How primary early career teachers perceive and shape literacies teaching and learning: 
A comparative case study

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This thesis was submitted to Murdoch University of Western Australia
in fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2018
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content, work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

This work was undertaken with approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee, Murdoch University (Approval 2015/205).

...........................................
Veronica Gardiner
ABSTRACT

What do we really know about the literacies teaching and learning experiences of early career teachers (ECTs)? In Western Australia, as in other Australian states, ECTs are impacted by neoliberal policy reforms pursuing standardised and didactic literacy teaching and learning. Many scholars argue that such reforms impoverish literacies learning for both teachers and students. To explore how ECTs perceive and shape literacies teaching and learning in these policy conditions, the present author facilitated a series of café based discussions. During interactions, ECTs reflected on their professional work over two calendar years, in metropolitan, regional and remote schools. Adopting a comparative case study approach, ECT meaning making was framed by interweaving the content and pedagogical Design focus of Multiliteracies Theory (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000), and the expansive learning schema derived from Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2001, 2011). The interpretive approach integrated visual topic mapping, critical discourse analysis, and identification of emergent correspondences between pedagogical Design and expansive learning processes.

Key findings highlight, that across the groups, possibilities for ECTs’ teaching and learning for literacies in schools were constrained by pervasive promotion of routinised and componential approaches to reading and writing, and commercially driven professional development and literacy resourcing. Becoming increasingly insightful about limitations in these policy aligned priorities and conditions, the ECTs responded over time by questioning, resisting and in some cases innovating Available Designs in lieu of contradictory professional goals. In the main, this innovation took place in the absence of systemic or school based support. Such results conflict with deficit readings of ECT
learning articulated in current policies. Implications may be of interest to school leaders, policy writers, teacher educators and other teachers wishing to support participatory teaching and learning for literacies.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**ACARA** – Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

**AITSL** – Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership

**APSTs** – Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

**ECTs** – Early Career Teachers

**ITE** – Initial Teacher Education

**OECD** – The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

**THE AUTHORITY** – The Schools and Standards Authority (Western Australia)

**THE OUTLINE** – The state based curriculum mandated for use in all Western Australian schools.

**TRBWA** – Teacher Registration Board of Western Australia
GLOSSARY OF KEY THEORETICAL TERMS

**Design** (Kress, 2010): active and dynamic processes through which learners access, interpret and re/make available meanings and practices.


**Literacy** (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013): teaching and learning for traditional literacy involves transmission of fixed and transportable practices for print based reading, writing and orality.


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Representing ephemera of the social world can feel like “writing on a waterfall” (Amaravati, 2012-2018). Here, I invite all the people who have supported my waterfall-writing, to dwell on some words penned by Reece Gerow (n.d.):

\[
\text{Let gratitude surround each move,} \\
\text{gesture, thought, smell, taste and touch –} \\
\text{each – a wonder of being,} \\
\text{each easily overlooked} \\
\text{as we go about} \\
\text{busily maintaining our selves} \\
\text{all day long.} \\
\]

\[
\text{So, without ‘should’ but with awareness,} \\
\text{let us return again and again} \\
\text{to this moment, this place,} \\
\text{most gratefully.} \\
\]

Specific thanks go to my Supervisors, Associate Professor Wendy Cumming-Potvin and Dr. Christine Glass; the theorists who have made my research possible; the wonderful people in the School of Education at Murdoch; and the brave, honest and inspiring early career teachers who participated in this study. More personally, I thank Sifu Professor Kit Po Wong and family, whose traditional Chinese arts rest in the hearts and minds of so many; and to my husband Ian, son Rhys and daughter Shelley, who faithfully abided in recent years.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Chapter introduction

What do we really know about Western Australian early career teacher (ECT) perceptions and experiences of literacies teaching and learning? Adopting a qualitative comparative case-study approach, this research explores and interprets how a small number of primary school ECTs in Western Australia, perceived and shaped literacies teaching and learning, in response to contextual conditions. Discussions with these ECTs were facilitated through a series of café-style meetings in three diverse Western Australian locations. To contextualise the study, the following section considers broader issues affecting teaching and learning for literacies in Australia.

Problematising policy aimed to improve standards of literacy teaching and learning

Teaching and learning for literacies in Australia is properly of interest to policymakers, politicians, teachers, school leaders, tertiary educators and the public (Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018). Yet literacies teaching and learning can have different meanings for different stakeholders (Lingard, 2018). That is, literacy and literacies, can be distinguished and treated from various vantages. As Bloome (1997) argued two decades ago:

There is no single definition of literacy. What counts as literacy at a particular time and place depends on who has the power to define it. . . Indeed how literacy is defined is full of conflict that goes beyond technical questions about ‘best’ ways to teach it. Rather it revolves around social, cultural and economic issues. (p. 107).
Today in Australian education, there are crucial differences between teaching and learning for traditional literacy, and teaching and learning for literacies, and many implications for teachers and students. As will be elaborated in later chapters, teaching and learning for traditional literacy involves transmission of fixed and transportable practices for print-based reading, writing and orality (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). Teaching and learning for literacies enables contextually dynamic, and textually and socioculturally diverse means for understanding and creating communications in a fluid, digitally informed social world (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000). Currently, it is mainly traditional literacy which is promoted, a situation bolstered by crisis talk about students’ declining achievements on standardised testing, which is linked to presumed deficits in teaching the basics in schools (Lingard, 2018).

Taking up the necessity of teaching basic literacy from a politico-economic vantage, the Australian federal government has proffered the StudentsFirst policy portfolio (Australian Government, 2014). This portfolio recommends closer scrutiny of students’ standardised assessment performance, tighter standardisation of teaching curricula, and commensurate regulation of professional practices. Politically, such reform is instrumental to lifting rankings of Australia’s national prosperity in the global marketplace (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017). However, many Australian scholars worry that in parallel, standardisation leads to a hyper-focus on singularly print-based and routinised approaches; components of which are easily measured through tests (Cormack & Comber, 2013; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2013;
Lewis & Hardy, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014). Logically, such narrowing runs counter to capacitating contextually and culturally responsive literacies, and limits students’ informed social participation in the real world (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Cumming-Potvin & Sanford, 2015; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018).

Numerous empirical Australian studies evidence this narrowing of literacies teaching and learning in the current neoliberal policy environment (Cormack & Comber, 2013; Hardy, 2016; Klenowski, 2014; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2013; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017). In view of a wider array of demands placed on ECTs in this environment, recent research in Australia has investigated ECT employment attrition (Gallant & Riley, 2014; Weldon, 2018), resilience (Johnson et al., 2014), and identity formation (Crosswell & Beutel, 2017; Gannon, 2012). But only a very small number of studies situate the ECT experience within policy influences (see Allard & Doecke, 2014).

The present study takes up Allard and Doecke’s (2014) suggestion that Australian ECTs might be able to offer some crucial commentary on teaching and learning in the current policy environment, where ECTs navigate:

a unique historical moment . . . which . . . cannot be fully captured by the experiences and understandings of a previous generation. Researchers, teacher educators and bureaucrats alike need to learn from what they [ECTs] report about the contradictory nature of their situations.

(p. 52)

The possibility of exploring and representing this “crucial commentary” was a strong personal motivator for undertaking the current study.
Researcher motivation for conducting the study

For me, the complexities of the early career experience have a great deal of personal significance. When I first entered full-time primary school teaching in 2007, I imagined that I would be encouraged to bring forth the same rich literacies content and pedagogy I had explored during ITE. My reality was vastly different. It seemed that my colleagues and school leaders were instead greatly preoccupied with analysing students’ testing profiles, and generating teaching sequences to improve these profiles. I noticed that resulting programming often foregrounded phonics, grammar, and spelling routines, or recipe-like approaches to genre. As I recall, one teacher in the classroom next to mine drilled her students for weeks to ensure their success on coming grammar assessments. Paradoxically, my colleagues sometimes confessed discord between these strategies and their own professional judgements. On account of this incongruence, I felt caught between competing professional narratives. What did it mean to teach literacies or literacy? At this early time in my career, I had never seen a pluralistic literacies approach in play in a real classroom.

To make better sense of my conundrums, I enrolled in a postgraduate Contemporary Specialisation in 2009, and a Masters by Research in 2010. Tertiary opportunities allowed me to develop understandings of Multiliteracies Theory (New London Group, 2000), and sociocritical and participatory approaches to education (see McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007; Smyth, 2006). These understandings informed my Master’s project, which facilitated experienced primary teachers to collaboratively reflect on literacies practices and resources, during a six month book club2. On project completion, I felt compelled

---
to draw on this knowledge-base to revisit my initial quandaries about the ECT experience.

The preface of my Masters thesis presented the following quote:

*Let me begin with the epines – with the thorns – and I hope a rose will emerge.*

Heinz von Foerster (1991, p. 3)

At that time, I understood research as an opportunity to critique the educational status quo. In the present thesis, I push my understandings of research one step further, to grapple with influences and conditions which ECTs experience and act upon within the status quo.

**Purpose of the study**

After delving into the research corpus, I found convincing evidence that current policy imperatives have profound effects on the literacy teaching and learning priorities of experienced teachers (Cormack & Comber, 2013; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2013; Lewis & Hardy, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017). While a small number of studies explore policy pressures on pre-service learning for literacies (Doecke & Kostogriz, 2005; Honan, Kervin, Exley & Simpson, 2014), the present study examines the experiences and perceptions of particular ECTs in Western Australia. I recognise that from a sociocultural perspective, which is fleshed out in coming chapters, the inquiry would need to account for ECTs’ situatedness in both local and global conditions.

**Figure 1.1** below depicts this nested relationship.
The following questions guided the research inquiry.

**Research questions**

1. *How do ECTs perceive and shape literacies teaching and learning?*  
   This question concerns ECTs’ perceptions of and choices about teaching and learning for literacies in context.

2. *How do ECTs perceive and shape professional learning for literacies?*  
   This question concerns the enablements and constraints which impact ECTs’ professional learning for teaching literacies.

3. *How do ECTs perceive and shape teaching and learning entailing digital and multimodal texts?*  
   This question concerns ECTs’ potential to actualise the full scope of official curricula for English.
Research approach

A qualitative comparative case-study (Flick, 2014; Stake, 2006) was chosen to access and interpret the experiences, perceptions and shaping processes of primary school ECTs, as they emerged during discussions. This choice of approach is consistent with the sociocultural perspective used to contextualise and theorise the study in toto. Meetings took place in cafés, over one school year. Additionally, an individual follow-up phone call was offered to each ECT, in the second calendar year of the study. The timing of these fieldwork activities is summarised in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1
The timeline of fieldwork with each group of ECTs

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<td></td>
<td>August</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>October December</td>
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<tr>
<td>Follow-up phone calls (2017)</td>
<td>March</td>
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Qualitative data emerging from interactions with each group comprised a bounded case for analysis (Stake, 2006). The study was not designed to verify whether ECT perceptions and reports matched their realities outside of group discussions. Rather, the aim was to foster informal conversational environments at a distance from schools, so that ECTs might reflect on literacies teaching and learning conditions, goals, enablements and constraints (see Gutierrez &
Vossoughi, 2010). This design, as well as early analyses, have been presented for peer review in various formats. A summary is provided in Appendix A.

**Significance of the study**

In an era when standardisation of educational content and pedagogy is prevalent in Australia, this study aims to contribute to what little is known about ECT experiences, perceptions and shaping of literacies teaching and learning.

*Theoretical contribution.* In this study, I combine sociocultural theories in a new way, to map how particular Western Australian ECTs perceive and shape literacies teaching and learning over time. The incorporated conceptual framework melds the pedagogical Design and literacies focus of Multiliteracies Theory (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000), with the nuanced learning-process focus of Cultural Historical Activity Theory's expansive learning schema (Engestrom, 2001, 2011). Further chapters argue that resonances between these two vantages support deep analytical insights into ECT professional experiences and activities. These insights build on standing scholarship about literacies professional learning, and widen our knowledge of current policy influences on the work of ECTs. Taking up the participatory bent of the incorporated conceptual framework, the study privileges ECT perspectives about contextual and conceptual phenomena, and their intentionality in relation to professional goals and purposes. The study thus gives voice to a cohort of teachers who are often obscured within and by current Australian policy reforms.
Methodological innovation. To capture complexities in ECT meaning-making and activity, this study examines emerging data from three analytical vantages: Visual Topic Mapping (Chandrasegaran et al, 2017; Johnsen, 2017; Nikolenko, Koltcov & Koltsova, 2017; Tornberg & Tornberg, 2016), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Gee, 2011), and discursive mapping of both expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011; Engestrom & Sannino, 2010) and multiliteracies pedagogical Design cycles (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000). The study proposes that such weaving allows the research to focus on holistic patterns as well as minutiae (Flick, 2014; Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014). Analytical approaches will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Contribution to knowledge in the field. Presenting findings from this fine-grained analysis of ECTs’ perceptions and activities, the study potentially informs a range of people involved in education about policy, school leadership, and/or system influences. The study is therefore poised to contribute to broader decision-making about the enablement of contextually and culturally pluralistic literacies teaching and learning, from the vantage of ECTs. This contribution is important to shifting narratives about the necessity of one size fits all treatment of ECTs’ professional learning for literacies, and politicised debate which emphasises ECTs’ professional learning deficits. Even though such shifts may emerge slowly in the field of Education at large (Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018), insights offered by the current qualitative study, provoke the need for a closer gaze on the sociocultural and political mediation of literacies teaching and learning into the future.
Explanations of some commonly used terms

Although a small number of footnotes appear throughout this thesis, the following explanations lend clarity about some common terms in use in Australia.

**Early career teachers (ECTs).** In this thesis, ECTs are defined as those teachers who are practising in classrooms, within five years of graduating from an initial teacher education program. This definition aligns with a significant body of Australian research which explores teacher employment and attrition (Broadley, 2012; Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson & Burke., 2013; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Lock, Budgen, Lunay & Oakley, 2012; McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006; Morrison, 2013; Weldon, 2018).

**Initial Teacher Education (ITE).** ITE in Australia consists of accredited programs which prepare teachers for classroom practice. ITE programs operate through university School of Education courses, which have both theoretical and practical components. Courses are offered at either undergraduate or postgraduate level. All courses embed practical learning experiences in schools, where pre-service teachers gradually approximate classroom duties under the supervision of practising teachers. ITE courses are regulated by a governing entity, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2017). Further governance requirements, set by the Western Australian Teacher Registration Board, mean that ECTs can only practise in classrooms after their receipt of a recognised tertiary Bachelor, or a postgraduate qualification relevant to the field (Government of Western Australia, 2017-2018).
**Casual contract employment.** This thesis acknowledges that ECTs may be employed through various contractual arrangements. The term ‘casual teacher’ refers to teachers who are employed under the conditions of a short term contract (for instance for whole, or part of, a day or week), or a fixed term contract (for periods of weeks to months). The terms ‘relief teacher’, or ‘relief teaching’, are used to refer to situations where casual teachers substitute for an appointed teacher who has taken leave.

**School leadership.** In this study, school leadership refers to primary school principals and deputies. Their specific duties typically include, but are not exclusive to, overseeing teacher professional learning, whole school curriculum planning and evaluation, performance management of staff, and the fiscal administration of sites. Additionally they are responsible for building relationships with students, parents and the community.

**School assemblies.** A common practice in schools, assemblies usually take place once a week. While everyone in the school is gathered, announcements and awards are made, and students sometimes present artistic or academic performances.

**Schooling systems.** In Australia, the public education system (66% of students) is government-funded and operated. The non-government system (also known as the private system) (34% of students) is partially government-funded, and is orchestrated by diverse religious and independent entities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Commonwealth of Australia, 2018). In Western Australia, the non-government system is comprised of Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA)³, and the Association for Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA)⁴. All three systems are administered in

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³ Retrieved 11 September 2018, from https://www.cewa.edu.au
⁴ Retrieved 11 September 2018, from https://www.ais.wa.edu.au
accordance with complex state and federal legislation, overseen by state and federal Ministers of Education (Government of Western Australia, 2017-2018).

**Compulsory years of primary schooling.** At the time of fieldwork for this study, compulsory primary schooling in Western Australia spanned Pre-primary (students from approximately four to five years of age), through Years One to Six (students from approximately six to eleven years of age) (Government of Western Australia, 2017-2018). Typically these phases are housed on single sites.

**Federal government.** It may be of interest to international readers to know, that the federal government of Australia functions as a two-party preferred representative democracy. Dominant political parties include the Coalition (a jointure of the Australian Liberal Party and the National Party), and The Australian Labour Party (Museum of Australian Democracy, n.d.). Despite the apparent simplicity of this arrangement, governance of the democracy is complex (Eacott, 2011; Savage, 2016). While specifics are beyond the scope of this thesis, some consequences of current arrangements are notable. Most significantly, while federalism works to set constitutional and legislative requirements for Australia’s states and territories, competing political and economic tensions are in play. One tension concerns federal capabilities to set policy at a national level, and then to impose this policy at the state-level. More will be said about federal policy for in Chapter Two.
Thesis structure

This thesis offers a comprehensive account of the study across nine chapters. The flow of chapters is represented in Figure 1.2 below.

Figure 1.2
Flow of the nine chapters

Chapter One, the current chapter, introduces the broad context and rationale of the study, and the inquiry. To describe the broader policy-context in which Western Australian primary school ECTs are situated, Chapter Two reviews the rise and effects of neoliberalism and neoliberal policy-making in international and Australian settings. This review identifies neoliberal policy-making as a social practice, which shapes and is shaped by complex political, cultural, and historical influences (Ball, 2015, 2016; Flew, 2014). The second section of Chapter Two identifies neoliberal agendas within Australian policies for education, which privilege standardisation and comparative performance measurement (Lingard, 2018). Interrelationships between and effects of standardised curricula for the subject English, standardised professional standards for teachers, and current
treatments of ECT induction, are reviewed in further sections of the chapter.

Chapter Three theorises literacy, literacies, and learning. First, it outlines the historical trajectory of theories underpinning literacy and literacies teaching and learning in Australia. Then, the chapter presents the study’s conceptual framework, which incorporates Multiliteracies Theory (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000) and the expansive learning schema drawn from Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2001, 2011). This framework offers complementary analytical vantages for interpreting how particular ECTs experience, perceive and shape literacies teaching and learning. Multiliteracies Theory positions all teachers as active and collaborative designers of dynamic literacies pedagogy, in response to contemporary communicative and sociocultural diversities. Cultural Historical Activity Theory offers a heuristic for interpreting processes of meaning-making and goal-setting over time, which in the current study concern ECTs and literacies teaching and learning.

Chapter Four explains and justifies the qualitative case-study approach, while Chapters Five, Six and Seven present findings emerging from analysis. Organised chronologically, the three findings chapters lay out key excerpts of ECT dialogue and commentary in relation to each case. Chapter Eight describes and maps insights in relation to each case, and compares similarities and differences across cases. Chapter Nine considers implications, limitations, and directions worthy of further research.
Chapter conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief rationale for the inquiry under study. It has argued that the study makes an important contribution to the scholarship of situated influences on ECTs’ teaching and learning for literacies, and how ECTs perceive and shape these influences. In a broader context pursuing standardisation and the didactic performance of the basics of literacy, such scholarship is pivotal to informing communicative and social participation in the twenty-first century. The next chapter reviews literatures pertinent to policies and educational reforms affecting ECT literacies teaching and learning.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE POLICY CONTEXT AND EFFECTS FOR LITERACIES TEACHING AND LEARNING

Chapter introduction

The current study is aimed to add to our knowledge about Western Australian ECTs and how they navigate literacies teaching and learning. The three questions guiding inquiry are:

- How do ECTs perceive and shape literacies teaching and learning?
- How do ECTs perceive and shape professional learning for literacies?
- How do ECTs perceive and shape teaching and learning entailing digital and multimodal texts?

The current chapter canvases the global and local policy-landscape, and its effects on Australian teaching and learning for literacies. Ultimately, the positioning of ECTs within this landscape is of particular interest. Review is offered from a sociocultural perspective, which constructs policy-making and implementation as complex social practices set within politics, culture and history (Ball, 2015, 2016; Flew, 2014).

The first section of the chapter traces the genesis of neoliberalism. The second reviews how Australian policies for education have come to embed neoliberal concerns over time. Review thus touches on current debates about provisions for literacies teaching and learning, and mediating influences from standardised-testing, educational target-setting and teacher accountabilities. The third section follows the reform of national and state-based curriculum for English, while the fourth reviews connections between policy-making and the actualisation of teaching and learning for literacies in classrooms. The final section problematises our lack of empirical data about how ECTs
are situated within these phenomena, arguing that more research is needed. To assist the reader, **Figure 2.1** depicts the flow of the chapter.

**Figure 2.1**  
*Consecutive chapter sections*

While not intended to provide a sociological analysis of neoliberalism per se’, the following historical account sets the scene for subsequent review of neoliberal trends in Australian education.

**A brief history of neoliberalism**

Several international theorists believe that post-industrialised nations such as the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Canada and Australia, possess a common intention to improve literacy education (Alexander, 2011; Green, 2018; Harris & Jones, 2018). However, the shape of such policy-making is framed by the varying notions of governance valued in these settings (Ball, Maguire, Braun, 2012; Lingard, 2018). In this thesis, these notions are understood as impacted by a complex array of political, cultural and historical factors (Ball, 2015, 2016; Flew, 2014).
It is important to establish the points above, because public commentators, as well as many academics in the field of education, tend to refer somewhat uniformly to international and national policy-processes through the banner term *neoliberalism* (Birch, 2017; Flew, 2014; Peck & Theodore, 2015; Weller & O’Neill, 2014). According to Storper (2016), the convoluted history and enactment of neoliberalism is less frequently acknowledged. Pre-empting these convolutions, neoliberalism’s parent movement, *liberalism*, advocated democratic forms of participation in all spheres of public life. In his detailed historiography, Birch (2017) elaborates how liberalism gained international popularity in the early twentieth century, arising out of the hardships of two world wars, the global economic crash of 1929 and the Great Depression of the 1930s. After the Second World War, government protections were initiated to foster socially responsible and equitable market relations. These government-protected forms, which at that time came to be known as *neoliberalism*, garnered rising interest in Europe, America and the Anglo-American colonies. It was only later in the 1950’s, that the Chicago School of Economics laid claim to a new version of neoliberalism, which promoted efficient market operation through less government intervention, and less concern for equity and social good.

By the 1970s, according to Birch (2017), the Chicago School model dominated market and trade relations in the Anglo-American world. This model was widely critiqued as producing social injustices. A landmark example emerged when the socialist government of Chile, was violently overthrown by neoliberal adherents in 1973, assisted by powerful US politicians. Sociocritical commentators viewed this coup as supporting elitist interests over public welfare. Yet despite widespread criticism, by the 1980s, Chicago School neoliberalism became increasingly attractive to Anglo-American voters, who elected Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the UK, and President Ronald
Reagan in the USA. At their heights, their respective governments opposed protective intervention in societal and economic affairs. When the term neoliberalism is used in the twenty first century, for instance in relation to policy-setting for literacy education, it is often equated with this strongly economic approach (see Ball, 2015; Brown, 2005). However according to Storper (2016), essentialist employment of the term may eschew the dynamic ways in which neoliberal reforms are enacted in national settings. On this note, the next subsection briefly reviews neoliberal policy-making in Australia.

**Neoliberal policy-making for education in Australia**

While Australia is often metaphorically positioned at the periphery of global affairs (Weller & O’Neill, 2014), its government nonetheless contributes to, and draws on, neoliberal policy approaches at large (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Savage & Lewis, 2017; Sellar & Lingard, 2013). Federal and state-based institutions, politicians and government departments settle imported policies in view of competing political stances (Gale & Densmore, 2003; Green, 2018; Lingard, 2018). Unlike the USA, Australia’s federal government retains a significant presence in sectors such as health, housing and education (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Savage, 2016). Historically, between federation in 1901 to 1980, this presence assisted re-distribution of many publicly owned resources (Connell, 2013; Lingard, 2010). For example, and for a range of reasons which can’t be canvased here, there was strong incentive to support migrant children to improve their English language skills. After 1980 however, federal policies were recrafted to advantage the nation in international economic spheres (Connell, 2013; Reid, Cranston, Keating & Mulford, 2011). In this vein, literacy came to constitute economic outputs, rather than cultural participation (Reid, Cranston, Keating & Mulford, 2011).
International policy entities such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) were crucial in catalysing this economised version of education (Lewis & Hogan, 2016; Lingard, 2018; Peck & Theodore, 2015; Savage & Lewis, 2018). The OECD overtly encourages its many client nations\(^5\) to cultivate and compete in regard to particular policy portfolios (Harris & Jones, 2018). National reforms and outcomes, for instance in relation to students’ literacy learning, are then evaluated on the basis of data collected through standardised measures of national sector activity (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013). While this census-style of assessment will be revisited later, the rest of this section considers how neoliberal policy-making has gained influence over literacy education in Australia.

In recent decades, key federal reforms have aimed to improve the measured outcomes of education, influenced by neoliberalism as described above. Australian policy-making thus reflects the politico economic belief that strategic management of the education sector will lift the nation’s asset accumulation (Lingard, 2018). To progress productivity, education policies invoke the standardisation of teaching and learning, and hold teachers and schools to account for students’ measured performance (Savage & Lewis, 2017). Over time, this standards- and performance-based agenda has manifested in the creation of national and state-based curricula, broad-scale literacy and numeracy testing, and regulatory professional standards for teachers (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Savage, 2016). Some researchers believe (Green, 2018; Heffernan, 2018; Lingard, 2018), that under these auspices, holistic and complex teaching and learning have been devalued. (A more detailed chronology of this trend is offered below.

\(^5\) A list of paying OECD client nations can be accessed at http://www.oecd.org/about/membersandpartners/
First, in a landmark event in 2008, federal ministers articulated consensus on educational goals to 2018, producing the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational goals for Young Australians* (Melbourne Declaration) (MCEETYA). The declaration articulates the right of each Australian student to participate in quality schooling, with priority accorded to attaining world class twenty first century standards in literacy, numeracy and technology. While these goals might seem to accord with democratic purposes, well known theorist Bob Lingard (2018) comments that in parallel, these goals position Australian students as low-level competitors in global politico-economic affairs.

Consider the following segment taken from the *Melbourne Declaration*:

> In the 21st century Australia’s capacity to provide a high quality of life for all will depend on the ability to compete in the global economy on knowledge and innovation. Education equips young people with the knowledge, skills and values to take advantage of opportunity and to face the challenges of this era with confidence.

(MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4)

Lingard views the above excerpt as an example of how policies can espouse both neoliberal and democratic purposes for education, while surreptitiously prioritising the former.

Concurrently in 2008, the National Education Agreement of the Council of Australian Governments Reform Council (COAG, 2008), explicitly aligned national educational goals to economic targets. As a move towards reform for standardisation, evaluation and strategic management (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017), annual national testing was instigated through the *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy* (NAPLAN). This reform was orchestrated through the federally appointed entity, the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority* (ACARA, 2008). Previously, state governments had supported schools to use an array of formative and standardised tests to inform judgements of student literacy and numeracy progressions. However, NAPLAN’s introduction signalled new national capability for normative and broad-scale comparisons of student literacy and
numeracy in Years Three, Five, Seven and Nine, hence underpinning evaluations of productivity. To showcase these comparisons, in 2013 the federal government created the *MySchool* website (ACARA, 2018). *MySchool* allows the public to compare numeric representations of school-based NAPLAN performances. As NAPLAN became an established arrangement, data profiles were appropriated for auditing the productivity of systems, principals, and in some instances, teachers (Lingard & Sellar, 2013).

Despite recurrent political assertions of *MySchool*’s rigor, some Australian scholars are critical of its metrics, which compress complex sociocultural and contextual factors into convenient numerical indices (Hardy & Boyle, 2011; Luke, 2011). Related concerns pertain to the marginalisation of socio-culturally and socio-economically diverse students, when federal public monies tied to NAPLAN success are streamed into advantaged private schools (Comber, 2016; Lingard, 2011). Connell (2013) comments that test-based steering of federal funding has thus cultivated inequities between public and private schooling provisions. Empirical research demonstrates that in these circumstances, educational disadvantage reliably residualises in specific socioeconomic, geographical and cultural groupings (Comber, 2015; Klenowski, 2014).

In the same year that NAPLAN was instigated, Prime Ministers Rudd and Gillard released the *Digital Education Revolution* portfolio (DER) (Australian Government, 2008). This policy was aimed to provide twenty first century technologies to schools, to innovate teaching content and interactions. In neoliberal vein, the DER explicitly called Australian teachers and students to prepare for increasing

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*For the interest of international readers - Kevin Rudd was elected as Labour Prime Minister of Australia on both December 2007-June 2010 and June 2013-September 2013. Julia Gillard performed as Prime Minister for the Labour Party from June 2010 to September 2013.*
competition in the digital global job market. Unfortunately, this initiative remained more notional that actual, because promised federal funding did not flow through to schools (Connell, 2013; Luke, 2011; Murphy, 2011).

As a result of ongoing politicking to position the Australian economy in the international marketplace, the OECD’s policy-making recommendations have been substantially taken up (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017). On its part, the OECD asserts that its guidelines are pivotal to attaining successful politico-economic national ranking. When the present study was being designed, the OECD’s Education at a Glance (2015) claimed that:

[OECD activities] address the needs of a range of users, from governments seeking to learn policy lessons to academics requiring data for further analysis to the general public wanting to monitor how schools are progressing in producing world-class students... [by examining]... the quality of learning outcomes, the policy levers and contextual factors that shape these outcomes, and the broader private and social returns that accrue to investments in education.

(p. 3)

One might note that the above excerpt foregrounds similar neoliberal themes to those identified earlier in regard to the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008).

The OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is well known in Australia (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Savage & Lewis, 2018; Sellar & Lingard, 2013). In the 35 client nations, PISA is used to evaluate the literacy attainments of fifteen year old students against measurable print-based indicators for reading and writing. In Australia, PISA profiling is widely construed as evidence of quality educational outcomes, or the need for sector reform (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Carvalho & Costa, 2014; Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Luke, 2013). During her term in federal government, Prime Minister Julia Gillard perceived PISA performance as so important that she passed the Australian Education Act.
(Commonwealth of Australia, 2013), to ensure a ranking in the top 25 nations on PISA by 2025. Other neoliberally informed nations, such as the USA, also construct competitive PISA performance as a policy imperative (Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013). Such target-setting is openly critiqued in Australian academic circles, as privileging performance-oriented rather socially participatory notions of schooling (Connell, 2013; Lingard, 2018; Lingard, Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013; Lingard & Sellar, 2013).

To generalise the notion that quality educational outcomes must associate with improvements in standardised test performance, a raft of federal policies currently espouse a crisis in students’ literacy testing results. This crisis is supposed to stem from deficits in early career and experienced teachers’ professional knowledge and practices (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Mills & Goos, 2017; Mockler, 2018). Policies articulating this crisis include StudentsFirst (Australian Government, 2014) and Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers (TEMAG) (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, 2014). According to the critical analysis of Skourdoumbis (2018), StudentsFirst employs neoliberal argumentative devices seen first in policy produced in the USA. Ergo, StudentsFirst derides the quality of teacher practice and preparation, and constructs standardised curriculum, pedagogy and professional learning as obvious solutions. In parallel, Action Now advocates closer scrutiny, standardisation and regulation of ITE formats and content (Rowan et al., 2015). Together, these two policies poise politicians to undermine public trust in teacher and academic knowledge, and to control educational content and arrangements (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Honan, Kervin, Exley & Simpson, 2014; Mills & Goos, 2017; Mockler, 2018). The next section explains how in these circumstances, curricula for the subject English present teachers with opaque and sometimes contradictory guidelines for teaching and learning.
The rise of mandated curricula for the subject *English*

Australia's first national curriculum eventuated out of lengthy and complex socio-political processes (Ditchburn, 2012; Lingard, 2018; Savage & Lewis, 2018). A decade ago, as described, the federal government created the ACARA entity, to standardise teaching, learning and assessment in lieu of the goals of the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008). According to Green (2018), ACARA structured national curriculum around established discipline areas, with little consideration of theoretical complexities. One such area was predictably named the subject *English*. By 2012, ACARA’s first version of *The Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum)*, inclusive of the subject *English*, was ready for implementation in classrooms.

