same time, assure them their wellbeing is of paramount importance, some major

revisions are required. The inevitable consequence is that teachers may be portrayed as victims. As Rizi and Lingard (2010) point out, institutional power 'cannot be sustained without popular consent' (p.11). Through complicity, teachers are party to their own potential exploitation (Clow, 2001). However, finding a voice and challenging policies requires courage.

> *'...there's a lot of unrest ...there's a lot of unhappiness but nobody is [...] brave enough to speak out...' (*Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.4.2.1).

The reticence to find a voice is due to possible reprisals from managers but the lack of a collective response from teachers potentially gives rise to their exploitation, hindering their pursuit of better work conditions.

6.3.4 Summary

Teachers recognise wellbeing as primarily their responsibility, as well as acknowledging that educational institutions have a responsibility towards their welfare. The current study highlights how wellbeing as an individual and collective phenomenon is particularly relevant in educational communities. Teachers are aware of supportive measures introduced by senior managers. However, they view these as tokenistic, addressing government agenda rather than their wellbeing. The study considers how teachers' wellbeing could be enhanced by open discussion between teachers and senior managers, enabling the development of a shared understanding of how teachers' wellbeing may be best supported.

6.4 Factors that established teachers identify as supportive in promoting wellbeing

6.4.1 What sustains teachers in education?

Poor wellbeing experiences is a fundamental factor influencing teachers in their desire to leave the profession (DfE, 2018). Consistent with literature, this study has found that a majority (n=5) of the study's participants have considered leaving the profession due to feeling '*not very well looked after and under recognised*' (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview). In

their view they are '*the scapegoat for everything... a punch bag'* (Kath: Post-Diary) and describe feeling over-burdened by teaching activities (face-to-face teaching, preparing lessons, marking) and administrative tasks (emails, phone calls, student monitoring). In addition, they are expected to cover for staff absences and attend team meetings and CPD activities. It is important to consider why teachers remain in an environment characterised by unremitting demands.

6.4.2 Meaningful teaching, doing something of value

Within the scope of this study the above consideration cannot be fully addressed. However, it suggests that teachers gain personal and professional fulfilment from sharing their knowledge and expertise with others. In line with the findings of Lobb (2017) and Avis et al (2011), the aforementioned devitalising experiences are tempered by the knowledge that they are doing something worthwhile: sharing knowledge and expertise with the next generation of nurses, midwives and mechanical engineers. A commitment to the public good is a common characteristic in teachers (Wilkins, 2011).

> *'I was so fortunate to have that superb technical training. So, I want to sort of... to pass the baton on, really...'* (Stuart: Pre-Diary Interview)

6.4.2.1 Feeling valued by students

Teachers have expressed that being with students is a core reason for staying in the profession (Lobb 2017; Avis et al, 2011; Hargreaves, 1998a), an opinion echoed by the present study's participants.

> *'It's great when… they [students] come into you and say thanks so much I couldn't have done this or that without you'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview).

Wellbeing is sustained by students' appreciation of their efforts. This aligns with Freire's (1970) belief that education is a project of liberation, within which the critical agency of both teacher and learner are realised. Commensurate with previous research (Brady and Wilson, 2021; Ryan and Deci, 2001), the findings of the current study highlight how individuals

flourish in various ways (Hursthouse, 2007) when their activities are congruent with their deeply-held values (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Such an approach reflects the eudemonic conceptualisation of wellbeing which focuses on self-actualisation through meaningful and worthwhile activity (Aristotle *NE*; Huta and Ryan, 2010; Ryan and Deci, 2001).

6.4.2.2 Meaningful teaching and celebrated moments

The participants express satisfaction when observing students genuinely learning, making comparisons with the frustrations of being coerced to ensure their success, regardless of their ability and lack of effort (see section 6.5.2.2). Their wellbeing is enhanced, by making valuable contributions to students' 'eureka moments'.

> *'The light bulb goes on and you see it in front of your eyes. And you think this is marvellous'* (Stuart: Post-Diary Interview, Findings 5.4.1.2).

The participants feel reassured they are '*doing something right*' when students tell them they look forward to their lessons (Connor: see p.90). There is also a sense of reward when former students tell them of the positive impact they have made on their lives. As already discussed, these findings are in keeping with previous research which considers wellbeing as both a psychological and social construct (Ereaut and Whiting, 2008; Day and Qing, 2011).

6.4.3 Supportive network

Participants recognise the importance of strong supportive networks both within and outside the college environment, principally identified as colleagues and family members.

6.4.3.1 Colleagues

The participants share how supportive relationships encourage positive emotions and mitigate against less positive experiences encountered inside and outside their educational context (Jones et al, 2019; Acton and Glasgow 2015). They characterise positive relationships

as sharing similar values such as fairness, compassion and generosity, all of which engender a sense of belonging and connectedness.

> '*I think the only thing that does support teachers is colleagues [...] there's only them people that can actually say, I know how you feel'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.4.1.1).

In this sense, wellbeing is a shared process in which labour-intensive activities such as marking students' work may be done in parallel with colleagues. Moreover, the participants comment on the sense of nurturing they encounter when their wellbeing is at 'rock bottom'. This sentiment pivots around colleagues being sensitive to each other's needs, building a trusting environment where personal and professional burdens and successes can be shared (Weiland, 2020, Liu et al, 2018). Teachers are often aware of each other's stressful events (Jones et al, 2019) such as Kath feeling defeated by *'…huge staffing issues, timetable changes and utter chaos'* (Kath: Diary Entry Four). Coupled with losing her dog, feelings of vulnerability are lessened by small acts of kindness such as a gift from a colleague '*making the job bearable'* (Kath: see page 108). Nurturing relationships with colleagues strengthen the principle of positive relationships being central to wellbeing (Jones et al, 2019; Weiland, 2020).

Of equal importance is sharing joy in positive circumstances outside the immediate classroom environment, for example, the domestic and catering staff. To '*stop, have a laugh and a cup of tea'* offers the opportunity to '*lighten things because it's [working day] very full on'* (Yvonne: see page 108). In addition, the notion of collective wellbeing is engendered when teachers are watchful about their colleagues' workload. Diane describes being willing to '*carry them [colleagues] a bit'* if they appear to be '*flagging*', appreciating that '*it's somebody else's turn next week'* (Diane**:** see page 104). Teachers are prepared to support colleagues even at personal cost, connecting meaningfully with others in tangible ways (Liu et al, 2018). Collegial relationships involve protective factors in which the sharing of burdens enriches greater connectivity with others (Noddings, 2003). In this sense, personal wellbeing involves being responsible for the wellbeing of others (Aristotle *NE*; DfE, 2021).

However, collegial relationships can cause disharmony. The participants experience anger and frustration when observing colleagues preserving their own wellbeing before that of others. This can lead to the rupturing of colleague relationships beyond repair.

> '*I can go as far as to say I despise my colleagues who don't do their best for our students'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings: 5.4.1.1).

This brings to the fore how our values sustain us, affording us a sense that we are doing the right thing for the right reason, in a way that contributes to maintaining a state of equilibrium between selfhood and actions. The participants suggest senior managers should have a vested interest in the overall wellbeing of teachers. Whilst '*good peer support is essential*', Stuart notes the limitations of colleague support due to *'peers being busy'* with work of their own. There is a need for a *'top-down [senior management] approach [...] particularly if they're teachers who are more introverted'* (Stuart: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.4.1.1).

The participants express a self-protecting distancing from their managers. As noted by Acton and Glasgow (2015), cultivating positive relationships with management may prove difficult in the context of a neoliberal culture where they feel under constant surveillance, their performance 'judged against a narrow range of measurable indicators' (p.108) (see section 6.5). The current study illustrates how relationships with colleagues are frequently understood as both a resource and constraint. There is perceived value in supportive collegial relationships, teacher to teacher and teacher to senior manager. Developing ways they can be fostered would appear critical in a demanding environment.

6.4.3.2 Family

The participants acknowledge the importance of support from families and partners in sustaining their wellbeing. However, while sharing the events of the day provides an opportunity to 'switch off' from work-related activities, family support was only noted by one participant whose partner shares the same profession. Conversations tend to pivot around the difficulty of maintaining a work-life balance and the negative impact it has on relationships. Participants spoke of ways their work contributes to a debilitating tiredness with the effect of '*not want[ing] to speak [...] or be nice*' (Yvonne: see page 112). This is

consistent with the research of Tebben et al (2021) which highlights how work interferes with family life and the difficulties teachers experience when seeking ways to mitigate stress and burnout.

6.4.4 Summary

The poor wellbeing of teachers in FE is a fundamental factor in their desire to leave the profession. However, their devitalising experiences are tempered by the sense of reward from doing something of value. Demonstrating a commitment to the public good (Wilkins, 2011) is shown by their sharing of knowledge and expertise with a new generation entering the workforce. The students they teach are the core reason they stay in the profession (Lobb 2017; Avis et al, 2011; Hargreaves, 1998a). That said, the power of social support is strongly indicated. Teachers express a need for strong relationships, inside and outside the educational context, encouraging them in all aspects of their professional lives. This appears vital in maintaining wellbeing, particularly when facing challenging circumstances.

6.5 The various professional demands and experiences that affect teachers' wellbeing

The participants (n=6) comment on the importance of working in a supportive environment. Not surprisingly, when asked what was meant by the term and realistic management expectations, conversations centred around workload, administrative tasks, time management and a clash of values with senior managers. The considerable dissatisfaction teachers feel about the expectations placed upon them has attracted substantial attention (Hargreaves, 2000a; Hargreaves, 2000; Ball, 2003; Avis, 2003; Lobb, 2017; Shorter, 2022). In the current study the participants describe their experiences as '*horrendous*', '*exhausting*', '*stressful*' (Findings: 5.1.2.1), revealing how the performative measures not only curtail their autonomy but also compromise their professional and personal values, a factor which may contribute to teacher attrition (Acton and Glasgow, 2015).

6.5.1 Workload

One of the most pressing problems the participants encounter is managing their workload. The labour-intensive nature of teaching and the completing of administrative tasks has a negative impact on their wellbeing. With little or no respite throughout the day to reflect on their practice, share conversations with colleagues or even take a comfort break, little time is left in which to re-charge and recuperate. Face-to-face teaching, preparing lessons, assessing students' work and undertaking administrative tasks is mentally and physically stressful, causing Connor to '*feel exhausted and physically sick whilst walking across the car park into college*.' He is then tasked to teach five groups of 20-25 students with only a five or ten-minute break between them, '*drinking water from a bottle before the next class and not having an opportunity to sit down'* (Connor: see page 90). Viewed as a significant factor in potential 'burnout', working in an unremitting environment is a debilitating factor (Rasheed-Karim, 2018; Day and Qing, 2011). Moreover, the burdensome nature of repetitive administrative tasks impacts on valued time for lesson planning. Writing emails and completing repetitive paperwork distracts them from their work with students, encroaching on teaching and learning. In order to ensure that students' needs are met, they often disadvantage themselves through overwork (Clow, 2001; Tully, 2022; Corbett, 2017). At times the participants admit feelings of guilt if they demonstrate an unwillingness to work beyond their contracted hours (Lobb, 2017). The possibility of silent and unfavourable repercussions from both students and managers serves to undermine their belief that they are doing a good job. As Tully (2022) states: 'hidden expectations [...] contrived around coercive managerial agendas equate work intensification with "good service"' (p.72). Contracted to work three days a week, but accumulating 60-65 hours, Conner feels 'burnt out' and the managers he confides in '*couldn't care less'* (see page 134).