Two years after its initial release, Prime Minister Abbott’s Liberal federal government instigated the *Review of the Australian Curriculum* (the Review) (Australian Government, 2014), to evaluate validity and balance. The Review proceeded to critique the document for overcrowdedness, and conceptual and pedagogical flexibility. Amongst more than 30 recommendations, the Review proposed stronger standardisation, and a return to didactic teaching of the basics of literacy (p. 126). At around the same time, a government affiliated review of *MySchool* (Grahame Cook Consulting, 2014), recommended that comparisons of schools’ standardised literacy and numeracy testing outcomes should be more closely scrutinised by the public.

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7 The online document for the Australian Curriculum, now in its eighth version, is available at [http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/)
Following recommendations of the Review, the federal government created the StudentsFirst policy ensemble (Australian Government, 2014). As signposted above, StudentsFirst constructs teacher quality in regard to comparative student performance on standardised tests. Following from the mandate of StudentsFirst, state ministers of education were directed to create new curricula responding to the Review’s recommendations. In Western Australia, the newly appointed School Curriculum and Standards Authority (self-coined The Authority), produced the k-10 Western Australian Curriculum and Assessment Outline (the Outline) for implementation in 2015 (SCSA, 2014). At the time of fieldwork in the present study, teachers in all compulsory years of primary schooling (i.e. from Pre-primary to Year Six) were mandated to use the Outline for teaching, assessing and reporting. According to the same mandate, the Outline embeds or supersedes all pre-existing state-based frameworks, such as those previously appropriate to the early years of primary schooling.

In contrast with other learning areas, the content and structure of subject English in the Outline remains close to its national antecedent. In exception, some of the framing rationales are worded differently. For instance, the overarching rationale for English in the Outline asserts that:

*The study of English is central to the learning and development of all young Australians. It helps create confident communicators, imaginative thinkers and informed citizens. It is through the study of English that individuals learn to analyse, understand, communicate with and build relationships with others and with the world around them. . . It helps them become ethical, thoughtful, informed and active members of society. In this light it is clear that the Western Australian Curriculum: English plays an important part in developing the understanding, attitudes and capabilities of those who will take responsibility for Australia’s future.*

8The online document for the Outline can be accessed at [http://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/](http://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/)

It would appear from this excerpt, that the *Outline* pays some regard to socially participatory purposes for learning the subject English.

In its structure, the *Outline* retains the strands of the *Australian Curriculum English*, which include Language, Literature and Literacy. The Language strand concerns “*knowing about the English language*”, the Literature strand relates to “*understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature*”, and the Literacy strand is aimed at “*expanding the repertoire of English usage*”. Sub-strands present descriptors under the headings of understanding, responding-to, and creating meaning. Throughout, texts are understood to include written, spoken and multimodal forms, in both print and digital domains. Further, communication is explained as integrating reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. However, literacies scholars suggest that the strands and sub-strands are notably absent of this integrative and participatory focus (Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Sawyer, 2010; Tonkin & Wilkinson, 2010). Instead, learning descriptors in the *Australian Curriculum for English*, and by derivation the *Outline*, are laid out in lists which tend to fracture meaningful and functional relationships between various content elements. Some believe this list-like approach encourages teachers to sustain traditionally segmented and skills-based approaches, rather than to generate innovations (Garcia, Luke, & Seglem, 2018; Sawyer, 2010).

In regard to the content of current curricula for *English*, scholars articulate varying perspectives, and acknowledge tensions in pairing the subject English with literacies, and approaches such as functional literacy (Green, 2018; Green & Sawyer, 2014). On the other hand, several scholars recognise that current curricula do offer a broad scope of possibilities for teaching and learning *literacies*. For instance, the proposed integration of Language, Literature and Literacy strands provides many possibilities for advancing functional grammar, as well
as appreciating meaning-making inclusive of sociocultural diversity (Exley & Mills, 2012). Further, Unsworth and Macken-Horarik (2015) believe that inclusion of the concept of multimodality is useful for prompting teachers to draw upon and integrate digital and visual texts. While theorised in the next chapter, in brief, multimodal literacies encompass communications extending beyond traditional practices with orality and print, to include substantive meaning-making about visual and spatial elements (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000).

In contrast to the theorists mentioned above, others believe the concept of multimodality has not been integrated into curricula in a way which informs innovation of standing pedagogies (Lu & Cross, 2014; Sawyer, 2010; Wall, 2017). Garcia, Luke and Seglem (2018) argue that as a consequence, teachers are likely to sustain familiar and segmented literacy concepts and practices, aligned to print-based emphases. Thus, teachers may experience significant challenges in recognising, interpreting and integrating contemporary literacies, and enact contradictory pedagogies.

In addition to the above problematics, a further potential influence is an increasing political emphasis on lifting students’ digital literacy (Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Green, 2018). At the time of fieldwork for this study, a heightened emphasis on students’ digital learning materialised from the addition of the Digital Technologies Curriculum (SCSA, 2014)10 to curricula implemented in schools. A repeated theme in the wording of this newer curriculum area, is the need to foreground digital production processes, so that students may contribute to Australia’s competitiveness in the global economy. According to Garcia, Luke and Seglem, such statements resonate with neoliberal aims, rather

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10 See https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/teaching/curriculum-browser/technologies/digital-technologies2
than culturally variant and creative purposes for digital interaction. Due to its recency, the effects of this curriculum addition are uncertain. Even so, the next subsection reviews an established body of research which suggests that Australian teaching of English, and teachers’ professional learning for English, are strongly aligned to traditional literacy rather than literacies, in accord with standardised test-based emphases.

**Policy effects on literacies teaching and professional learning**

At a time when curricula appear oblique about contemporary literacies, and test-based literacy performance is a policy priority, teachers may interpret and act upon curricula in various ways (Green, 2018; Lingard, 2018). However, Australian studies reliably suggest that teachers tend to prioritise standardised assessment emphases (Cormack & Comber, 2013; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2013; Lewis & Hardy, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017). These emphases centre on discrete and testable reading and writing knowledge and skills, including phonological awareness, traditional grammar, and spelling rules.

Key studies undertaken over the last decade illustrate the veracity of this finding. Several years ago, Lobascher (2011) observed inordinate drilling of phonics and spelling in multiple primary classrooms. In interviews, teachers explained these practices as NAPLAN-oriented. A few years later, Cormack and Comber (2013) interviewed teachers in one rural, primary school in South Australia, to explore teaching and learning priorities. Many of the interviewed teachers perceived pressure from policy, as well as school leaders, to shape literacy teaching and learning for improving students’ performance on NAPLAN. Klenowski (2014) describes practices in a
national network of schools, as part of a large project exploring Indigenous literacy learning. This study points to a pervasive emphasis in classrooms and schools on fostering NAPLAN success. Strategies in use included overt cultivation of basic literacy skills; whole school timetabling for skilling and drilling; and whole school evaluation of test based literacy outcomes. In another study around the same time, drawing on interviews with thirty two primary and secondary teachers in Queensland, Lewis & Hardy (2014) describe NAPLAN data as the principal frame for strategic whole school planning. Wall’s (2017) study, involving interviews with English teachers in three secondary schools in the state of Queensland, suggests that teachers tailor episodes of teaching around select skills described in curricula, on account of perceived policy pressure to lift NAPLAN outcomes for literacy. Together, these studies seem to bear out scholarly concern about the narrow actualisation of curriculum for English.

Australian researchers have collaborated with teachers to broaden classroom approaches. Some, for instance, have worked beside teachers to enrich their understandings of multimodality (see Callow, 2013; Walsh, 2011), and appreciation of socioculturally diverse literacies (see Comber, 2016; Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017). However, Comber, Woods and Grant argue that more generally in the current policy climate, teachers in all phases have diminished opportunities to:

see, let alone experience, high-quality examples of literacy teaching and learning focused on providing all students with access to the skills, knowledges and understandings valued within schooling and more broadly.

(p. 115)

A small number of Australian studies have directly invited experienced teachers to offer their perceptions of policy influences on literacy teaching and learning. Interviewing primary and secondary teachers in Victoria and South Australia, Kostogriz and Doecke (2013)
found that teachers identify significant contradictions between culturally responsive teaching for literacies, and policy imperatives enjoining standardisation. Other studies acknowledge that school principals may be aware of these contradictions, but perceive the development of non-standardised and non-traditional versions of literacy teaching and learning as politically fraught in light of broader performance demands (Heffernan, 2018). Some research illustrates that ITE educators navigate similar imperatives for standardisation (Honan, Kervin, Exley & Simpson, 2014), in spite of the fact that ITE now interfaces with increasingly diverse pre-service cohorts (Cacciattolo & Gilmore, 2016).

Australian studies further suggest that policy steerage of professional learning has reinforced traditional approaches to literacy (Hardy, 2016; Rowan, Mayer, Kline, Kostogriz & Walker-Gibbs, 2015; Sachs, 2016). Experienced and early career teachers are likely to experience this policy steerage through professional development (PD) (Johnston, 2015; Mockler, 2013; Parr, 2010; Sachs, 2016). In this thesis, PD refers to events where external authorities transmit prescribed content and techniques for expected implementation (Mockler, 2013). In this way, teachers are told to work in particular ways, and given the materials they should use. According to Sachs (2016), PD thus reflects a training mentality, where teachers are encouraged to plan stepwise linear sequences, for achieving predetermined and measurable literacy teaching and learning goals.

The prevalence of PD in Australia is reliably indicated (Hardy, 2016; Mockler, 2018; Lingard, 2018). Almost a decade ago, a large scale survey distributed by Doecke and Parr (2011), found that PD is the primordial format for orchestrating teacher learning. Respondents described PD as usually involving one-time workshops, where teachers are coached to deliver set policy outcomes rather than professionally
generated pedagogies. On a similar theme, Hardy and Boyle (2011) found that Australian teachers do not perceive PD as fostering diverging forms of pedagogy, or dialogue about varying professional needs in context. In one of very few studies in Western Australia, Broadley (2012) found that some regional teachers are well accustomed to these transmissive formats, which for them, are facilitated by metropolitan authorities.

Alongside widespread PD, Australian policies for education mandate professional practices to be evaluated against authoritative standards, developed by government affiliated entities. Currently, benchmarking occurs against the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership’s (AITSL) *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (APSTs)(2014). The AITSL entity was established in 2011 to drive up the quality of teacher learning in all career phases. To do so, AITSL constructed an online framework structured around three domains: professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional engagement. These domains are elaborated through 37 standards, across a continuum of career development. At prescribed calendar intervals, practicing teachers must provide formal evidence that they meet the appropriate standards. According to Rowan et al. (2015) however, such evaluations are not derived from substantive professional judgements, but “inextricably linked to [external] debates about whether or not teachers are achieving the results that are seen as desirable” (p. 282). At time of writing, the politically perceived importance of this regulation is echoed in *StudentsFirst* (Australian Government, 2014), where the teaching and learning of early career and experienced teachers is rendered as being in deficit (Mockler, 2018).
To illustrate the relationship between this regulation of the profession, and its potential to influence literacy teaching and learning, it is instructive to examine a small number of video clips which AITSL (2014)\(^1\) uses to represent exemplary practice. At the time of designing this study, one example, titled *Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities*, depicts a graduate teacher using ability grouping to organise guided reading sessions. Perhaps inadvertently, the clip focuses exclusively on teaching traditional grammar. A second example, titled *Using data to improve learning programs*, shows teachers analysing and responding to students’ NAPLAN performance data. Like the earlier example, it foregrounds traditional conventions of *English*. A third example, titled *Multiple literacy outcomes*, professes to highlight digital teaching and learning. In effect however, the exemplar only foregrounds skill-based writing conventions. While these exemplars are perhaps unproblematic in singular, when brought together, they go some distance to illustrating how the APSTs align teaching and learning to traditional components of literacy encapsulated in NAPLAN. At the time of analysing these exemplars, I could find no depictions of more holistic pedagogies. This short analysis seems to confirm Mayer’s (2014) view that policy aligned representations tend to bypass contextually deliberative and conceptual dimensions of teacher learning.

Aiming to strengthen ties between AITSL’s professional standards and the future practices of ECTs, the Students*First* initiative (Australian Government, 2014) requires ongoing reform of ITE content (Mayer, 2014; Mills & Goos, 2017). Some researchers assert that *ipso facto*, AITSL and Students*First* work in tandem to shape early career literacy teaching and learning (Honan, Kervin, Exley & Simpson, 2014; Mayer, 2014; Mills & Goos, 2017).

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\(^1\) At the time of writing and since fieldwork interactions, these exemplars have been removed from AITSL’s APST framework.
Problematically, the direction of this policy shaping may well conflict with current efforts in ITE to immerse ECTs in complex and socioculturally sensitive literacies (Mills & Goos, 2017; Rowan et al. 2015).

Another important phenomenon affecting teachers’ learning for literacies, is the increasing presence of commercially produced materials in schooling. On this point, teachers’ responses to a recent nationwide survey suggest that commercial materials are widely used, and include packaged teaching programs, classroom resources and PD modules (Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017). Many respondents perceived these materials as targeting skills-based literacy pedagogies. Scholarly concern is accumulating that such materials may reinforce the routinisation of literacy teaching and learning in schools, and sideline more diverse or responsive professional approaches (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Hogan, Enright, Stylianou & McCuaig, 2017; Johnston, 2015). It has not escaped the notice of these scholars, that school personnel may perceive these commercial materials as providing the tools they need to address policy constructed deficits in literacy teaching. Further, these materials may be seen as particularly useful by those who wish to standardise the instruction of traditional literacy. As mentioned, a return to didactic teaching is a current policy priority. The aforementioned researchers have called for more investigation into the escalating presence of commercial materials in the schooling sphere. The present study enables opportunities to investigate whether and how ECTs perceive these phenomena.
Current treatments of professional learning in Australia, as described above, represent a significant shift from those of previous decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, it was common for Australian teachers to make a broad range of decisions about schooling and curriculum (Sachs, 2016). Many teachers were also active in teaching associations, where they could debate teaching of the subject English (Mayer, 2014). By the 1990s, educational researchers described such professional debate and decision making through constructs such as inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), and participatory professional learning (Mockler, 2013; Sachs, 2000, 2016). These constructs capture the situated and active ways in which teachers can engage in collective professional reflection. This collective meaning-making poises teachers to negotiate their own and others’:

- diverse intellectual and pedagogical perspectives;
- historical and biographical experiences;
- innovation of resources and tools;
- broader policy arrangements.

The multifacetedness of such participation contrasts markedly with teachers’ current positioning through PD (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Scholes et al., 2017).

The review offered in this chapter so far, suggests that possibilities for teaching and learning for literacies in Australia are vulnerable on a number of fronts. This chapter has argued that current educational reforms are strongly motivated by a neoliberal agenda, which forces teaching and learning for English to conform to traditional skills. Empirical evidence is accruing that the resulting standardisation and test orientation reduces possibilities for teachers in all phases to experience, dialogue about, and construct responsive and holistic literacies (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Honan, Kervin, Exley, & Simpson, 2014; Lingard, 2018; Rowan, Mayer & Kline, 2017; Wall, 2017). Luke, Woods and Weir (2013) argue that researchers have an
important role to play in critiquing this status quo, as well as in
signposting how approaches might develop otherwise. This thesis
argues that there is a compelling need to explore these policy pressures
and effects in regard to Western Australian ECTs. The next section
considers what is currently known about ECTs, who like their
experienced counterparts, are situated in a policy context pursuing
standardisation, and regulated performance.

ECT teaching and learning for literacies?

Some aspects of the Australian ECT experience are well
documented. For instance, a substantial body of empirical research
describes generic challenges facing most new teachers (Crosswell &
Beutel, 2013, 2017; Doecke & Kostogriz, 2005; Ewing & Manuel, 2005;
McCormack & Thomas, 2005). There is also description of how, in the
vast geography of this continent, ECTs may face special challenges
when placed in rural or remote locations. Challenges are most likely to
arise when these settings do not match the teaching circumstances
ECTs had initially imagined (Broadley, 2012; Johnson et al., 2014; Lock,
Budgen, Lunay & Oakley, 2012; Rowan, Kline & Mayer, 2017). Further,
in the current context, ECTs are frequently employed under casual or
short term contracts, a situation which challenges their attainment of
teaching and learning continuity (Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck,
Aubusson & Burke, 2013; McCormack & Thomas, 2005; Morrison, 2013;
Weldon, 2018). In general then, Australian ECTs may face a range of
conditions and challenges which have been of interest to researchers
for at least a decade.
Across Australia, various system level supports are available to assist ECTs to navigate these challenges. For instance, in each state, a registration board orchestrates minimum acceptable procedures for formally inducting ECTs into the profession, in accordance with the Australian federal Teacher Registration Act 2012 (Government of Western Australia, 2016-2018). Induction is understood as taking place over a period of years, during which ECTs transition to full registration. Through an initial process of provisional registration, new teachers are appraised against graduate level standards in the APSTs (AITSL, 2014; TRBWA, 2018). To support full registration, ECTs are expected to participate in learning modules facilitated by specific private and public providers. While teacher registration is instituted federally, state governments administer local requirements (Mayer, 2014). Current provisions offered in Western Australian schooling systems, are depicted in Table 2.1 below.
Table 2.1
Formal programs supporting ECTs by schooling system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Format</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education (DETWA)</td>
<td>Graduate Teacher Professional Learning Program(^{12,}), facilitated through the Professional Learning Institute.</td>
<td>Four face to face modules, aligned with the APSTs, undertaken over the first 30 months of classroom practice: Module 1 Professional standards for effective classroom practice; Module 2 Facilitating student learning; Module 3 Assessing student learning; Module 4 Graduate teacher conference, professional achievements and aspirations. All modules are available at no cost to employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Education of WA (CEOWA)</td>
<td>Early Career Teacher Program, available to employees through the Professional Learning Portal(^{13})</td>
<td>All staff, including ECTs, progress through a tailored pathway, where sessions include: Orientation; Faith Story and Witness; Accreditation to work, to teach, to teach religious education, and to lead; Ongoing renewal. Progression is supervised by school principals in partnership with the CEOWA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Independent Schools of WA (AISWA)</td>
<td>Graduate to Proficient - Teachers(^{14})</td>
<td>A series of bookable collaborative sessions supporting ECTs to explore issues and challenges.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these programs, at the time of this study, ECTs in the government system may attend a Teacher Welcome Day, and can opt in to receive face to face mentoring. Note that Crosswell and Beutel (2013) describe Western Australian induction arrangements as a “standout” in comparison with other states (p. 145). Further, AITSL


\(^{13}\) See [https://www.cewa.edu.au/careers/professional-development/professional-learning/](https://www.cewa.edu.au/careers/professional-development/professional-learning/)

\(^{14}\) See [https://www.ais.wa.edu.au/event/graduate-proficient-teachers-0](https://www.ais.wa.edu.au/event/graduate-proficient-teachers-0)
(2016) recently set a goal for Western Australian induction protocols to be implemented across all states.

Empirical research regarding ECTs in Australia has mainly sought insight into the significant phenomenon of career attrition, the need to foster resilience, and identity formation. In relation to the first issue, Gallant and Riley (2014) explored the experiences of nine ECTs practicing in the surrounds of Melbourne, Victoria. Salient themes include ECT disillusionment with lack of opportunities to innovate classroom practice, and limited access to individual support from school leadership. Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson and Burke (2013), who undertook a longitudinal study with forty-two ECTs in New South Wales, report similar themes. In addition, they found that ECTs employed through casual and short-term contracts are particularly impacted by lack of professional learning opportunities and supports.

Regarding career attrition, several studies suggest that ECTs are more likely to remain in the profession if they participate in both formal and informal collegiate discussions, and experience contextually meaningful support (Broadley, 2012; Buchanan et al., 2013; Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Lock, Budgen, Lunay & Oakley, 2012; McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006). Morrison (2013), who conducted an ethnographic study involving fourteen ECTs in South Australia, similarly reports that ECTs are more likely to become distressed and leave the profession, if they lack opportunities for professional learning dialogues with colleagues. To inform future studies, Weldon (2018) categorises different types of attrition, to distinguish between those who choose to leave the profession and those relocating schools.

To explore facets of ECT resilience, Johnson et al. (2014) interviewed 60 graduate teachers in the states of Western and South Australia. The study explains a range of interrelated and dynamic personal, social and contextual influences. Emphasising variation,
Willis, Crosswell, Morrison, Gibson & Ryan (2017) contrast the accounts of two ECTs practicing in rural schools in the eastern states. Echoing Gallant and Riley (2014), these ECTs identified the absence of leadership interaction and support as a serious challenge. Interestingly, in a much earlier study, Ewing and Manuel (2005) found that ECTs may not seek help from school leaders if they perceive performance evaluation to be a high priority in context. In a further layer of complexity, Heffernan’s study (2018) suggests that school principals perceive collegiate interaction as particularly fraught in the current performance oriented policy environment. Together, these studies signpost important potential influences on the circumstances of ECTs in Western Australia.

Investigating formations of ECT identity in the current policy context, Allard and Doecke (2014) depict how twelve ECTs of secondary English in the state of Queensland, navigated tensions between standardised teaching emphases and emerging professional stances. Eliciting teacher narratives, Allard and Doecke illustrate how ECTs may identify and problematise tensions between standardised approaches to curriculum, and the need to tailor teaching and learning to diverse student needs and interests. In the state of New South Wales, Gannon (2012) also explored the identity formation of ECTs of secondary English. Employing a discourse analytic approach, Gannon offers insight into ECT dilemmas and conflicts, which again concerned imperatives for the standardisation and professional regulation.

The current study argues that further research is warranted, and that one pathway would be to explore how ECTs perceive and shape literacies teaching and learning, in regard to multiple and potentially contradictory contextual and conceptual factors. Taking up this warrant, the present study is mindful of Gannon (2012), who recommends that direct dialogue with ECTs can offer crucial
information about their perceptions of “nuances, emphases, contradictions and omissions” in the current policy landscape (p. 424). The study notes other authors, who believe that informal conversations with ECTs provide a means for accessing these perceptions and perspectives (Connell, 2013; Crosswell & Beutel, 2017; Mockler, 2013; Rowan, et al., 2015). It is possible that during such dialogues, ECTs may consider past experience, voice aspirations, and analyse how their circumstances help or hinder (see Rowan et al., 2015).

**Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has adopted a sociocultural stance to describe neoliberal policy trends and impacts on Australian teaching and learning for literacies. Various literatures have been drawn on, to highlight neoliberal policy ideals invoking standardisation and comparative test based performance in education. Existing empirical research in Australia suggests that under these policy conditions, teachers are poised to reproduce traditional practices of literacy, rather than to innovate pedagogy for literacies. However, a significant research gap exists in regard to how and if ECTs perceive and shape literacies teaching and learning in this policy landscape. It has been argued that a fine grained and situated research approach is needed, to capture ECTs’ voices, perceptions and experiences. Such research has the potential to rejuvenate public, institutional and policy debate about the ways in which ECTs are steered and supported in their first years.

This chapter has crafted both a backdrop to, and rationale for, the study. The next chapter accomplishes two further ends. First it theorises historical shifts underpinning teaching and learning for literacy and literacies in Australia. Second, it conceptualises how ECTs’ evolving meaning-making about, and actions upon, literacies teaching and learning might be mapped. To do so, the chapter brings together
CHAPTER THREE
THEORISING LITERACIES TEACHING AND LEARNING,
AND THE STUDY’S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter introduction

The previous chapter described aspects of the Australian policy setting for education, and identified a gap in the research in regard to ECT literacies teaching and learning. Chapter Three historicises theories underpinning teaching and learning and conceptualises the interpretive framework of this study. First, the chapter traces theoretical shifts underpinning teaching practices in Australian classrooms. Such shifts illustrate sociocultural, political and eco-material influences (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Engestrom, 2001, 2011). Historical description leads to presentation, in the second section, of Multiliteracies Theory (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000). Importantly for the current research inquiry, Multiliteracies Theory positions experienced and early career teachers to evolve literacies pedagogy to respond to twenty first century communication and sociocultural diversities. Collaborative, critical and innovative professional Design processes are central to evolving this pedagogy (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000). The third section introduces the second dimension of the study’s conceptual framework: Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engestrom, 2001, 2011). Engestrom’s expansive learning schema is presented as an innovative way of mapping ECTs’ ongoing thinking-and-doing in relation to contextual enablements, challenges, and goals. Later, the chapter considers how this theoretical incorporation enables deepened insight into how ECTs negotiate contradictory influences on literacies teaching and learning.
Historical theoretical shifts informing literacy teaching and learning in Australia

The following account sketches historical trends in theory underpinning teaching and learning in Australian classrooms. Highlighting the enormity of these shifts, in the mid twentieth century, the term literacy was used only to denote whether someone could competently read, write and speak (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009). Now, in the twenty first century, there is broader realisation that learners need to utilise repertoires of literacies (Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018).

In the mid twentieth century, it was common for teachers in post industrialised nations such as the UK, USA and Australia, to view discrete print-based skills as the primordial content of the subject English (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Janks, 2010; van Kraayenoord & Paris, 1994). Often, this content was drawn from literature and textbooks idealising the high culture of the English empire. Tasks in reading, writing and spelling, as well as orality, supported student acquisition of valued mechanical skills and alphabetical knowledge. At the international level, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) explained that universal and repetitive transmission of this skills-based content was important for assisting students “to read and write a simple message” (1953, p. 13). The term literacy was not yet in general use (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011).

After World War II, Australians were able to take advantage of global mass production (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; van Kraayenoord & Paris, 1994). They could access a widening range of texts, including youth literature and school reading books levelled for vocabulary and sentence structure (Saxby, 1999; van Kraayenoord & Paris, 1994; Winch et al., 2010). In turn, teachers were expected to have mastered the rules of English spelling, traditional grammar and phonics (Christie
Meanwhile, levelled reading materials became increasingly popular as the Behaviourist paradigm gained sway (see Skinner, 1963; Thorndike, 1969). In brief, Behaviourists view learning as a product of changing conditions for behaviour (Mayer, 2018). That is, learning is acquired when people reliably produce specified behaviours in response to defined situations or stimuli. Behavioural elicitation is manipulated through reward or punishment. In the area of literacy, learning is acquired when students associate and produce the correct behavioural response to strings of letters, words or sentences. A common heuristic for behavioural acquisition is S-O-R, where S stands for stimulus, R stands for response, and O is a placeholder for the organism producing the response, as represented in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1
The S-O-R heuristic of Behaviourism

Notably, Behaviourists do not regard thinking, intentionality, or cultural influences as legitimate educational concerns (Schwandt, 2007). Under Behaviourism, teachers incline towards a measurement-based, diagnostic approach to producing outcomes (Mayer, 2018).

By the 1960s, Behaviourism began to be superseded by two main paradigms. First, Social Learning explained social and environmental influences on learning (see Bandura, 1969; Bowlby, 1953). Second, Cognitivism theorised the role of mental events, memory and motivation in the learning process (see Chomsky, 1966). Due to this succession, the teaching of reading, writing and orality began to be influenced by considerations of learner’s thinking and motivation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; van Kraayenoord &
Paris, 1994). These considerations lead to the generation of techniques to assist students to summarise, represent and analyse information in more efficient ways (Mayer, 2018; Winch, et al., 2010).

In the 1970s, theoretical stances continued to accommodate, elaborate or refute previous ones. Literacy teaching and learning followed suit. For example, incoming Information Processing approaches extended Behaviourist and Cognitivist principles, to facilitate students to actively encode, retrieve and reproduce specified information during reading and writing (Craik & Lockhart, 1972). In contrast, Reader Response approaches drew on students' personal meaning-making about texts, acknowledging differences in biography, culture and socioemotional experience (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1993). From this view, reading is a personal experience situated in learner beliefs and conceptions, rather than strategic improvement of mental processes. Alongside these developments, transmissive and measurement based approaches to teaching reading and writing remained common (Ford & Opitz, 2011; Smith & Goodman, 2008).

In the 1980s, Heath (1983) and Goodman (1989) energised debate about the sociocultural implications of schooling. Heath's milestone ethnographic work in Southern Carolina illustrated how schooling can accommodate and promote white middle class interests and linguistic experiences, while marginalising the language facilities of other groups. Importantly, this research took place when sociocultural groups in the USA were often segregated by law. Heath emphasised the validity of students' authentic meaning-making, but also how schooling can undermine sociocultural practices through discrimination in relation to race and social class. In complement, Goodman theorised how teachers might enrich the communicative experiences of all students, by helping them to make connections between the classroom, their unique personal experiences, and broader societal views. Together Heath and
Goodman highlighted the literacy learning needs of diverse students, the problematic ways in which schools respond to this diversity, and the need to support cohesive and equitable learning opportunities (Janks, 2010).

By the 1990s, many Australian teachers, like their overseas peers, acknowledged the importance of connecting schooling to students’ sociocultural experiences and knowledge. The resulting broadening of teaching came to be known as the whole language movement (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012). While varying across contexts, whole language approaches typically support:

- informal as well as formal literacy opportunities;
- personal, collaborative and artistic expression;
- integration of reading, writing, listening and speaking;
- immersion in a broad range of texts;
- student engagement rather than teacher transmission (Cambourne, 1992; Smith & Goodman, 2008).

Typically whole language approaches also enfold:

- language experience – connecting writing, reading and play to lived experience;
- process writing – fostering awareness of writing as a cyclic process of collaborative reflection and development;
- genre based learning – fostering understandings of the features and purposes of different text types; (Flood, Heath & Lapp, 2005; van Kraayenoord & Paris, 1994).

In Australia, this unfolding of holistic and socially meaningful literacy teaching coincided with a comprehensive political swing towards equity in education, aimed to improve the life chances of diverse social groups (Connell, 2013).
In parallel with a swing towards equity concerns, some Australian theorists interrogated how cultural and political positioning is imbued through schooling practices and materials (Luke, 2018). An important international influence emerged from the critical work of Freire (1972, 1973). This work critiqued traditional schooling in Latin American countries, where the teaching of reading and writing was disassociated from students’ authentic sociocultural meaning-making. Freire is well known for characterising transmissive models of teaching as banking education, a metaphor likening learners to passive receptacles which are to be filled with culturally dominant knowledges and language conventions. Teachers and students were called instead to dialogue about how texts privilege particular societal arrangements and forms of participation. Evolving these themes, Freire and Macedo famously titled their 1987 text, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*.

In the USA and UK, theorists identifying under the banner of *New Literacy Studies* (NLS), critiqued the validity of teaching fixed, context neutral and supposedly portable reading and writing techniques and skills (Gee, 1990, 1999; Street, 1997). Viewing language and communication as tools for cultural participation, here too, literacy was recognised as a social practice, shaped in myriad by cultural, historical and political factors. On the strength of these claims, Street (1997), asserted that schools could facilitate full and equitable literacy participation only if learners’ social and cultural knowledge was drawn upon. In common with a Freirean approach, NLS recognised the need to connect diverse students’ participation with their real world experience.
Taking an interest in the way language functions to support social participation, NLS theorist James Gee (1990, 1999) explained communication as the enactment of relationships. More specifically, Gee proposed that people interpret, attribute and act on the world in socially recognised ways, which effect and are affected by sociopolitical interests and personal goals. Language and literacy thus constantly respond to and constitute social purposes and attributions. Patterns of social interpretation, attribution and action comprise Discourses:

... varieties or styles of language used to specify socially situated identities and activities (practices). ... combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools and objects.

(Gee, 2011, p. 201)

For Gee, being literate therefore means being able to compare, critique, reimagine and reconstruct multiple Discourses in the social world. It follows that language, communication and literacy exist as processes in flux.

Australian theorists such as Halliday (Halliday, 1979; Halliday & Hassan, 1985), theorised language and communication as a totality which combines several social and pragmatic functions. From this view, spoken and written text enable people to activate meaning at ideational, interpersonal and textual levels. A central tenet of the Hallidayan perspective is that acting upon and through language, enables learners to relate to their own and others’ social purposes. In other words, language and literacy are integrally related within a sociocultural framework of understanding. According to some however, the Hallidayan approach required teachers to learn some very challenging technical concepts and metalanguage, at a time when a broader emphasis on the mechanics of reading and writing still held much sway (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009).
In current day Australia, the value of these different approaches continues to be publicly contested. However, many Australian researchers believe that such debate fosters a focus on the past rather than the future (Connell, 2013; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Lingard, 2018; Luke, 2018). To progress beyond this regressivism, Luke and Freebody (1999) inter-related historically valued ways of talking about and doing things with text forms and communications, into a heuristic of Four Roles or Four Families of practices:

- code-breaking – focusing on language units and conventions such as the visual shapes of words, letter-sound relationships, and how these synthesise to make meaning in strings of words;
- text-user practices – facilitating grasp of text level conventions, structures and purposes, and manipulating the linguistic devices and purposes of different genre;
- text-participant practices - connecting meaning-making about texts with personal experience, other texts, and phenomena of the real world;
- text-analyst practices – facilitating awareness and questioning of sociopolitical positioning in texts, for instance by developing facility with stereotypes or points of view.

This pedagogy has been taken up in some Australian (see Hill, 2010) and overseas classrooms (see Serafini, 2012). The next section explains how Multiliteracies Theory (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000) further unified but also extended concepts underpinning teaching and learning, with relevance to communications in the twenty first century.
Progression towards recognition of multiliteracies

The term *multiliteracies* was first coined in the 1996 discussions of ten international scholars, who came to be known as the New London Group (2000). These scholars mused on the need to support more life relevant and expansive pedagogy in schools. Phenomena recognised as having a new and distinct footprint in the twenty first century included:

- diversifying cultural interplays in an increasingly globalised world;
- proliferating digital technologies and communication platforms;
- blurring of national, commercial, institutional and personal boundaries for communication;
- rising neoliberal influences on life experiences, as well as on schooling.

While the New London Group synthesised broad fields such as linguistics, semiotics, cultural studies and discourse theory, they agreed that traditional approaches invoking print and rule based *literacy*, were insufficient for informing contemporary communicative participation.

Now, in the second decade of the twenty first century, changes in communications and sociocultural practices are intensifying. Children and adults around the world grapple with a huge variety of communicative forms, including nonlinear and hyperlinked digital texts, music platforms, video applications, digital news media, social media, virtual gamespaces, digital televisions, and blogging, just to name a few (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Rowsell, Morrell & Alvermann, 2017).
In response to these rapid changes, *pedagogy for multiliteracies* shapes teaching and learning around two emerging diversities (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000). The first diversity concerns sociocultural and linguistic interplays within and across local and global contexts. These interplays reflect the increasing interpenetration of social groups and cultural communications. The second diversity emerges in relation to forms of text, which people access and act on for morphing pragmatic, aesthetic and cultural reasons. In recognition of these diversities, *being multiliterate* means understanding, using and manipulating complex discursive forms, which are shaped and reshaped by sociocultural, material and political influences in context. By implication, a multiliterate citizen understands neoliberal and commercial influences on the creation of and participation in digital formats and content (Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018).

Offering a schema for understanding semiotic configurations of meaning in a digitised textual environment, Cope and Kalantzis (2013) and Kress (2010) conceptualise seven modes. Categories extend beyond traditionally recognised modes to include: alphabetical or numeric representations; oral or spoken forms; still or moving visual images; auditory sounds; gestures and/or movements of people or characters; tactile and perceptual forms; and spatio-temporal forms. This schema acknowledges the rise of images and interactivity in real life communications. Pedagogy for multiliteracies facilitates learners to understand how each mode can be configured for meaning, how configurations work together multimodally, and how configurations embed sociocultural and sociopolitical nuances (Bull & Anstey, 2010). Students gradually refine their understandings of modes and multimodality when they:
• explicitly engage with configurations in a range of traditional and contemporary texts, including digital formats;
• interpret unknown texts;
• reflect on and reframe sociopolitical meanings and positioning;
• produce a variety of texts for culturally and personally meaningful purposes (Kalantzis & Cope, 2004).

Such opportunities contrast with those availed by transmissive literacy approaches, which apply fixed and transportable print-based skills (Christie & Macken-Horarak, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013).

By definition then, multiliteracies pedagogy positions new and experienced teachers to enable plural and balanced repertoires of literacies (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Collier & Rowsell, 2014; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). Pedagogical crafting is conceptualised through a Design cycle (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000), through which experienced and early career teachers:

• draw on understandings of Available Designs - practices, artefacts and/or concepts present in context;
• Design – reconstruct practices, artefacts or concepts in relation to evolving professional purposes and understandings;
• re-Design – integrate new practices, artefacts or concepts into ongoing activity.

This Design cycle is represented below in Figure 3.2.
Collaborative professional inquiry and debate is integral to pedagogical Design, assisting teachers to innovate beyond situated circumstances and notions (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018). The multiliteracies Design cycle thus offers a very different pathway to professional learning from that implied by the PD popular in Australian educational settings (see Mockler, 2013, 2018; Sachs, 2016).

In the classroom, teachers of multiliteracies spiral student learning opportunities through four dynamic knowledge processes:

- situated practice - articulating and reflecting on available knowledge and practices, real life experiences, and interests;
- overt instruction – systematically crafting shared understandings and metalanguage about diverse texts, designs of meaning, and contextual practices, to inform ongoing co-construction;
- critical framing – critiquing sociocultural and sociopolitical configurations of meaning in texts, communications and social arrangements;
transformed practice – transferring evolving knowledge and practice to other contexts (New London Group, 2000). Pedagogy facilitating students in learning for multiliteracies thus integrates historically distinct literacy trends. Integration is intended to enable learners to creatively adapt and recraft standing repertoires, and to translate them across contexts at need (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013).

In order to energise pedagogical Design (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000), teachers need to be continually learning about contemporary devices, texts and cultural expressions (Botelho et al., 2014; Strong-Wilson, 2008). Teachers might also problematise how official curricula and assessment policies capacitate or hinder literacies learning opportunities, both for themselves and their students (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Rowsell, Morrell & Alvermann, 2017). Concurrently, teachers may benefit from analysing their own sociohistorical experiences, and how these shape pedagogical responses to contemporary communications and texts.

It is fair to say, following from the review presented in Chapter Two, that many questions remain about whether Australian ECTs recognise, value and/or wish to integrate the Multiliteracies standpoint into teaching and learning (Comber, 2015; Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017). This thesis has acknowledged that both experienced and early career teachers face many anachronisms in this regard, including oblique curricula for the subject English (Garcia, Luke, & Seglem, 2018), policy calls for the didactic production of literacy (Lingard, 2018), and lack of access to substantive debate about pedagogical development (Mockler, 2013, 2018). Yet, existing research does not tell us much about how Australian ECTs perceive or respond to these imperatives and conundrums. The next section outlines the sociocultural learning perspective of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2001,
2011), which the current study draws on to frame ECTs’ collective meaning-making about teaching and learning for literacies.

**Conceptualising ECTs’ literacies meaning-making through Cultural Historical Activity Theory**

In common with Multiliteracies Theory (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000), Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) recognises human meaning-making as both intentional and mediated by cultural, historical, social and material influences in context (Roth & Lee, 2007). That is, human knowledge and action are understood as emerging from dialogic exchanges about social and material life, which manifest diverse goals and sociocultural perspectives. The CHAT acronym flags these emphases:

- **Culture** - marks humans as inherently social beings whose language about, actions-on, and knowing-of, the world are shaped-by and shape diverse cultural values and resources;
- **History** - points to how culture, social practices and communication evolve over time;
- **Activity** - signals the social practices which people put into play in evolving cultural and historical contexts;
- **Theory** - denotes a conceptual framework aimed to explain these phenomena (Foot, 2014).

To date, CHAT has informed research in a variety of fields. In some instances, CHAT has been used to frame professional and organisational learning (see Daniels, 2004; Edwards & Daniels, 2012; Roth & Lee, 2007; Timmis, 2014), although not in the way the present study has been conceptualised. To set the scene for resourcing CHAT, the next subsection traces its main historical antecedents.
The historical emergence of CHAT

CHAT draws on a heritage of Russian scholarship, including the works of psychologist Lev Vygotsky and his students (Cole, Engestrom & Vasquez, 1997; Roth & Lee, 2007). Vygotsky began his career during the 1917 Soviet Revolution (Davydov, 1995; Wertsch, 1985). His major research took place in Moscow between 1924 and 1934, in collaboration with Leont’ev, Luria, Gal’perin, and Ilyenko. According to the literature from which CHAT draws, the Russian Politburo invited Vygotsky to revise the field of psychology, to support a shift in political agendas after the Soviet Revolution (Davydov, 1995; Leont’ev, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). This invitation enabled Vygotsky to postulate reciprocities between language, thought, social interaction and the sociocultural contexts in which they emerge (Leont’ev, 1978; Roth & Lee, 2007; Stetsenko, 2005).

One of Vygotsky’s (1978) goals was to refute Behaviourism’s disregard for people as intentioned social beings (Leont’ev, 1978; Wertsch, 1985). As explained in Chapter Two, Behaviourists construe learning as the reliable patterning of responses (R) to external stimuli (S), without regard to mental or cultural phenomena. Vygotsky claimed instead that individuals act intentionally within their sociocultural and material environments. Engestrom (2001) notes the significance of Vygotsky’s contribution to the field of Psychology at that time:

_The individual could no longer be understood without his or her cultural means; and the society could no longer be understood without the agency of individuals._

(p. 134)

Vygotsky's successors continued to recognise the significance of cultural mediation and individual intention, although world events were to divert the direction of their work.
After Vygotsky's death in 1934, Leont’ev and his colleagues moved away from Moscow and named themselves the Kharkovites. By this time, research into individual action had become politically problematic in Stalinist Russia (Davydov, 1995). Consequently, Leont’ev (1978) turned his attention to theorising collective social purposes and goals (objects). In complement, Ilyenkov (1982) highlighted how differing social purposes and goals give rise to contradictions to be negotiated. Davydov (1990) further proposed that people negotiate contradictory goals and purposes by imagining, articulating and then concretising new activities. Together, these notions inform contemporary CHAT, which offers two schema for conceptualising how social conflict prompts learning development. While both schema will be detailed below, this thesis adopts only the second, for mapping how ECTs make sense of and shape literacies teaching and learning over time.

**CHAT schema for framing ECT situated meaning-making**

CHAT is a recent phenomenon, named in 1996 when cultural psychologist Michael Cole visited Vygotsky's academic successors in Russia (Roth & Lee, 2007). CHAT evolved through various streams in the following decades, for instance through the separate work of Engestrom (2001, 2011), and Fleer (2006). The present thesis takes up Engestrom’s approach. While the breadth of Engestrom’s work cannot be visited in this brief subsection, an overarching principle is that dialogue provides the medium for social interaction and learning, allowing people to ideate, express and negotiate diverse perspectives, sociohistorical experiences and purposes. According to this view, tensions between diverse perceptions and purposes prompt people to pursue further sense-making, and shaping of activity. Engestrom thus refers to social meaning-making and action as socioculturally responsive and constantly open to reformation.
Engestrom’s version of CHAT offers the researcher a choice of two schema for exploring social meaning-making and activity in bounded contexts (Engestrom & Sannino, 2010, 2011; Foot, 2014; Postholm, 2015). The first schema maps changes in joint activity, within and between bounded systems (the Activity System schema) (Engestrom, 2014; Roth & Lee, 2007). The second schema, which is adopted in the current study, describes processes of thinking-and-doing emerging in collective discussions about activity (the expansive learning schema). As there are so many synergies between the schema, which might be of interest for future research in the area of the present study, both schema are described below.

Engestrom (2001, 2011) extrapolated the first schema, the Activity System, from Vygotsky’s (1978) notion of culturally mediated action. The Activity System depicts dynamically related components of situated joint activity. Learning maps onto changes in or between systemic components (Roth & Lee, 2007), which are always depicted in on holism, as in Figure 3.3 below.

**Figure 3.3**
*Representation of one Activity System*

*Drawing on Engestrom (2001, 2011)*
In the *Activity System* (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), as depicted above, subjects are the people who engage in joint activity. Interactions between subjects are therefore the focus of analysis. In research, subjects could be a group of teachers dialoguing about literacy teaching and learning. Artefacts or tools are the material things or concepts which subjects construct during joint meaning-making. In the field of literacy teaching and learning, artefacts might include curriculum, policies, pedagogical concepts or print and digital resources. The object is the perceived purpose or goal of meaning-making activity. For teachers, goals or purposes might concern intentions to develop a particular pedagogy. The community is comprised of the people engaging together, such as groups of teachers involved in dialogue. Rules pertain to shared understandings about interactions in the community, such as collaborative etiquette. Division of Labour denotes how tasks and interactions are distributed amongst the community. Outcome(s) are developed practices or artefacts, such as when new classroom approaches are generated.

To represent the conflictual nature of sociocultural meaning-making, Engestrom (2001, 2011) identifies four contradictions. Primary contradictions emerge in relation to one component of activity, for instance regarding differences in views on particular literacy tools. Secondary contradictions correspond with tensions between components. For instance, incongruities might arise between literacy tools available to teachers, and pedagogies they wish to develop. Tertiary contradictions involve dissonant activities, for instance between an experimental and an existing pedagogy. Quaternary contradictions emerge when new pedagogies are recontextualised in, but don’t match, other contexts.
The second CHAT schema, which is pivotal to the present study, foregrounds people’s qualitative processes of thinking-and-doing in relation to conflictual and evolving purposes over time (Foot, 2014). Engestrom and Sannino (2010) thus refer to expansive learning as “a process of concept formation” (p. 11), during which learners struggle to realise and respond to emerging goals. Possibilities for goal setting, and reflexive thinking and acting, are contingent on experiential, material and conceptual resources in context (Daniels, 2004, p. 196). Furthermore, in Multiliteracies Theory, these contingencies may be referred to as Available Designs (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000).

Engestrom (2011) delineates how learners consider and analyse situated circumstances, express goals, and navigate emerging contradictions, through the expansive learning heuristic. The following comprises the full heuristic cycle:

- **voicing** – existing practices, knowledge and conditions are narrated;
- **questioning** - existing practices, knowledge and conditions are considered in respect of multiple values, perspectives or goals;
- **analysing** - historical and contextual causes and consequences are interrogated;
- **imagining** - new ways of thinking or doing are ideated;
- **innovating** – concrete experimentation takes place;
- **evaluating** – experimental changes are considered in terms of strengths and weaknesses;
- **consolidating** – thinking or doing may be recontextualised, prompting new cycles of conflict and meaning-making.

A visual representation of the expansive learning cycle is offered in **Figure 3.4** below.
Within a cycle, some actions can overlap, but one action will often be dominant at any one time (Foot, 2014). Also, learners typically visualise new possibilities before making them concrete (Engestrom, 2011; Foot, 2014). Despite these provisos, the neat sequence above is considered an ideal type, because *a priori*, meaning-making is understood as dynamic and contextually malleable (Engestrom & Sannino, 2010; Foot, 2014). The full cycle is thus not intended to be empirically deterministic.

In the CHAT tradition, careful analysis of *expansive learning* enables the researcher to texture representations of participant lead deliberations (Engestrom, 2014; Engestrom & Sannino, 2010). In the present study, deliberations of interest concern how ECTs interpret and act upon their own and others’ *Available Designs* for literacies teaching and learning (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000), as well as navigate contradictory goals and circumstances. As mentioned, Engestrom
regards dialogue as the pivotal means through which learners, such as ECTs, can share in this kind of deliberation. In addition, he proposes that dialogue conforms a metaphorical *mirror surface*, in which participants such as ECTs can coalesce perceptions, understandings, goals and contradictions. Researchers play an important role in facilitating this mirror space, for instance through prompting analytical interchanges, or introducing conceptually stimulating resources (see Gutierrez & Vossoughi, 2010; Postholm, 2015).

Engestrom and Sannino (2010, 2011) argue that *expansive learning* can be identified analytically through dialogic markers. Presenting their analysis of eight organisational learning discussions, Engestrom and Sannino (2010) demonstrate this mapping empirically. The present study aims to pursue a similar approach. I propose that during facilitated dialogue, it is logical to expect that ECTs might voice dilemmas about their teaching and learning experiences. They might also question and disagree with some educational arrangements in situ. Earlier in this thesis, these perceptions, understandings and narrations of experience were referred to as *Available Designs* (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; García, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000). According to the work of Engestrom and Sannino, the discursive emergence of these situated dilemmas, questions and conflicts marks entry into *expansive learning*. Manifestation of more evolved *expansive learning* processes might be expected if and when ECTs generate “*novel mediating models, concepts and patterns of activity that go beyond and transcend the available forces or options*” (Engestrom & Sannino, 2010, p. 371). The present study targets if-and-how ECTs *Design* (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; García, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000) novel concepts or patterns of activity in relation to literacies teaching and learning, professional learning for literacies, and/or digital and multimodal emphases alluded to in official curricula for *English*.
Thus, further than identifying ECTs’ *expansive learning*, the present study also aims to illustrate synergies between *expansive learning* (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), and the pedagogical *Design* process put forward in Multiliteracies Theory (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000). I argue that while the pedagogical *Design* heuristic is helpful in suggesting a developmental trajectory for literacies pedagogy, the current study's fine textured mapping of *expansive learning* enables elaboration of ECTs’:

- perceptions and understandings of *Available Designs* – which might be voiced, questioned and analysed during dialogue;
- goal related *Design* activities – emerging through re-imagined and experimental teaching and learning activities.

I see resonances between the two process cycles as enabling new ways of detailing ECTs’ perceptions, situated circumstances, shifts in pedagogical intentions, and responses to challenges and conflicts in situ. Notional overlay of the two process cycles is depicted in **Figure 3.5** below.

**Figure 3.5**  
*Notional overlay of expansive learning processes, and multiliteracies pedagogical Design processes*

To summarise, it is my belief as a novice researcher, that there are unexplored complementarities and correspondences between these process based lenses, and that their overlay creates a new horizon for scholarship. Nuanced and textured findings emerging from analysis through this overlay will be presented in later chapters.

Chapter conclusion

Independently, Multiliteracies (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000) and CHAT theorists (Engestrom, 2001, 2011; Engestrom & Sannino, 2011) have called on researchers to complicate and nuance empirical inquiries into learning processes. Creating connections between Multiliteracies Theory and CHAT, this chapter has elaborated a contextually sensitive conceptual approach to exploring and interpreting ECT perceptions and shaping of contemporary teaching and professional learning for literacies. The current chapter has described pedagogy for multiliteracies (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000), which positions ECTs to evolve literacies teaching and learning with relevance to twenty first century complexities, through pedagogical Design processes (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000). These contemporary complexities include:

- proliferating textual and linguistic forms of communication in an increasingly digital world;
- diversifying sociocultural patterns of participation, interaction and communication.

The expansive learning schema (Engestrom, 2001, 2011) has been put forward to detail and map how ECTs perceive and act on situated conditions, imperatives and contradictions regarding teaching and
learning for literacies. I have argued that such mapping can complexify accounts of ECT sense-making about their professional work. To date, Australian researchers have not employed such a fine grained lens on ECT teaching and learning for literacies, or ECT intentionality. The next chapter justifies the methodology chosen to enact this inquiry.
CHAPTER FOUR
METHODOLOGY

Chapter introduction

Chapter Four begins with an explanation of the qualitative, comparative case study approach, and researcher positioning within this approach. The second section describes the three small groups of primary school ECTs participating in the study, and how they comprised cases for analysis. The third explains how qualitative data for each group was generated, the fourth accounts for the analysis approach, while the fifth speaks to issues of research quality.

Methodology is guided by the study's three research questions:

- How do ECTs perceive and shape literacy teaching and learning?
- How do ECTs perceive and shape professional learning for literacy?
- How do ECTs perceive and shape teaching and learning entailing digital and multimodal texts?

Because a qualitative researcher's subjective judgements are implicated in processes of research design and inquiry (Flick, 2007; Simons, 2009; Stich, Cipollone, Nikischer & Weis, 2012), I refer to myself in first person in various points in coming chapters. Locating myself in this way, I do not seek to foreground my own experience of the research, but to highlight the complexity of accessing and interpreting social phenomena.
The qualitative, comparative case study approach

A qualitative, comparative case study approach (Flick, 2014; Yin, 2012), was used to generate and interpret dialogues with small groups of ECTs. A qualitative approach is appropriate to exploring collective perceptions and meaning-making in context, as well as broader sociocultural influences. According to Flick (2007), qualitative approaches:

Seek to unpick how people construct the world around them, what they are doing or what is happening to them in terms that are meaningful and that offer rich insight. Interactions and documents are seen as ways of constituting [these] social processes.

(p. x)

Qualitative research is therefore underpinned by social constructionist epistemology, which acknowledges that people know and act on the world through social interactions (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Flick, 2014). From this perspective, social interactions position people to make sense of their experiences and intentions, and to negotiate different stances on the possibility of knowledge of the world. In turn, these perceptions, experiences, interpretations and actions, are set within sociocultural, historical and material influences. The next subsection details the case study approach.

The comparative case-study approach

Stake (2006) describes qualitative case studies as inquiries into bounded social phenomena or processes. In this study, a comparative case study approach (Flick, 2014; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014) enabled qualitative inquiry into how and why groups of ECTs make sense of and navigate particular professional circumstances, and approaches to literacies teaching and learning. Differences and similarities between phenomena emerging in distinct cases may signal contextual and sociocultural influences (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Yin, 2012).
Put simply, the case study approach was chosen to access and then interpret, dialogues and contextual information pertaining to each group. Notably, the study was not designed to observe or verify correspondences between ECT descriptions and school-based or professional environments. Instead, the ECTs were positioned to reflectively discuss professional experiences and issues at one remove from schooling environments. Rather than being a weakness of design, this separation was considered to allow ECTs to share perceptions, understandings and goals without concern for mediation from school peers, leaders or cultural norms (see Gutierrez & Vossoughi, 2010). In addition, dialoguing off school sites was considered to minimize perceptions that the research, or the researcher, was aimed to forward particular school-based or policy agendas (see Thomson & Gunter, 2011). The design and facilitation of collegiate dialogue was therefore a key consideration, given the trend towards regulating and evaluating ECT’s practices in the current policy scape (see Chapter Two). The next section lays out ethical principles which informed design of the qualitative comparative case study.

**Ethical principles underpinning the case-study**

Qualitative researchers are aware of methodological effects on participants, as well as on data generation and interpretation (Flick, 2007). As mentioned, a key consideration was the creation of spaces in which ECTs could authentically, and with least intervention, articulate standpoints and perceptions. While strategies for research quality and rigor of the design will be discussed towards the end of this chapter, the following account highlights how ethical considerations shaped choices about ECT positioning in the case study.
During initial planning of the case study, I was supported to develop an awareness of ethical principles through institutional training (Flick, 2007; Yin, 2012). This training expanded my existing research skills and understandings, gained during Masters and Research Assistant work. PhD level institutional training accorded with the *National Statement of Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007* (Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007), and the agreed principles of the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). At intervals, I discussed research conduct with my university supervisors and advisory panel. Further to institutional training, the initial proposal for the study was reviewed through Murdoch University's Confirmation of Candidature process, which involves a presentation to a panel of five academics from Western Australian universities. Amendments in response to panel feedback enabled the proposal to gain ethical clearance from the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) *(Appendix B)*. During fieldwork, ethical training continued to inform my decision making. The next section illustrates my intended positioning during fieldwork.

**Researcher positioning in the case-study**

Fieldwork interactions were designed to foster a series of informal café discussions with small groups of ECTs. Throughout, I mainly acted as a facilitator, and sometimes as an observer. Facilitation was planned to be proscriptive rather than prescriptive (Hung, Chee, Hedberg & Seng, 2005). Proscriptive facilitation offers minimal or loose initial support to participants, so that they can gradually shape interactions around self-referent interests and purposes. Preferred facilitation strategies included asking the ECTs neutral questions, offering prompts, encouraging turn taking, and practising active listening (May & Perry, 2014; Simons, 2009; Watt, 2007). Examples of these practices appear in transcript segments presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. Low
key strategies thus aimed to prioritise ECT dialogue, in line with theorised facilitation of *expansive learning* (Engestrom & Sannino, 2010, 2011). Because the presence of a researcher affects how qualitative data is brought into being (Patton, 2002; Simons, 2009), and the *expansive learning* approach privileges the authentic dialogue of participants, I continued to reflect on and fade facilitation as the study progressed.

Refining facilitation, I generated a collection of researcher jottings. Many were inspired by incidental encounters with visual artworks and pieces of literature (May & Perry, 2014). These jottings were collated into a researcher journal (Watt, 2007). Often the content of these entries prompted conversations with university supervisors. In this way, journaling and discussion with accomplished others aided me to cultivate researcher reflexivity (Stich, Cipollone, Nikischer & Weis, 2012). According to Simons (2009):

*To be reflexive is to think about how your actions, values, beliefs, preferences and biases influence the research process and outcome. It is an active process, an intentional, conscious, looking back on the actions you take and decisions you make to deliberate how they influence your study. It is particularly important in qualitative case study where you are re-presenting the experience of others, constructing an interpretation of the reality you observed and the stories people told you.*

(p. 91)

Examples of journaling will be offered later in the chapter, when data generation strategies are described. In the meantime, the next section describes how the three group cases were formed.
Constituting and describing the three group cases

This section describes how ECTs were recruited for group participation, the geographical and physical settings in which groups interacted, and brief demographic information about the ECTs.

Recruitment

The initial aim was to recruit approximately three small groups of ECTs, in diverse locations around Western Australia. No distinction was made for employment system. Groups were not intended to represent other ECTs or teachers in their local setting. Instead, interactions with different groups were regarded as enabling insight into bounded and particular instances of ECT circumstances. While it was hoped that groups would be recruited from pre-specifed regions, in reality, the recruitment process was influenced by pragmatic considerations (Patton, 2002). Ultimately, not all ECTs who volunteered could participate as they needed to be co-located to meet face to face.

Recruitment began with broad efforts to build a groundswell of interest in the project. First, I posted an HREC approved invitation to the study on various Facebook networks for teachers (Appendix C). Based on my professional experiences, I considered these networks likely to be known to a large number of Western Australian ECTs. Further, in contemporary times, research recruitment through social media is increasingly recognised as credible and practical (Child, Mentes, Pavlish & Phillips, 2014)\(^{15}\). Teachers viewing the post were encouraged to snowball it to other teachers (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Patton, 2002). To bolster my own efforts, several School

\(^{15}\) See further: https://theresearchwhisperer.wordpress.com/2016/11/15/recruiting-participants-using-twitter/
of Education staff also distributed the post. According to Gelinas et al. (2017), research invitations posted and snowballed through social media are a passive form of recruitment, which correlates with traditional offline strategies, where potential participants must actively contact a researcher to gain more information.

An Excel spreadsheet (Microsoft Office, 2011) was used to track contact details for ECTs expressing interest. According to their preference, ECTs on this list were sent a personalised email, mobile phone text or Facebook message. ECTs who continued to respond were sent the formal Information Letter (Appendix D). Two of these ECTs invited remote and regional colleagues to participate. Information Letters were passed to new contacts. Eventually, three of the original contacts were removed from the list when they realized they would be unable to attend meetings (for instance, one cared for a baby outside school hours). After these adjustments, the final total number of participants was seven: three in the metropolitan area, two in one remote town, and two in one regional town.

Consent Forms (Appendix E) were emailed before the first meeting and signed when I could meet the ECTs face to face. At this point, practical and ethical principles were openly discussed. Further, in recognition that informed consent is an ongoing process rather than a distinct event (Flick, 2014; Patton, 2002), ECT and researcher understandings of confidentiality and representation were revisited during café and follow up discussions. In some instances, ECTs preferred that particular information about themselves or their context be omitted from research dissemination. As a consequence, I discussed audio transcription with ECTs during final meetings, and briefly showed them transcript examples. These discussions resulted in agreement to de-identify the names of some local landmarks, cultural festivals, and the names of commercial programs used in schools.
Additionally, ECTs requested that their comments about a particular political event not be transcribed or analysed.

After granting written informed consent at the first face to face encounter, the ECTs completed a short Background Survey (Appendix F), which requested non-sensitive demographic information and a brief indication of professional goals and interests. At the end of 2016, written re-consent was obtained for ECTs to participate in a short follow-up phone call early in 2017. I did not previously know any of the ECTs and had not practised as a teacher in any of their locations. In addition, none of the ECTs had gained their teaching qualifications from the university where I enrolled for PhD studies.

**Amendment to the initial recruitment plan**

Before successful recruitment as above, the study originally received approval from Murdoch University HREC to approach educational systems for recruitment assistance. The initial plan was to present the study to interested school principals and staff in targeted areas of Western Australia, in different schooling systems. The study would then proceed independently of school sites, or school leadership involvement. However, lengthy processing delays ensued in regard to one educational system. After five months, an unexpected impasse was reached, when an email was received determining that all of the study’s transcripts would need to be scrutinised in detail by the system administrator’s office. An accompanying edict indicated that ECTs in the study would be open to legal pursuance if they expressed any negative views of their system employer. I consulted with my PhD Advisory Committee, who gave deep consideration to the potential implications of these determinations. The Committee then sought advice from Murdoch University HREC. It was collaboratively agreed, after several university-based meetings, that since the study was framed to support open professional dialogue, all submitted requests
for system assistance should be withdrawn. Recruitment was then progressed as described in the previous section, after a revision was made to the original plan. The revision was devised with the assistance of the Faculty Ethics Chair, and the Murdoch University HREC.

The occurrence of this ethical dilemma formed a backdrop for my ongoing reflections on the broader context of Western Australian ECTs’ work. As a consequence, I developed an early awareness of potential risks posed to participating ECTs, should they be associated with data collected in the study. Consequently I took particular care to protect their identities. Protective strategies included the use of participant pseudonyms in transcripts, and replacement of geographical identifiers as mentioned. Additional care was taken not to allude to identifying characteristics of groups when presenting the study at academic or professional conferences. Respecting these cautions, the next subsection provides non-sensitive information about settings in which the study took place.

**Settings of interaction**

**Geographical settings.** For ease of reference, the groups were named using metropolitan–regional–remote categories developed by the Commonwealth Government (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). ‘Remote’ denotes communities at long distances from state capital cities or other centres. ‘Regional’ refers to smaller towns distinct from state capital cities. ‘Metropolitan’ refers to the densely populated urban locations which surround a state capital city.
Although description of community settings was not within the purview of this study, some brief information may be helpful to orient the reader. The remote town had established infrastructure, and significant employment in mining, animal farming and tourism. Transience was common, with a high incidence of fly-in fly-out work arrangements. The images in Figure 4.1 below, were not taken in the remote location under study, but in similar locations around Australia. They are presented to evoke a sense of the remote landscape for the reader, in alignment with the interpretive framework, which acknowledges the importance of visual meaning making (Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000).

**Figure 4.1**
*Images evoking the remote context*

Very distant from the remote location, the regional town also had established infrastructure, and significant employment in mining, animal farming and tourism. Similar to the above representation, images evoking the context of the regional town are offered in Figure 4.2 below.
Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), accessed from the data bank of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), indicated that the remote and regional contexts were close to average. Meanwhile, the metropolitan location was situated in an established northern suburb of Perth, ten minutes travel distance from the central business district. Teachers in the metropolitan group taught in a range of socio-economic conditions. Images evoking this context appear in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3
Images evoking the metropolitan context

Images were sourced under Creative Commons arrangements
**Café settings.** A series of discussions with each group of ECTs took place in local cafés. After the first round of meetings (see again Table 1.1), ECTs chose the cafés they preferred to meet in. For example, while the metropolitan group first met in a generic venue, by the third meeting they chose a café with overstuffed couches and an outside patio area. Similarly, the regional group first met in a main street venue, but later decided on an upmarket space with long couches and contemporary music. Images of venues around Australia similar to those chosen by each group, are offered in Figure 4.4 below.