Moreover, the current neoliberal culture of education shapes the political discourses around the workload of teachers (Acton and Glasgow, 2015; Ball and Olmedo, 2013) often suggesting that a good and successful teacher is an 'ever-resilient professional' regardless of their conditions of work (Manuel et al, 2018, p.5). This has spawned tacit expectations of managers and normalised the burdensome nature of workloads. In this sense, their workload appears to be deeply ambivalent, entailing both the 'psychic rewards' of teaching (empowering and supporting students) and 'personal and professional sacrifices' (Tully, 2022, p.72).

Various studies (Avis et al 2011; Manuel et al, 2018; Tully, 2022) consider how teachers perpetually work far beyond contractual obligations. This is commensurate with the findings of this study wherein, due to working a 50 to 60-hour week, Diane describes her workload as 'horrendous'. Common to the experiences of Diane and Connor, the Workload Survey (FE/HE) (2022) undertaken by the University and College Union, reports that on average FE teachers work 49 hours a week, the equivalent of working 'an average of two unpaid days per week' (Shorter, 2022, p.3). Even though the number of hours has slightly decreased since the Workload Survey (2016), in which teachers worked an average of 51.6 hours a week, the majority of teachers in FE remain challenged by their workload, describing it as 'unmanageable most of the time' (Shorter, 2022, p.3).

6.5.2 Professionalism, compliance and teacher wellbeing

6.5.2.1. Professionalism

The notion of professionalism was a common theme in participants' narratives. Consistent with literature (Corbett, 2017), the current study reveals how teachers' understanding of professionalism is shaped by their current role and that of their former industry (e.g. nurse, midwife, engineer) affording them a 'dual lens' on workload and wellbeing. This gives rise to a 'dual professionalism' (Robson, 2006 in Fletcher et al, 2015, p.102) combining occupational and pedagogic expertise (Fletcher et al, 2015). The participants' understanding of professionalism is thereby shaped by both their disciplinary expertise and their pedagogical roles.

Professionalism as a socially-constructed concept, means different things to different people (Tully, 2022). For example, in both the immediate culture of their work setting and the broader cultural landscape of educational rhetoric that shapes participants' working lives, there is a sense of separation between the concept of 'a professional' and that of 'being professional' (Helsby, 1995, in Wilkins, 2011, p.400). The latter is characterised by the participants role modelling the expected behaviour and work practice of students in their chosen careers, a notion akin to the responsibility teachers feel towards learners (ref?). Others emphasised the importance of caring for the welfare of students (Noddings, 2005),

engaging in their complex lives (see Findings: 5.2 Caring Dimensions) and embracing the emotional dimensions of teaching (Hargreaves, 2000a). This gives insight into the importance teachers place on their pastoral role and how this is central to their 'being professional'. In accord with Clow's (2001) concept of holistic and emancipatory professionalism, which places emphasis on the pastoral role some teachers undertake, the values they hold appear to pervade each aspect of their work. They position themselves not just as educators but 'in loco parentis'. In her capacity as a former midwife, Diane takes time to dissipate students' fears about personal aspects of their health. Similarly, Nikki feels morally bound to adopt the role.

> *'...'[in] loco parentis'… I take it very seriously er…and if on the times we've been away with students on trips I'm absolutely their parent and protector er… and there's a moral stance that I feel it's appropriate to take'* (Nikki: Post-Diary Interview).

The participants reveal how 'being professional' often provides a deep sense of satisfaction and strengthens wellbeing, in that they are making a positive impact on students' lives, their values exercised and legitimated. It is thus unsurprising that teachers in this study, and in other research projects, recognise the positive impact on wellbeing when professionalism is based on teacher-led values and priorities (Tully, 2022, p.73). The concept of being 'a professional' is less about personal and professional values, centring around successfully meeting internal and external expectations of senior managers and organisations such as Ofsted. Associated with ideas of institutional accountability and performative measures, the participants' narratives indicate that being 'a professional' is a blend of specialised training and qualification, 'performance' and 'compliance'. Echoing Foucault's (2008) notion of governmentality that pervades FE, teachers are expected to internalise the regulations and standards placed upon them by adhering to accountability measures that offer no room for recourse. In a bid to demonstrate a united front with senior managers' expectations, and preserve their own sense of autonomy, some participants emotionally distance themselves from management by referring to them as 'the establishment' rather than by their first names. Their constructions of professionalism offer insights into how they are governed by their personal and professional values, experiences and internalised expectations and by the standards and regulations of their profession. It reveals the diverse ways teachers understand the concept of 'a professional' and 'being professional' by employing what might be described as a professional compass, to navigate the dominant discourses in education

and complexities of their working lives.

6.5.2.2 Compliance and resistance

6.5.2.2a Working in a consumerist paradigm

Teachers work in a neoliberal culture of standardised assessments, performance measurements and market-driven reforms (Acton and Glasgow, 2015, p.108), focusing on economic efficiency and the commodification of education. Academic discourses highlight how the marketisation of education has positioned the student as customer rather than learner (Balan, 2023; Brancaleone and O'Brien, 2011; Cuthbert, 2010) negating a holistic vision of teaching. Both teacher and student are de-personalised to sustain efficacy and adhere to accountable measures. The notion of students as customers places them at the centre of business (Cuthbert, 2010 p.8) rather than education. Students are primarily valued as a source of income (Ball, 2004, p.14), an ideology that positions them as statistics rather than people. As a result, teachers lose valuable opportunities to build positive and meaningful rapport with students, an aspect they identify as supporting wellbeing. Ball (2004) considers how denying the primacy of human relationships in the production of value 'erases the social' (p.4) wherein 'pedagogic relationships and values are marginalised' (p.5). In line with Wilkin's (2011) research on English teachers' professionalism, a pervading theme in the current study reveals how the conflicting paradigms of 'student as customer' (management) and 'student as learner' (teachers) has a disempowering impact of discord between management expectations and teachers' professional autonomy (p.393).

> *'...we're there to educate. Our business is teaching and learning. We're not interested in the numbers'* (Diane: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.1.1.3).

Ball (2004) suggests teachers find themselves struggling for authenticity when students are portrayed as mere statistics. Their roles are governed by some kind of 'living contradiction' (Illsley and Waller, 2017, p.488) in which commitment and experience are sacrificed for compromise and performance. In other words, they are expected to hold in tension their personal and professional values and those of the institution in which they work.

> *'...realistically, it's a business. So, it doesn't matter that [the student] has got really low attendance… been rude in class… not handed work in. If you get rid of the student... the financial cost to the college is too much so you have to get them through'* (Kath: Post-Diary Interview, Findings: 5.1.1.3).

The commodification of education has led to an exploitation of teachers (Balan, 2023) with student satisfaction and college financial security prioritised at the expense of wellbeing. This ideology diminishes job satisfaction and increases a sense of alienation from management expectations among educators. It also sits in contrast with previous work expectations and conditions noted in the 'Silver Book' (1981) which determined more positive working conditions for teachers in FE (Fletcher et al, 2015). Connor describes the refusal by management to decrease the number of students to whom he is teaching the technical skills of using a lathe. His sense of vulnerability is tangible.

> '*…he [the manager] couldn't care less about the stress and anxiety for me and my wellbeing, couldn't care less about that'* (Connor: Post-Diary Interview, Findings: 5.1.1.3).

Connor's comment exudes professional disdain in managerial rhetoric that gives the illusion of concern about teacher welfare through the implementation of tokenistic policies and initiatives. Moreover, the neoliberalistic ideology of education as a commodity explicitly posits the student as customer and teacher as producer (Ball, 2004). Students' needs are considered of paramount importance, stifling those of their teachers. As discussed in the literature review, the shift of power and presence of student voice prompts teachers to justifiably ask where their voice may now be heard (Cook-Sather, 2006; MacBeath, 2019).

> *'What is drummed into you is nothing to do with your own... wellbeing… It is student first, second, third and fourth…*' (Connor: Post-Diary Interview).

The above mantra indicates how teachers feel exposed by the expectations of both manager and student. They are caught in the middle, reflecting academic discourses concerned with vulnerability (Ecclestone, 2007). Such a scenario is a substantial inhibitor in fostering wellbeing. 'Marketisation and managerialism [...] centred-ness has reduced caring in FE' (Gleeson et al 2015, p.87). The ethical effects are stark. Students are now units of monetary value, a situation that potentially overrides both their transformative learning and the welfare of their teachers. In a performative culture the financial security of educational institutions is all consuming, leading to a preoccupation with student retention and performance. Some institutions now adopt risk-aversion strategies, enrolling students who

are most likely to succeed and pose less financial risk (Donovan, 2018). They are seen as either a problem or a resource, resulting in a prevailing ethos that leaves no room for failure and everyone must pass.

6.5.2.2b Everyone passes

Regulated by three main government policy levers: 'formula-based funding, regular inspection and statistical performance data' (Fletcher et al, 2015 p.156) teachers have entered an era of heightened scrutiny and performativity (Gleeson et al, 2015) in which they are accountable for their own performance and that of their students. Lyotard's concept of performativity provides a lens through which to consider how performative measures regulate teachers' behaviour and students' expectations. Education has become subject to systematic, quantifiable and standardised arrangements (Brancaleone and O'Brien, 2011) encroaching on all areas of teachers' work, challenging professional autonomy. Their judgements are marginalised, displaced by a culture that limits the potential of emancipatory growth and flourishing of both teacher and student. The notion of a liberal, learner-centred education (Bath, 2009; Gleeson et al 2015; Balan, 2023) has become subordinate to a narrow regime of '*what works*' (Ball, 2003, p.87) privileging the metrics of statistics to ensure the success of students and the financial viability of educational institutions. The notion of '*what works*' remains a focus of FE institutions promoting standardised testing and outcome-based evaluations of students' academic performance (Balan, 2023). In the quest for efficiency, performative measures (Locke, 2015) are a powerful tool in dictating how teachers go about their daily practice. They are tasked to teach strictly to a set curriculum, negating opportunities to deviate from a narrow 'cut and paste' culture which not only obscures holistic images of education but also leaves no room for students to fail. As discussed in the literature review '… [students are] achieving more but learning less…' (Ecclestone, 2007a, p.324). At the expense of genuine learning, students' success rate is deemed the most important measure of effective practice (Fletcher et al, 2015). As a result, some teachers feel under pressure to conform to performative measures by fulfilling management expectations for all students to succeed, even if they feel deeply alienated by what they are obliged to do (Acton and Glasgow, 2015). Connor describes how

he tried to prevent one student from failing, even when the student told him: *'I'm gonna fail the course and I couldn't care less'* (see page 85). The student's lack of success was perceived by senior management as Connor's responsibility, not that of the student. Connor shares how the experience led to feelings of helplessness, loss of agency and an erosion of wellbeing.