**Figure 4.4**
*Images evoking the café settings*

I travelled to each location on the date chosen by ECTs, and arranged to offer them coffee, cake and/or light savoury food. My travel safety was closely monitored through university protocols. First, I completed brief training on safety and ethical practice in fieldwork and gained university approval for fieldwork and travel (Appendix G). Second, I sent email and text updates about my departures and arrivals to my principal PhD supervisor. In view of discussions with the principal supervisor, I was mindful when walking between venues at night, and when travelling by taxi. That being said, I had taught and lived in a remote town several years ago, gaining some experience with remote travel and communities.
**Facebook setting.** In light of international research suggesting that teachers access Facebook pages for professional purposes (Roach & Beck, 2012), I created one closed Facebook page for all ECTs in the study to access between April and December 2016. Access was achieved via a single use link, which I emailed or messaged to ECTs after the first meeting. If they accessed the page, ECTs could view images and links to resources discussed in meetings. Initially, I seeded the Facebook page with select resources potentially of interest to the groups. Seeding included posts about the Literacy Shed resource, a website which presents primary school teachers with a wide variety of texts and literacy strategies, and the Dust Echoes resource (ABC, 2012), a special multimodal collection of Indigenous Dreaming stories. I chose these resources for a number of reasons. First, I had seen them promoted by respected professional entities such as the Primary English Teaching Association of Australia. Second, over several years previous to the current study, I had engaged in learning conversations about such resources with experienced teaching colleagues in schools, and with experienced teachers during Masters level research.

One aim of offering the Facebook page, was to sustain a low key connection between myself and the ECTs. I considered this connection particularly important in view of the attrition often noted in research projects spanning several months (Saldana, 2003). I monitored the page on a daily basis, and reiterated the need for confidentiality, through a permanently pinned header (Appendix H). While ECTs in all three groups viewed and sometimes liked the Facebook posts, they almost never commented on the page. When asked about this pattern, ECTs across the groups reported that they regarded the Facebook page mainly as a placeholder to remind them of coming meetings. Similarly,

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16 Literacy Shed can be accessed at: [https://www.literacyshed.com/home.html](https://www.literacyshed.com/home.html)
17 Dust Echoes (ABC, 2012) can be accessed at: [http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/digibook/2570774/dust-echoes](http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/digibook/2570774/dust-echoes)
although the Facebook page was titled “Multiliteracies Learning Collective”, the ECTs never once used this title in conversations. That being said, interactions with the Facebook page did not comprise principal data for this study, which privileged face-to-face dialogue and researcher observation. Notably, there was no attrition of ECT participants from any group in this study.

**Description of participants**

All ECTs identified as female and Australian. Most spoke English as a first language. In these respects, the groups had significant sociocultural commonalities. However, there was some variation in other demographics. Four ECTs had obtained a Bachelor in Education, while three had graduated from postgraduate ITE courses. As a whole, the group ranged from early twenties to over forty five years of age. In terms of experience, three ECTs had practised for less than a year, one for more than a year, and three for more than three years. All teachers in the remote and regional groups were employed as full time classroom teachers, while in the metropolitan group, each teacher was employed through one or more casual contracts, sometimes simultaneously in multiple schools. That is, in any week or month, the metropolitan ECTs practised in different schools, and in different schooling systems. All phases of compulsory primary schooling were represented in the study, with one ECT practicing in upper primary (which in Australia correlates with schooling Years Five and Six), two in middle primary (correlating with Years Three and Four), and one in the early years (Pre-primary to Year Two). At the beginning of the study, the three casual contract teachers taught various year levels. Across the whole group, the ECTs were employed in different education sectors. It is important to reiterate that the study made no analytical distinction for educational system, which enabled access to ECTs practising in potentially diverse circumstances. For ease of reference,
the ECTs comprising each group (using pseudonyms), are listed in **Table 4.1** below.

**Table 4.1**  
ECTs participating in each group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>ECTs (pseudonyms)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>Alese and Charlotte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Liz and Laura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>Elly, Jade and Samantha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategies for generating data about interactions are detailed below.

**Data generation**

As stated above, the study investigated ECTs’ collective meaning-making about literacies teaching and learning. The sequence of café discussions enabled diachronic generation of dialogues (Saldana, 2003). That is, dialogic data reflected meaning-making in meeting-episodes, as well as shifts in meaning-making over the longer period of two calendar years. Dialogue for each group formed the primary data for case-based analysis, complemented by secondary data comprised of researcher field note observations and journal entries (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Yin, 2012). A representation of primary and secondary data appears in **Figure 4.5** below.
The following elaborates each strategy.

**Dialogic café meetings**

As mentioned, to foster authentic dialogue, meeting interactions were facilitated proscriptively (Hung, Chee, Hedberg & Seng, 2005). I contributed refreshments to support a welcoming and informal atmosphere. I was also mindful of beginning each meeting with slow paced talk about everyday themes such as holiday experiences or a visit to the cinemas. ECTs sometimes revisited these themes during the body of meetings, appearing to balance deeper and more intense conceptual or reflective segments. Notably, although meetings were planned to take approximately one hour, all three groups voluntarily continued discussions well beyond this time, as they pursued talk about their own interests and needs.
The beginning of the first meeting included an unstructured focus group segment, to proscriptively guide talk towards literacies teaching and learning themes. While focus groups can function in various ways (see Barbour, 2007), in this study, minimal structure was provided in keeping with the participatory bent of the project. Along these lines, I created a placemat guide (Appendix I) to assist ECTs to share their perceptions and perspectives with little verbal framing from myself. For ease of reference, an image of the placemat guide is presented in Figure 4.6 below.

Figure 4.6
Placemat guide

As can be seen, the guide offered the generic prompt, “How would you describe . . . ?” along with topic choices:

- . . . your teaching context?
- . . . your literacy teaching?
- . . . literacy?
- . . . professional learning for literacy?
- . . . university learning for literacy teaching?
ECTs chose how and in which order to approach these topics, sometimes choosing to introduce other topics. The guide was inspired by a participatory format used in Johnson et al.’s (2014) research on ECT resilience. In the first two meetings, I additionally brought along a range of texts to potentially stimulate discussion. Some of these texts had won distinguished awards (Appendix J). The collection included picture books by well known Western Australian author Shaun Tan, and professional learning texts published by the Primary English Teacher Association Australia (PETAA). As explained in Chapter Three, in the CHAT tradition, resources brought along by the researcher may assist in fostering substantive dialogic interactions (Engestrom & Sannino, 2010, 2011).

While I aimed to cultivate informality, dialogic interchanges technically require participants to consider multiple perspectives, and to negotiate and/or contest ideas and understandings (Engestrom, 2001, 2011; Mockler, 2013, 2018). To encourage truly dialogic interchanges, I used opportunistic, low key strategies such as head nodding, empathetic body postures, and expectant facial expressions. Sometimes I also used specific prompts such as, “Can you tell me more about that? How does that compare with what (name) was saying earlier?” or “Does anyone have a different view on that point?” Examples of these strategies appear in transcripts presented in later chapters.

Field notes and observations assisted me to reflect on these and other aspects of dialogic facilitation.

**Researcher field note observations**

After each meeting, I wrote notes about potentially significant interactions and about the meeting context. Such observations acknowledge that communication occurs through several modes, and that discursive data includes information beyond that recorded by audio voice recorders (Gee, 2011; Kress, 2010; Yin, 2012). Notes
included my observations of ECT gestures or expressions at key junctures of discussion, such as when ECTs became emphatic or used particular hand movements. All observations were annotated onto formal transcripts, as described later in this chapter. Acknowledging that interactions with ECTs were nested in the broader context of education, I sometimes noted policy and media developments potentially affecting the broader landscape of literacies teaching and learning. Additionally, I used a researcher journal to reflect on ongoing research design, decision-making and participation.

**Researcher journaling**

Journaling assists the qualitative researcher to document and reflect on researcher-research-researched relationships and impacts on inquiry (Holloway & Biley, 2011; Saldana, 2003; Simons, 2009; Watt, 2007). To give the reader a general sense of the appearance of the journal, some images of pages are offered in **Figure 4.7** below.

**Figure 4.7**
*Images of pages from the researcher journal*

The following brief excerpts offer a little more detail about how I used the journal to cultivate reflexivity. The entry below was generated only days after the very first café meeting:
I see now how much I would like the teachers to see and negotiate critical and transformative opportunities within collective dialogue, rather than for me to be presenting an agenda up front. CHAT is invaluable for guiding this kind of take on the journey, as it encourages participants to see, think, wonder, talk and negotiate discourses and historically established practices. But even then, I know I need to be careful to design with a lean towards the participatory... For example, each time a ‘back to basics’ perspective has been expressed, it has been so tempting to gainsay or challenge the speaker. Yet I have managed to be fairly neutral.

(21 April, 2016)

Now, many months later, I see this entry as representing my initial struggle to facilitate, rather than intervene in, authentic ECT meaning-making. A few weeks after the above entry, when the first round of café meetings had been completed for all groups, the following entry was crafted. Research facilitation and participant positioning continued to be a theme:

*I am finding this no easy thing, although I think I have done ok. There are a few moments I wish I had done differently, to bring more depth to discussions. However, on the other hand, I am happy to see I may be developing a lighter touch than I previously was able to bring to the table in my Masters research. I really want them [ECTs] to consider, unveil and question through authentic peer-driven dialogue, rather than through imposed inquiry processes. My role, as I see it stemming from both multiliteracies and CHAT, is to facilitate and seed dialogic possibilities, by designing for a supportive environment.*

(4 May 2016)

Both of the above entries flag my growing desire to develop sensitivity to ECT participation. This desire also surfaced in ongoing discussions with university supervisors. I note now, that awareness of such complexities is not the sole purview of novices, as can be seen in the accounts of some very experienced qualitative researchers (see Thomson & Gunter, 2011). According to Koro-Ljungberg and Bussing (2013), growth in sensitivity to the complexities of research signposts the continual effort needed to approximate methodological and ethical awareness. Evolution of this awareness was pivotal in the multi-voiced
settings of the present study, which were aimed to support dialogic diversity and professional inquiry.

Sometimes spontaneously, my reflections struck a chord with themes I observed in artworks in daily life. As an example, one reflection was energised by a poem penned by Rossetti, to accompany his famous painting “Aspecta Medusa”\(^\text{18}\). I was drawn to the poem when scrolling through an internet blog:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Andromeda, by Perseus sav’d and wed,} \\
\text{hanker’d each day to see the Gorgon’s head,} \\
\text{till o’er a fount he held it, bade her lean,} \\
\text{and mirror’d in the wave was safely seen,} \\
\text{that death she liv’d by.} \\
\text{Let not thine eyes know any forbidden thing itself,} \\
\text{although it once should save as well as kill,} \\
\text{but be its shadow upon life enough for thee.}
\end{align*}
\]

(Rossetti, 1865)

In my own jottings, I drew parallels between Rosetti’s mirror, and my perception of research as unveiling forbidden information about education:

\textit{Perhaps in tune with Rossetti, I find myself thinking about research as a way of understanding some potentially damaging practices in literacy education. For me there are striking parallels between the transformation of the original beautiful Medusa into a dangerous Gorgon, and the current turn towards neoliberal policy agendas. I guess I believe that research affords us to see the influence of neoliberalism on education; knowledge which is at present ‘forbidden’ (see the second stanza above . . . Let not thine eyes know any forbidden thing). In other words, I believe that one of the most helpful devices for unveiling neoliberalism is the mirror of research, which allows us to refract our practices as teachers, and as researchers.}

(21 April 2016)

\(^{18}\) Rossetti’s poem can be accessed at: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45004/aspecta-medusa-for-a-drawing; Rossetti’s painting can be accessed at: http://www.leicestergalleries.com/19th-20th-century-paintings/d/dante-gabriel-rossetti/13668
While I now believe this entry to be quite naïve, it illustrates my early intention to search for meaning in-and-through research. Musing on this entry again two years later, I was assisted to transform my conception of neoliberalism, and to critique my early adoption of the mirror metaphor to represent the research process. I will comment on this turn at the end of the thesis. As an aside, it has not escaped my notice that journaling additionally offered me a way to balance the print-centric work of producing a thesis, with multimodal semiotic representations and imaginings (Kress, 2010). This propensity to visualise was also pivotal to my analysis approach, as the next section will describe.

**Data representation and analysis**

Qualitative data representation, and then formal analysis, emerged in cycles (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Yin, 2012). As is usual, the first iteration organised the data.

**Transcription and data management**

Dialogue for all meetings and follow up phone calls was audio recorded using two *Olympus* digital recorders. Double device capture enabled cross validation of ECT utterances and sounds. As soon as possible after fieldwork, I transcribed the audio recordings, using a self made protocol drawing from Gee (2011) and McLellan, Macqueen and Neidig (2003) (Appendix K). The protocol supported consistent transcription and served as an acknowledgement that dialogic interactions include extra linguistic phenomena such as laughing, pauses, emphases and role playing (Gee, 2011; Kowal & O’Connell, 2014). Emerging transcripts were labelled by date, place of meeting, and attendees (using pseudonyms). Successive speaking turns were numbered, and extra linguistic details noted in brackets. On
completion, transcripts were annotated with researcher fieldwork observations. Manual transcription and annotation enabled me to re-experience aspects of the original interchanges, and prompted reflexivity about research design and positioning (Barbour, 2007; Saldana, 2011). Because I wished to foster integrity between what Gee (2011) calls form, function and situated meaning-making (p. 63), each round of transcription and auditing was lengthy and complex (Gee, 2011; Kowal & O’Connell, 2014; Schwandt, 2000). On completion, transcripts were kept in secure storage, ready for formal analysis.

Analysis

When I arrived at the time for formal analysis, I felt a need to generate an intermediary step before CDA, and in accord with my reservations about standardised approaches to complex social phenomena, I searched for a way to visualise the data holistically. To track this search (Flick, 2007, p. 135), I began a new researcher journal. Authentic images of ‘messy’ analytical memos in this journal appear in Figure 4.8 below.

Figure 4.8
Images of pages from the analysis journal

I considered immediate use of a code and sort approach (Yin, 2012, 2014) potentially reductive. As an alternative, I looked to Maxwell and Chimel’s (2014) suggestion that visual mapping techniques can unveil
holistic complexities which might otherwise be overlooked and decontextualised through conventional coding.

To support my decisions about what content to represent (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014), I settled on exploring Topic Mapping. Emerging in recent years in the field of Computer Science, Topic Mapping enables researchers to holistically interpret large collections of dialogic data (Chandrasegaran et al, 2017; Johnsen, 2017; Nikolenko, Koltcov & Koltsova, 2017; Tornberg & Tornberg, 2016). The work of Johnsen (2017) is particularly informative, because it conceptualises how to represent dialogic structures and topic changes, while keeping the contextual flow of dialogue intact.

I adopted Johnsen’s (2017) notion that categories and subcategories can be used to identify nested relationships in a whole data set. Following Johnsen’s protocols, I crafted icons to represent the two overarching topics, ‘literacies’ and ‘professional learning’, and then used line connectors to map flows of subtopics. Topic Maps were crafted for each meeting transcript. For illustration purposes, an excerpt is presented in Figure 4.9 below.
According to Johnsen (2017), visual mapping can lay the ground for formal dialogic analysis. As an example of this application, Tornberg and Tornberg (2016) integrate Topic Mapping with Critical Discourse Analysis. Preparing to adopt this approach, I put my Topic Maps to one side, and re-examined the transcripts through the lenses of Gee’s (2011) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). As mentioned in Chapter Two, according to Gee, we use language to interpret and act on social, political and cultural meanings through particular language formations. Such analysis aligns well with this study’s proposal to interpret the entwinement of the multiliteracies pedagogical Design cycle (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000), and expansive learning processes (Engestrom, 2001, 2011).
Gee’s (2011) CDA offers qualitative researchers twenty seven strategies for identifying and interpreting dialogic language functions. The following three strategies were chosen for their relevance to the current study:

- **Significance Building Strategy** – for analysing how participants denote some phenomena as more significant than others;
- **Activities Building Strategy** – for analysing how participants attribute goals or agendas;
- **This Way Not That Way Strategy** – for analysing how participants explain their purposes and goals.

To grapple with the complexities of ECTs’ perceptions and shaping of literacies teaching and learning, I repeated CDA in cycles. Each cycle was recorded on a *Microsoft Word* matrix. An excerpt is depicted in Figure 4.10 below.

**Figure 4.10**

*CDA matrix exemplar embedding use of Gee’s (2011) tools*

While developing CDA matrices, I moved between inductive and deductive reasoning, guided by the research questions (Gee, 2011; Yin, 2012).
To deepen induction and deduction, and to make substantive connections between the two existing layers of analysis (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014), the results of CDA were compared and justified against each Topic Map. Converging and diverging results were then backloaded onto the original transcripts, to justify and triangulate findings (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Yin, 2012). Patterns continued to be referenced to the conceptual framework. Being aware that I was not generating a simple synthesis, complexities sometimes informed the study in powerful ways. Consequently, I began to reason about case commonalities and differences.

Segueing to pattern matching (Yin, 2012), the next iteration involved mapping the multiliteracies pedagogical Design cycle (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000), and dialogic manifestations of expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011; Engestrom & Sannino, 2011; Postholm, 2015). A main aim was to trace ECT perceptions of their contexts, as well as changes in thinking processes and goals. An illustrative excerpt of expansive learning analysis is provided in Figure 4.11 below.

**Figure 4.11**
*Expansive learning matrix exemplar*

To conclude analysis, I justified markers of the multiliteracies pedagogical *Design* cycle, and *expansive learning*, against previous layers of analysis. I also began to consider the rigor of interpretations and rival explanations (Yin, 2012). Results are reported in the following chapters. Before progressing any further however, I wish to comment on my analytical conundrums about participant humour.

**The (im)possible analysis of participant humour**

Given that the project aimed to foster informal conversations, it is perhaps not surprising that humour emerged as a feature. Even so, I found the prevalence of humour across the groups and meetings quite remarkable. Consequently, it is important to walk through my decision making about its interpretation. For reasons which will follow, I decided that instances of humour, as well as intimations of humour, would be transcribed but left unanalysed.

My first reasoning was that this study was not specifically designed to analyse interpersonal interactions, but rather ECT perceptions, thinking, and reflective dialogue. I consider this a crucial distinction. Second, the application of Gee’s (2011) Critical Discourse Analysis tools in this study, was not specific enough to allow inferences about paralinguistic details recorded through audio devices (Holmes, 2000; Viana, 2013). Third, and maybe most importantly, scholarly analysis of humour is not as yet well established (Viana, 2013).

Accepting these caveats, it is important to signpost that the literature examining verbal humour contains some interesting points for reflection. According to Holmes (2000) and Viana (2013), research participants can use humour for a number of purposes, including to foster collegiality and social bonds, but also to ameliorate negative perspectives in situations where collegiality is valued. Recurrent laughing or use of a ‘smiling voice’ are examples of where paralinguistic
information might denote attempts to ameliorate socially sensitive perspectives. While it is impossible to interpret whether or not amelioration was intended by participants in this study, the ECTs and I did interact in a collegial way, and often discussed sensitive topics loaded with professional and personal significance.

In summary, I made the decision to transcribe but not analyse the many emerging instances of ECT laughter. I believe this retains integrity in representation. Although not formally analysed, these inclusions allow the reader to make their own judgements about humorous interchanges, as they will. Other issues impinging on rigour, design, interpretation and representation are considered below.

**Strategies for approximating quality in research**

Rather than using a checklist of criteria for conceptualising the quality of the present study, I took note of Barbour’s (2001) suggestion, that rigour follows from considered attempts to approximate the principles of qualitative research itself. Touchpoints in this section thus concern these principles.

**Working towards representativeness.** A proposed strength of this study is its fine grained and process-based lens on ECT professional experiences, perceptions and activities in context (Stake, 2006). As explained above, case-studies are well positioned to explore situated meaning-making and changes over time (Flick, 2014; Saldana, 2003; Simons, 2009). It follows that case-based qualitative research is not intended to represent or extrapolate to whole populations (Flick, 2014; Simons, 2009; Stake, 2006). While inferences from this study are therefore not expected to generalise empirically, findings may inform the ways in which we choose to support or interpret ECT literacies teaching and learning in other contexts (Miles, Huberman & Saldana,
Further, Schwandt (2000) reminds qualitative researchers that case-based interpretation does not offer any perfect or finalisable rendering of social phenomena. However, to represent ECT perspectives and experiences with integrity, I aimed to generate a holistic and contextually sensitive approach to analysis and interpretation (Maxwell & Chmiel, 2014; Patton, 2002). On a related point, the interrogation of rival explanations was inherent in analytical cross verification (Yin, 2014). Where alternate readings of the data are credible, they are presented in later chapters.

**Balancing researcher and design effects.** Qualitative researchers recognise that any form of interaction with research participants may influence them and/or their context (Flick, 2007; Simons, 2009; Stich, Cipollone, Nikischer & Weis, 2012). As much as possible in this study, I aimed to facilitate and represent authentic dialogic meaning-making with and between ECTs. An explicitly reflexive approach was undertaken to pursue this aim. As outlined above, reflexivity was tracked through a research journal (Watt, 2007). According to Simons (2009), when the researcher’s subjective interpretive processes are tracked and critiqued, the trustworthiness of knowledge claims is strengthened.

**Taking advantage of opportunities for triangulation.** Although the study relied mainly on discursive data, findings were corroborated through multiple analytic vantages (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). According to Patton (2002), this cross-justification may comprise a means of triangulation. In addition, opportunities for episodic triangulation were enabled in the field (Flick, 2007; Saldana, 2001), when ECTs revisited, confirmed or built-onto previous utterances over a series of encounters. To reiterate a point made throughout this chapter, such strategies were employed in acknowledgement of the
complex and potentially contradictory phenomena experienced and made sense of by these ECTs.

**Bolstering credibility and trustworthiness.** In addition to appreciating the integrity of participant experiences and views, this study’s use of recognised protocols, as well as more novel strategies, was critiqued and justified during regular substantive conversations with university supervisors. Such conversations potentially assist the researcher to interrogate gaps and misunderstandings (Flick, 2007).

Committing to the above strategies, I hope the present research can be viewed as:

- dependable – research processes are systematic;
- credible – interpretations accord with the focus of the inquiry;
- transferable – there are important implications for education more broadly (Flick, 2014; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Patton, 2002).

The following chapters present case-based findings flowing from the methodology described in this chapter.

**Chapter conclusion**

This chapter has presented the methodology chosen for inquiry into the chosen research questions. The qualitative comparative case-study approach has been explained, and amenable methods of data generation and analysis have been outlined. The chapter has dwelt in particular on researcher cultivation of ethical and methodological reflexivity. Representing a contribution to methodological scholarship, the chapter additionally narrated and justified how three analytical approaches were woven together, to assist interpretation of data through the lenses of the study’s conceptual framework. The following three chapters bring the empirical inquiry, and the voices of the ECTs, to life.
CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS FOR THE REMOTE CASE

Chapter introduction

Chapter Five presents findings from analysis of the remote case, in meeting chronology order. Subsections correspond with the study’s three research questions, followed by a brief interpretive synthesis. Overall, the chapter illustrates how the ECTs in this case first perceived, then questioned Available Designs of literacy teaching and learning in situ (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000). Gradually activating expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011) and pedagogical Design, these ECTs eventually imagined and experimented with more contextually sensitive teaching practices, and sourced spaces for professional learning. By the end of the year, they identified important ways in which school-leadership had routinised skills-based and commercially informed literacy teaching and learning (see Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017), aligned to system accountability imperatives (Lingard, 2018). Follow up conversations indicated that ongoing possibilities for literacies teaching and learning depended on the conditions of schools to which ECTs relocated. First, some brief background information about the ECTs in this case is offered, to set the scene for presentation of these findings.

Brief background about the remote ECTs

The Background Survey revealed that the two ECTs in the remote group, Alese and Charlotte, had been teaching in the same primary school for more than one year. Charlotte taught Pre-primary and Year One students (approximately five and six years of age), and Alese taught Year Three students (approximately eight years of age). Alese and
Charlotte attended separate School of Education ITE programs, each attaining a Bachelor of Education for Early Childhood and Primary. Alese spoke English on a regular basis, was 27 to 35 years of age, and reported being interested in discussing students’ literacy difficulties. Charlotte spoke English as a first language, was 18 to 25 years of age, and wrote that she was interested in discussing “anything”. Alese and Charlotte appeared to know each other well. They talked about visiting each other’s homes, and frequently told humorous stories or jokes about shared experiences. While they did not co-teach, they occasionally brought their classes together for common learning experiences.

The first meeting

Overview

To create a welcoming atmosphere for my first meeting with Alese and Charlotte, I pre-ordered cakes and savouries. After Alese and Charlotte arrived, we seated ourselves at a table near the window of the town’s main street café. There, we remarked on architecture in the town, and the pleasant autumn breeze. When the ECTs appeared settled, I revisited the formal aims of the study, and our mutual understandings about confidentiality and informed consent. The ECTs completed the Background Survey, and traded banter about choosing pseudonyms. In my written observations, I noted that both ECTs professed to “adore their jobs”, and that Alese made a brief reference to administering NAPLAN during that day. While doing so, she suggested that the testing:

*doesn’t really give us [teachers] an accurate picture of anything, besides the fact of things we already know.*

I was unable to probe this comment, because at the time, I was responding to Charlotte’s brief questions about the Background Survey. But when Charlotte had completed the survey, I introduced both ECTs
to the placemat, to initiate the focus group segment. After placemat discussion, I showed Alese and Charlotte the study’s closed Facebook page, and sent them an invitation link. As mentioned in Chapter Four, I had generated starter posts on the Facebook page, which offered links to the Literacy Shed website (the Literacy shed LTD, n.d.), Shaun Tan’s *The Lost Thing* (2000), and *Dust Echoes*, an online collection of Indigenous narratives (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2012). Late in the meeting, the ECTs handled and discussed two picture books I had brought along to share: Emily Gravatt’s (2008) *Little Mouse’s Big Book of Fears*, and Alan Snow’s (2009) *How Cats Really Work*. I also showed them some iPad applications for supporting narrative learning in the early years: *Meet Millie* (Megapops LLC, 2011) and *StoryKit* (Apple, 2010). In total, this first meeting lasted approximately one hour. The following subsections present key segments of dialogue related to the research questions.

**Literacies teaching and learning: initial perceptions**

As mentioned, early in the meeting I invited Alese and Charlotte to discuss prompts presented on the placemat guide, saying, “*You can talk about the topics* [depicted] *in any way you would like to*”. Alese and Charlotte responded:
97. **Alese:** Ah . . . literacy teaching? Oh I think it’s pretty *routine*. We do like, we kind of do a Literacy Block, in its *own* form.

98. **Charlotte:** Yeah, and our school’s making one up this *year*, so we’ve kind of had some input this term which-

99. **Alese:** Yeah, which is good.

100. **Charlotte:** Into what *our* Literacy Blocks should *look* like and what they *do* look like.

101. **Alese:** Yeah. As opposed to you know they do the *Indigenous Block* [pseudonym], where it’s like, “You *have* to do this”.

102. **Veronica:** Yes.

103. **Alese:** And we kind of said, “Oh, it [the Indigenous Block] doesn’t really work for *all* children.” Well that’s what I think anyway [laughs].

104. **Veronica:** Yeah.

105. **Alese:** Every time I’ve tried it [the Indigenous Block] it’s *failed horrendously*.

In this first segment, Alese and Charlotte highlight the “*Literacy Block*” [97, 100] structure currently used in their school, and a previous initiative simply referred to as “*Indigenous Block* [pseudonym]” [101]. Alese claimed that she had found the latter less responsive to student needs in context, although no reason was offered. In my investigations after the meeting, I found material describing *Indigenous Block* as a system-initiative assisting remote and regional schools in Western Australia to develop consistent and explicit literacy instruction for Indigenous students. The strategy implements a predetermined sequence of routines, which include: a preview of the learning focus, reading of print around the room, explicit teaching of reading, small group guided reading, whole class and independent writing, and a plenary session. At this early stage of discussion, their current implementation of Literacy Block remained unclear. After a few moments, Alese [107] began to comment on her pedagogy:

> Coz I want them [students] to be independent, you really want to get them to . . . and without doing heaps of, I *know* drilling is important, and *some* things need, you know, repetition over and over again, but yeah, it’s just trying to get children to love what they’re doing.
Alese [107] seemed to signal the importance of balancing repetitive and
skills-based opportunities with independent student learning and
think?”, Charlotte [112] pointed out that her younger students were
“very different” in that they were still learning their “letter sounds”.
Charlotte [115] elaborated:

So my Pre-primaries are really strong. And my Year Ones not so
much. But then I’ve got some Pre-primaries that can’t write their
name. I’ve got one Year One who can’t write her name either. So,
a big range.

In the above segment, it would seem that Charlotte mainly points to
variations in students’ writing skills.

A minute or so later, Charlotte [128] added some detail about
opportunities she offered in her classroom:

Yeah, so my literacy it starts off with . . . letter flashcards, and then
segmenting and blending CVC words [words following the
consonant-vowel-consonant pattern] . . . and then we break up
and either do our reading rotations or our writing recounts. Um I
work with the other Year One class . . . for spelling. We do
Decoding Approach spelling. So, and we do a test at the
beginning of every term, and put them in their different levels.
So, within my spelling class, there’s three different groups within
that too. So all, they’re not all . . . the same level.

Again, Charlotte referred only to skill-based activities, with spelling and
early decoding being significant. Commercial programming occupied
some importance in planning for these opportunities. On later
investigation of the commercial program Charlotte had mentioned, I
found that Decoding Approach (pseudonym) explicitly supports a skills-
Based approach to the production of spelling.

As conversation continued, I prompted Charlotte to talk a little
more about her teaching, asking her, “What do you think your direction
is?” Charlotte [145] explained:
I’m still learning because some students don’t know all their letter sounds. So I’m still learning ways to really teach that type of thing. There’s only so many flash cards you can do. I think yeah, just repetition of writing, writing, writing, writing. Even if they don’t get the spelling right, or the letter formation right, the more they do it, I believe, they’ll get better at it.

Again, Charlotte [145] mainly articulated a small range of skill-based and transmissive strategies, which assisted students to “do” writing. But Charlotte also acknowledged the limits of her knowledge about how to “teach that type of thing”.

Later in the same conversation, Alese provided some contrast. I had simply repeated the prompt depicted on the placemat, “So... what is literacy?”

211. Alese: Yeah... (big breath out)... I guess it’s a combination of reading, writing, speaking and listening... Being able to function basically I think, in the world, with everything around you, and be able to get yourself around. Because if you can’t read, you can’t really do anything. If you can’t speak to people, you can’t communicate. And being able to communicate yourself through those things as well. Like through your writing, and have a voice?
212. Charlotte: Mmmm hmm.
213. Alese: Yes that’s really complicated for people.

In this segment, Alese explained literacy “in the world” [211] as comprised of traditional practices of “reading, writing, speaking and listening”. She seemed to have an awareness of these practices as enabling people to voice social purposes.

A few minutes later, I attempted to shift conversation to the topic of diversity, asking: “So you’ve talked about a big range in your students’ learning. Are your classes very diverse in other ways do you think?”
The majority of our kids will be low ability, with a few in the middle. Um and like culture-wise it’s mostly like Indigenous kids, we’ve got a few kids that are maybe from the Philippines and ..

Charlotte: Torres Strait Islanders.

Alese: Torres Strait Islanders.

Charlotte: Lots of Torres Strait Islanders.

Alese: And Kiwis [New Zealanders] and that.

Charlotte: Yeah.

Alese: Not really. We don’t really have .. a massive range.

The above segment might be interpreted as somewhat paradoxical. Alese and Charlotte acknowledge that their students are socioculturally diverse. Yet Alese [366] pre-empts this acknowledgement by aggregating students into one category of “low ability” [366], concluding with the statement, “We don’t really have a massive range” [372]. It would seem, that at this time, Alese and Charlotte had a tendency to assimilate their notions of sociocultural diversity into comparative constructions of ability (Green, 2018). Notably, these notions were to evolve in later meetings. The next subsection illustrates how in the meantime, Alese and Charlotte made sense of attendance at PD.

Dilemmas about arrangements for PD

In another thread, Alese and Charlotte discussed professional learning for literacy, in response to the placemat guide. At first they declared:

231. Alese: We’ve .. you know we get a lot.

232. Charlotte: We are really lucky, we do gets lots of professional learning.

Elaborating, Alese and Charlotte recounted their attendance at several PDs. A table of these PDs (using pseudonyms) is provided in Appendix L. Despite Charlotte’s perception that they had been “really lucky” [232], Alese [265] seemed confused about the purpose of this array of PD:
You know, there are some [PDs], and I get there’s the boring part of it, that’s fine. But you know, I really just [laughs], I don’t like the waffle, just tell me what we’re going to do, “This is the problem, this is the solution.” Coz you kind of don’t, there are so many PDs and so much information comes at you, you’re kind of like, “What do I use?”

In these comments, Alese does not seem to question the availability but rather the usefulness and cohesiveness of the PD she had been sent to. Neither here, nor in other conversations, did she mention any opportunities to discuss these arrangements with an experienced colleague or school leader. However, this being only the first meeting, there was as yet little evidence to interpret ECTs’ relationships with their school leaders or colleagues.

Slightly later, Alese and Charlotte offered perceptions of learning they had experienced further back in time, when I asked about another topic depicted on the placemat, “So, what sort of focus do you think you had when you were at university?”

319. **Charlotte**: It [ITE] was general yeah, they should have-
320. **Alese**: It was very *generalised*.

(seconds later)

324. **Alese**: I think there should be *more* specific units on phonics [in ITE]. It’s [phonics] a *big thing*. A lot of our children can’t *read* because they’re not exposed to phonics. … But I think that *some* of the courses are *so* generalised, that . . . you come out, and you learn on the *job*.

Alese and Charlotte implied that ITE had been too general to foster literacy practices valued in their current setting. Alese [324] seemed to emphasise this point, by associating students’ current reading attainments with deficits in phonics teaching. Consistent with this privileging of print, the next subsection illustrates how the ECTs responded to the multimodal shared texts.
Responses to shared multimodal text

Later in the first meeting, the ECTs perused the picture books I had brought to share, and talked about how the texts might be used for student learning. Leafing through the picture book *Emily Gravatt’s Big Book of Fears*, Alese [507] reflected:

You know you could use it for spelling words to be honest. If they [students] were doing the silent ‘ph’ sound. They could go through these things [the phobias depicted throughout the text]; they could *research* things on them. Um, we could talk about their fears, and how you could get over your fear. We could look at this as . . . a *text*, you know looking at the way the author’s *arranged it*, with all the different pictures and the rough *pages*, and they [students] could make their own.

Alese [507] readily recognised that students could interact with the multimodal text in print, oral, visual and spatial modes, although she did not use any formalised terminology in her description.

Still reflecting on the same picture book a minute or so later, Alese [535] exclaimed:

This is awesome, I *love* this [text]. I love like the scribble. Coz its just like the little . . . the little mouse adding to it . . . And everyone teaches children that are *different*, you know.

Beginning to express aesthetic engagement with the text, Alese again signposted that students can participate in texts in different ways. However, when I prompted more specifically, “*Do you do much work on the visual aspects?*”, she seemed to associate the text with a particular teaching purpose:

555. **Alese:** I think that’s the first thing *most* children respond to, “Is it visually engaging?” So that they want to *look* at it.
556. **Charlotte:** Yeah.
557. **Alese:** Coz if they don’t want to *look* at it they’re not going to want to *read* it. Because you know, if you’re *reading*, if they *can’t* read, and even my kids that *can* read they’d still like me to read a picture book like *this*.
558. **Charlotte:** Yeah.
559. **Alese:** Because they can . . . piece all those pieces of information together, while I’m reading it, and connect the dots.
Thus Alese seemed to position visual engagement as ultimately instrumental for procuring students’ reading of print. The next subsection draws together findings presented for this first meeting.

**Commentary on key dialogues**

In the first meeting, Alese and Charlotte mainly reflected on situated experience, thus invoking *Available Designs*. In particular, they signposted the situated importance of routinised, skills-based literacy teaching and learning, which focused on spelling, writing and phonics (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). A reliable body of empirical evidence suggests that such routines are common in Australian classrooms (Cormack & Comber, 2013; Klenowski, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017), which are likewise heavily informed by commercially sequenced literacy materials (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017). On a different note, Alese recognised that literacy and communication could satisfy students’ social purposes in the real world, and felt there was a need to balance the school’s structured skills-based approach with opportunities for students’ independent learning and engagement. In contrast with this awareness of diverse social purposes, the ECTs tended to aggregate student attainments into one deficit category of ability ranking. Green (2018) claims that such aggregations are likely when teachers fit notions of diversity into the normative and standardised performance orientations common in a neoliberal educational environment.

Regarding *Available Designs* for professional learning, Alese and Charlotte reported plentiful opportunities to attend PD, although Alese expressed some confusion about the array on offer. Alese and Charlotte were more overt about a perceived disconnect between learning in ITE, and the skills-based literacy practices valued in their school (see Mills & Goos, 2017; Rowan et al., 2015). Against this backdrop, the ECTs
expressed an aesthetic appreciation of multimodal text, but seemed to view it mainly as a tool for promoting print-reading engagement (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Kress, 2010). This perception resonates with the ways the ECTs had described their print-dominated school environment. In the second meeting, the ECTs reflected on these priorities and Available Designs in more detail.

The second meeting

Overview

The second meeting for the remote group took place in a venue chosen by the ECTs, which featured a melange of furniture and artworks. We had our choice of a small vintage table setting. Alese was first to arrive, and in my fieldnotes I recorded that she greeted me enthusiastically. When Charlotte arrived a minute or so later, the three of us ordered coffee and cake, and talked for several minutes about a local community event, and our holiday activities. After we had settled, I offered each ECT a string handled Literacy Bag, containing colourful objects such as bookmarks and author leaflets. After Alese and Charlotte explored their Literacy Bags, I invited them to view and discuss the picture book Memorial, by Shaun Tan (1999), and Paul Dufficy’s professional learning text, Designing Learning for Diverse Classrooms (2005). Similar to the first meeting, the second lasted approximately one hour.

Implementing and balancing commercial programming for teaching writing

Early in this meeting, Alese and Charlotte spontaneously evaluated various commercial programs implemented in their school. Months previous, they had reported attending PDs associated with some of these programs (see again Appendix L). Regarding Terrific Writing, Alese [112] commented:
It’s [the writing program] breaking it down [writing] and making it really explicit, “This is the section you do [for writing]. This is what’s in this section”. Sometimes I feel like with writing, we teach it so ambiguously. And then we wonder why the kids can’t do it. Because in Year Three they’re still eight years old. They’re not going to know how to write a narrative text with structure, you know? And then we kill the creativity by focusing it too much on the structure of it. So it’s that . . . that balance I think.

In this way, Alese re-introduced a notion she had talked about in the first meeting: the need to balance skill-based learning with opportunities for student creativity and engagement in writing.

However, on this occasion Alese marked a stronger tie between skill-based writing and commercial programs implemented in the school. To illustrate her notion of balance, Alese [143] recounted how she put a particular resource into play:

I’m doing ‘My Place’ with the kids for History. And we just looked at, we watched the trailer for one of them which just kind of gives them a rough idea of what it was about. And I was interested because the book is presented in such a cool format.

Alese’s [143] resourcing of the multimodal learning object “My Place” illustrates how she sometimes showcased textual and sociocultural diversity. When I examined information about the My Place resource, I found that is a television series based on an award winning book authored by Nadia Wheatley and Donna Rawlins (2008). Episodes narrate the experiences of children who lived in a particular house over its 130 year history. Narratives represent a range of sociocultural experiences, including those of Indigenous and migrant peoples in Australia. Support materials provided by the Australia Children’s Television Foundation integrate subject English focuses with cross-cultural learning opportunities.

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Beyond this one instance, the ECTs alluded only to print-based daily routines. The following short recount of a day’s events is representative:

929. Charlotte: They [students] did ah Reader’s Theatre writing.
930. Alese: That was cute.
931. Charlotte: And then they helped sound out the words for the younger students to write.
932. Alese: That was cool. And then they did reading with them as well, the little buddy readers.
933. Charlotte: That’s right.
934. Alese: It was for my kids to increase their fluency.

Noticeably, the ECTs repeat their previous emphasis on students’ production of writing. Yet as the following section illustrates, the ECTs began to critique the PD through which this emphasis may have been purveyed to them.

**Writing-focused PD**

Early in the meeting, I asked, “How’s professional learning going? You said [in the first meeting] that you were doing quite a lot.” Alese and Charlotte offered more information than they had in the first meeting:

96. Alese: We do a lot. We did ‘Terrific Writing’, I loved it.
97. Charlotte: Two days.
98. Alese: Two days.
99 Charlotte: We had a non-fiction day and a fiction day.
100. Alese: It was so good. I really liked it. But it has to be the whole school, otherwise there’s really no point. . .So hopefully the school is going to, because what happens here, is all these random PDs come up and we go to all of them and then we end up with a million programs that we don’t use properly.
101. Charlotte: Yeah. And last year we did ‘Super Writing’. So we started that last year and now we’re doing ‘Terrific Writing’.
102. Alese: Mmmm hmmm.
103. Charlotte: So we’re like, “So which one are we going to do?”

Although Alese and Charlotte enjoyed their writing PDs, Alese again expressed uncertainty about implementation of overlapping writing approaches.
A few minutes later, Alese introduced her intention to seek more context-relevant professional learning:

268. **Alese:** I’m thinking of doing my Master’s.... We’ve got all these kids; these are the problems... *I have no idea.* Because I wasn’t taught about *any* of this stuff at Uni, and... The parents *expect you to know.* You can research yourself, but I need a deeper... like understanding.

(20 seconds later in the same discussion)

311. **Alese:** If it’s related to, what I’m seeing at work, it will be good. Because it will be contextual.

312. **Charlotte:** It will make everything clearer.

313. **Veronica:** In your practice?

314. **Alese:** Yeah and that’s it. That’s what I want to do. I can’t wait to get started.

Alese thus reasoned that she needed to extend her professional knowledge, to better respond to student learning needs in context.

In contrast shortly afterwards, Charlotte recounted her continued involvement in PD-as-program, when I turned to her to ask, “*And Charlotte you were saying?*”:

316. **Charlotte:** So I’m doing a program. I’ve had two courses now, whole day courses, one where we go to [another remote town in WA]. The Literacy Coordinator and myself go, because it’s based on early childhood language. So we’ve been to [another remote town in WA] for a day and we’ve done a teleconference, for another day. So we’ve got another one, the lady’s coming to [the remote town]... at the end of the month. I think that one’s connected to comprehension, linked to comprehension.

317. **Veronica:** And then do you work with everybody?

318. **Charlotte:** And then we take it back to the staff meeting and present it. So at the last staff meeting we presented about vocab and grammar.

In this way Charlotte reiterated a connection between PD and skill-based teaching of writing.
Almost at the end of the meeting, adding detail about a different dimension of professional learning, Charlotte spontaneously exclaimed, “That completely reminds me, I have to do the modules and things like that”. Charlotte and Alese recounted their experience of graduate learning support in the following way:

1350. Charlotte: Although they’re over the weekend and they’re two days, I found them really helpful [modules].
1351. Alese: (screws up her nose)
1352. Veronica: That’s good.
1353. Charlotte: Not cool going on a Saturday, but you do it quickly.
1354. Alese: And there are scones.
1355. Charlotte: And there’s free food.
1356. Alese: (laughs)

Noticing that Alese had screwed up her nose while Charlotte was speaking, I prompted, “How did you find yours Alese?” Alese [1360] replied:

    Um, I didn’t mind them. I found them a bit boring. But . . . most of the people we had [facilitators] skipped through a lot of it so you didn’t have to do heaps of the things.

It seemed that Alese and Charlotte held mixed views about system-level graduate induction; perhaps the food, rather than the content, had most caught their attention. The next subsection highlights how despite the school’s perceived focus on writing and skills, Alese continued to facilitate classroom opportunities inclusive of multimodal texts.

**Valuing multimodal text**

Perusing my copy of *Designing Learning for Diverse Classrooms* (Dufficy, 2005), Alese spontaneously described a text she had been using in her classroom:
357. **Alese**: Oh . . . we’re reading that book right now (pointing to an example in the text). ‘The Invention of Hugo Cabret’ . . . But the one I’ve got, is like a digital, like a graphic novel as well. It was only fifteen bucks but inside it’s got all these beautiful charcoal drawings and stuff as well. So the pictures will stop, and all these pictures will start to tell the next part of the story. And then the text starts again. I love that.

358. **Charlotte**: On the Smart Board?

359. **Alese**: No in the book. It’s amazing. It’s this beautifully bound gorgeous book.

Here Alese threw more light on her attempts to offer students a range of textual encounters. Aiming to explore Alese’s rationale for using a graphic novel, I asked, “And that complex meaning-making of the graphic images with the text?”

379. **Alese**: Mmmm. Yeah . . . I really wanted to get it for them [my students/‘The Invention of Hugo Cabret’] so they could look at it, compare the book, like listening to it, watching on the, at the movies, and looking at someone else’s illustrations.

380. **Veronica**: Wow.

381. **Alese**: I said, “When you watch a movie, it’s always weird, because your image of that person in your head, and how they come out in the movie’s always different”.

382. **Veronica**: Yeah.

383. **Alese**: It’s someone else’s interpretation.

384. **Charlotte**: Yeah.

Here, Alese tacitly implied that multimodal meaning-making can be diverse, personally interpretive and aesthetic. This understanding aligned with the way in which she had previously articulated purposes for literacy in the world.

A few minutes later, the ECTs shared their responses to Shaun Tan’s (1999) illustrated narrative *Memorial*: 

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463. **Alese:** There are so many things in there (looking at the text). It’s funny how so many emotions can come through a picture... I like this (indicating the whole-page illustration of a fig tree).

(Seconds later)

479. **Charlotte:** (Looking at images) It gives them [students] time to *think*.

480. **Alese:** Yeah and I like it as well, the visual. I *love* visual art, so... and it’s about understanding. You don’t have to *write* things sometimes, for you to understand, what it is.

Again, Alese and Charlotte offered aesthetic and arts-informed responses. Importantly, Alese [480] also asserted that not all communication needed to involve writing, in contrast with her perception of writing-dominated practices in her school.

**Commentary on key dialogues**

Meaning-making in this second meeting highlighted Alese’ and Charlotte’s entry into questioning and analysis of the school’s *Available Designs*, and thus progression in *expansive learning* (Engestrom, 2001, 2011). They had also begun to reflect more substantively on their own goals for literacies teaching and learning. While many segments of discussion continued to foreground the school’s emphasis on routinised literacy teaching (see Cormack & Comber, 2013; Klenowski, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017), the ECTs were more explicit about the need to balance commercially structured teaching of writing, with creative and engaging writing opportunities. Given that arranged PD continued to focus on teacher implementation of writing skills (see Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017), Alese imagined that she might source more contextually relevant professional learning through external enrolment in postgraduate studies.
As an aside, the ECTs offered mixed views about systemic induction supports (see AITSL, 2016; Crosswell & Beutel, 2013; Government of Western Australia, 2017-2018). Meanwhile, Alese reported that she was using a small range of multimodal texts, although she seemed focused on students’ aesthetic engagement rather than understandings of visual design (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Kress, 2010). ECT analysis heightened in the third meeting.

### The third meeting

#### Overview

The third meeting began with extended informal talk in the same artistically decorated café as before. Alese and Charlotte shaped most of the conversation, and voluntarily extended our interactions to approximately one hour and twenty minutes. I chose not to bring resources to stimulate discussion, in accord with planned fading of facilitation. The following subsections illustrate how Alese and Charlotte had become more cognisant of contradictions between their own goals for literacies teaching and learning, and priorities they perceived as dominant in their school.

#### Considering teaching for subject *English*

Initially, Alese and Charlotte’s discussion concerned recent PD. This thread is presented in a later subsection. Afterwards, Alese and Charlotte introduced the topic of reading assessment, which in their school was informed by the *Trucks and Ducks* program. Commenting on implementation, they declared:

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20 It may be of interest to the reader to know, that since the time in which these fieldwork interactions took place, the SSTUWA successfully brought an action before the Western Australian Industrial Relation Commission, to specify that “two days of teacher relief each year is available to schools to support the participation of each graduate” in specific induction programs. This action suggests, at least in relation to public schools, that ECT’s are now expected to attend modules within normal weekly working hours.
346. **Alese**: Our deputy [principal], is from the eastern states, and *she* used it [Trucks and Ducks] over there, and she brought it *here*. 

(a few seconds later)

351. **Charlotte**: On Monday, we had to enter *data* on it [Trucks and Ducks], all together as a *school*. We’re becoming really, as teachers we used to do our own *separate* data collection.

352. **Alese**: Mmm.

353. **Charlotte**: And now they’ve [school leadership] *made* it so you have to do it a certain way, in *Excel* [spreadsheets].

354. **Alese**: Coz Admin [school leadership] told us [to]. Coz we do a *lot* of assessment. We collect all this data but there’s really no point to it.

355. **Charlotte**: And they’re going to make it so that if the kids are in Year One all the way to Year Six, [so] that teachers can view their Trucks and Ducks data all the way through.

This segment was the first instance where these teachers referred to whole school reading assessment. At first the ECTs seemed non-committal about this data collection. For instance, Alese [365] remarked:

> I can see the *benefit* of it. So I’ll *do* it. But if I didn’t have to do it, I wouldn’t be upset (laughs).

But in the following minutes, some humorous lampooning emerged, with both ECTs dramatically claiming to "*love data*" [370] and colouring in the boxes of the data spreadsheets [372]. Immediately after these statements, they sang part of a well known song [name withheld], clearly enunciating, "*We’re getting better all the time*" [373]. In fieldwork observations I noted:

> Although the song reference was not clear to me at the time, it seemed that the ECTs were ridiculing the data collection approach promoted by school leadership. Perhaps they did not want to say so directly.

A minute or so later, to explore whether the ECTs perceived these school-based practices as impacting their teaching of *curriculum* for *English*, I asked, "*So you’ve talked about . . . assessment. What about curriculum? How do you approach what’s in there?*” The ECTs spoke animatedly:
433. **Charlotte:** It's really big [curriculum English].
434. **Alese:** It's huge.
435. **Charlotte:** It's really massive. But this year at our school, we've got a Literacy Specialist. Because we never got given a Scope and Sequence.

(seconds later)

439. **Charlotte:** Yeah. I think that as a teacher, I need structure.
440. **Alese:** Otherwise, it's too overwhelming. You look at it all and you go, “Oh God.” And you don’t know what skills need to be taught together. But there's heaps of things in there. Like for Speaking and Listening and stuff, when you look at it, it seems really overwhelming, but it's basic stuff.

Alese and Charlotte seemed to share the perception that curriculum English was overwhelming, and that the school's Literacy Specialist had provided an antidote in the form of a much simpler “Scope and Sequence” [435]. This reductionism appeared consistent with the ECTs' previous intimations of skill-based writing, phonics and reading priorities in the school.

Later, Alese and Charlotte reiterated the importance of reducing curriculum demands, offering hypothetical advice to future graduates:

897. **Charlotte:** And as for the curriculum, don’t let it bombard you.
898. **Alese:** Yeah.
899. **Charlotte:** Just just break it down step by step.
900. **Alese:** Mmm.
901. **Charlotte:** Make it basic, yeah.
902. **Alese:** Yeah, I agree.

These recommendations again suggested that Alese and Charlotte believed the official curriculum to be overly complex, and that making practices more “basic” would reduce this complexity [901]. Despite expressing this belief, both ECTs were prepared to contest constraints on their professional learning for literacy.
Beyond PD for program implementation

At different points throughout the third meeting, the ECTs expressed frustration with PD arranged by their school leaders. For example, Alese made the following comment about requirements for her to attend a particular event:

140. **Alese:** I wasn’t asked if I wanted to go, I was told that I was going. The day before . . . and I . . . I like to do things, but it was kind of like, well you know, at the end of the day, my immediate job is to take care of my kids.

In this way, Alese seemed to oppose arrangements for PD. Slightly later, Alese and Charlotte made some inferences about these PD arrangements:

193. **Alese:** It’s just, “Here. Have some PD.”
194. **Charlotte:** But I think our Admin [school leadership], also, whenever PD’s available, they just take it.
195. **Alese:** They just take it, yeah. Regardless of whether or not it’s-
196. **Charlotte:** It’s like last year. When we did ‘Terrific Writing’ and, no we did it this year. Last year was ‘Super Writing’, like yeah.
197. **Alese:** And they’re both great programs. But we can’t run them together.

As in previous meetings, Alese and Charlotte seemed uncertain about the usefulness of PD arranged by their school leadership, and alluded to its potential overlap. When I probed, “So Admin [school leadership] wants those [writing programs]?”, the ECTs asserted:

242. **Alese:** Yes. It’s [leadership arrangements] from, we think it’s from their review. From the [system] review thing. So they [leadership] need to do all these things. (seconds later)
248. **Alese:** It’s like everything is for their ‘tick the box’.
249. **Charlotte:** Tick the box, yeah.
250. **Alese:** It’s all about ticking the box.

These comments, although somewhat vague, seemed to point to perceptions that school leadership shaped PD around criteria to be “tick[ed]” off for systemic performance management review. Slightly later in the same conversation, Alese and Charlotte asserted somewhat
forcefully that leadership in turn positioned them as non-participants in professional decision-making:

262. Alese: [loudly] We're professionals. If they want me to do something in my job, I'll do it, but just tell me what it is. I don’t have a problem with it. Sorry I just bumped you with my elbow.


264. Alese: [smiling] I’m making a noise now [referring to her loud, humorous tone]. So yeah, it’s a bit interesting sometimes.

265. Veronica: Mmm.

266. Alese: We [teachers] all sit there sometimes and start guessing, (dramatic) “I wonder why we’re doing this?” It’s like a game.


In fieldnotes about this segment, I recorded that Alese and Charlotte had again become humorously dramatic. Later, I clarified that “Secret Squirrels” [268] is the title of a famous 1960s American television cartoon, about the antics of two spy-detective squirrels21. Use of this metaphor seemed to highlight that Alese and Charlotte had not been invited to participate in decision-making about their professional learning.

A minute or so later, Alese [299] commented on how she would prefer to be positioned:

But it would be nice to know, if the school can communicate openly. And there’d be a bit more trust and a bit more you know, “This is what’s going on. Blah blah blah blah.” “Ok, cool.” And then you can prepare yourself, for whatever you’ve got to do. . . . Then we’d be a bit more willing, to be a bit more flexible, if you know what’s going on.

Alese[299] was quite explicit about her wish to dialogue with leadership, and her perception that this would provide her with professional direction.

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21 For interest, see further information about the cartoon at http://nostalgicentral.com/television/tv-by-decade/tv-shows-1960s/secret-squirrel/
Late in the meeting, Alese [740] suggested that her very recent postgraduate enrolment had provided her with an alternate space to participate in professional knowledge work:

I have to actually go out and seek this information [through postgraduate study]. It’s not given to me. You know, and all this new research that’s being done. I don’t know anything about it. The only reason I know now is because I’m actively looking for it. You know, all these studies that are done . . on everything under the sun. . All these programs. Are we running the most efficient program? You don’t know, because we don’t have access to that research unless we go out and physically do it ourselves. And it doesn’t really, I don’t even know if Admin [school leadership] knows.

Alese [740] recounted how enrolment in external postgraduate study had helped her access new professional knowledge(s) informed by a range of academic research. Of particular interest to this study, these encounters seemed to poise Alese to challenge the literacy “programs” implemented in her school. She again connoted an absence of substantive literacies learning conversations with school leadership. Additionally, and for the first time, Alese signposted the potential limitations in her leadership’s knowledge base. Despite gaining these insights however, the next subsection illustrates that ECTs’ perceptions of multimodal teaching and learning had not changed significantly.

The instrumental value of teaching viewing

After discussing English curriculum earlier in the meeting, I asked Alese and Charlotte, “What about viewing . . coz that’s in there as well?”

465. **Alese**: I think with my kids they view things in a general sense all the time. Like we watch things on the internet all the time. We watch YouTube videos. But then the actual viewing aspect, if you look at it as like a marked curriculum outcome, I couldn’t really say that I specifically target a particular task to do viewing. I’ll just include it.

466. **Charlotte**: Yeah.

467. **Alese**: In whatever I’m doing. It’s like a hidden extra. It’s integrated, but it’s not like I specifically teach it.
These comments resonated with ECTs’ previous perceptions of the importance of teaching and learning for traditional literacy, and the need to reduce the complexity of official curricula.

**Commentary on key dialogues**

During this meeting, discussion mainly focused on ECT goals for more active participation in professional learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011). When ECTs did discuss literacy teaching and learning, they espoused a reductive approach to official curricula for *English* (see Green, 2018; Australian Government, 2014), aligned to facilitation of skills-based basics (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). On the other hand, both ECTs appeared to lampoon the school’s test-based data collection approach. Against this backdrop, they positioned teaching of viewing as an optional extra, a finding which touches on the concerns of several curriculum commentators (Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Green, 2018; Lingard, 2018). Beginning to critique her positioning as an implementer of commercial PD for writing (see Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017), Alese highlighted how her tertiary studies were now providing her with substantive and contextually meaningful learning. Alese thus appeared to be concretising new activity (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), and exploring literacies teaching and learning *Design*.

**The fourth meeting**

**Overview**

The final meeting for the remote group took place after the conclusion of the 2016 school year. Both Alese and Charlotte had relocated to the metropolitan area. After some messaging between ourselves, the ECTs decided that this time we would meet at a warehouse-style, seaside café. In fieldnotes, I recorded:
Charlotte arrives first. Initially, she does not offer as much eye contact or smile as much as in previous meetings. I am not sure why. I try to get her talking while we wait for Alese . . . After a few minutes Charlotte says she has been worried for weeks about [taking up] her new position. Gradually she relaxes as we chat.

So Charlotte and I talked for several minutes in the summer sunshine, about her change in living circumstances. After Alese arrived, the ECTs seated us under a large yellow bistro-umbrella. Like previous meetings, the fourth began with refreshments and extended informal talk. The meeting continued to be informal and unstructured throughout, lasting approximately one hour and twenty minutes.

**Informing notions of quality**

Much of this meeting was taken up with ECTs’ reflections on their year in retrospect, and circumstances they might face in the next. At one point, Alese remarked to Charlotte that she wanted to adjust how she selected literacy resources:

504. **Alese:** I don’t think I will spend so much time [next year] worrying about . . . how things look. Like whether I’d laminated it or got the stickers on the tub. . . . I think . . . as a teacher I . . . I would spend all this time on this resource, and then not look into enough research on it. And I would just end up with this resource and go, (high pitched), “Oh it’s great. Look it’s pretty”. And then I’m like, “Oh, it’s not really very good”.

505. **Charlotte:** Yep.

506. **Alese:** So I’m going to filter my resources a bit more, and really think about what I’m doing. “What do I need this for?” Otherwise you just buy stuff or get stuff online and laminate it, and I’ve got this box of stuff that I’ll probably never use. Because now I’ve gone, “Oh that’s probably not the best.”

(seconds later)

510. **Alese:** Ooo. Um, it’s not the best approach to just randomly find these resources that you type in. Um like Guided Reading resources, all this stuff comes up, and you just download it. And I’m like, “Yay, I have resources.”

511. **Charlotte:** Whereas you could just re-use ones you already have. Like that ‘repetition words’ one.

512. **Alese:** Yeah. Yeah. So quality not quantity.
Although the above segment might seem incidental, Alese now sees herself as “really think[ing] about” [506] literacy resourcing. Interestingly, she notes how previously, she would not have accessed research, perhaps making a connection here with her recent postgraduate study. In conclusion, Alese [512] associated this inquiry with the term “quality”, although notably, Charlotte [511] still drew discussion back to the skills and print-based emphases salient in her experience. The next section portrays ECTs’ much deeper reflections about seeking new employment.

Deciding to relocate schools

At the beginning of the meeting, Alese and Charlotte alluded to their recent change of employment circumstances. I was aware of these changes, although not in any detail. After our first stretch of catch-up talk, Alese explained why they had both decided to relocate:

351. Alese: I think because we kind of . . weren’t enjoying . . . our current leadership.
353. Alese: It was easy to go [to a new school]. Coz our current leadership, it was a bit, for me he/she’s unorganised. And he/she doesn’t know whether he/she’s coming or going. And he/she didn’t know [about Alese’s plan to leave] (laughing), see I applied for a job after week eight [the last fortnight of the school year].

Here Alese [351, 353] makes a fairly direct connection between tensions with leadership in the school, and the ECTs’ decisions to leave. Later, Charlotte and Alese mused on leadership practices contributing to this tension:

475. Charlotte: We had to do all this testing.
476. Alese: Mmm.
477. Charlotte: But why? Whereas at the new school [to which Charlotte is relocating], we’re going to have to explain it. Talk through it and everything, not just file it away.

(seconds later)

480. Alese: I was whipping off all these tests for these kids and assessing them constantly, but . . we didn’t do anything with it [at the remote school].
Representing a significant shift from lampooning the school’s data collection strategies in the previous meeting, Alese and Charlotte now expressed explicit critique. When I asked, "Was that approach agreed upon?", Charlotte [489] reiterated that such decisions were made by school leaders, with, "No follow up" [489] with teachers. Reinforcing this view, Alese remarked, "Nuh, there was none of that" [494]. Overall, this segment lends further insight into a long-term disconnect between leadership and ECT purposes.

Shortly afterwards I asked if, “Anything else happened at the end of the year?” Alese and Charlotte alerted me to another contradiction in purposes, regarding writing programming:

562. Charlotte: Did we tell you, Alese and I got sent to [another remote town] for the ‘Terrific Writing’ master class?
563. Alese: Mmm.
564. Veronica: Oooh.
565. Charlotte: (laughing) In the hopes that we were going to ..
566. Alese: (laughing) Run it next year at the school.
567. Charlotte: (laughing) Be the experts the next year.
568. Alese: (laughing) But we were both leaving [the school].
We had a really awkward meeting [with the principal].

These remarks denote how, from the ECTs’ perspectives, leadership sought to position them as key implementers of the "Terrific Writing" program. Elaborating on this positioning a few minutes later, Alese [595] declared:

Everyone’s just bam, bam, bam (repeatedly smacking her hand into her palm). Everyone’s doing it. Yeah but it doesn’t really work like that though, because you don’t, if not everyone knows what they’re doing, and you’re being forced to do something, you don’t like it.

Accompanied by gestures of hand smacking, Alese’s [595] phrase “you’re being forced” emphasised how implementation imperatives seemed to run counter to teachers’ substantive learning. Slightly later in the same conversation, Alese continued this theme:
676. **Alese**: I want whoever I’m working for to trust me and know that it’s the kids I’m working for. Coz that’s our job.

677. **Charlotte**: Yeah.

678. **Alese**: So I think *that’s* the biggest thing that made me go, “Nuh, I want to leave, because you [leadership] don’t trust me, you think that I don’t know” (laughs).