> *'It's a mug's game and it's killing me. If… you're actually good at the job, if you care... I mean, I know people who actually don't care'* (Connor: Post-Diary Interview).

Participants' opinions varied concerning responsibility for students' success or failure. However, the majority (n=5) expressed the opinion that management put the onus for student failure on the teacher, regardless of their effort.

> *'Like that's not a reflection on them... on them students, what grades they get… that's a reflection on you…'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.1.1.2).
>
> *'Management always believes that if students aren't achieving the top grades, it's the teacher's fault' (*Yvonne Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.1.1.2).

This study reveals how pivotal management expectations can be on the morale of teachers, highlighting the negative impact of 'top down' ideals. *'Success for All'* (2002) had a profound effect on teachers, diminishing their motivation to put everything into their practice and has contributed to a blame culture (Avis, 2003, Action and Glasgow, 2015, Corbett, 2017). It also positions teachers at an ethical crossroads in which performative measures result in their feeling coerced into inflating grades not reflective of their students' effort or ability. The 'fudging' of grades conflicts with Nikki's personal and professional beliefs.

> '*...but I don't want to reward ones [students] that haven't put the effort in and don't have the ability'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings: 5.1.1.2).

In line with previous research (Avis, 2003, Acton and Glasgow, 2015) pressure to ensure the success of students generates anxiety for some whilst in others it generates a determined resilience to the idealistic expectations that all students should succeed.

> '*I've had other members of staff saying that if they [students] don't pass they will… quit their jobs and I said, don't be so soft. I said if the student fails, they fail, not you'* (Yvonne: Post-Diary Interview, Findings: 5.1.1.2).

The neoliberal emphasis on student success negates fostering well-rounded professionals (Balan, 2023) and marginalises the vision of a liberal education. Spaces for teachers to exercise creativity and curiosity are no longer opened up – notions which align with human

flourishing and working towards personal growth (Aristotle *NE*). Judgement and authenticity are sacrificed for performance at the expense of wellbeing. Both teacher and student are valued by productivity alone, mitigating opportunities to embrace the value of failure in cultivating resilience and critical thinking (Balan, 2023). This in turn 'allows the erosion of accountability and [...] ambition [of] students' (Jupp, 2015, p.108), potentially giving rise to a deficit approach to students as the burden of responsibility for success is placed solely on the teacher. Teachers have become results-driven technicians in a culture that stifles opportunities for them to realise deeper purposes and values and establish a work-life balance.

6.5.3 Summary

The commodification of education has led to teachers working in a consumerist paradigm in which their wellbeing has been compromised. They are governed by professionality, operating in both a restricted and extended understanding of what it means to be 'a professional' and 'being professional'. This is an important aspect of teachers' understanding of their role, influencing how they address the demands of their educational institutions and how they relate to their students. They operate under intense scrutiny, circumscribed by heavy workloads and a culture which demands success for all students regardless of their effort or ability. This has led to profound disillusionment, particularly when their personal and professional values are negated by management and performative measures. Moreover, the demand of neoliberalism exploits their goodwill and limits opportunities for meaningful and authentic connection with students.

6.6 Pedagogic interactions with students: their effect on the personal and professional wellbeing of established teachers

> '*I am a teacher at heart and there are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy. When my students and I discover uncharted territory to explore, when the pathway out of a thicket opens up before us, when our experience is illumined by the lighting life of the mind, then teaching is the finest work I know. But at other moments, the classroom is so lifeless or painful or confused and I am so powerless to*

do anything about it that my claim to be a teacher seems a transparent sham' (Palmer, 1997 p.15).

Palmer's sentiment embraces the discussion regarding teachers' interactions with their students. It reflects their inner landscape, the part that, rarely seen, is personal, joyful, vulnerable and protected (1997, p.20). Teachers' personhood is central to their educational experiences and woven into the fabric of their professional lives (Palmer, 1998). In other words, great teaching has less to do with technique and much to do with the teacher as a person (Tanner, 1999). In this ideology, they are acknowledged as emotional workers, sensitive to the demands of their occupation (Yin et al, 2016). They teach out of who they are, shaped by their experiences (Freire, 1970) and habitus (Bourdieu, 1990), a notion that resonates with the 'messiness' of the profession, and values discourses of care that respect students as individuals with complex lives rather than statistical data.

Although teaching was not the first career choice for any of the participants, their narratives convey a desire to do something good and worthwhile, aspirations that encapsulate altruistic motives to care about students' wellbeing and make positive contributions to their lives. This was a prominent theme in their accounts and a central part of their understanding of 'being professional' in FE (see section 6.5.2.1)

6.6.1 Students as hero and anti-hero

Consistent with previous literature, this study has found that conversations regarding relationships with students tend to focus on positive and challenging aspects of their behaviour (Jephcote et al, 2008; Avis et al, 2011; Lobb, 2017). The participants identify the importance of maintaining positive relationships with students, acknowledging that students' behaviour has a direct impact on their own wellbeing. Moreover, the narratives emphasise the satisfaction they gain from relationships with students, both positive and challenging, identifying them as central to their ongoing professional commitment. However, teacher-student relationships appear to be deeply ambivalent, 'full of promise and fraught with danger' generating a mixed bag of emotions (Gallagher, 2008, p.217). The participants'

reflections on relationships with students include wartime metaphors. The '*classroom can feel like a battle zone at times'* (Diane: see page 109). Yvonne relates how, if students find a '*chink in your armour [...] they've beaten you down'* (see page 109). The ambivalent nature of teacher-student relationships is more acutely illustrated in Nikki's reflections when teaching engineering students on a weekly basis. In the extract below she positions herself as both protector of students whilst simultaneously feeling vulnerable from their disruptive behaviour.

> *'… I believe that my students feel I genuinely do care about them and how they're doing. I'm fiercely defensive of them...' (becomes visibly upset, emotional)* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

Later in the conversation she describes how relationships with students can come at a personal cost.

> *'I have in the past taught level two learners that were really, really, horrible… and they were constantly looking for every opportunity to be disruptive [...] so yeah, I felt powerless'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings: 5.4.1.2).

There are hints of humiliation in this reflection. Her situation highlights how challenging behaviours may often be perceived as personal attacks, exposing teachers to various emotional vulnerabilities and psychic risks (see section 6.6.2). In addition, the repetitive nature of teaching students who persistently display challenging behaviour highlights how prolonged experiences of unpleasant emotions evoke changes in the short and long-term wellbeing of teachers (Spilt et al, 2011). The ripping up of her resources by one group of students led to a loss of trust by Nikki.

> '*After a while, you just get worn down [...]I'm going to make it [the lesson] boring and I'm going to teach you and you're going to learn, and I'm going to chalk and talk it'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview).

It is thus important that teachers recognise that they are in a continual process of managing the emotional landscape of the classroom. They are expected to control their own emotions and engage in what is commonly referred to as emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). In the above narrative, Nikki becomes risk-averse and more passive in how she relates to students. Teachers use emotional labour as a means of protection and self-preservation to support their psychological wellbeing (Brown and Everson, 2019). They engage in surface and deep acting as emotion-regulating strategies, concealing their true emotions and maintaining professional boundaries that align with professional expectations (Hochschild, 1983; Nair,

2019; Avis et al, 2011; Yin et al, 2016; Glomb and Tews, 2004). Yvonne feels the need to put on her 'game face' when responding to challenging behaviour. Engaging in both surface and deep acting distances her from emotionally-charged situations, mitigating against potential long-term stress and burnout.

> *'Oh, fizzing sometimes […] my game face is on, and I have left the classroom a couple of times to go out and swear or kick a door… Sometimes you feel like you want to cry, so I remove myself' (*Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings: 5.3.1.3*).*

Yvonne's narrative draws attention to how emotional labour supports teachers in managing emotional dissonance, protecting a sense of self. It also illustrates how the process may involve a maelstrom of emotions. Prolonged emotional labour may contribute to emotional exhaustion. Similar to the findings of Jephcote et al's study (2008) in FE, the current study highlights how teachers feel emotional labour is part of being professional. Adopting a dual personality when interacting with students helps Connor sustain a professional demeanour.

> '*A dual personality… if the students saw me outside the classroom and in the corridor, you could have a banter with them, but when you're in the classroom… this front comes on'* (Connor: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.3.1.1).

This highlights how relationships are complex and shifting and how managing one's emotions is an essential component of supporting personal and professional flourishing. A lack of respect affects Connor more than any other type of challenging behaviour. In line with previous research (Split et al, 2011; Axup and Gersch, 2008) this study illustrates how teachers gain intrinsic rewards from positive relationships with students and experience negative emotions in conflictual relationships that provoke anger, hurt and anxiety. Whilst negative emotions are associated with diminishing efficacy and wellbeing, they also cause low morale and stress. Looking beyond a culture that apportions blame simply on teacher or student, Wilson's (2002) review on the causes of teacher stress suggests it is often a three-way interactional matter between teacher, student and educational context. Similarly, in this study Diane shares how, when a student directs an expletive at her during a lesson, it is the lack of support from the college management that distresses her.

> '*…ineffective support and management of disruptive students impacts more on my wellbeing… It's not the… behaviour of the student. It's the inability of the college to act appropriately'* [Diane: Post-Diary Interview].

A more cohesive partnership between all parties may have prevented the stress experienced by Diane. In addition, the apparent reticence of educational institutions in providing effective support has a detrimental effect on teachers' wellbeing. Furthermore, it underlines how, in part, the emotional security of teachers depends on systems and their efficient management. In contrast, although student behaviour is frequently cited as a major cause of stress and burnout in teachers (Axup and Gersch, 2008; Hagenauer et al, 2015), the classroom is also a space where teachers can reflect upon their practice (Gleeson and James, 2007) and forge positive and productive relationships with students.

> *'If you've got a good relationship with students, you own the classroom, and that's your safe zone and it's lovely'* (Diane: Post-Diary Interview).

6.6.2 Caring: rewards and risks

In considering factors that support their wellbeing, participants identify positive relationships with students as the most important. Common to all is an understanding that being a teacher goes significantly beyond the disciplines of subject knowledge, teaching skills and other necessary factors that go with the profession (for example, parents' evenings, PMRs, CPDs). Perhaps the most compelling theme in this study is the high level of commitment the participants feel towards their students. From the outset of the study, the participants' narratives reveal a perception of their profession as multi-dimensional, individualised and charged with emotion. They also display an intrinsic desire to care for the students they teach. A marked aspect of this understanding is a sense of ownership with the participants often referring to '*my* students' not '*the* students'. Although '*my*' students' is predominately included in female participants' narratives (n=4), compared to (n=1) male never including the term and (n=1) male including the term twice.

> '*I think, once they walk through them doors in September, they don't know it at the time but they, they are yours… you refer to them as your kids...'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings: 5.2.2.1).

This serves to highlight the human desire for relatedness to others, particularly when working together in close proximity (Spilt et al, 2011). It is widely acknowledged that personal relationships with students gives meaning to teachers' work, fostering a sense of wellbeing (Noddings, 2005; Hargreaves 1998b; Palmer, 1998; Avis et al 2011; Gillespie,

2005). Central to this notion is Noddings' (2018) theorisation of teaching which posits the act of caring for the other as undergirding the role of education *per se (*see literature review 2.2.2*).* In line with Noddings' view, teachers seek out reciprocal relationships with students, fostered on mutual connection and respect (Brown and Everson, 2019; Gillespie, 2005). They go beyond the external veneer that students present, to be open to knowing the person as a whole. They also demonstrate a willingness to 'at least momentarily [being] engrossed in the other's plans, pains and hope' (Noddings, 1996 in Delaune 2017 p.339; Gillespie, 2005). The current study illustrates how knowing the students and responding to their needs is a pre-requisite to establishing an authentic relationship with them. This is in keeping with Gillespie's (2005) study on teacher-student relationships endorsing the importance of honesty and authenticity in relationships. Founded on patience and commitment, it is a notion Noddings (1984) refers to as 'motivational displacement' in which teachers are truly open and receptive to the needs of student. They appear to be fully aware of the emotional demands entailed in teaching and the need to be 'genuinely fully present' (Gillespie, 2005 p.214; Spilt et al, 2011) if relationships are to engender a sense of trust. However, this way of 'being' may not be an easy process. Teachers often experience a range of emotions particularly when responding to unanticipated situations such as safeguarding issues. Diane describes feeling both irritated and honoured when a student discloses flashbacks to historical child abuse (see findings: 5.3.2.2). Yvonne feels vulnerable when mopping up the feelings of students sharing tragic circumstances. This illustrates the underground working of teachers (Avis et al, 2011) and highlights their expansive role in meeting a range of demands. However, it may also lead to 'compassion fatigue' (Hagenauer et al, 2015, p.11) or a sense of guilt if not effectively addressing a student's needs. For Kath the knowledge that her student has been made homeless causes her to ruminate about their welfare whilst simultaneously experiencing a sense of guilt if she fails to address her needs.

However, the uplifting effects of caring for students (Gillespie, 2005) may not be shared by all teachers or indeed students. In their attempts to foster meaningful relationships, teachers may be imposing care and attention, causing unintentional conflict. As Slote (2010b) highlights, both teacher and student may desire a more transactional, business-like relationship. In this sense, institutional expectations for teachers to care for students may cause some to feel morally obliged to appear caring, contributing to experiencing emotional

dissonance in fulfilling cultural expectations (Glomb and Tews, 2004; Owens and Ennis, 2005). Although the findings in this study are contrary to the notion of teachers seeking a transactional relationship with students, they do highlight how the desire to build relationships with students involves psychic rewards and risks. Participants in this study are sentient to the psychic rewards of teaching, their working lives peppered with pockets of deep and transient joy. Positive feedback from students engenders emotional satisfaction for Diane, making her proud of the job she is doing. When Connor learns that students have been looking forward to his lesson all week, he feels he is '*doing something [teaching] right*' (see page 90). In common with Diane and Connor, Stuart explains how supporting students to overcome difficulties motivates him to improve his practice, strengthening his professional identity and reinforcing his wellbeing.

Notwithstanding these moments of celebration, teachers gain a sense of legacy building when going beyond the boundaries of students' learning and classroom activities. They engage in supporting students to fulfil their long-term aspirations, *'encouraging them to follow their dream'* (Diane: Diary Entry Two). Delayed gratification is experienced when they feel they have had a lasting impact on students' lives.

> *'…You see them in Tesco, they run up [to you] two years later. I've just passed my exams and I can remember your lessons' (*Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings: 5.2.1).

This illustrates how teaching is a deeply rewarding profession, particularly when teachers engage in personal connections with their students (Noddings 2018; Avis et al, 2011). As already discussed in the literature review, care for students applies to both male and female teachers and highlights how their wellbeing is enhanced when they foster positive relationships (Spilt et al, 2011). Caring strengthens teachers' identity as moral and ethical individuals and resonates with the notion of Aristotelian human flourishing (eudaimonia) in which teachers act to the best of their ability, exercising virtues such as kindness and integrity, their activities congruent with deeply-held values and a greater sense of purpose (Aristotle *NE*; Ryan and Deci, 2001; Russell, 2013). The importance of positive student-teacher relationships sits in stark contrast to a neoliberal focus on marketisation, managerialism and performative measures, potentially dehumanising both student and teacher. This pervading culture works in opposition to the 'kind, positive, shared learning environment [deemed] as necessary in supporting teacher flourishing' (Acton and Glasgow,

2015 p.108). The current study considers how teachers experience distress when their efforts to care for students are compromised by institutional constraints. Notwithstanding the psychic rewards experienced by teachers, consistent with Spilt et al's (2011) study, caring for students may expose them to psychic risks, making them vulnerable to rejection and emotional exhaustion. Their sense of vocation to '*help people'* (Yvonne: see page 93) and '*care about them and how they are doing'* (Nikki: see page 139) is made redundant when that care is not reciprocated by students, leading to feelings of personal failure (see page 139). This is of particular note when teachers express a desire for personal relationships with their students (Avis et al, 2011, Spilt et al, 2011).

To acquire knowledge and complete course work and examinations successfully, students need teachers (Avis et al, 2011, Brown and Everson, 2019). However, this study reveals how teachers also need students with all participants (n=6) commenting on the value of positive feedback from students regarding both personal and professional attributes. In line with Brown and Everson's 2019 study, student endorsement appears to enhance self-worth, 'legitimise[ing] their authenticity [and competency] as a teacher' (p.246).

> *'I have had feedback from my students[...] they love me and value me… it makes it all worthwhile'* (Yvonne: Diary Entry Five, Findings, 5.4.1.2)
>
> '*The students make it known how irreplaceable you are'* (Kath: Diary Entry Five: Findings, 5.4.1.2)

This gives cause to consider the complex nature of student-teacher relationships. Both parties engage in unpredictable interactions. Moreover, even though teachers may find the behaviour of some students challenging, they remain willing to see beyond it and continue to invest emotional energy in caring for their wellbeing.

> '*They'll say very nasty things to you, but it's not personal. [...] it could be to mask the fact that they are having a hard time at home… it could be an argument with a friend'* (Kath: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.3.1.3).

This resilience illustrates how caring behaviour often relies on phronesis (practical wisdom), the implementation of which opens up critical spaces, allowing teachers to care for the personal needs of students rather than relying on 'axiomatic rules and principles' (Noddings, 2010a, p.148). In the value-laden context of their institutions, phronesis supports teachers to develop the capacity to understand their students' needs. At the same time, they appear committed to drawing a line under less positive behaviour and not bear a grudge.

> *'…it's another day [...] We start again. We always start again'* (Yvonne: Post-Diary Interview, Findings 5.4.1.2).
>
> *'You have to reset no matter how much they [students] have annoyed you'* (Nikki: Post-Diary Interview, Findings 5.4.1.2).

As already discussed, (see Findings 5.4.1.2) Yvonne's inclusion of the first-person plural reflects an understanding that making a renewed start is a collective activity. Symbiotic in nature, it requires both parties to hold growth beliefs about relationships, characterised by a willingness to start afresh. Moreover, it is worth considering how holding growth beliefs about the nature of classroom relationships serves to support the wellbeing of student and teacher, a notion that reflects Roffey's (2012) view that student and teacher wellbeing are two sides of the same coin, promoting positive feelings associated with belonging, respect and trust.

6.6.3 Summary

Teachers' personhood is central to their educational experiences (Palmer, 1998). They teach out of who they are, experiencing satisfaction and wellbeing when their values and beliefs are realised, not just in their academic performance but in the relationships they establish and maintain with their students. They manage both the academic and emotional landscape of the classroom, demonstrating a desire to engage with students beyond its parameters. This disposition often involves a significant amount of emotional labour as described by Hochschild (1983). However, the practice of managing one's emotions in an educational context is complex and layered, encompassing notions of vulnerability, self-protection and control through the maintenance of a professional demeanour. It should be noted that both male and female teachers experience psychic rewards and a deep sense of joy when their caring efforts bring about positive outcomes in their students (Noddings, 2005, 2018). However, when emotionally investing in caring behaviours, they are also exposed to psychic risks. They describe a sense of loss personally and professionally when students present challenging behaviours, expressing feelings of rejection, emotional exhaustion and personal failure. Teacher resilience is captured in their determined and committed approach to supporting students' welfare regardless of personal cost and professional constraints. Moreover, a central theme in this study reveals the symbiotic nature of the student-teacher

relationship, highlighting the human desire to relate positively and authentically to others, reinforcing and enhancing the wellbeing of both.

6.7 Chapter summary

This chapter presents a discussion addressing the study's main aim and research questions. It begins by acknowledging wellbeing as an individual and collective phenomenon, influenced by social and psychological events. Participants consider wellbeing as primarily their responsibility, in addition to recognising that their educational community (culture, managers and colleagues) has a duty of care to be proactive in ensuring the wellbeing of employees. However, supportive measures employed by the college are understood to address government agenda rather than teachers' wellbeing, particularly when teachers are experiencing challenging circumstances. This points to the importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships both inside and outside the college environment to enhance wellbeing.

Students are identified as the central reason why participants remain in teaching, engendering professional satisfaction when their caring behaviours towards students contribute to positive outcomes (Noddings, 2005, 2018). Investing in the wider lives of students beyond the parameters of the classroom supports a sense of authenticity and accomplishing something of value. This sits in sharp contrast with the technicist and performative culture that pervades their educational community. Overwhelmingly, participants indicate how commodification and performative measures in education limit their personal and professional liberty, leading to profound feelings of disenchantment and cynicism in the purpose of education *per se* and their role as teachers. They perceive their goodwill exploited through unremitting workloads and idealistic management expectations with all students expected to be successful regardless of effort and ability. The discussion ends, by highlighting how teachers engage in emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) in their endeavour to manage both the academic and emotional landscape of the classroom.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

7.0 Introduction

This final chapter begins by summarising the aim of study. The first section highlights the contribution to knowledge and the second discusses its strengths and limitations, with areas identified for further research and practice. The final section reflects on my personal and professional journey**.**

The study has raised important questions about how, in a potentially hostile environment, teacher wellbeing in FE can be effectively maintained (Day and Qing, 2011; Rasheed-Karim, 2018). Factors understood to be supportive and challenging are considered, providing insight into teaching as a multi-dimensional activity encompassing a humanistic ideology in which they are valued as individuals with opinions, emotions, knowledge and skills. These attributes are challenged by the commodification of education and performative measures which underestimate and trivialise their role as emotional workers, sensitive and responsive to the welfare of students, often at significant personal cost. The study contests the notion of teachers as mere technicians, routinised deliverers of pre-designed packages of knowledge, devoid of emotional and caring dimensions and gives voice to their everyday, professional experiences. While dominant discourses portray them as vulnerable, it is only one side of the story they wish to tell. Importantly, the findings reveal how teacher wellbeing thrives where space for authenticity and purpose are nurtured.