Alese [676, 678] thus suggests that being a professional should entail being trusted to make contextually appropriate judgments about literacy teaching and learning.

Late in the meeting, Alese commented further on her experience of external postgraduate study:

1248. **Alese**: I just like that I get access to [as a postgraduate], you know like journal articles and things that we *don’t* get access to *normally*, because we’re not at university. About things that do concern us, like Guided Reading programs. Are they effective? You know? How does it work for a kid who has a learning difficulty? How does it work for you know? And all these studies that are being done, we know *nothing* about . . . and they’re important to us, because they impact us. Does this program actually work?  

(a few seconds later)

1252. **Alese**: So yeah, I think learning about these things is definitely making me rethink a lot of things that I do and my approach to things.

In continuity with the previous meeting, external postgraduate study seemed to be providing Alese with opportunities to critique programmatic literacy routines. This substantive meaning-making was also evident when the ECTs reflected on their access to digital tools over the past year.

**Critiquing lack of operational technology**

Throughout this meeting, the ECTs reflected back on experiences they had in 2016, and experiences they might have in their prospective schools the next year. One such discussion arose when I happened to ask Alese and Charlotte if their remote school had integrated “*an emphasis on technology*”. They responded:
659. **Alese:** I’m excited to have a Smartboard that works [at the new school].
660. **Charlotte:** (laughs)
661. **Alese:** We got all these brand new Smart Boards in the school [original remote school], but they weren’t installed properly. So they didn’t work.
662. **Veronica:** Oooh no (laughs).
663. **Alese:** So we had these amazing tap screen things . . . and we said something [to school leadership], but nothing got done. Um so all these amazing touch screens, and all this awesome stuff, but they were just, you know, a really good TV screen for YouTube clips, basically.
664. **Charlotte:** (laughs) (modelling being told) “Don’t touch it.”
665. **Alese:** And I can’t write on them. Coz they’re, it leaves a shadow, so (laughs) I’m excited to . . . not have to deal with those kind of technological issues [at the next school].

Suggesting that they had not been equipped with operational technology, Alese [661, 663, 665] and Charlotte [664] demonstrated new critical awareness of how leadership arrangements may have constrained their literacies teaching and learning during 2016.

Continuing the conversation, I asked, “Why do you think that would happen?”

669. **Charlotte:** It looks good.
670. **Alese:** It looks good. We’ve all got Smart Boards in the classroom. But I think there was a lot of things not working up North, the Admin [school leaders] just kind of want them to look good. They don’t actually care. And they don’t listen to what, I don’t think one of them listened to what we wanted, as teachers. I get it, you’re the boss. I don’t have a problem with that. But we are in contact with those kids every single day . . . We need to know what’s going on. We need to use these tools. And if they don’t work, we just get resentful about it.

This excerpt provides additional evidence that these ECTs perceived their leadership as not focused on teachers’ and students’ learning needs. Meanwhile, Alese’s [670] acknowledgement of the “need” to use digital tools intimated her intention to broaden literacies practices to those involving digital technology. Ultimately, this goal-setting presaged changes in the following year, at least for Alese. However
before visiting these future developments, the next subsection comments on findings emerging from the fourth meeting.

**Commentary on key dialogues**

A major development in this meeting concerned ECTs’ recognition of a contradiction (Engestrom, 2001, 2011) between their goal to participate in contextually responsive decision-making, and their positioning as implementers of program-based literacy (see Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017). Now openly analysing and critiquing priorities at large, the ECTs attributed school leadership as operating from a performance-based agenda (see Heffernan, 2018; Lingard, 2018). In another thread, Alese and Charlotte questioned an associated lack of access to operational digital tools, which they considered a constraint on classroom pedagogy.

Making a decision commonly seen in the early career phase (Broadley, 2012; Buchanan et al., 2013; Lock, Budgen, Lunay & Oakley, 2012; Morrison, 2013), both ECTs traversed this contradiction (Engestrom, 2001, 2011) by deciding to relocate schools. They also designed alternate opportunities for literacies teaching and learning participation. Both ECTs seemed to understand that changed arrangements for the future, perhaps mediated by more responsive leadership, might enable them to evolve teaching and professional learning differently. The next section represents how the ECTs navigated possibilities, in the schools they chose for 2017.
Follow-up the next year: new possibilities, new challenges

Alese and Charlotte each participated in a short follow-up telephone conversation with me, early the next year. These conversations briefly explored how ECTs’ perceptions and perspectives had developed over a longer span.

Alese

Alese began animatedly, announcing that she “loved” her new school. Most of her account highlighted new access to digital tools. For instance, in an early comment Alese said:

We do so much PD and they're [the school] very technology savvy. We all have our own iPads in the classroom and we have about nine iPads and laptops and stuff and the kids all know how to use them.

(3 mins 49 sec)

In this and further comments, Alese intimated her experience of completely changed situated priorities, comprising a shift in Available Designs:

We integrate it so much with literacy.... Say for example the kids make a Book Creator, and so if we’re doing a comprehension strategy, we’ll get them to do a page on Book Creator, or they take pictures of themselves, or they can create all these amazing things, without any paper. It’s beautiful for them to be able to have that experience.

(5 mins 38 sec)

Positioning students as participants-in and creators-of digital text, Alese signalled some aspects of a contemporary literacies approach (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018). Later, Alese commented on associated leadership directions:

It’s good because everything has to serve a purpose and they’re [school leaders] trying to get us to think, as teachers, instead of just substituting technology, how can we get the kids to create instead of consuming. If we just give them [students] an App where they play a game, they’re consuming; they’re not creating.

(7 mins 2 sec)
Thus in contrast with her previous experiences, Alese perceived that leadership in this school (“*they’re trying to get us to think*”), afforded teachers with conditions to participate in contemporary digital formats. Charlotte on the other hand, had entered quite a different scenario.

**Charlotte**

Charlotte began by acknowledging that she was still “settling in” to her new context. After discussing the general setting of the school, I asked Charlotte to reflect on her current approach to literacy. Charlotte responded that she was concerned that:

> We’re just really pushing down on their [students’] reading and writing. That’s the focus, so their letter sounds, and then reading CVC words, and then writing them down. So the kids get pushed a lot at this school. (2 mins 44 sec)

Here Charlotte seemed to signal the situated importance of students’ reading and writing performance, which now constituted *Available Designs* for literacy pedagogy. Slightly later, Charlotte also talked about limitations in professional learning:

> I’ve been to one [PD] . . and that was last week. We had a PD day. . . So compared to [the remote town] where we got so many, so many opportunities. Nuh. (3 mins 58 sec)

It seemed that PD was now far less frequent than in the previous year at her remote school, although at no time did Charlotte critique these arrangements.

**Summary of ongoing developments**

Conversations with Alese and Charlotte pointed to diverging teaching trajectories. While Alese appeared to be afforded with opportunities to approximate digital literacies practices (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018), Charlotte faced narrowed possibilities (Cormack & Comber, 2013; Klenowski, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017). Similarly, while Alese reported that her new leadership was supportive of substantive professional learning

**Chapter conclusion**

This chapter illustrates how Alese and Charlotte first identified and questioned print-based and componential *Available Designs*, and then attempted to *Design* aspects of teaching and learning for literacies. Tracing gradual activation of *expansive learning* (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), the chapter illustrates the important influence of ECTs’ aspirations to participate in contextually sensitive professional learning for literacy. By the end of the year, these ECTs recognised the pivotal role school-leadership had played in privileging routinised, skills-based and commercially-informed literacy teaching and learning (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017), aligned to systemic accountability imperatives (Cormack & Comber, 2013; Klenowski, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017). Imagining and experimenting with new *Designs*, Alese enrolled in external postgraduate study, and both ECTs moved to other schools. Follow-up in 2017 indicated that this relocation presented the ECTs with new *Available Designs* to negotiate. Chapter Five has thus traced Alese and Charlotte’s perceptions and shaping of literacies teaching and learning, in the particular conditions they were faced with. Chapter Six unveils a similar but different pattern of findings, for ECTs in the regional group.
Chapter introduction

Chapter Six presents findings for the regional case. In the same way as for the previous chapter, findings appear in meeting order, in subsections corresponding to the study’s research questions. Again, short analytic commentary is offered. Key excerpts of dialogue, and some researcher observations and reflections, illustrate contextual prioritisation of routinised skills in reading and writing (Cormack & Comber, 2013; Klenowski, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017), implementation of which seemed to be surveilled by school leadership. In parallel, according to these ECTs, school-based support for literacy teaching and learning was almost non-existent. Seeking alternatives, the ECTs covertly sourced a small range of professional learning materials, and made changes to their pedagogy and professional lives. Analysis indicated that a major catalyst for pedagogical Design (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000), and expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), was a contradiction between the school’s rigid approach, and ECT goals to foster students’ literacies engagement. As a preface, the next section provides background information about the two regional ECTs.

Brief background information about the regional ECTs

The ECTs in this group, Liz and Laura, were both in their first year of teaching in the same primary school. They did not teach the same cohort; Liz taught Year Six students (approximately eleven years of age), and Laura taught Year Two students (approximately seven years of age). Background Surveys revealed that Liz and Laura attended
separate School of Education ITE programs in different universities, each attaining a Master of Teaching in Early Childhood and Primary. Their Bachelor level qualifications came from diverse fields. Liz spoke English as a first language, was in the 27 to 35 years age bracket, and wrote that she was interested in a diagnostic approach to literacy, how to cater for specific disabilities, and how to program for spelling. Laura also spoke English as a first language, was in the 27 to 35 year age bracket, and recorded that she was interested in discussing spelling, speaking and listening. Liz and Laura had previously interacted on a first name basis, and adopted a relaxed but professional manner towards each other.

**The first meeting**

**Overview**

The first meeting for this group took place in a large main street café. Laura was first to arrive. While we waited for Liz, we sat at a small wooden table in front. After only a few minutes of informal preamble, Laura told me in a hushed voice, that she was “really struggling” with her “85 hour working week”, and that she wasn’t sure if she could continue teaching. While making these remarks, Laura appeared quite subdued, even sad. As it was very early in her first year, I wasn’t sure if she was still adapting to the challenge of the beginning weeks of practice. I made a mental note to monitor Laura’s potential need for future support. Despite my qualms, when Liz arrived shortly after, Laura became quite cheerful, and did not revisit the topic of workload. Initially, as the three of us settled with coffees, cakes and hot chips, we shared our understandings of the aims and protocols of the study. Then, consistent with facilitation of the remote group, ECTs filled out Background Surveys, and began to discuss topics depicted on the placemat.
In later interactions, I showed Liz and Laura the study’s closed Facebook page, and sent them the invitation link. As for the previous group, resources depicted on the Facebook page included the Literacy Shed website (The Literacy Shed LTD, n.d.), Shaun Tan’s narrative *The Lost Thing* (2000), and *Dust Echoes* (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2012). Liz and Laura likewise viewed the same two picture books I had brought along to share: Emily Gravatt’s (2008) *Little Mouse’s Big Book of Fears*, and Alan Snow’s (2009) *How Cats Really Work*. I also shared the iPad applications *Meet Millie* (Megapops LLC, 2011) and *StoryKit* (Apple, 2010). This first meeting lasted for approximately one hour.

**Dilemmas about expected teaching structures and strategies**

In a coincidental mirror of placemat discussion in the remote group (Chapter Five), Laura and Liz first talked about the Literacy Block implemented in their school. Their descriptions were quite different from those offered by the remote ECTs:

103. **Laura**: Well at our school there’s a very set way they do the Literacy Block. So every single class has . . . can’t even remember the order of it now, but it’s basically-
104. **Liz**: Yeah ten minutes, yeah five to ten minutes of phonics.
105. **Laura**: Which is like flash cards. Um spelling, which is the *Wonderful Word Lists* program.
106. **Liz**: Yeah, yeah.
107. **Laura**: Which is meant to be, they do like, a spelling sort or an activity. And then there’s rotations with the teacher.
108. **Veronica**: Yup.
109. **Laura**: Um . . . reading a big book and focusing on a topic. So, I’ve got this in my dot point form (laughing, reading from a page of notes). It’s got fancy names, like Shared Reading.
110. **Veronica**: Mmm.
111. **Laura**: Then there’s *Guided* Reading . . . writing . . . I’ve forgotten something . . . I don’t know.
112. **Liz**: Um . . .
113. **Laura**: And *then*, you’re meant to also, that’s like meant to be the daily . . . set-up, and somewhere in there you’re also meant to fit in . . . grammar and handwriting and-
114. **Liz**: Mmmm, mmm.
Liz and Laura described the Literacy Block as a “set” sequence in “every single class” [103], with segments for phonics [104, 105], spelling [105-107], and reading [109-111]. Some of this routinisation was associated with the purchasable commercial spelling program Wonderful Word Lists (pseudonym). Investigating the publisher’s website, I found the program described as enabling teachers to assess, identify and document student spelling progressions. While the ECTs were readily able to name this program, they were less able to name segments in the school’s Literacy Block structure [109-113]. In fieldnote observations, I recorded that:

_Laura read the correct names of Literacy Block segments from a list she hurriedly pulled from her handbag. I had the sense that she had not prepared these notes for our meeting._

To deepen discussion, I simply asked, “So how is that working out?” Laura [124] replied:

_When I first came [to the school], it [Literacy Block] was really overwhelming (laughs). But now I’ve found that, because to fit it all in I was like, “How do you fit this all in one block?” But now I’ve found it really helpful because it gives me a structure._

In this way, Laura [124] suggested that the Literacy Block structure helped her satisfy school-based requirements. However, Liz seemed to hold a different view:

139. **Liz**: Um (puffs out). So I haven’t, I haven’t achieved the school’s ideal model. Um . . . the phonics part, I’m finding very difficult [in Year Six].

( a minute or so later)

159. **Liz**: We’re really having to go . . . _back to basics_ in all areas, but it’s really _hard_ with um . . . that phonics. So um . . . I have to admit, I’m doing things a little bit my own way.

I noted that at this time, Liz:

_Repeatedly twists the bracelets on her wrist, and beats her chest twice. While she could have just had a cough, the topic of Literacy Block appeared to make her uncomfortable. She hadn’t been twisting her bracelets before._

In this short space of conversation, Liz made a logical connection between “the school’s ideal model” [139] and a “back to basics” approach
In contrast with Laura, Liz alluded to implementation of this approach as a challenge, although at this early stage, it was unclear why this might be so.

Several minutes later, Liz [320] offered more detail about her perspective:

For me literacy is being able to understand . . communication and the world, and being able to communicate back to the world. . . Um and literacy is in many forms, so . . literacy is not only the written.

Using phrases such as “for me” and “not only the written”, Liz appeared to lay claim to literacies, rather than the rigid literacy ideal of her school. In dialogue presented in the next subsection, Liz and Laura shared their perceptions that ITE had not prepared them to teach towards the school’s priorities.

**Lack of preparation for situated priorities**

As dialogue continued, Laura reflected on another topic depicted on the placemat. I had gently steered this topic-choice by asking, “So you’ve come through [transitioned to early career teaching] as postgraduates?”

184. **Liz**: Yes, yes.
185. **Laura**: In my course there was really only . . one subject . . for literacy. That was in my first semester. I feel like (laughing) I need some more.

Probing for more information, I asked, “So how do you feel . . that has set you up to be a teacher?”

190. **Laura**: . . Aaarrhh I think probably not very well (laughs loudly).
191. **Liz**: (laughs).
192. **Laura**: Because . . that . . subject . . the teacher was, the lecturer was nice, but it was . . kind of went above my head. . . . I got good grades and all of that stuff. But in terms of now applying it, to the classroom, I’m really not using . . I can’t even remember anything I learned in that thing [ITE]. I’m just kind of finding my feet, as I go along.
In this extract, Laura positioned university learning as having little in common with teaching and learning in the classroom. Professing that she couldn’t “even remember” “that thing” [192], Laura seemed to objectify ITE as a distinct event, rather than perceiving it as underpinning her professional learning for the longer term. Liz talked about her experience of ITE in a similar way:

214. **Liz:** It [ITE] taught you from a very broad perspective. And I’ve come into a school which is, it’s *this way*.
215. **Laura:** Yeah.
216. **Liz:** And also there’s an expectation that you *know* this way [in the school]. And so it’s *really* having to like get in (smacks hand onto other palm), and learn it *so quickly*. The expectation was um, yeah, (laughs), “Get onto it.” Um so yeah, it was .. ah (sighs out) .. I think university has this *broad and very ideal* perspective.

Repeating the theme, Laura and Liz emphasised that ITE had not facilitated their knowledge of literacy teaching and learning valued and expected in this school, which Liz articulated as, “it’s *this way*” [214]. Previously in the meeting, Liz [see above 159] had labelled these expectations as “*back to basics*”.

To explore if the ECTs received support for developing the forms of professional knowledge valued in this school, I asked: “*What about professional learning? As far as support for ongoing learning, how is that going?*” Laura [269] explained:

We have a literacy coach at our school, who is .. *really fantastic*. He/she has only been in my classroom so far to help me with behaviour management. But I know that he/she will be going around. He/she is a full-time teacher, but is given release one morning a week to go to classes that need help with the Literacy Block.

According to Laura, support had actualised only in targeted assistance for behaviour management of Literacy Block. This focus on well-managed routines, may have influenced the ECTs’ perceptions of teaching with multimodal texts, which are illustrated in the following section.
Dilemmas about multimodal engagement and managing student behaviour

Halfway through the meeting, I invited the ECTs to explore “Little Mouse’s Big Book of Fears” by Emily Gravatt (2007), and “How Cats Really Work” by Allan Snow (2009). After a minute or so of leafing through them, Laura volunteered:

534. **Laura**: (subdued) These types of books scare me.
535. **Veronica**: They scare you?
536. **Laura**: (subdued) For reading, coz . . . like this page (equal proportions of cartoon images and printed prose). I would be able to describe it to them [the students]. But then I’d be scared that they’d be off task very quickly.

(a few seconds later)

546. **Laura**: So, like this would be a page where I would have to do that, like talking aloud type stuff. So that’s why it scares me, coz there’s been such a focus on . . . behaviour, like managing behaviour [at the school].

It seemed clear that Laura associated these “types of books” [534] with students being “off task” [536], a situation which potentially undermined the school’s priorities [546]. Slightly later, Liz took a turn to talk about the book she was holding, Little Mouse’s Big Book of Fears:

568. **Liz**: Oh I love it (laughs). And um . . . My kids would love this, they’re um . . . they’re an artistic bunch . . . ah it would take me . . . ah a good lesson to get them over . . . “It’s a kids book.”
569. **Veronica**: Yup.
570. **Liz**: Um . . . because they haven’t been . . . exposed to . . . um . . . oh what is it when it’s just purely pictures, like the Shaun Tan type.
571. **Veronica**: Right, postmodern picture books, and picture books.
572. **Liz**: Yeah picture books where there is so much . . . going on. Um, they haven’t learnt how to, you know, see beyond the words.

In this way, Liz mused on her belief that students in this school had not interacted with “Shaun Tan type” [570] of texts. For her part, Liz seemed to appreciate the holistic-aesthetic possibilities of teaching with the text, and recognised how embedded visual elements legitimately represented meaning. The following subsection comments on findings presented for this first meeting.
Commentary on key dialogues

Unlike ECTs in the remote group, these ECTs were much quicker to unveil their dilemmas and questions (Engestrom, 2001, 2011). A significant theme concerned rigid and traditional Available Designs for literacy teaching in the regional ECTs' school. These situated priorities resonated with teaching for the basics, in particular promoting phonics (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013); heavily routinised and structured teaching sequences (Cormack & Comber, 2013; Klenowski, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017); and commercially standardised literacy materials (Lewis & Hogan, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017). Both ECTs appeared to have very little professional support. Further, while Liz and Laura appreciated the aesthetics of multimodal text, Laura believed these texts might erode her enablement of the well-managed routines valued in the school. Liz hinted at recognition of broader literacies, sometimes invoking practices beyond the print mode. Both ECTs espoused disjunctures between contextually valued teaching for the basics, and the holistic literacies they had been exposed to during ITE (see Honan, Kervin, Exley & Simpson, 2014). These situated priorities and disconnects became a focus in the second meeting.

The second meeting

Overview

The second meeting took place in the same café as previously, although this time we sat on bench seats at the back. Laura again arrived first, reiterating her continued work load of “80 hours a week”. When I asked Laura if she would like to access any professional advice or support, she commented that her most trusted advisor was her mother, who had been a teacher in the past (see Crosswell & Beutel, 2017). She also remarked that she had decided to resign from full-time
teaching, to “have a life”. As an alternative, she was considering taking up relief teaching. Once Liz arrived, the two ECTs became quite lively as they caught up on each other’s news. In the same way as for the remote group, I distributed Literacy Bags for Laura and Liz to peruse, and invited them to discuss Memorial, by Shaun Tan (1999), and Paul Dufficy’s professional learning text, Designing Learning for Diverse Classrooms (2005). Late in the meeting, we revisited the study’s closed Facebook page, where I had posted images of these resources. Altogether, this second meeting lasted one hour and twenty minutes.

**Diverging from school programs and routines**

After Liz and Laura explored their Literacy Bags, I invited them to revisit a topic they had aired in the first meeting, “How’s phonics in your classroom going?”

182. **Liz**: Um well I was naughty, and I bought myself a ‘Sounds Make Patterns’ book over the school holidays. (seconds later)

186. **Liz**: Because the moment I put the ‘Learning by Rote’ chart in front of them [the school-preferred commercial phonics program] . . . they just say [the students], “Errr. Don’t understand. Don’t understand.” (several seconds later)

203. **Laura**: But like, I haven’t . . . (short laugh) been trained how to use it [Learning by Rote]. So I haven’t really used it other than pinning it up, to show them.

204. **Liz**: (laughs).

In this excerpt, the ECTs report different forms of resistance to the school’s preferred phonics program. I noted that Liz and Laura offered these reports in a gentle but humorous tone. On investigation, I found that Sounds Make Patterns [182] is a commercial program comprised of workbook activities, aimed to improve phonemic awareness and spelling. Learning by Rote [186], another purchasable program, claims an explicit phonographic approach to spelling. About her decision to switch commercial programs, Liz [182] coined herself as “being naughty”.
Continuing to comment on school-preferred programs, Liz and Laura [245] mentioned “Scripted Reading”. When I asked what this was, the teachers explained:

248. **Liz**: It’s a decoding comprehension program.
249. **Laura**: But it’s *very* structured.
250. **Liz**: Mmm.
251. **Laura**: So I’ve noticed this school brings in lots of programs that are .. you do A, B, C, D.
252. **Liz**: Mmm hmm.
253. **Laura**: So it’s like Guided Reading, there’s five steps. You do each of the five steps, and do it a very *set .. way*. Rather than like fluid sessions.

Unfortunately, the website for the commercial program *Scripted Reading*, does not provide any description of the program’s aims or components. It does however provide copious information about how to book whole school PD. Liz and Laura seemed to share the perception that leadership was in some way strategic about implementing these commercial programs, which promoted stepwise reading skills.

Not long afterwards, I asked, “What do you think of it? [Scripted Reading], to which Liz and Laura replied:

286. **Liz**: Well, comprehension in my class is really low.
287: **Laura**: I think that’s *across* the school though. Coz there’s *such* a focus on getting them up the levels, and, “Can you read? Yep, you can read. Next level (laughing).” But there’s not really a focus on, “Do you understand what you’re reading?” (laughs).

Liz and Laura flagged how *Scripted Reading* was implemented to address student deficits in reading “*comprehension*”, and for “*getting them up the levels*”.

Against this backdrop, Liz and Laura seemed interested in re-imagining their pedagogy. This emerged when Laura initiated a new thread of conversation, asking me, “*Have you been watching that show on Channel 2, ‘Revolution School?’*” When I said that I had not, Laura ventured:
324. **Laura**: So this school [in the TV show] is in the bottom ten percent for Victoria [state of Australia]. They got all these consultants in and they put in all these programs and brought up all their levels for everything. And I see very similar things at this school.

(Several seconds later)

339. **Liz**: Yeah and the actual thing that they’re doing is what I’m expected to do. Those same books.

340. **Veronica**: Aahhh? (rising intonation)

341. **Liz**: Exactly the same books.

342. **Laura**: *Trucks and Ducks reading program.*

343. **Liz**: Yep. And um . . . yeah and the comprehension in my class is, is low, it’s really low. They [students] can’t . . . infer meaning upon words, um . . . ah they can’t say what the author’s . . . intent is. You know the purpose.

344. **Laura**: They can’t read between the lines.

Here Liz and Laura identified similarities between the commercial programs implemented in their own school, and those used in the “bottom ten percent” [324] school depicted in the television program. Investigating later, I found that *Revolution School* (ABC, 2016)22 is a series about the efforts of Kambya College, a low achieving secondary school in Melbourne Victoria, to lift achievement on standardised testing. From the ECTs’ perspective, their own school had similarly implemented *Trucks and Ducks*, to improve student performance on “levels for everything” [324]. The *Trucks and Ducks* reading program can be purchased online from a well known publisher. The website claims that the program specifically facilitates student comprehension through the use of levelled reading materials. These materials assist the teacher to improve measured literacy outcomes. After examining the Revolution School videos in some detail, I noted that:

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The narrative of each episode resonates strongly with neoliberal claims that Australia is experiencing a literacy teaching and learning crisis. Oft repeated statements in the show include, “Australia’s education system is falling behind” and “letting down the nation”. Instantiating pro-neoliberal reform, Kambrya College is depicted as “undergoing a quiet revolution” in collaboration with education “guru” John Hattie, who helps teachers to understand and “fix” deficits in student achievement. One such fix is to replace the Trucks and Ducks reading program (pseudonym), with Independent Reading sessions.

Liz [347] explained that she was inspired by the TV show to experiment with the Independent reading strategy:

I was like mmmmm… So while they’re [students depicted in the TV program] doing Independent Reading, the teacher’s going around and asking, you know, “What are you reading? How are you enjoying it? What’s the theme of this book? Um genre.” So just asking the questions, “Are there any difficult words in the text? How would you, how would you find the meaning for these words?” You know, “What’s your process?” So I did that today (laughs).

Continuing to mirror views expressed in the television program, Liz [360] believed that Independent Reading might assist her students’ reading engagement:

Mmm. Um so yeah. I did this conferencing. And I think the fact that . . . [the students thought] “Ms [Liz] is actually going around and actually asking questions about, what we’re reading”. . . The reading intent [of the students] got a little bit more. And um . . . people were, enjoying their books and laughing (surprised voice).

In this way, Liz alludes to reading enjoyment in her classroom as a novelty. To probe Liz’s perceptions, I asked, “And so, I know it’s only new, but how do you feel about it [Independent Reading]?”
374. **Liz:** I learnt *so much more about* . . . where they’re *at* with their *reading*, but also what they *liked* and what they dislike. *I* felt . . . more connected with them, and their reading for the first time. Yeah . . . I was like, “So what are you *really* struggling with in this book?” And they’d say, “Oh the place names . . . and the foreign setting” or . . . you know um . . . some students knowing what the genre was and (soft laugh) . . . And students that were able to articulate themselves *so* freely and easily, and then those that took time to . . . put words to what they were . . . processing. *Yeah, I was . . . yeah* (laughs).

375. **Laura:** I feel like sometimes [in the school] there’s *so much* structure, and there’s *a lot* of behavioural expectations as well. Like that individual *spirit* gets crushed a bit.

In this way, Liz expressed a new appreciation of how her pedagogy could respond to student needs and interests in relation to reading printed texts. Laura [375] on the other hand, signalled ongoing tension with the school’s prescriptive approach to literacy. The next subsection illustrates mechanisms used in the school, to align the ECT’s practices with this preferred approach.

**Perceptions of surveillance**

A few minutes after the above conversation, and almost without preamble, Liz [429] mentioned that she had been re-reading some of the school’s materials for teachers, saying, “*Well . . . I needed to make sure I was doing the right thing for um . . . Guided Writing. We had to record ourselves doing* (covering her face with her hands) . . . *Oh it was terrible.*” In fieldwork notes, I recorded:

> As she covered her face with her hands, Liz appeared distressed, but not angry. She spoke in a low, subdued tone. Her facial expression was flat.

To probe for more information, I asked Liz, “*Record? As in video?*” Laura, whose practices were also recorded, took up the thread:
Laura: It [a video] was getting shown at the *staff meeting*. It was getting shown at the staff meeting, coz this was what we were meant to be doing for literacy.

Liz: Yes, yeah. (clears throat)

Laura: I did a whole ten-minute video. And then they only showed the first minute and maybe a few shots. And I thought, “Aww” (laughs).

Liz: Whereas mine [segments that were shown] were all behaviour management.

Notably, videoing seemed to be aimed to capture ECTs’ compliance with expected routines, although I felt there was some ambiguity in what Liz and Laura had said. Wondering whether other teachers had also been recorded, I asked, “*So did they show snippets of everybody? Did they show lots of people’s?*” But Liz [440] averred, “Well no we got *assigned*”, hinting that Liz and Laura had been specifically designated. When I sought to clarify further, “*Was that for learning?*” Liz [450] asserted:

> It was more accountability. Making sure that everyone . . . *at school*, um teachers and EAs [Educational Assistants], knew what was to be covered in every Literacy Block.

It would appear that these arrangements were aimed to coerce whole-school production of standardised and well managed Literacy Block routines. Significantly, in these circumstances, the ECTs seemed to find teaching with multimodal materials a challenge.

**Experimenting with the visual mode**

Following the above discussion, I offered the ECTs Shaun Tan’s text *Memorial* (2012) to explore. After a few moments of watching them leaf through the pages, I asked, “*What do you think of that book Liz?*”

Liz: That’s Perth (gesturing to images), the Swan River . . . a Morton Bay Fig Tree, you know, it *sings* to me (laughs).

Laura: It’s always the fun thing about like . . . (dramatic voice) “This book has such *beautiful illustrations*. Look what the artist’s done.” . . . and then I need to read the rest of the story (laughs).
Similar to responses they had expressed in the first meeting, Liz and Laura obviously appreciated the aesthetic-artistic elements of the text. Perhaps taking this textual interaction as a prompt, Laura [565] recounted some challenges she had recently faced, when introducing her students to visual meaning-making:

> We [the class] tried to do genre, with some really awesome photos of [the regional town]. We tried to get the kids to look at side-by-side shots, of the same buildings, but in the now versus like a hundred years ago. And my class really struggled, in looking at comparisons, and I ended up just completely changing tacks with history because they just . . . struggled too much with it.

Laura implied that, despite her intention to broaden the available range of textual materials, this shift to the visual had been challenging for students. It is logical to suppose that such challenges are compounded when ECTs lack access to substantive support, in a context seemingly dominated by print-based priorities and routines.

**Commentary on key dialogues**

In the second meeting, a clash (Engestrom, 2001, 2011) emerged between Liz and Laura’s professional goals for literacies teaching and learning, and the school’s rigid priorities and structures. ECT dialogue now intimated that Available Designs of teaching and learning for the basics (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013), were treated as instrumental to getting students in the school “up the levels” of standardised assessments (see Cormack & Comber, 2013; Hardy, 2016; Klenowski, 2014; Wall, 2017). Confirming research findings elsewhere (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017), commercially generated literacy interventions for phonics, spelling and reading were a strong presence. Liz and Laura appeared to experience significant vulnerability in relation to these school-based accountability measures, which were aimed to align their teaching and learning to situated priorities (see Rowan et al., 2015).
Despite these measures, Liz was beginning to imagine and experiment with small changes to her pedagogy. Sourcing one strategy from a television program, Liz highlighted limited access to professional learning beyond implementation of programs set by the school (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Mockler, 2013; Scholes et al., 2017). Laura was also actively seeking change, narrating her attempt to facilitate student meaning-making with visual texts. These developments point to ECT progression through *expansive learning* processes (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), and the beginnings of pedagogical *Design*. Dialogues in the third meeting illustrate how Liz and Laura continued to reflect-on and shape literacy teaching and learning in lieu of situated priorities and circumstances.