7.1 Contribution to knowledge

7.1.1 Value of listening to teachers: adopting a wider lens

In common with the writings of Goodson (2014) and Petrie (2015) the study draws attention to the paucity of research about the FE sector which has made an invaluable contribution to delivering both ‘economic and social benefits to individuals and [their] communities’ (Petrie, 2015, p.3). However, compared to primary, secondary and higher education (UK), the FE sector struggles to articulate its value (Petrie, 2015). The expertise of its teachers is overlooked, along with the powerful stories they have to tell and their unswerving

commitment to students. Current research is subjected to a market-managed ideology, focused on gaining statistical data through countless large-scale, questionnaire-based surveys which leave teachers' voices 'in the shadows' (Goodson, 2014, p.34). Moreover, in being represented as a numerical aggregate, they are often portrayed as mere objects of research, rather than active agents of change. In line with Goodson (1981), the current study reveals how 'in understanding something so intensely personal as teaching it is critical we know about the person the teacher is' (in Goodson 2014, p.30).

However, FE must bear some responsibility in failing to position itself as a sector with something of value to contribute. Its lack of confidence in the strategic role it plays sustains the use of deficit metaphors such as the 'Cinderella sector' or 'the middle child', plugging the gap between secondary and higher education (Sedgmore, 2011 in Petrie 2015, p.3). These metaphors are deeply embedded in the political discourse (Petrie, 2015) and permeate the culture of most teachers. Even when they demonstrate a willingness to be vulnerable, they feel quashed by management addressing the demands of educational accountability and reform, to the detriment of teacher and student. There is little culture of encouragement for teachers to question how their working lives may affect their wellbeing. I am reminded of my own journey as a research practitioner. My determination to step out of the dominant ideological context of the educational community in which I practiced created disharmony with some colleagues and managers. Questioning the educational status quo was perceived as radical. I was regarded as distancing myself from colleagues and joining the 'intellectual elite' (Dunne et al, 2005, p.158). Any desire to undertake research was considered threatening and self-indulgent. On no account should it interfere with the 'real' work of timely assessments and the organising of student resources. In line with Ball and Goodson (1985), this study acknowledges the importance of no longer portraying teachers as '[voiceless], shadowy figures on the educational landscape' (in Goodson, 2014, p.29). Adopting a qualitative approach has afforded teachers a chance to speak powerfully about the complexities of their working lives. Their raw emotions are captured, revealing an emotional world which aligns with the moral responsibility of teaching beyond demonstrating mere technical proficiency and meeting political imperatives. However, the act of sharing comes at personal cost. Teachers have revealed compassionate practices to be a cornerstone of their practice. Viewing them as holding a mono role, perfunctory in nature,

occludes them as passionate and resourceful, strengthened by values of honesty and integrity: characteristics understood to strengthen wellbeing. Their narratives overwhelmingly reveal how teaching is best understood to be about relationships with the students they teach and a commitment to engage with others beyond the narrow parameters of managerial expectations or professional performance. Not enough has been said about the intense nature of their many roles. One is of protector and confidante, when a student shares personal circumstances such as a mother's illness, becoming homeless or self-harming. The range of emotions they experience – irritation, compassion, relief – are integral components of their working lives. In contrast, feeling vulnerable when a student demonstrates challenging behaviour, can give rise to anger, frustration and a sense of failure. In common with Hochschild's (1983) notion of emotional labour, the study reveals how teachers engage in surface and deep acting, disguising their true emotions to present a positive demeanour. However, Hochschild's empirical study focused on industries such as flight attendants on aeroplanes, where interactions with service users are often one-off, short-term events. Teachers' emotional labour extends to daily, weekly, monthly engagement often with the same students. The study provides insight into the dread teachers feel in caring for students who rip up their carefully-prepared resources. '*Why was I putting in so much effort for this nasty little piece of work? [still crying]'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview) and the resilience they hold *'…no matter what happened the lesson before, [...] you have to reset… you have to… think this is going to be a great lesson' (*Nikki: Post-Diary Interview*).*

Teachers have revealed how compassionate practices are a cornerstone of their practice. These intimate accounts of their daily, working lives underscore how their emotional needs are glossed over by bureaucratic policy makers and management. Their conversations and written accounts convey what it means to be on the 'front line' of FE today. The views of practitioners in such a valuable occupation as education, deeply embedded in caring and compassionate practices, deserve to be heard. As Casey states: 'Failing to record the voices of ordinary teachers […] actually silences them' (1992, p.188).

7.1.2 A clarion call: it's time to talk *with* teachers not *at* them and to close the gap

Despite teachers' love for their subject and student, they are demoralised by ever-changing government policy and management expectations, both damaging their personal self-worth and professional autonomy. Hegemonic discourses, prioritising the commodification of education and performative measures, have normalised the subjugation of teachers. The concept of education as transformative and a valuable means of self-actualisation and discovery (Freire, 1970), is consequently abandoned. So, too, is thoughtful appreciation of the needs of individuals within that process. Learning is delivered as a product and teachers are 'reinvented as units [of] performance and productivity' (Taubman, 2015, p.111) their actions monitored and judged, their voices muffled, having little impact on how their working lives are structured. They are expected to internalise the regulations of their educational community and this contributes to a state of '*mental instability because they feel like they are locking up so much*' (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings: 5.3.2.1).

Disinterest can lead to an intensification of anxiety in which, to self-preserve, teachers distance themselves from management. This study suggests that not listening to teachers is indecorous and counterproductive. Managers would benefit from heeding their colleagues' concerns to avoid an atmosphere of damaged trust which benefits neither party. Teachers are not making unreasonable requests about processes and procedures that dominate their working day. Daley (2015, p.19) highlights how their workload has almost trebled since the days when the Silver Book (1981) had control of the number of hours they were contracted to teach. The current study profoundly illustrates how teachers work far beyond their contracted hours, often accumulating 60 to 65 hours a week.

Genuinely supportive measures, in which teachers' views are heard and acted upon, promotes wellbeing (Gleeson and James, 2007). Not listening to teachers gives rise to resistance and even subversion with some appearing to conform to managerial requests whilst being deliberately selective in their fulfilment. They set their own limited agenda, deciding how their time may be best spent just to get the job done. Moreover, in line with Page's (2015) view, the current study reveals how becoming cynical not only makes the onerous requests of managers more palatable but provides opportunities for teachers to reassert their personal values and autonomy. They need to feel listened to by managers and understood by the wider college community, to increase a sense of 'collective ownership'

(Jupp, 2015, p.187). There is need, therefore, for real change in FE culture, grounded on dialogue that affords teachers room to air concerns, their professional worth acknowledged. I am mindful that the current culture has led to disenchantment among colleagues and a keen desire to leave the profession through stress-related ill health, voluntary redundancy, a change in career or early retirement (Petrie, 2015). This is summed up by Nikki, an experienced teacher.

> *'…if I'm honest with you, it's a five-year cruise before I retire... and I feel a bit trapped by being at [names college]'* (Nikki: Pre-Diary Interview)

There is a sense of panic, fuelled not only by news of 'FE's staffing crisis, with one in four staff in 2019 leaving within the first year of work' (Mellor, 2024, no pagination) but also by experienced staff expressing a desire to leave the profession after many years. This palpable disconnect between teachers and management can only be rectified through meaningful dialogue and a commitment from management to talk with not at the teachers they manage.

7.2 Strengths and limitations

7.2.1 Strengths

a) Methodology and methods

The methodology and methods employed enabled me to capture and analyse the complex nature of participants' experiences. Qualitative methods enable the researcher to interpret the participants' beliefs, values and experiences. In common with Bartlett's (2012) study on the value of modifying the diary-interview method, to gain deeper insight into participants' experiences, I adapted a diary-interview method by inviting the participants to take photographs of an image capturing a moment that summed up their day as a teacher. To some degree the method of combining participants' photographs was successful. It afforded them an opportunity to reflect on their experiences, acting as a 'common ground for mean sharing' and allowing a deeper and broader understanding of the topic for participant and researcher (Richard and Lahman, 2015, p.12). The combination of pre- and post-diary semi-structured interviews allowed me to gain insights into their inner world and to value the

routine experiences of their working lives alongside the more intense and challenging moments. Moreover, the diary-interview method gave the participants opportunities to talk about their contributions. I was able to explore their diary entries in greater detail by engaging in mean making, capturing rich data on personal motives, feelings and beliefs. This approach lends itself to Freire's (1993) notion that the 'thinking subject does not exist in isolation but [...] in relationship with others' (in Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012, p.67). In addition, I aimed to ensure that the participants felt comfortable with the format of their diaries by offering several options in completing it. This proved successful, with all participants (n=6) contributing personal, in-depth accounts of their working lives and wellbeing experiences. Furthermore, the diary-interview method provided an opportunity to make visible the 'whole person' including the context of the participants' working lives and their relational experiences with managers, colleagues and students.

b) Project design

The project design was successful as an empirical study. Longitudinal in design and incorporating a three-phase approach, it afforded participants time to reflect on their working lives. Characteristic of longitudinal interpretive research, the iterative process supported the development and refining of each phase, as my exposure to the phenomenon increased (Wimpenny and Gass, 2000). This approach deepened my insight into the complexities of the participants' experiences which were fluid, nuanced and personal. It also enabled me to hold in tension the commonalities and diversities of their experiences. In addition, the trustworthiness of the study was strengthened by my actively encouraging participants to 'member check' their own transcripts at the end of Phase One and Three. This was to ensure my continued sensitivity to the data (Braun and Clarke, 2022) and lessen researcher misinterpretation. The process was successful, engaging all participants. One responded by text: '*Transcript spot on* ☺' (Pre-Diary Interview) and '*It was really interesting and rewarding to reflect*' (Post-Diary Interview, Stuart: 8.11.22 and 19.03.23 respectively). Taking this approach served to foster a sense of participant ownership and agency.

c) The insider / outsider position

In qualitative phenomenological inquiry, the researcher's intention is to penetrate as profoundly as is ethically possible the personal world of designated participants. Undertaking the study in a familiar educational institution meant that mutual, trusting relationships were already firmly established. This fostered a generous flow of information with the participants at ease sharing personal and professional experiences. They opened up about their feelings, highlighting the therapeutic nature that qualitative research offers. Taking this approach enhanced the quality of participants' responses with meaningful and authentic narratives the result. Moreover, having been a teacher in FE, I had privileged understanding of the culture and micro-politics of the setting (Bell, 2005). In possessing a measure of cultural competence, I also shared their understanding of internalised language. Being both an 'insider' (colleague) and an 'outsider' (researcher) gave me an advantage.

7.2.2 Limitations

a) Context of the study

The study was limited by recruiting participants from one college only. This meant they were influenced by the values of a specific educational institution. In addition, it could be argued that the particular socio-economic context of the college is reflected in the findings. Engaging a wider sample, by recruiting participants from other educational institutions, may have yielded similar but more diverse findings. In addition, the current study concentrates on the wellbeing of *vocational* teachers in FE. An alternative, one that considers the wellbeing of non-vocational teachers, on A Level courses, for example, would potentially produce a broader understanding of teacher wellbeing. Moreover, participants shared similar characteristics, such as demographics and ethnicity. However, although all the participants were Caucasian, Christian and taught on vocational courses, they were dissimilar in other aspects. They ranged in age from mid-thirties to mid-sixties and had various professional experiences before entering teaching (e.g. nurse, midwife, mechanical engineer). Two males and four females took part in the research. Notwithstanding that

qualitative and interpretive research seeks to understand the idiosyncratic nature of participants' experiences, the study cannot claim to reveal all conceivable nuances of wellbeing experience.

b) Terminology and unavoidable delays/lag between phases

Data for the study was generated over several months, contributing to some loss of momentum in the research process. In the first instance, there were unavoidable difficulties in completing pre-diary interviews (Phase One) due to domestic arrangements of some participants and the work commitment of others. The diary-keeping behaviour (Phase Two) of some became inconsistent. Similar to other studies (Mittelmeier et al, 2021; Cao and Henderson, 2021b), the research process contributed to a decline in the motivation and attention of some participants, suggesting the process had become onerous. One participant shared the following reflection.

> '*It was a bit of a slog. I wouldn't have completed my diary had I not known you'* (Nikki: 5.03.23).

By comparison, some participants perceived it to be a positive experience.

> '*Permission to write down what you were thinking even if it was detrimental to the organization… It was like shutting the door and moving on'* (Yvonne: 03.04.23).
>
> *'Helped me to put my thoughts in order... no wonder I felt that bad'* (Diane: 29.03.23).

Making photo-elicitation part of the process was an attempt to create a space in which the participants' memories and ideas could be explored in ways that verbal exchanges may not (Bates et al, 2017). However, the two male participants did not engage at all, with little explanation. This was disappointing and limited the study's findings. In my instructions I wrote: 'You are invited to use your mobile phone to record an image... that capture[s] a moment that sums up your day as a teacher'. On reflection, had I written 'you are *requested*' I may have elicited a greater response. More assertive language may have proved beneficial. In a bid to ameliorate any power imbalance between researcher and researched (Barden and Bygroves, 2018), my unassuming approach potentially contributed to valuable data not being captured.

7.3 Implications for further research and practice

7.3.1. Wellbeing in FE, rated the lowest of all sectors (UK)

Much is expected of all teachers, regardless of the sector in which they work. The current study documents how they work far beyond contracted hours, experience workload stress, emotional labour, lacking, at the same time, agency and autonomy. Many become cynical and detached from management (Jephcote et al, 2008; Daley, 2015; Weiland, 2021). Although their mental health is of concern to the Department of Education (Department of Education,2021), the wellbeing of teachers in FE is currently the lowest of all (Education Policy Institute, 2020). Daley (2015) compares the challenging working conditions they face with those of colleagues in other sectors. Their pay is the lowest. At the same time, they are expected to 'pick up classes, drop classes, change sites', with fewer rest and comfort breaks throughout the day (Daley, 2015, p.14). The picture is disheartening. Furthermore, in line with Daley's findings, the current study suggests that the value of experienced teachers is not acknowledged.

> '*I don't think that they [management] value real expertise and real-life experience... They think that anybody can slot into any of the roles and... it's not true. And I think it's, I think we're very hard done to…*' (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview, Findings 5.1.1.1).

FE has been subjected to more policy reform and market-led forces than most of its counterparts (Taubman, 2015). In addition, research carried out among teachers draws upon statistical indicators of wellbeing with pre-prescribed questions limiting the depth of responses (What Works Wellbeing, 2014-2024). The focus has tended be on a deficit-model, emphasizing aspects of teachers' working lives that contribute to a diminished sense of wellbeing. This study, whilst acknowledging the less positive experiences of teachers, also draws attention to their positive experiences. It lays the groundwork for future research to consider adopting a nurturing-based approach, which would explore how wellbeing can be enhanced and sustained. This would move the agenda towards preventative and positive measures to address the issue. Further research could also explore how teacher wellbeing impacts students, offering a broader perspective on the symbiotic wellbeing experiences of student and teacher.

7.3.2. Renewed orientation in CPD and ITT programmes

As noted by the participants, establishing and maintaining positive and productive relationships with their students may involve caring for their wellbeing both inside and outside the college environs. The desire to relate to students on a personal as well as professional level often involves offering unnoticed support, engaging in what is commonly referred to as 'underground work' (Avis et al 2011; Lobb, 2017). This aspect of teachers' working lives is therefore less likely to be acknowledged by colleagues and managers, contributing to a sense of emotional isolation and compassion fatigue. There appear to be few opportunities for teachers to reveal how much and in what way they care for their students and the concern they demonstrate for their welfare and wider lives. Sensing they are doing something good and worthwhile may enhance wellbeing but could also challenge it. Research on the emotional work experienced by teachers on a daily basis is limited, particularly in FE. There is scope for further research on the emotional work experienced by teachers and the value of informal, *ad hoc* conversations with managers rather than a reliance on prescriptive and formal performance management reviews. Such an approach would allow teachers to express concern for their students' welfare and the effect this concern has on their own sense of wellbeing. Teachers need to have a safe space in which to legitimately share their feelings without fear of recrimination. Adopting such a policy would have implications for CPD training for managers in FE, enabling them to be open to listening to teachers concerns and act accordingly. In addition, teachers need to be made aware of the range of support available to them in maintaining their wellbeing. However, access to support should include carefully considered routes beyond the control of management, so teachers can receive support without fear of reproach.

Moreover, the pervading emphasis in ITT courses on simply acquiring a set of skills and knowledge, fails to acknowledge the pastoral role they are expected to play in the lives of their students, often taken for granted and underdiscussed in teacher training. It stands to reason that there should be a refocus of ITT courses and CPD, giving less prominence to issues of control (standards, outcomes, accountability) and, in its stead, a stronger focus on the emotional dimensions of teaching and skills needed to connect meaningfully with students. The current study considers how a programme of practical strategies, to assist beginning and experienced teachers in developing positive relationships with their students,

would help them to successfully navigate the emotional geographies of the classroom and develop professional boundaries when caring for students.

7.3.3 Policies - working towards a shared understanding

The current study highlights that the value of policies which determine how teachers go about their working lives, is for the most part questionable. Research undertaken by Shattock (2006) noted how policy making in the UK over the previous 50 years saw a change in the locus of policy formation from local educational authorities and institutions to greater central government guidance, in return for more substantial funding. In Shattock's (2006) view, universities, colleges and schools had previously exercised freedom to 'make their own policies in response to external stimuli and their own strategic needs' (p.134). Policies were now fully determined by government mandates which served to dictate how educational institutions went about their daily business. Shattock refers to this change in balance as a transformation of 'inside-out' to 'out-side in' policy making (p.136). In the current educational climate, Shattock's views are seen to have greater currency. Government mandates are now *de rigueur* for all educational institutions. There is now a unilateral 'one-size-fits-all' approach to policy, determining how teachers should respond to their pedagogic and relational experiences with students, colleagues and managers. The dominant discourses of government highlight how prescriptive, simplistic policies governing educational communities fail to address the complexity of teachers' daily working lives (Thomas, 2001; Farley and Chamberlain, 2021). This study gives cause to consider how policies *per se* have a limited benefit to the people they are intended to support, affecting their autonomy and working conditions. To some degree, the policies also erode teachers' sense of individuality and wellbeing. They dismiss government policies as tokenistic, giving an illusion of concern about their welfare and evoking distrust in managerial motives and rhetoric. Moreover, the study reveals how policies are understood to cause stress in teachers (Farley and Chamberlain, 2021). Caught in a 'Catch-22' situation, policies and procedures have become a catalyst for problematising the individual (Farley and Chamberlain, 2021). If teachers, for example, disagree with the policies determined by management, they can anticipate less than positive repercussions. If, however, they adhere to management

expectations, against their better judgment, they may feel compromised and suffer a loss of personal integrity.

As already discussed, imposed policy making gives rise to an 'us and them' scenario between teachers and their managers and notions of power (Bell and Stevenson, 2006). Findings in this study highlights the need to consider how this significantly contributes to teachers feeling alienated from the policy making process and disillusioned by the outcome of policy implementation. However, it would be wrong to suggest that the current study portrays teachers as victims. While their opinions are both important and compelling, they need to find a collective voice and in so doing reposition themselves as policy actors rather than mere implementors. Teachers in this study acknowledge the tokenistic nature of policies influencing their practice as in '*need of revision'* (Yvonne: Pre-Diary Interview). The exclusion of teachers in policy generation sustains their perception that the policies implemented are a redundant product rather than a valuable process. Meaningfully engaging teachers as active policy makers would be a valuable contributing factor to their greater sense of agency and wellbeing. Further research could examine how collaborative interventions between managers and teachers might support teachers' understanding of the 'whys and wherefores' of policy development and implementation. Instigating a culture in which teachers and managers listen to each other's views should be embedded into everyday practice. Such a strategy requires structural implementation, to reshape policy discourse that goes beyond the 'us and them' scenario, shifting the narrative that perceives policies as idealistic and tokenistic to one that supports and empowers.

7.4 Reflection – the journey

Teaching in FE is viewed as the 'Cinderella' sector of all educational communities (UK) with over-crowded classes, under-resourced materials and fewer holidays for teachers. It is messy, unpredictable, exciting and sometimes disheartening but, in spite of these perceived challenges or maybe because of them, I found a deep personal fulfilment in it all. The current study shows how this cocktail of feelings is no stranger to other teachers. We bring

all we are as people to the students we encounter and with whom we build relationships. Teaching at its best is a personal endeavour. In a similar vein, I have come to recognise that research enquiry is personal, too. Often ignited by professional interest, the line of enquiry is shaped by the researcher's 'values, feelings, culture and history' (Herman, 2010, p.283). I am persuaded that we cannot fully escape our historicity, our 'take on the world'. Researcher subjectivity is ever present (Finlay, 2009 p.14; Wellington and Sikes, 2006).

From the start of my journey, I was captivated by the notion that research may be viewed as a means of reducing ignorance rather than making any 'truth' claims (Wagner, 2010). My research study was an opportunity to explore the wellbeing experiences of teachers by adopting a qualitative phenomenological approach concerned with human experience in which multiple realities exist and vary between people, groups and cultures (Denscombe, 2017; Cohen et al, 2011). Through this lens, truth is understood to be partial, situated and revisable. Becoming a researcher has not only been a vehicle for academic integration (Krause, 2001) it has been a process of the 'letting go and letting come' of ideas (Jelfs, 2011) and identities. Previous research has highlighted how doctoral students often hold in balance multiple roles, those of being both researching professionals and professional researchers (Wellington and Sikes, 2006; Bourner et al, 2001). This has been a welcome and challenging aspect of my journey. Doctoral education is more than acquiring knowledge and skills, it offers a critical space to determine the texts I choose to read. Considering the views of authors with conflicting opinions requires not only expansion and contraction of my thesis but a personal transformation, 'a continual becoming' (Thomson and Walker, 2010, p.16). Moreover, it has provided a challenge to my personal and professional values, causing me to question how those values shape the discourse of a classroom, the relationships I build with students and the emotional dimensions incurred in so doing. Attending doctoral conferences has presented opportunities to network with fellow professionals from educational communities other than my own. Fellow teachers' experiences in both Primary and Higher Education offered similar and diverse accounts of working conditions, relationships with managers and students and the effect on their wellbeing. These experiences helped me to think both more holistically about the words that I write and to gain confidence in establishing an authorial voice. Authors such as Thomson and Walker (2010), Wellington and

Sikes (2006) and Winter (1998) note the importance of seeking 'one's own voice, an authentic voice' (Winter, 1998, p.54) and the importance of becoming autonomous and empowered. This has not been easy. In the course of seven years' writing, my doctoral supervisors have offered critique and encouragement, moving it from 'thin to thick' (Thomson and Walker 2010, p.19), expanding and contracting ideas. Both a pleasurable and painful process, it has become a liberating aspect of how I understand my own construction of knowledge. However, I am mindful of Derrida's development of deconstruction and hermeneutics which claims that all texts have ambiguity, that reality determines the language we use and that for each reader the meaning of the text is different (Almabrouk, 2020). In my enthusiasm to convey my ideas, I had been remiss in considering the possible impact on the reader. Feedback from supervisors highlighted how, on reading my findings chapter '*some of the experiences shared are both shocking and enlightening'* (14.09.23).