**The third meeting**

**Overview**

The third meeting took place in a newly opened café chosen by the ECTs. Formal and informal seating zones alternated throughout, and the décor had an air of interior design. On arrival, Liz and Laura seated us on two low-slung leather couches which faced each other. The meeting extended well beyond the expected time frame, with the ECTs voluntarily continuing discussions for nearly two hours. Developments since the last meeting were a topic of interest.

**Innovation of literacy structures and routines**

About halfway into the meeting, I asked Liz about the Independent Reading strategy she had talked about in the second meeting, *“You were saying last time Liz that you had just started doing reading conferences. How’s that going?”*
Liz: Yeah. So that's still going, and I've now got reading groups, finally. Um . . and so they're on a rotation. (a few seconds later)

Liz: So I do that for 10 minutes with them. Then they continue to read and then that allows me to do the reading conferencing. So I'm getting there in terms of balancing and . . . how to be in a couple of places at once.

Liz was thus continuing to experiment with a strategy she had sourced some months ago, from the Revolution School documentary (ABC, 2016). She went on to describe how she was also introducing a broader range of reading texts. First explaining that she thought her students liked a “bit of variety” [720], Liz recounted her introduction of a comedic novel:

Liz: Well at first they were like, “Hmmm” [when introduced to the text].

Veronica: (laughs)

Liz: But then I um . . . we listened to the introduction as a whole class. And . . they could see it. They were like, “Mmm, mmm?” And they were listening and they were listening. And then a few jokes came up. About farting and boogers [a topic in the text].

Laura: (laughing)

Liz: And . . . they were like, “Can we laugh?” And then someone, I think I finally laughed, and they were like, “Oooh”. Yeah, “Oooh ok. This is funny. Alright. Yeah, we like this”. The first story was about ‘Dribbling Dave’ or ‘Dribbling Derrick’? . . . and the flood that he causes with his dribbling.

Hoping that Liz might offer a rationale for text selection, I asked, “How long did it take you to find a thing like that?” Liz [749] responded:

Um . . . it was really by accident. I um . . ordered some kids magazines for the classroom through Book Depository, I think it was. I got a free order voucher so I could purchase a book (laughs). And I went, “Ok”.

While this segment confirms that Liz was still focused on providing students with opportunities for reading printed text, she was also attempting to source a broadened range to target student interest and engagement. The next subsection highlights how at the same time, the ECTs were negotiating a lack of professional support.
Voicing lack of institutional support

Earlier in the meeting, Laura reflected on her recent professional experiences, prompted by my very simple inquiry, “How is everything going?”

60. Laura: It’s actually been really awesome. I think I’d told you I’d gone from full-time... to relief [substitute teaching]. Coz I was just like working 85 hours a week.

(Several seconds later)

84. Laura: I have a life now. I have time to do stuff. And... I can plan holidays and... it’s such a big difference. And now I’m, coz... I’d gone from, (flat staccato) “I can’t do this. I don’t want to do teaching. I need to get out of this. This isn’t good.”

In this way, Laura fleshed out important decisions she had made, about workload challenges in the previous half of the year. For her, this meant leaving full-time employment to take up casual relief positions.

After several minutes, Laura [148] reflected back on the ethos of the first school, where she had originally been working 85 hours per week:

The two different schools, there’s such a big difference. Like my big thing was behaviours... were so exhausting, every day just trying to be on top of it [at the original school]. Whereas here, in my new school it isn’t really a problem... I just think the structures as well, of the two different schools, make a big difference. And I think even... with the kids’ behaviour. So... at that school [original] they’re very strict, the kids always have to be quiet moving around the school, being in the classroom, there’s just this... they always have to be quiet all the time, except in the brief period when they get to play. So I think that has an effect, because kids aren’t meant to be quiet all day, all the time.

It seemed that for Laura [148], the “strict” protocols and “structures” of the original school had contributed to her decision to leave. Laura’s dilemma perhaps went beyond the typical challenges which face ECTs in the early months (see Buchanan et al., 2013).
A little later in the same conversation, Laura [184] commented on the low level of support she had received in the original school:

I did have a .. like I was assigned a mentor person, who was basically there like if I ever had any questions, I was supposed to go .. talk to them. Like if I needed help they’d .. give me the help, but .. yeah in terms of like .. modules and stuff like that, there wasn’t much of that.

While somewhat oblique, Laura [184] intimated that professional support was “assigned” rather than chosen, and that she felt reticent about accessing it. Dialogues presented in the next section suggest that in addition to lack of support, official curricula for English were perceived as presenting a further demand on the ECT’s resources.

**Identifying constraints on teaching diverse text forms**

Several minutes later, Liz and Laura returned to comparing their different schools. Most of this conversation continued to touch on leadership priorities, and behaviour management expectations.

Seeking to reintroduce the topic of literacies teaching and learning, I asked, “How do you feel the English Curriculum works in with what you’re doing? What sort of influence do you think that has?” Liz and Laura segued to this new topic:

479. **Liz:** (loud sigh) Um .. Huge. And it’s jam-packed. Um .. yeah I find .. that .. yeah there’s so much that we need to be teaching and um .. in so many different forms, online and um and .. written. Like it’s, it’s taken, yeah it has to take so many shapes. It’s just so much. And where? Where is the time?

(several seconds later)

486. **Laura:** You keep looking at your programming and you’re like, “We really need to move on”. Coz we’re not going to fit all this other stuff in and, but we need to keep doing this because you’re not getting it yet. But if I don’t move on then I’m not going to fit all .. the curriculum in. Coz you sit down, to do your programming, and you’re like, “Ok, to fit everything in, this is the timeline”. But then it .. never works.

489. **Liz:** Nuh. Never.
Acknowledging that curricula for English depict a variety of focuses for teaching and learning, inclusive of “many different forms” [479], Liz and Laura nevertheless perceived available classroom time to “fit it all in” [486] as severely limited. Several seconds later, Liz [498] reasoned about this conflict:

You know, people say, “Integrate it. Integrate it into other subjects”. And you do . . . and maybe the kids are learning that lesson . . . unconsciously. But they’re not learning it consciously because it’s being integrated into other areas. Because it’s not, “Ok, in writing this is what we’re focusing on”. Because instead, you’re going, “Ok, geography. We’ve been researching (sigh) blah, blah, blah”. The explicit . . . is being lost when we’re integrating it.

Here Liz [498] mainly expressed dilemmas about how to integrate explicit teaching for English into broader curriculum. A few minutes later, Laura identified contextual factors potentially influencing this challenge:

523. Laura: Do you think that there are two reasons for that though, not having enough time, is that that Literacy Block is so jam packed.
524. Liz: Oh yeah.
525. Laura: That you’re like, “Ok, we’ve got like 20 minutes (laughs)”. 
526. Liz: Yes. We have 20 minutes for writing. And we have . . . 20 minutes for (laughs).

Here, Liz and Laura tie the compression of available teaching time to the school’s imposition of a compartmentalised Literacy Block. These and other findings from the third meeting are drawn together below.

**Commentary on key dialogues**

Liz and Laura demonstrated increasing awareness of tensions (Engestrom, 2001, 2011) between the teaching and learning they wanted to put into play, and the rigidly routinized approach purveyed by their school (Cormack & Comber, 2013; Klenowski, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017). Analysis revealed the continued predominance of compartmentalised Available Designs for reading and
writing, bolstered by commercial program interventions (see Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017).

Now expressing clear opposition to these school-based priorities and arrangements, Liz and Laura experimented with alternatives. For Liz, this involved trying out strategies and texts beyond the schools’ repertoire. For Laura, it meant exploring casual teaching in a different school. The teachers were beginning to recognise how their enablement of a fuller scope of literacies may have been constrained by the school’s traditional approach, and that other Designs for pedagogy were possible. Dialogues presented for the final meeting depict how Liz and Laura evolved stronger resistance to the priorities of this school, and became more confident about enunciating professional goals.

The fourth meeting

Overview

For the final meeting, we met in the same designer café as previously, although on this occasion we met in the evening. Being late in the year, the teachers had many commitments in the afternoons, including reporting to parents and organising Christmas events. The three of us sat at a dinner table in the front room, where Liz and Laura talked at will for almost three hours, while we ate hot savouries and drank coffee.

Setting new teaching goals

After everyone had caught up with the latest news, I prompted the ECTs to reflect, “So... if you had to sum up your journey [this year], what would you say about it?” Liz [636] responded:
With literacy. I feel like I’m just finding my feet. Yeah. I feel like this year. this year was just figuring it out, and next year I can actually put into place. how I want. ah the learning experience. I want for the kids. Like what I really want to offer and provide for students.

In this way, Liz [636] acknowledged that her approach had evolved over time, and might continue to evolve in the future. To tease out her intentions, I asked, “What is that?” Liz [642] explained:

Um. so it’s. so it’s structured but it seems unstructured. I know that seems ridiculous, but. ah. yeah. the ideas. the ideas are evolving. But it’s open to their interpretation, it’s open to how far they would want to take it [the students]. Um.

Liz [642] appeared to articulate a strengthening intention to facilitate student-centred meaning-making and learning purposes. Wondering how Liz planned to facilitate this approach, I asked, “What’s your role in that?”

644. Liz: My role. is. challenging them, pushing them, giving them feedback, and giving them the confidence to take a risk again the next time.

(a few seconds later)

653. Liz: Like I still have the school set up. and the way they do things, and I still just. can’t agree. Um. I look at the other classes with their little reading groups, and the kids look just so bored.

Liz [644] now positioned students as full participants in literacy learning, and herself as a facilitator. She appeared aware that this stance stood in direct contradiction with the school’s “set-up” [653]. To deepen discussion, I probed, “So in relation to the content? Like the type of texts?” Liz [657] explained:

Yeah, the type of texts um. still having that variety. Oooh (sigh). I can’t wait for next year, to actually finish things with the kids. Like I feel like, you know, I go in with the (laughing) best intentions, but there’s so many things, and this idea of, you know, what’s going to come out of it, then. two weeks later, you know some other priority comes up.
Liz thus revealed her plan to expand students’ textual practices, recognising that leadership would mediate and potentially constrain her actioning of this plan.

Immediately after the above comments, Liz offered examples of how leadership had recently constrained her planned approach. For instance, Liz recounted one occasion, where she had been instructed to privilege a whole-school literacy competition, instead of planned teaching. This recount is not presented here, as an attempt to avoid inadvertently identifying the school. However, Liz went on to comment on her leadership’s rationale, and her need to comply with it:

737. **Liz:** The school is so proud of . . . the structure. In literacy. And how it’s taken the school so far. They’ve seen such huge . . . improvements. Um . . . so obviously, yeah, they don’t want (laughing) someone to tamper with it.
738. **Laura:** (laughs)
739. **Liz:** (laughing) Or have their own interpretations of it

Here Liz [737] reiterated the school’s prioritisation of structured and competitive practices, which she associated with school wide “improvements” [737].

Slightly later in the same conversation, Liz imagined how she might broaden her leadership’s perspective on literacy teaching and learning:
Liz: I’m trying to think how to approach it [the school’s perspective], with the decision makers.

Veronica: Mmm.

Liz: You know? (laughs)

Laura: Yeah. It can be difficult.

Liz: Yeah. Absolutely. Um so we had our staff meeting and it was NAPLAN-focused [standardised testing]. And .. you know, [there was] a lot of praise for .. um the growth .. um .. in the students that have been here since early primary. So um, and then a lot of our top students have plateaued. And [there was] talk about how to extend them. And so I was able to raise the issue of .. the ‘Levelled Reading’. And .. the fact that there is nothing else in the school to offer. And so they raised that, maybe because of me, well you know, maybe they’d stop ‘Levelled Reading’. And they’d just choose [the students] .. what they want to read.

Spoken from an awareness of the influence of NAPLAN assessment on situated literacy practices, Liz talked through the possibility of reshaping whole-school reliance on levelled reading schemes.

Further into conversation, Laura [830] commented more generally on the performance-based approach of the school:

I think it’s not fully linked, but it is kind of. The assemblies are all being streamlined .. I didn’t like that everything was getting streamlined, so that they [students] were studying all the time, and it was (repeatedly taps her spoon on her cup) heads down bums up kind of thing .. and all the fun of school, gets cut out of it.

While Laura’s [830] use of the phrase “heads down-bums-up” evoked a sense of performance requirements, I nevertheless asked, “Which areas do you think are valued?” The ECTs were in accord:

Laura: (laughing) Being smart. Like going up and up and up with your grades.

Liz: Grades.

While not specifically linked to the topic of literacy teaching and learning, both Liz and Laura signposted how the measurement and comparison of student performance influenced priorities set by the school. As if to highlight this point, the ECTs immediately returned to
discussing the whole-school literacy competition, which their students were currently being groomed for. The next subsection outlines how Liz and Laura again discussed their lack of access to professional learning support.

Problematising school leadership

Throughout this final meeting, Laura frequently referred back to her negative experience of the original school. For example, very early in the meeting, Laura [45] remarked:

I had such a not good experience at the beginning of the year [in the original school]. I was like, “I don’t want to get into full-time work [in teaching] again if it’s going to be crazy.”

Later in the meeting, Laura [875] returned to this theme:

I just, I’m kind of glad I got out of there [original school]. There’s some awesome people in there, but . . . I think now I would be running . . . for the hills, out of teaching. And I’ve had six months [as a relief teacher] to kind of, get out of my funk, and realise, “No. I’m good at this. And I enjoy it. I like having these relationships with the kids [in her new school], and now next year I have . . . come around to giving it [full-time teaching] a second chance.”

In this way, Laura [875] intimated that she continued to be impacted by the challenges she had experienced earlier in the year. On the other hand, new opportunities to build “relationships with kids” had enabled her to recast these experiences to some extent. Continuing to reflect, Laura mused:

887. **Laura**: I think . . Liz has been a bit of a rebel I guess.
888. **Veronica**: Oh?
889. **Laura**: Coz she goes against the grain. And I think . . yeah . . kids need to have fun, if they’re going to learn anything. Like they’re not going to have fun all the time.
890. **Veronica**: Yeah.
891. **Laura**: But they need to, want to do what they are doing. Otherwise . . there’s no real point of being there. That’s where the learning comes from.
In this excerpt, Laura identified the different ways in which she and Liz had shaped their teaching trajectories, to respond to professional challenges and contradictions. While Laura perceived Liz as a “rebel” who worked “against the grain” [887, 889], Laura perceived herself as working to value student engagement [889].

Slightly later, I asked, “And what about professional learning?” First mentioning that she had been to one team-meeting about a particular student, Liz explained:

904. **Liz**: Yes. Yeah . . um so . . that was . . yeah for me that was a one-off [the team meeting]. Now that we’re in Term Four, [role-plays being the principal] “Year Sixes. Ok, we’ve done enough” (adopts an authoritative voice, stiff body posture and mimes hand washing). You know?
905. **Laura**: (laughs)
906. **Liz**: Yep [laughs].

In field notes, I wrote:

Although I cannot be sure, Liz seemed to imply that her school leadership was no longer interested in supporting professional learning for teachers of the Year Six cohort. Liz’s posture and demeanour were so different while role-playing, I was convinced that she was mimicking her school principal.

I repeated my previous prompt, to confirm my understanding, “Ok. So no professional learning?” Laura too, seemed curious:

908. **Liz**: Um . .
909. **Laura**: Have you had any Graduate Modules?
910. **Liz**: No. No. Not this term.

These comments from Liz, and her gestures of hand washing, suggested that leadership had de-prioritised her attendance at PD for the remainder of the year. As an alternative explanation, it remains possible that by this late stage of the school year, the school’s funding arrangements may have run their course. I wondered aloud if the teachers could ask their school leadership, “Can I please go [to a particular event]?” But Liz and Laura responded:
Liz: Um... never tried it.
Laura: No. I tried it once.
Liz: Oh really?
(seconds later)
Laura: And I got rejected because it didn’t follow the... approach that the [original] school was taking (laughs).

These responses seemed to confirm that leaders in this school, and the ECTs, had different ideas about professional learning needs and interests. Further, it seemed that the ECTs and their leaders had not discussed these divergent understandings. The following subsection suggests that leadership similarly disregarded teachers’ goals to respond to students’ literacies learning needs.

School-based constraints on planned teaching for viewing

Early in the meeting, Liz turned conversation to the derailment of her plan to teach viewing:

Liz: My teaching is pretty much going out the window as of next week [third last week of the school year] (laughs).

(Seconds later)

Liz: I’ve got all these lessons planned.
Veronica: Oh I see.
Laura: I’m glad I’m not you.
Liz: I think I’ve, I think I’ve got maybe... half an hour to maybe forty five minutes max a day of teaching. As of next week.
Laura: Whah?

(Seconds later)

Liz: I had this really great like [plan], you know, “We’ve read a text by Michael Peterborough (pseudonym - celebrity UK author). And now we’re going to watch the thing, and going to compare” and... You know, and, “What’s different and similar and, you know, why do we watch that?” You know, character development, and all of that. My viewing sessions.

For the first time, Liz [241] revealed her intention to integrate specific “viewing sessions” into classroom learning opportunities. However, her planning seemed to be, “going out the window” in deference to leadership priorities.
In another first for this group, the ECTs went on to initiate discussion of multimodal texts. Laura began this thread with a brief spontaneous comment about intending to teach with Shaun Tan’s (2006) visual narrative, *The Arrival*. The ECTs became quite animated:

339. **Liz**: Oh I love him. I like Shaun Tan.
340. **Laura**: They are like picture books.
341. **Liz**: Oh aren’t they incredible?
342. **Laura**: But they’re all based on beautiful illustrations.

Echoing responses they had offered to my shared picture books earlier in the year, the ECTs spoke in aesthetic-artistic terms. To explore how Liz imagined teaching with *The Arrival*, I asked, “*So what would you do with it* [*The Arrival*] *do you think, if you could use it?*” Liz [374] thought:

Um . . . See I think it . . . it makes you . . . it makes you draw upon language. Like to *describe* what you’re seeing. So I think it’s really good at extending vocabulary. Yeah, I just . . . because they [students] *want* to describe it, and you can *offer* them . . . different and bigger words, yeah just a *variety* of words that they *haven’t*. . . yeah they *want* to express but they don’t know how to express.

Here, Liz expressed appreciation of how visual texts can prompt readers to expand their communicative repertoires. Continuing the discussion, Laura suddenly produced a note from her collection of belongings, where she had written the website address for the

*StoryLine Online* resource. She explained:

384. **Laura**: It’s like an online . . . place where . . . they have a storybook. But there’s someone who *reads* it.
385. **Liz**: Oh?
386. **Laura**: And then pictures from the story kind of get illustrated as the person is reading the story. They get actors to read the story.
387. **Liz**: Aaahhh.
388. **Laura**: So they put *lots* of expression into the different voices, and like the ups and downs and stuff.
389. **Liz**: Yep.
390. **Laura**: So for little kids, I thought that was really *good*, because . . . *that’s* one of the things that’s like the *last* thing to come with reading. Is the expression. They read like in all monotone.
Laura clearly valued this online resource, which she believed could foster student capabilities in “reading” and “expression” [390]. On investigation, I found that StoryLine Online\(^{23}\) claims to be award winning. It specifically supports the practice of reading aloud to young children, presenting a large video collection of American actors reading various narratives. Some comprehension-based activities accompany the videos. Despite being an online format, the resource appears to foreground traditional reading practices, and positions learners mainly as passive viewers.

**Commentary on key dialogues**

By this fourth meeting, Liz and Laura were confidently expressing their professional goals and needs (Engestrom, 2001, 2011; Engestrom & Sannino, 2010). Key dialogues suggest that the ECTs were developing critical insight into prescriptive *Available Designs*, and associated performance imperatives. On the basis of their emerging understandings and goals, Liz and Laura intimated:

- intentions to experiment with pedagogy and content inclusive of multimodal materials;
- recognition of the fraught reality of school leadership, in an era of performance-oriented educational practice (Heffernan, 2018);
- potential opportunities to resist and shape leadership decision-making.

These resolves marked Liz and Laura as traversing *expansive learning* (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), to *Design* alternative pedagogy. However, in follow-up conversations the next year, Liz and Laura talked about diverging possibilities to enact this pedagogy.

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\(^{23}\) See [https://www.storylineonline.net](https://www.storylineonline.net)
Follow-up the next year: diverse horizons

Laura and Liz each participated in a follow-up phone conversation the following school year. Key moments of conversation pointed to their diverging practices.

Laura

Laura had relocated to a small specialist school for 2017. Her experiences in this new school contrasted sharply with her previous ones:

*The principal at this school is really good. . . . If you need any PD or anything you can just go and ask him/her for advice and stuff. He/she’s a lot . . . more approachable and a lot more supportive [than previous leadership].* (2 min 38 sec)

Laura described how her pedagogy had changed in these circumstances:

*It’s a bit different in this role coz I’ve got three year levels. So I kind of have to put my different hat on depending on what work I’m working on and trying to think about what to actually cover.* (5 min 2 sec)

*So I’ve been trying to get my head around it all, the different programs [used at the school] and writing something that works in our context.* (6 min 28 sec)

In this way, Laura alluded to her continued efforts to evolve contextually responsive pedagogy, although her use of the word “programs” perhaps flags the presence of some standardised literacy interventions. To explore contextual influences, I asked, “Is there something that’s guiding your approach now?”

*You get a lot of this push-down . . . the kids have to sit there and write formally in the bigger grades and . . . you still want them to be doing that hands-on stuff, so just sneaking it in.* (8 min 44 sec)

Reminiscent of her experiences at the beginning of the previous year, Laura identified performance-based writing as a priority in this new context. However, Laura’s use of the phrase “sneaking it in” seemed to
imply her continued willingness to resist and shape *Available Designs*. Follow up with Liz revealed quite a different scenario.

**Liz**

Unlike Laura, Liz continued to teach in the original school, working towards goals she had articulated the previous year:

*I . . (laughs) I had an idea last year and I was quite determined to try to make it happen. And this year I’m actually seeing it happen.*

(2 min 49 sec)

After a few more minutes, Liz detailed some practices she was trying to shape:

*So reading conferencing’s happening. The listening comprehension is going well.*

(4 min 46 sec)

*So um this week [with the chosen text] they had to create a Facebook profile for the main character. You know, [making connections to] their likes and their interests.*

(5 min 3 sec)

Liz thus indicated efforts to broaden the scope of her literacies teaching and learning. But when I asked about professional learning, Liz replied:

*Um (laughs and sighs) much the same.*

(6 min 2 sec)

While this statement should not be over-interpreted, Liz seemed to rely on our shared understandings and previous dialogues, where she had reported a dearth of school-based professional support.

**Summary of ongoing developments**

These brief follow-up conversations illustrate how both Liz and Laura continued to shape literacy teaching and learning in view of their professional goals, even though they were faced with constraining contextual priorities, and little professional support.
Chapter conclusion

Dialogues presented for the regional case provide vivid illustrations of how Liz and Laura perceived and shaped situated teaching and learning priorities and arrangements. In their original school, Available Designs appeared to focus on rigidly standardised literacy teaching structures and routines (Cormack & Comber, 2013; Klenowski, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017). These routines converged with teaching for the basics of literacy (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013), implementation of commercial program interventions (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017), sparse professional learning support (Mockler, 2013, 2018; Sachs, 2016), and whole school accountabilities (Connell, 2013; Lingard & Sellar, 2013; Rowan et al., 2015). Liz and Laura traversed expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), and pedagogical Design, as they sought to explore and foster a broader range of literacies concepts and text-based opportunities, engage with student needs and interests, and in Laura’s case, relocate schools. Chapter Seven lays out findings for the metropolitan case, which differ markedly from those emerging from the remote and regional cases.
CHAPTER SEVEN
FINDINGS FOR THE METROPOLITAN CASE

Chapter introduction

Chapter Seven presents findings for the metropolitan case, following the same structure as the previous two chapters. The metropolitan case is of particular interest, because ECTs' understandings of *Available Designs* for literacies teaching and learning (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000) confirm, but also depart from, those expressed in the other groups. These casual ECTs tended to place much more importance on gaining employment, and accessing school-based professional learning. Often they attributed their literacy teaching and learning capacities as being in deficit, and tended to gravitate towards the perceived support of standardised curriculum and step-wise teaching materials. While these ECTs were clearly proactive in sourcing commercial PD, they did not consistently perceive these opportunities as assisting them to adapt to demands in schools. Two of the ECTs felt they were ultimately unable to resolve a lack of learning connection with schools, and by the time of follow-up, chose to leave the teaching profession. The third ECT accepted a contract in the non-compulsory early childhood setting, a role she did not associate with facilitating literacies. The next section presents brief background information about ECTs in this group.
Brief background information about the metropolitan ECTs

The three ECTs in this group, Elly, Jade and Sam, had been teaching for varying lengths of time. Elly was in her first year of practice, while Jade and Sam had been teaching for more than a year. All three were employed on a casual basis, in different primary schools in the north metropolitan district. Jade mainly taught in the early primary years (spanning approximately five to six years of age), while Elly and Sam taught across primary year levels. Background Survey responses revealed that the three had attended different ITE programs in different universities. While Sam and Jade had gained Bachelors in Education (non-specified), Elly possessed a Graduate Diploma (Primary). Elly spoke English as a first language, was in the 56 years and over age bracket, and wrote that she was interested in discussing foundational literacy concepts and curriculum. Jade also spoke English as a first language, and was in the 36 to 45 years age bracket. She did not record any particular interests. Sam spoke English as a first language, was between 46 and 55 years, and recorded that she wanted to discuss literacy teaching in general. Elly, Sam and Jade had not professionally previous to the study.

The first meeting

Overview

The first meeting for this group took place in a suburban café. I did not start audio-recording until all three ECTs arrived. Before recording began, we had changed tables twice, eventually settling in the patio section. During this time, our refreshment order went missing and we needed to re-order. Meanwhile we enjoyed light conversation. Eventually I turned discussion to the aims and protocols of the study. Then, consistent with facilitation of the other groups, the ECTs filled out
their Background Surveys, chose a pseudonym, and began to discuss topics depicted on the placemat guide. The remainder of the meeting progressed in a similar way as for the other groups. That is, I showed Sam, Jade and Elly the study's closed Facebook page, sent them the invitation link, and shared the same texts and iPad resources to stimulate interest-based discussion. Distinctly in this group, Sam and Jade did not usually use Facebook, but said they would think about arranging access. This first meeting lasted approximately one hour and fifteen minutes.

**Perceptions of being unready to teach literacy**

A few minutes after beginning recording, I introduced the placemat and prompted: "If someone would like to start . . How would you describe . . any of those things (gesturing to the placemat)?” Jade [10] described her teaching situation:

> I suppose that your teaching context kind of would . . maybe inform, a lot of the other things that we would talk about . . . So I teach, I cover relief teaching in Pre-primary. So I work across three different classrooms and one, sorry three different pre-primary classes. And I have a specific role within those pre-primary classes; to introduce the new letter and sound that they’re learning for that week. And we follow the 'Alphabet Sounds’ program.

As described, Jade’s role mainly involved teaching phonics using the *Alphabet Sounds* program. Investigating this program after the meeting, I found that it had been freely available since 2007, originating from a UK Department of Education. The website claims that the program supports systematic teaching of relationships between spoken and written letters, generalising in later school years to students’ spelling skills.
After the above, Jade talked for about a minute about principles underpinning *Alphabet Sounds*, noting the importance of implementing a fixed learning sequence. Elly [35] expressed some interest, asking Jade, “Does your role require assessment of those children then? Or just the presenting of it [*Alphabet Sounds*] during the [school] term?” Jade elaborated:

36. **Jade**: I’m doing a little bit of assessment. So I’m currently doing a checklist using flip cards with the *SATPIN* letters, “Can you tell me the name of this letter? What sound does it make?”

37. **Sam**: Do you get time to go through with each child?

38. **Jade**: Actually I’m just doing that during class time. Though I’ve set aside an activity period for me to do that. And then I keep that record for *myself*, so I know which children have and haven’t got it, and I provide a copy of that to the class teacher as well. Yeah. But the class teachers have *just* done all their own letters and sounds testing and everything *coz* they’ve had to do um . . *On Entry*.

Significantly, Jade implies a relationship between the diagnostic approach of *Alphabet Sounds*, and diagnostic *On Entry* assessment. My independent inquiry revealed that *On Entry* assessment is administered to all students beginning Pre-primary in Western Australia. The testing protocol details each child’s point-in-time literacy and numeracy skills against a benchmarked standard, so that teachers can intervene in relation to under-performance,

Unfortunately, Jade did not have a chance to elaborate about *On Entry*, as we were interrupted by the waitperson. Resuming our conversation around the placemat a couple of minutes later, I asked, “What about you Elly?”

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48. **Elly:** So I’m *fascinated* with language, and . . . very keen to be working with ESL [English as a second language].

(Seconds later)

54. **Elly:** But I just feel very inadequate . . . with the practical *step by step*, so I actually volunteered in [school name] last term while I was waiting for registration. I’m very excited to discover them, and a network of schools, and so they’ve all got my CV so I can do relief there (laughs).

In researcher observations, I noted that Elly delivered these comments in a gentle, almost self-deprecating manner. Referring to herself as still transitioning into the profession, she seemed to aspire to “*practical step by step*” [54] literacy teaching practices. Elly described her current knowledge of these practices as “*very inadequate*”.

Several minutes later, Sam took a turn to describe her journey towards teaching, which had included tertiary learning in the subject *English*. Sam [91] claimed that during her tertiary experiences, she had not learned “the basics of literacy”, and felt she now needed to [93] “look up everything, to understand how a sentence was constructed and everything else”. In contrast with Jade and Elly’s goals to engage more closely with schools, Sam [102] simply said:

But now I’m having a break from mainstream school and so I’m going into tutoring.

This short statement seemed to indicate a discontinuity between Sam’s experiences of learning *English* in the tertiary setting, and extant literacy practices in schools. To regroup our conversation, I prompted, “So we’ve said a little bit about where we’ve come from. What would we say literacy is then?” Jade took up the thread:

108. **Jade:** Everything. Everything. Talking, listening . . . reading, writing . . . you know, knowing letters and sounds, and I didn’t say before but part of my school context is, ah we’re in a very multicultural area.

109. **Sam:** Mmm, same with ours.

While first defining literacy as “*everything*” [108], Jade referred only to traditional components of reading, writing and “*knowing letters and sounds*”. Rather than elaborating this definition, Jade signified the
importance of functional orality, by sharing a narrative about one second language learner who needed to communicate through mime. For ethical purposes, this narrative is not presented here. In conclusion however, Jade evaluated [120]:

Yeah, one word and tapping me on the shoulder and pointing and he takes my face and turns my head to where he wants to look (role-plays, turning her head with her own hands). So yeah, a lot of EALD [English as an additional language/dialect] and .. so that .. is very .. difficult.

In the last line [120], Jade thus construed facilitation of second language learning as very challenging.

A minute or so later, when I sought to confirm that ECTs “were saying that diversity of practice includes those multicultural aspects and the different languages and all sorts of things?”, Elly reasoned about perceived challenges:

126. **Elly:** But I think ah .. that whole guesswork .. distresses me. That we’re all thrown out into the .. the mix .. and having to guesswork the .. the steps, when really if there was a national, apart from the curriculum, “This is what we should teach”, if there was a national “How to teach that”.

(seconds later)

132. **Elly:** So part of my concern is that consistency across the board .. for the standard of literacy in Australia, to be as consistent as possible.

Elly’s response to my question about sociocultural and linguistic diversity, was to suggest that planning for teaching should be supported by more standardised and prescriptive curricula. However Jade was open to analysis of this logic:
208. **Jade:** I don’t know that you’d ever be able to *get*, one program, that all schools follow . . . because, I did my prac at a few different schools and I’ve talked to lots of teachers at different schools and principals all have different . . . thoughts on what’s the best way to do things.

209. **Elly:** Yes, yes. Philosophy.