Moreover, participants in this study have expressed a desire to read my thesis on its completion. I am respectfully mindful that, without their willingness to share experiences, this project would not have been possible. As noted by Raheim et al (2016), establishing and maintaining an 'open and dwelling attitude [negates] the notion of attentive listening as "a fake"' (p.5). I understood how being 'authentically present' in which my 'open and uncontested listening', would respectfully convey the importance of their experiences (Eide and Kahn, 2008, p.204). However, I was concerned by entering the 'life worlds' of participants, asking sensitive questions that may have caused distress and even harm. My sense of responsibility towards participants contained a desire to care for their welfare and wellbeing. Noddings (1984) notes how becoming momentarily engrossed in their hopes and disappointments involved a 'commitment of self' (p.13). Mindful of the drawbacks of sensitive research as well as its benefits, there is a risk of opening up 'Pandora's Box' when asking people to talk about aspects of their working lives they may never have fully considered. The current study has engendered powerful feelings in the participants – joy, hope, anger and states of hopelessness. Their willingness to share what they often considered to be the routine and mundane, alongside critical moments in their working lives, has proved humbling. Their pride, joy and determination have been strongly conveyed. I have been party to their deeply-rooted convictions about the important role they play in

the lives of their students, sometimes to the detriment of their own welfare and wellbeing. Funny encounters with students have been recalled with much laughter, alongside tearful moments when painful experiences have been relived, for example, when a student tore up one participant's carefully-constructed resources in front of her. I am also mindful of the cathartic, therapeutic nature that telling one's story has to offer.

> *'Yeah, thinking about my experiences, writing them down, helped me to make sense of my day'* (Diane: 29.03.23).

It has been a cathartic experience for me, too, as researcher, educator and colleague – roles I have held in tension as they merge into each other. In listening to the participants' personal accounts, I am moved by the depth of their emotions, their passion for the subject they teach and how much they care for the welfare of their students. I often relived both positive and less positive experiences of my own. Teaching is both an isolating and shared experience. It is personal and unique whilst open to public debate and scrutiny. This study strengthens the belief that teaching is a 'multidimensional and highly individualised activity' (Lumpkin and Multon, 2003, p.288) one which affords immeasurable personal fulfilment and cost. So, too, this study restates how teacher wellbeing is complex, multi-faceted and a shifting phenomenon. Finally, it is my hope that I have done justice to the stories recounted, imbued as they are with accounts of unmanageable workloads, relentless demands and compromised values. These voices should not be pushed aside by 'top down' objectives. They deserve to be listened to at government level and play a part in influencing the agenda of educational reform.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Aide Memoire: Interview Questions Phase One

Introductory Questions
Did you always want to become a teacher?
What were the main reasons why you choose to become a teacher? Are these reasons still important to you? If so why?
How long have you been a qualified teacher?
Why do you stay in teaching?
Research Question: How do established teachers understand the term wellbeing?
The research is exploring teacher wellbeing. I'd be interested to know how you would define/describe teacher wellbeing.
What are the biggest issues facing teacher wellbeing today?
Research Question: What are the various professional demands and/or experiences that affect teachers' wellbeing?
From all the different job demands and tasks that you have to undertake as a teacher, which one/s you think have a more direct effect in your wellbeing? Why?
Research Question: How might pedagogic experiences/interactions with students affect the personal and professional wellbeing of established teachers?
Teaching and being with students can be enjoyable but there are times in which it may not be so enjoyable
What makes it enjoyable? Can you give me example/s?
What makes it less enjoyable? Can you give me example/s
Do these experiences (enjoyable and less enjoyable) have any effect personally or professionally?
Research Question: What factors do established teachers identify as supportive in promoting teacher wellbeing?
What do you think supports teachers' wellbeing in teaching? Why do you feel this way? Can you give me example/s?
Research Question: What is the teacher's role in promoting teacher wellbeing?
Some teachers feel that it is their responsibility to promote and maintain/sustain their wellbeing. How do you feel about this?
In a previous question you described a less enjoyable day. Was there anything that you could have done to prevent what you described? What did you do? How was this helpful?

Appendix B

A Reflective Diary

Further Education: A Teacher's Reflective Diary/Journal

A reflective exploration of UK Further Education teachers' experiences of wellbeing: capturing life as it is lived

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Appendix B

Teaching in UK Further Education

Diary Entry Two
Date 17/11/22

Your wellbeing experiences in Further Education

This is an opportunity for you to pause and reflect on significant events/experiences (positive and/or less positive) regarding your wellbeing today. Choose three words which sum up your day, for example:

☐fulfilling ☐exhausting ☐challenging ☐stimulating ☐encouraging ☐frustrating ☐dull ☐exciting ☐rewarding ☐emotional ☐average ☐disappointing

Please note: if you prefer, choose words other than those listed above

☐ Bizarre. ☐ Hilarious ☐ Satisfying.

Reflecting on your teaching today, and the words you have chosen to sum it up, describe the significant events/experiences "Lesson observation Day!"

So today big day! (Not) I'm to be observed by my line manager & her boss (the deputy principle) I hae no respect for either of them in any format. Yes this sounds terrible I know, but there it is! Luckily it was an Anatomy & Physiology class (a subject that I am very comfortable with) the class I was observed with was large (25 students) & a chatty & lively bunch. They played their part beautifully - I am very fond of this particular class & they are of me. The "boss" arrives and I have convinced the sub in a corner grinning like a Cheshire Cat! The deputy arrives 10 mins

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Appendix B

Photograph Activity

Capturing life as it is lived

(Cao and Henderson, 2021)

You are invited to use your mobile phone to record an image. The photograph should capture a moment that sums up your day as a teacher. Examples could include a computer, overflowing wastepaper basket, cup of coffee/tea, biscuit, pen, phone, note from colleague or student.

For this activity, you may send the photograph via email or include a printed copy when you submit your diary. It would be useful to write a sentence(s) about the image in the box below.

The picture shows man holding up his thumb - Caption Drowning in work on 2hrs sleep & Manager asks how you are doing?

Please ensure your photographs do not include colleagues, students or identify your place of work.

Photographs you include in your diary will be anonymised by the researcher. This includes any identifiers that may be present.

Thank you for recording your reflections today. Please do not hesitate to contact me by email or phone should you have any further questions.

Email either of the following addresses.
allisongod@hotmail.com or 11011140@hope.ac.uk
You may also contact me on the following contact number: T: 07580 245359

Appendix C

Aide Memoire: Interview Questions
(Phase Three: post-diary interview)

Pseudonym: Yvonne

Thank you for completing your diary. There are several experiences that you have described which I would like to explore further. I trust that you are happy with this – however, be mindful that you can stop the interview at any point.

Introductory question: Tell me about two photographs you have chosen that summed up a day in teaching.

Interview questions in response to Diary Entries

Questions relating to Diary Entry 1, 3 and 6

a) You mention that you attend an 'industry update session' at a local NHS hospital. This day seems important and positive experience to you professionally and personally. Can you tell me a little bit more about this?

b) However, there appears to be a change in how you feel about your day summing it up as '*exhausting, challenging, frustrating'* as you return to the college. It appears you feel that your 5 ½ years of nursing training and your knowledge and skills are 'worthless' to your line manager. Can you tell me a bit more about this?

   - You describe how you are 'fizzing' ... what do you mean by that term?
   - Did you reveal/demonstrate how did you were feeling to your line manager? If not, why not?

c) Do you disguise how you are feeling often?

   - Can you describe other times when you have perhaps disguised how you may be feeling?

d) How important is recognition and acknowledgement from management?

   - In Entry 3 You describe the '*Last working day of the year. A total let down.*' Summing up your day as a '*Let down, underappreciated, undervalued'*. It's the Christmas lunch...
   - Can you give examples times when your efforts have been recognised and acknowledged by management?
   -

e) How important is being recognised and acknowledged to your sense of wellbeing?

f) Some people may consider that a teacher's role goes beyond the academic learning of students.

   - In Entry 6 you describe a learner survey in which the students say '*they love me and value me. 'I know they tell me so – it makes it all worthwhile'.*
   - Can you tell me a little more about this?
   - How important is recognition and acknowledgement from students?

- Can you give examples of other times when your efforts have been recognised and acknowledged by students?
- Have you ever received less positive feedback from students? If so, how may that have affected your sense of wellbeing?

Questions relating to Diary Entry 2

a) Being observed is a '*positive process*' for you. Do you ever question the observation process?

b) Have you ever received less positive feedback from observers? If so, how may that have affected your sense of wellbeing?

Questions relating to Diary Entry 4 and 5

a) '*New Year, new start*!' – what do you mean by this? (Destiny and growth beliefs?)

b) Timetables have been changed without you or the students being consulted. Can you tell me a bit more about this?

- Possible ideas:
  - Loss of agency?
  - Workload – covering lessons?

c) You describe how the students are '*keeping me going [although] they constantly pester me, whinge at me, cry on me'...'they say they need me'. I believe this is 100% true'*

- Being a confidante – Does that happen often? Can you give me examples?

d) How may that affect your sense of wellbeing positively/less positively?

e) Do you think caring for others is an important part of teaching?

f) There seems to be another side to the teacher /student relationship... you describe how '*I need them [students] too, without them my job would be intolerable'* Can you tell me a bit more about this?

g) Some teachers may say that if they have positive relationships with students, they are less prone to burn out. What are your thoughts about this?

h) In terms of your wellbeing – how important are student/teacher relationships?

Is there anything you would like to talk about that I have not mentioned?

Appendix D

Liverpool Hope Research Ethics

Username: 11011140

Latest Notes for this Application (by feeneyd on 2021-04-15 22:12:53)

Allison,

As someone who has to read through a lot of these forms, I always feel that I have received a gift from heaven when I encounter one where the student has invested the time and effort that you clearly have in making sure that the form is ready for scrutiny before being submitted.

It seems that you are about to undertake a very interesting and valuable piece of research. You have completed your ethics form very clearly and comprehensively and it seems to me that you have given ample consideration to all elements of your proposed study that could conceivably have a bearing on the ethics of your undertaking.

I therefore have no hesitation whatsoever in granting you ethical approval. You can commence your research with immediate effect. I wish you the very best of luck in completing it.

With best wishes,

David Feeney (feeneyd)

Contact IT Services - **E-mail**:itshelp@hope.ac.uk - **Tel**: 0151 291 2100

Appendix E

Email and information to potential participants

Dear (name),

As a student at Liverpool Hope University, I am inviting you to take part in a research project. This will be used as part of a doctorate with Hope University.

The focus of the research is to explore teachers' views on their wellbeing experiences in Further Education (UK).

In the first instance, you are invited to share your views during an interview. This will be an individual activity which will take place at a date, time and location of your choice. The interview can either be undertaken in person, via a telephone or by electronic media e.g. Zoom. Your views will be audio recorded and will last approximately 30 minutes. In my role of researcher, I will be interviewing you.

At a later date (e.g. three weeks after the interview) you will be invited to complete a diary. This will be an opportunity for you to record significant events/experiences (positive and less positive) regarding your experiences of wellbeing over a six-week period. You may also wish to take photographs which you feel are relevant to your experiences of personal/professional wellbeing, e.g. pen, computer, book, playdough, drawing etc.

During the final part of the research, you will be invited to talk about the experiences you have recorded in your diary and share any photographs that you have taken. Once more, this will be an individual activity to take place at a date, time and location of your choice. Your views will be audio recorded and will last approximately 30 minutes.

Any information you contribute to the research will be treated with the utmost respect and will only be shared with the university's assessor/s. You will not be required to give any personal information that can be traced back to you in any way.

If you decide to take part in the research, and then at a later date decide that you no longer wish to take part, I will support your decision and respond in a professional, polite and kind way.

I do not want you to feel obliged to take part in the project, however, I would be very grateful for your participation.

If you have any questions about the research or your participation, please do not hesitate to email me at either of the following addresses:

allisongod@hotmail.com or 11011140@hope.ac.uk

Warm regards, Allison Goddard

Appendix F

LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Title of research project: Wellbeing Matter: Exploring Teachers' Experiences of Wellbeing in UK Further Education

Name of researcher: Allison Goddard

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	Yes	No
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.	Yes	No
I agree to take part in this research project and for the anonymised data to be used as the researcher sees fit, including publication.	Yes	No

Name of participant:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix G

Thematic Analysis: Braun and Clark (2022)

Process of data analysis: six phases of reflexive thematic analysis

Phase 1	**Familiarising with the data**	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading, making (brief) notes about analytical ideas. Related to each data item and the dataset.
Phase 2	**Coding**	Systematically coding salient features that are potentially interesting, relevant or meaningful. This includes semantic and/or latent coding and involves collating data relevant to each code.
Phase 3	**Generating initial themes**	Identifying shared pattern meaning across the dataset. Compiling clusters of codes that seem to share a core idea or concept, and which might provide a meaningful answer to the research question. Themes describe broader, shared meanings.
Phase 4	**Developing and reviewing themes**	Generating a thematic map by checking if themes work in relation to the data extracts and across full dataset. Beginning to consider the relationship between themes, and existing knowledge, and/or practice in the researcher's field, and the wider context.
Phase 5	**Refining, defining and naming themes**	Ongoing analysis to ensure each theme is built around a strong core concept or essence. Generating clear definition and names for each theme and considering the overall story the analysis tells.
Phase 6	**Writing up**	Weaving together the researcher's analytical narrative and compelling and vivid data extracts, to produce a coherent and persuasive story about the dataset that address the research question/s.

Appendix H

Interview
(Phase One: pre-diary interview)

Pseudonym	Yvonne
Code Identifier	020
Date	17.09.22
Duration of interview	51 minutes
Location of interview	Held in participant's home

Pen Portrait

- Previous career in NHS: nurse and midwife
- Teaching in FE for 15 + years
- Teaches on Health Studies courses
- Had several roles in education - teacher, personal tutor, course Leader for Health Studies. Current role's – teacher, course leader for Health Studies.
- Teaches on level 3 courses
- Age: 50+

SEMANTIC CODING		LATENT CODING
	INTERVIEWER (I): So, there are 18 questions. Okay? It's about teacher, wellbeing in further education. So, just as a few introductory questions. Did you always want to become a teacher?	
	YVONNE (Y): Never …never wanted to be a teacher. Always wanted to be a nurse erm…that was always my dream job ... erm... I went into nursing. I went into midwifery. I had my own business and then I just wanted a new challenge and I saw that there was a niche for the way…older students sort of, FE [further education] students going into nursing, the way that nurses were being trained, midwives were being trained, was different and I saw that there was a niche maybe that there wasn't enough people from the industry in teaching and it was ...it was ... I was looking at the sort of teenager side. I was looking at 16 plus and early adults as well who wanted to convert maybe to be a nurse and erm…I wanted a new challenge for myself and I thought well, I could, with all my background experience… if I trained to be a teacher, I could perhaps, teach those that want to go into it in the future because I saw that the way that education was going to go. And the way they were looking at the erm…actual (two) levels that they rolled out, but that was before the T- levels [technical levels] were rolled out, they were looking at sort of how they were going to get the next generation through, and that's when I took up the challenge, but I never, ever wanted to be a teacher.	
Imaging future self		*Enters teaching because she wants to use her existing nursing knowledge and skills to support future nurses*
Doing something of value/ helping students		*Sees teaching as a way forward to support others but never aspired to become a teacher* *Feels the desire to **help** others*
	I: Okay, thank you. So, erm… the next question is what were, the main reasons … Why you chose to become a teacher?	
Industry experiences are important	**Y:** I wanted to help …future generations because they changed the way that they taught the nurses. I mean, I did my nursing the old fashion way and it was like a proper true apprenticeship. You started off, you did a little bit in the classroom and then you went on the wards and you were on the wards for the majority of the time. And you… you were hands-on, erm…you weren't even classed as super numeree. You were actually on the ward in uniform learning, and you did a 40-hour week, and you got paid for it, doing it and then you did a block of learning you went into classroom for a few weeks and did exams. Then you were back on to your next rotation and they were changing it. It was when they did the project 2000 nurses and they started doing the degree route, and	

Clash of values	we brought those on to the wards, the girls and the lads that were doing nursing back then and in sort of late 80s and they haven't got a clue because they did spend all the time in classroom, and they have no practical skills. So that's why I'm quite excited about the T- levels in the way because it's supposed to be more practical based than just classroom based. I think that's what's lacking cos common sense, and, and the skills are just not there. **I:** So, when you started answering that question, you talked about, you wanted to help people, is that the word you used?	*Feels the lack of 'hands- on' experiences are vital – not just complimentary to academic learning in the classroom.*
Doing something important	**Y:** Yeah ...helps… helps society in a way because the old-fashioned nurses, the way that we were trained, the proper nurses, they're all dead or retired or retiring. **I:** So, are those reasons still important to you now? Are they still relevant to you now?	*Thinking about societal needs for future nurses 'proper nurses'*
	Y: Absolutely, cos I really do not believe that the NHS has got it right the way to train nurses. It needs to …before a degree …it needs to start right from A level standard it needs to start beforehand because they have, they've got unrealistic expectations. They do not know what they let themselves in for and that's why there's a big dropout… of nurses. **I:** So, how long have you been qualified as a teacher then?	*Thinks the Government has a lack of understanding of how to train nurses- 'unrealistic expectations'*
Distancing self from the wider college community /management?	**Y:** I'm going into 14th year now …because I came to work at 'X' college qualified in the June and I started in September and I'm just going into a 14th year at this establishment now. **I:** And why do you stay in teaching? What's keeping you in that profession	*Implies that the college management are faceless – sense of separation between self and college management*
Personal satisfaction **Position self as influencing others**	**Y:** I love the students. I like being with teenagers. I think they're fun, they keep you young, they keep you questioning things, they get a bad rap don't they sometimes with some people and on-the-whole, I've only ever met a few that are really, really bad, a really difficult, the majority of very malleable one that they want to learn and yeah, I love it **I:** So, it's the students….	*Staying in teaching is fundamentally about being with students*

Appendix I

Coding Set: First 40 Codes
(Phase One: Pre-Diary Interviews)

Imagining future self	Doing something of value/helping students	Industry experiences	Clash of values	Doing something important/ value	Disconnect distancing self from management	Personal Satisfaction	Positioning self as influencing others	Impact of establishment's attitude	Vocational Calling
Lack of confidence in managers experiences outside academia	Power – position self as superior to management	Wider world – lacks confidence in Government's decision making	Wellbeing a holistic concept	Caring for others	Pretending to care for others, emotional labour	Disconnect between self and other teachers	Negative relationship with other teachers	Being a positive role model	Importance of maintaining a professional attitude - emotional labour
Positive experiences with students' learning	Less positive experiences with students	Exhausted – wartime metaphors	Coping strategy	Feeling vulnerable	Impact on family relationships	Teaching is labour intensive	Being resilient	Less positive experiences – feeling angry with management	Positive experiences with students-learning
Relationships with students – caring	Belonging – ownership of students	Positive relationships with teachers	Negative relationships with teachers	Wellbeing policies	Wellbeing a shared responsibility	Impact on family relationships	Role/demands positive experiences	Role/demands less-positive experiences	Resilient – taking control

Appendix J

Second Coding Set: Developing Themes
(Phase One/ Interviews and Phase Two/Diaries and Photographs)

Disconnect with others	Control	Emotional dimensions	Inter-personal relationships
• Distancing self from management • Clash of values (with management and other teachers) • Policies/Wellbeing Days tokenistic • Disconnect of self with other teachers • Teaching is labour intensive (management's expectations e.g. marking, observations, student behaviour)	• A compromised self (emotional labour/ dissonance) • Clash of values with management/ teachers • Being a positive role model (for students) • Impact of 'establishment's' attitude • Coping strategies (being resilient) • Teaching is labour intensive • Management (e.g. blame culture, unrealistic demands)	• Doing something of value e.g. helping students • Impact of establishment's attitude • Vocational calling • Personal satisfaction • Feeling vulnerable • Use of wartime metaphors	• Caring for others (students and teachers) • Pretending to care for others (emotional labour) • Positive experiences with students (e.g. learning) • Less positive experiences with students (e.g. behaviour) • Positive experiences with other teachers (coping strategy) • Less positive experiences with other teachers • Less positive relationship with management (anger) • Impact on family relationships

Appendix K

Main Themes and Sub-themes

The development of main and sub-themes using reflexive thematic analysis

Phase One: Pre-diary interviews Phase Two: Diaries and Photographs Phase Three: Post-Diary Interviews

Main Theme	Sub-theme
Disconnect from Others	• Clash of Values Disharmony with managers Everyone passes Students as customers • Teaching is labour intensive Workload Administrative tasks
Caring Dimensions	• Vocational calling • Caring for Others Students as people Role of confidante • Feeling vulnerable and resilient
Control	• A Compromised and Fulfilled Self (emotional labour) Teaching is more than just a performance? Emotional labour enhances wellbeing Emotional labour and students • Contextual influences on wellbeing Defining teach wellbeing Wellbeing as a shared responsibility Opportunities to talk about wellbeing
Inter-personal Relationships	• Professional relationships Managers and colleagues Students • Impact on family relationships