210. **Jade:** And teachers all have different thoughts, and . . . yeah and it’s so it varies widely.

211. **Elly:** But that’s scary, because . . . if you take away the measuring stick . . . you can imagine how creative that *might* be, and teachers are naturally creative, but if you take away the measuring stick, what’s . . . you know, what’s it going to look like?

It seemed that Jade and Elly were comfortable about voicing these multiple perspectives on teaching and learning for literacy. From Jade’s [208] perspective, school leaders and teachers evolve situated responses to varying contextual factors and philosophies. In contrast, Elly [211] ventured that teachers’ efforts to craft diverse approaches should be constrained, at least in part, because they could not be easily measured and compared.

This dissension prompted me to ask about another focus depicted on the placemat, “*So how do we feel about the curriculum then? Some people might say that . . . the WA Outline or . . the Australian Curriculum would form that core?*” Elly [239] asserted:

> I think that’s a tremendous . . . *base-line* [Australian Curriculum], but it’s not the how-to, when you’re breaking it down as to, “Should the children be learning those letters?” And those sounds *first*, or secondary or what’s, what’s a priority, what’s not. It’s a great baseline, that we should all be on the same *page*, but it’s . . . not quite defining enough for me as to *how to* which I think really *equips* the teacher more, to do her job well. And those sounds *first*, or secondary or what’s, what’s a priority, what’s not?

Here Elly [239] restated her perception of the need to standardise and prescribe the “*how to*” of literacy teaching and learning, which she related to linear learning of phonics and letter-sounds. It remains unclear whether Elly emphasised these particular skills because she viewed them as significant, or because they had been themes in
previous discussion on the day. The next subsection illustrates that despite expressing quite diverse views on some topics, Elly and Jade were in accord about the perceived irrelevance of their learning in ITE.

**The irrelevance of ITE and the relevance of PD**

Early in this meeting, the ECTs had offered their initial perceptions of literacy teaching and learning, and Elly had suggested that ITE had not prepared her well for classroom teaching. This thread has been presented above. In further comments, Elly [56] asserted:

“I know it’s not good to come across as not confident in your field, but I, I believe in honesty as well (laughing voice). So I mentioned it to the principal [at a school]. I said look, ‘I really feel under-trained. Theory was great [at university], it was very broad, I know the why of teaching, but I do not feel that I know the how to do it.”

Here Elly [56] attributed deficits in her professional knowledge to the “very broad” and theoretical focus of ITE. As conversation flowed, Jade contributed a similar attribution:

72. **Jade:** I’m listening to you [Elly] and thinking, when I . . . went to Uni we had a lot on literacy. Like a lot.
73. **Elly:** Really?
74. **Jade:** On literacy.
75. **Elly:** Did you do four years by the way?
76. **Jade:** Yes . . . but I still walked out, not knowing how to teach it.  

(seconds later)

86. **Jade:** I think it’s almost like kind of a really dim feeling like you’re in the dark and great to have theory-87. **Elly:** It’s wading, it’s doggy paddling.

Rather than asking Elly and Jade to elaborate, at this point I had prompted Sam to tell her story (presented previously)

Several minutes later, to shift the conversation to focus on learning supports available to these ECTs, I asked, “Do you get to attend any school [based] professional learning?” Jade [165] reflected on a PD she had attended:
I went to a particular one that was . . it was running of PA rotations or PA sessions [phonological awareness] for Kindergarten to Pre-primary. So that was a whole day course and my principal paid for me to go and organised relief for my day. Which was great because from what I understand the funding for that is . . minimal.

Here Jade [165] evaluated school-based provisions for teacher PD as “minimal”. In this situation, it is perhaps significant that the principal chose to support PD for phonics, rather than other literacies emphases. The next subsection illustrates how in parallel, the ECTs expressed dilemmas about not understanding multimodality.

**Dilemmas about understanding multimodality**

After the above discussions, I asked the ECTs if they might like to explore some multimodal iPad applications: *Meet Millie* (Megapops LLC, 2011) and *StoryKit* (Apple, 2010). However, just as I offered them my iPad to view, Sam [276] asked about the meaning of the term multimodal:

276. **Sam:** From memory, multimodal was um . . . oral? Was that different types of texts? Is that right or am I getting it mixed up?

To prompt a little more conversation, I asked, “Anyone else got any ideas about what that might be?” The following reflections emerged:

280. **Elly:** Yeah. I remember having to *study* it [in ITE]. And I remember struggling to *grasp* it, to *begin* with. But I think as I pushed through . . . I formed a very *general* idea, that it’s all the other ways of learning using IT, interactive whiteboard . . .

281. **Sam:** Mmmm.

282. **Elly:** iPads, software . . . yeah, anything that’s visual, hands on, besides the basic reading and writing, and listening and speaking.

It seemed that Sam and Elly were seeking to make sense of the concept, which they mainly associated with the use of digital devices. Aiming to prompt Jade to contribute, I simply turned and asked, “*Jade*?”
In these comments, Jade [289] and Elly [290] claimed only a general understanding of multimodality. While Elly expressed some familiarity with the term from her experience of ITE, previously in the meeting she had constructed ITE as too broad and theoretical to inform literacy teaching and learning in schools.

A few minutes later, the ECTs explored my copy of Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears. The following is representative of how they talked while they explored:

492. Jade: (perusing pages in the text) It’s got all kinds of layers and fold out bits.
493. Elly: Very tactile.
494. Jade: There’s maps and chewed pages and all sorts. (to Elly) Have a look, it’s lovely.
495. Elly: (laughing, takes the book) This one looks like heaps of fun for a certain, like maybe three/four, four/five (year levels), where you could really go in different directions.

In these comments, Jade and Elly mainly appreciated the unique layout of the text, and they didn’t use technical textual metalanguage. To probe Elly's [495] suggestion that “you could really go in different directions” [with the text], I asked, “What directions do you see Elly?” She [497] replied:

Well, even just the way it’s laid out, there’s a lot of . . . movement. I would . . . struggle . . . to use this in the lower grades where you’re really just trying to grasp the concept of text.

Here, Elly [497] surfaces the notion that teaching with such texts might be a “struggle” in younger age groups. Meanwhile, none of the ECTs offered any further suggestions for teaching with such texts.
Commentary on key dialogues

In the first meeting for this group, the ECTs mainly articulated *Available Designs* oriented to teaching traditional literacy. While Jade defined her role as focused on programming and assessing phonics learning, she recognised that teachers and principals might shape their approaches around varying contextual needs (Heffernan, 2018). An important thread throughout discussions concerned ECTs’ perceptions of the need to standardise teaching, curricula, and assessments, to address deficits in their professional knowledge (see Cormack & Comber, 2013; Klenowski, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017). Elly in particular reproduced the vernacular of *Students First* (Australian Government, 2014), which critiques ECTs’ readiness to teach the basics (Mills & Goos, 2017). Flowing from these perceived deficits, the ECTs felt that students’ linguistic and sociocultural diversity presented them with many challenges. In parallel, they were critical of the “*theoretical*” and “*broad*” approach adopted in ITE, which had not prepared them to negotiate the “*how to*” of stepwise literacy in classrooms (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Honan, Kervin, Exley & Simpson, 2014). On this point, all three ECTs acknowledged that their understandings of multimodality were undeveloped. In the second meeting, the ECTs problematised some of their initial perceptions and *Available Designs*.

The second meeting

Overview

The second meeting took place in the same suburban café as before, although this time we sat inside on benches. Elly and Sam arrived first, chatting about a humorous incident from Elly’s day of relief teaching. Jade arrived a few minutes later, updating the group about her latest holiday adventure. In the same way as for the other
groups, once everyone had caught up on their news, I shared out Literacy Bags, and invited the ECTs to view Memorial, by Shaun Tan (1999), and Paul Dufficy’s professional learning text, Designing Learning for Diverse Classrooms (2005). Elly, Jade and Sam voluntarily extended our discussion to approximately two hours.

**Sharing strategies for teaching reading and writing**

After everyone was settled with refreshments, Elly talked about some challenging moments from her day as a relief teacher, which had involved a pre-set reading and writing task for Year One students:

328. **Elly**: They [students] couldn’t really read back their work. They struggled. Couldn’t remember some of what they’d told in the story. And I thought, I wasn’t too happy with . . . the process. I just wasn’t happy. I thought, “Surely we could . . . story tell, and then go and write . . . and then come back and read it having remembered what we could.”

(Several seconds later)

335. **Jade**: The Year Ones last year, it was *such a struggle* for them [writing].
336. **Elly**: So it wasn’t just my class then.
337. **Jade**: It was *such a struggle*. And in the end I skipped it, and we did author study on Monday mornings instead of that, with Natty Jefferies (pseudonym). And we looked at all of his books. And then they write their own story and that type of thing, and we did all that kind of thing.
338. **Elly**: Coz that engages their imagination more, doesn’t it?
339. **Jade**: And it’s not just the reading. I was getting some kids that I was just getting two sentences out of them, about what they did on the weekend.

In this interchange, Elly and Jade used the conversation space to co-construct understandings about teaching writing. Amongst other things, they appeared to aspire to supporting students to write more than “two sentences” [339]. While limited to this more traditional and performative goal, this instance of peer-based meaning-making was still quite significant, given Elly’s original advocacy for prescriptive and standardised professional learning. The next subsection showcases how the ECTs similarly shared and analysed experiences with commercially-generated literacy PD.
Analysing the purposes of commercial PD

After the above conversation, the ECTs leafed through my copy of Paul Dufficy’s, *Designing Learning for Diverse Classrooms* (2005). Responding to their apparent interest, I commented that, “It might be in the library [at a school] . . . There can be quite a lot of stuff in the library”. However, rather than commenting on the text, and almost as an aside, Elly and Jade declared:

450. **Elly**: Different schools *push* different programs, don’t they? Like *Joyful Phonics Learning*, or *Sounds Make Patterns*, or *Grammar Points*. . . a really good one.

451. **Jade**: That’s been [Grammar Points] talked about a lot on Facebook. Teachers’ Facebook; *Grammar Points* and *Super Writing* and *Big Ideas*.

452. **Elly**: Yes. I like that one.

In this very short space, Elly and Jade named a plethora of commercially packaged literacy programs. Investigating afterwards, I found that *Joyful Phonics Learning* is a UK commercial program claiming a synthetic approach to phonics, grammar and spelling. *Sounds Make Patterns*, I have described previously. *Grammar Points* claims to raise standards of students’ writing, through a ‘back to basics’ and ‘building blocks’ approach to skills. Elly seemed to believe that schools chose these particular commercial programs for strategic reasons. I simply practiced active listening as Elly [455] continued:

Yeah, I watched it [Grammar Points] in my Grade Two prac [during ITE], and I loved it. It was just very effective. It just really gave direction. It pulled together why you use the punctuation, how you do a big think and . . . yeah I thought it was a very good strategy.

Elly [455] thus returned to voicing the need for explicit programs and structures, to lend more “direction” to teaching of grammar and writing.
Later in the meeting, Elly [646] reiterated this focus on writing skills, when she shared her aspirations for coming PD:

The good news for *me*, is I signed up for . . . it’s put on by [commercial company name], and it’s called *Connecting Phonics and Writing*. And it’s a new phonics program, a new way to teach children to read from . . . the beginning. So I’m really excited, because I feel like that will give me . . . a bit of foundation learning that I said I didn’t feel I had before.

It appeared that Elly [646] placed a great value on this commercial opportunity, because she believed it would assist her to redress deficits in her literacy teaching repertoire.

Soon afterwards, Jade announced that she had recently attended four similar events. However Jade was more cautious about taking these PDs at face value:

682. **Jade**: Everybody is like, "This way is the best approach. *This* way is the best approach."
683. **Elly**: There *are* a lot of ways out there.
684. **Jade**: And everybody’s got research to back up *their* way of doing things, and this and that and the other, you know . . . It’s obviously *our* role to pick what is appropriate for *our* students and for *us*, and for *our* situation.
685. **Elly**: And our *school*, and what your principal dictates (laughs).

In these comments, Jade [682, 684] critiqued how commercial PDs can spruik the “*best approach*” or “*way of doing things*”. On her part, Elly [685] demonstrated increasing awareness of the mediating role of school leaders. Perhaps marking the limits of collective questioning however, the ECTs did not reflect on the necessity of choosing PD related to writing or phonics. The next subsection presents more analytical dialogue, where these teachers considered the purposes of digital learning and participation.
Reasoning about digital participation

About midway through the meeting, Jade spontaneously mused on teachers’ limited use of technology in her school:

541. **Jade**: I have to say that at our school we don’t use a lot of technology, in those Pre-primary classes, which is where I’m at now. And the Kindy class . . . non-existent. We’re talking about ways to bring more technology in, and . . . of course, the new *'Digital and Technologies Curriculum’* that’s coming in (eye roll).

542. **ECTs**: (laughing)

543. **Jade**: I would really like to bring some technology into it. Like I’d love for them [students] to be able to make some films, and you know, setting up their room for [the classroom theme] or something like that. I’m trying to, them being able to film each other, or . . . you know make a movie, or, I don’t know, I’m really trying to bring that in, but, I think . . . it’s hard coz . . . I didn’t grow up with computers.

Here Jade frames how her personal experiences with technology might impact her implementation of curriculum reform. Nonetheless, Jade expressed the intention to increase student participation in formats such as film making, while carefully acknowledging that her own experiences and knowledge might constrain intended facilitation.

A few minutes later, against the backdrop of Jade’s intentions to innovate, Sam [596] expressed the view that writing focuses should remain important:

They [students] still have to . . . um . . . *write* with their hands and . . . they still have to read *books*. To go too much *either way* . . . particularly *nowadays*.

Although these brief comments should not be overinterpreted, Sam seemed to intimate a balanced view of literacies pedagogy, inclusive of reading and writing focuses. However, later in the year when Sam, Jade and Elly revisited the theme of digital interaction, new tensions were to emerge. Before unveiling this longer term meaning-making, the main findings for this second meeting are synthesised below.
Commentary on key dialogues

In discussions of the second meeting, Elly, Sam and Jade deepened their understandings of Available Designs for literacy teaching and professional learning. For instance, Elly and Jade made sense of limitations in their pedagogy for supporting students’ writing. They also mused on their positioning as consumers of commercially-generated literacy programs, which Elly felt were strategically promoted in schools (see Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017). During these deepened conversations however, the ECTs did not question the assumed necessity of teaching traditional phonics, vocabulary-building or grammar skills (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). While Jade expressed interest in increasing students’ participation in digital formats, it remained uncertain whether this stemmed mainly from a perceived need to implement Digital Curriculum (ACARA, 2010-2018). Sam meanwhile, countered that traditional writing skills should be maintained. Discussion in the third meeting turned towards the topics of professional resourcing and support.

The third meeting

Overview

For the third meeting, we changed venue to a café suggested by the ECTs. We sat quite close to each other in leather chairs, positioned around a low wooden table. Jade was unable to attend, as she was belatedly called to an interview at her school. Despite Jade’s absence, Elly and Sam enthusiastically traded thoughts and recounts for approximately two hours.
Advocating for standardisation, but critiquing performance expectations

Much of the first half of this meeting revolved around ECTs’ professional learning experiences. Key segments are presented in the next subsection. Later in the meeting, Elly and Sam decided to discuss how they selected texts for students to read:

690. Elly: It’s quite crucial to pick a good text. ‘Connecting Phonics and Writing’ have ‘Reading Garden’ levelled readers, aligned to each lesson phase that they take the children through. Even if you wrote your own text, to do that, you know I think it’s worth it.

691. Sam: Well, I notice the little readers in the library, in the young readers section, they actually have a section in the back that does that. So they’ve integrated that for the different year levels.

692. Elly: That’s what they do at school all the time. They’ve got different resources and such, then they’ve got the levels and dots. That is a major part of the day, is that they swap over their books and go to the EA, read their level, and she swaps them out.

Here Elly [690] appeared to equate “good text” with commercially produced “levelled readers”, viewing student access to these texts as an important routine. Investigating, I found that Connecting Phonics and Writing (pseudonym), is a UK commercial program, which claims to set a gold standard for highly structured phonics learning. It is unclear whether Elly and Sam utilised other text selection strategies, as there was an absence of discussion of authentic children’s literature in this group. However, their legitimisation of commercially levelled literacy materials seems consistent with their previous valuing of standardised literacy teaching.

Slightly later, I asked Elly and Sam if they used official curricula to inform literacy teaching. They responded as follows:
780. **Sam**: Mmmm.
781. **Elly**: In SCSA you can go into *Judging Standards*, and you can pull up the different differentiations.
782. **Sam**: I have. I’ve seen that. It’s got good examples. Yeah, it’s very good.
783. **Elly**: I’ve printed all those out and made booklets for each of them. So I can flip through, like if I go to a Grade Five class, I can pull out Grade Five and have a squiz [colloquial - a close look].

Interestingly, Elly [781, 782] selectively associated my question with standards-referenced elements of curricula for subject *English*. Neither ECT mentioned any other aspects of curricula, or connections with literacy pedagogy.

After a few minutes more of discussion, Elly and Sam talked about using concrete materials such as mini-whiteboards. Elly [848] believed that her students preferred these materials, because they allowed for mistakes to be erased, which helped students cope with “anxiety”. As this theme diverged from any expressed previously, I simply asked Elly, “*What do you think they’re [the students] anxious about?*” Elly [852] became quite animated:

Well... in Grade One and Grade Two they’re being given the... yeah, the levels... the expectation is... it’s *imbalanced*........

But at school (smacking her fist into her palm repeatedly and loudly, and role-playing emphatically as if speaking to students) “*It’s coming up, you’ve got to get it right. You’ve got to do your recount. You’ve got to do your recount. You’ve got to do your recount*, you know. And they’re giving them big, big words, til they get the words right.

For the first time in this group, Elly [852] shared her perception that students may be negatively impacted by “*imbalanced*” expectations about standards of writing. This was a theme which teachers returned to in a later meeting. For now, the next subsection illustrates how Elly and Sam identified absences in professional support, which could have helped them make sense of these expectations.
Identifying an absence of professional support

As mentioned, informal talk at the beginning of the meeting revolved around the topic of professional learning. Elly expressed a particular concern about a dearth of opportunities to talk to other teachers:

18. Elly: But nobody . . . knows . . . the systems that I'm working in, or actually wants to debrief or discuss how I found it. There's no one to talk to.
19. Veronica: Yeah?
20. Elly: And, it's not like I want to complain, I just want some strategies.

(Several seconds later)
34. Elly: I'm often left a little bit, feeling, coz I do suffer from anxiety when I need to go there the next time. Coz there's gaps [in information sharing].
35. Veronica: Yes?
36. Elly: Um . . . you know, I hardly sleep, the night before I go. And I'll be exhausted as well as challenged. So . . . I don't know if that anxiety is just part of my age bracket, or is it just . . . the lack of someone to talk to. . . Or is it that I have this need to . . . debrief with somebody that's trained . . that gives me the strategies a little bit more? I'm not asking them to look in on me, I'm just asking for . . . a discussion. You know?

At the point where the above mini-narrative ceased, our flow was interrupted by the waitperson delivering our chai tea. However, this short segment is potentially significant, in that it contrasts with Elly's previous advocacy for transmitted and standardised literacy teaching and learning. Elly seemed to have shifted to the perception that opportunities “to talk to” colleagues would assist her to evolve her literacy teaching. As Elly points out, such dialogue could have enabled her to deliberate on pedagogy suited to the students she was teaching.

Later in the meeting, this lack of professional support again became a topic for conversation, when Elly remarked on the belated discovery of induction programs for graduate teachers. She had been searching for information about teacher registration:
427. **Elly:** Somebody should have told me at the beginning of the year, but there’s a course for the graduates.  

(seconds later)

434. **Elly:** But yeah, they said [system support officer] they do want relief and casual to come along as well. But I mean, no one came knocking on my door (smiling). If I wasn’t proactive I’d be floating out in the system for years.

Elly had not been aware of systemic induction supports for graduates, although her inclination to be “proactive” [434] had helped her avoid “floating out in the system for years”. In dialogues presented in the next subsection, ECTs intimate that they did not perceive digital teaching emphases as a similar priority for exploration.

### Resistance to digital forms of multimodal text

To investigate how these ECTs might respond to a good quality multimodal text, I brought along both print and digital versions of *Dear Greenpeace*, by Simon James (1991). I first presented Elly and Sam with the print text, offering some brief commentary on how the text’s imagery could be drawn upon in various ways. However, while perusing the book, Elly turned to Sam and said:

632. **Elly:** That’s *her* writing [the character’s]. See the font?  
633. **Sam:** Yeah.  
634. **Elly:** And that’s the answer back [letter writing between characters in the text]. How clever. They’ve even changed the font to give it that . . .  
635. **Sam:** Mmmm.

Although Elly explored several pages of the picture book, and I had specifically highlighted the imagery, her immediate attention had been drawn only to written components. On its own, this response was perhaps unremarkable. But when I went on to show the ECTs a digital version of the same text, Elly and Sam were quick to question the purpose of teaching with this format:
656. **Elly:** Oh, oh ok. (frowning) I would have thought that was confusing.

676. **Sam:** How does that help them? [students]

Elly and Sam’s responses to the digital version seemed consistent with their recurrent valuing of written forms. In following comments, I mentioned that the digital text might form a “scaffold” for student learning, to which Elly [680] replied:

I would do it the opposite way. I thought you could read that whole thing out [the print text] and then . . go into that [the digital text]. It’s **fantastic.**

Despite Elly’s eventual affirmation, this thread went no further, because the ECTs promptly, although politely, turned conversation to a different topic. Importantly, tensions in regard to digital formats emerged again later in the year. Before presenting end-of-year findings however, the next subsection synthesises findings for this third meeting.

**Commentary on key dialogues**

Despite earlier problematisation of the imposition of commercially generated literacy materials in schools, in this third meeting, Elly and Sam agreed that commercial levelled readers offered examples of “**good text**” (see Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017). Elly also indicated the high value she placed on standards-referenced aspects of curriculum documents (see Green, 2018). In a new development, she shared the perception that performance expectations for students’ writing were “**imbalanced**”, and produced student anxiety. In regard to professional learning, Elly voiced both a lack of opportunity to dialogue with colleagues in schools, and challenges in accessing systemic induction support (see Crosswell & Beutel, 2013; Morrison, 2013; Rowan, Mayer & Kline, 2017). Elly’s earnestness to engage in professional dialogue seems at odds with policies such as Students **First** (Australian Government, 2014), which profess the low quality of ECT learning capacities. Yet Elly’s reflections
resonate with those of ECTs researched elsewhere (Buchanan et al., 2013), and provide further evidence of the reduced substantive professional learning opportunities experienced by some ECTs. Significantly, this lack of actualised professional support contrasts with the ways in which graduate induction is sometimes vaunted in various literatures (see AITSL, 2016; Crosswell & Beutel, 2017). A finding of teachers’ resistance to digital text seems to underline Elly and Sam’s ongoing privileging of traditional Available Designs for literacy teaching and learning.

The fourth meeting

Overview

For this final meeting, we returned to the café we had visited on the previous occasion, where we settled at a dinner table for four. The summer evening was pleasant. All three ECTs attended this final meeting, which they voluntarily extended to almost three hours. I did not bring any resources to share, and topic flow was shaped by the ECTs.

Re-considering contemporary literacies

Much of the early discussion in this final meeting revolved around teachers’ professional learning experiences, and their plans for the future. Late in the meeting, I invited discussion of digital formats, which had been a theme in the previous meeting. As Jade was absent on that occasion, I was interested to see how she might respond to this topic. In a low key way, I simply asked: “What are your thoughts on that [digital literacy]?” Sam, who had previously asserted that writing remained important in contemporary times (see the third meeting), was first to respond:
774. **Sam:** Some of them [primary aged students] can be quite
digit, digitally *literate*, in that they know how to . . *access* the
things that they *want* to use. But they’re shallow readers, they’re
not deep readers.

( several seconds later)

784. **Sam:** Yeah. If you switch on a *screen*, ah . . . I found that with
some kids at school, well any kind of class I was showing it to,
they would really like it. Um . . . yeah I even toyed with the idea of
filming *myself* and then saying (laughing), "Oh we’re just going to
watch this little clip".

In contrast with the third meeting, Sam [774] now acknowledged that
students are drawn to digital interactions, and that she was beginning
to use some digital practices in the classroom. On the other hand, Sam
noticeably constructed students’ digital practices as “*shallow*” [774].

As terms such as digital literacy can be interpreted in many ways, I
prompted a little more perspective-taking, asking, “*Do you think it’s part
of our responsibility to help them make meaning and be deep thinkers
about all of those formats?*” Sam and Elly’s immediate responses were
as follows:

796. **Sam:** (flat voice) Not really.
797. **Elly:** Good question.
798. **Sam:** Because . . . it depends what . . . if my goal on the
internet is to find a service provider . . . to fix my car, or whatever,
that’s my goal. I don’t need to know . . . the history of the
company, or . . . who works there, or you know, I *only* need to
access something. So they *do* need to know how to do those
things? But they *also* . . . if they’re accessing a mobile phone
provider they need to know how to read and evaluate . . . the
information, and how, how the bills work, and how they’re going
to be charged, you know? And if they skim read . . . that’s where
they get in trouble.

Sam and Elly were thus beginning to recognise contemporary
complexities. While Sam initially opposed the prospect of deepening
student’s understandings of digital formats, she also acknowledged that
students need to utilise deeper meaning-making strategies in online
spaces. Elly meanwhile, legitimated this instance of more open
dialogue.
Seeking clarification, I asked: “So, in some senses you’re saying that kids need to do that [deep reading] digitally as well?” Jade attempted to reframe collective understandings:

810. **Jade**: Is it not about knowing when they need to . . . read . . . for deep meaning? . . . Like, when you’re looking at, if you’re looking at a website, if you just need to pick out the information and find the phone number and whatever, knowing that you don’t need to read that, at that point, but then knowing when you are reading a novel that you’re reading for meaning and that you need to pick up meaning out of it, so you do need to read it at that different level. Is that part of what I’m saying?

811. **Sam**: Knowing how to read different texts.

812. **Elly**: So you’re having different purposes.

(Seconds later)

820. **Veronica**: What were you thinking Elly?

821. **Elly**: That yeah, I totally agree with that. That um . . . they need both.

Thus in this further segment, the ECTs worked to understand the purpose of digital participation, although tensions between positions continued to be evident. For instance, Jade alerted the group to how different forms and strategies for reading might satisfy various purposes in different situations. Sam on the other hand, seemed to intuitively associate narrative reading with meaning-making, and digital reading with pragmatic information-getting. Elly eventually asserted that a balance might be needed. In somewhat of a juxtaposition, the following subsection illustrates that these ECTs perceived system-level arrangements as being unsupportive of this calibre of meaning-making.
Questioning system-level PD and induction

Early in this final meeting, during initial catch-up, Elly updated us about some commercial PD she was going to attend:

113. **Elly:** I did a huge PD just gone, with [commercial company]. I’m doing ah my graduate PD next week.

114. **Veronica:** Oooh.

115. **Elly:** I feel so over-studied though [as a result of the PD]. I felt like I was back in Uni trying to write assignments. The same challenge. How to make it sound . . I’m just not really, I used to love writing, but how . . to write for the questions in an assignment, to get it sounding . .

Seeking to explore her perceptions, I asked Elly, “You have to write things?” Elly [117] responded:

- He would give us quite a few different scenarios that we had to then reply to on a forum post or reply to somebody else’s post. To pass. We had to do that and . . we also had to come up with 3 smart goals, this is really good. I felt that was probably the biggest learning curve for everybody at the course. And they’re all experts except me.

At this point, I noticed that Sam and Jade were looking at Elly uncertainly. Appearing to take these looks as a cue, Elly [119] continued:

- No, they were all specialists already. They were specialists and coming in and getting more training. Whereas I haven’t even had a classroom of my own yet. . . I had to invent the child, and the stage that he was at. And then find the goals . . of what I would do to help that child. . . And I just took days (laughs).

Therefore, despite having greatly anticipated this particular PD (see previous meeting), it seemed that perhaps Elly felt devalued by the one-size-fits-all format of the PD.
Slightly later in the same conversation, Jade critiqued undifferentiated systemic provisions for teacher learning:

165. **Jade**: (emphatically) *We need to teach towards people's [teachers] different learning styles and . . . you know, build from their already existing knowledge and building on and all that type of thing. But then training for us, and also *assessments*. When we're taught to do assessments they're supposed to be, you know, this and this and then this. Well that's what we're given as Uni students or whatever. Then the assessments we're given [as teachers], [we] don't get any of those things (laughs).

166. **Sam**: Mmm, I know.

167. **Elly**: Yes, yes.

Above, Jade points to contradictions between systemic arrangements for teacher “training” [165], and contemporary principles of differentiated teaching and learning.

Later in the meeting, discussion returned to this topic when I asked, "*What do you think the continuing challenges are?*” [for ECTs]. Jade responded:

639. **Jade**: I think it’s so *diverse* [teacher learning]. Everybody's experiences are so *diverse*, because of the contexts that they go into, and the experience they have once they’re *out there*, you know whether they are doing relief and they're at lots of different schools, or if they're at a school that has certain focuses. And does things differently to another school, you know? Everybody has such diverse experiences.

640. **Elly**: (echoing) *Experiences.*

641. **Jade**: How do you provide advice that is going to *suit* . . . everybody, or even a majority of people?

Here Jade advocated that teacher professional learning should be more tailored, to enable contextual needs to be taken into account. To facilitate further discussion of this point, I asked, “*Do you think that the current way things are organised for early career teaching, do you think that . . . addresses that diversity?*” Jade responded by commenting on her recent experience of graduate induction:
Jade: No. I just went to my fourth graduate unit. So this is just specifically a graduate unit.

Veronica: The module things?

Jade: Yep. And it was actually the first time I went to the ah ... the pilot version, of them splitting ... the units up for early childhood, primary and secondary.

Elly: Great.

Jade: And . . . they had workshops.

Elly: Great.

Jade: So you could go and choose the workshops that would be most helpful to you, you had a morning and an afternoon session for each day, you could choose the workshops.

Elly: Very good.

Jade: So . . . I think . . . that is helpful. But even within that, it was probably not specific enough.

Elly: Too wide, too broad.

In this way, Jade again acknowledged the need to shape teacher professional learning in relation to diverse circumstances and contextual needs.

To enable the ECTs to revisit a theme expressed in previous discussions, I asked Elly, “And over the time [of the group] you’ve said you want people to discuss things with, to collaborate with?” This thread was taken up by Jade and Elly:

Jade: I was going to say . . . I was aware that we had the Literacy Coordinators and things [at school], but . . . I actually didn’t feel comfortable approaching them to ask questions . . .

Elly: Yeah, no. You need to present success.

Jade: Cos I was trying to get a job at the school, and I wanted them to see me as capable of teaching . . . and yes I would ask questions, but you know, I think part of that . . . not having a permanent job, is also a little bit tricky, cos you want to look like you know what you’re doing as well. So I think you’re a little bit hamstrung by that.

Elly: You are, yes.

Elly and Jade suggest how the perceived need to portray themselves as a professional “success’ may have hindered their help-seeking in schools to date. Slightly later, when I reiterated, “People’s journeys are very different?”, Elly connected the need to demonstrate professional
success within the precarious circumstances of ECT contract employment:

743. **Elly:** There is a common factor that they [ECTs] are feeling. . *thrown in* . . and having to really . . prove themselves to survive, or . . I mean are other jobs like that?

744. **Jade:** Yes. Corporate jobs are like that? Sometimes.

745. **Sam:** If you don’t perform, in IT, coz we know a few IT specialists, you get put on the bench, or you get you know, your contract just ends, but they all work on contracts like, for doing.

746. **Elly:** It could be the whole contract ah . . *thing* that has changed our . . society and so that you *are* having to just look after yourself.

Here all three ECTs reflected on how professional conditions positioned them to “*perform*” [745] in relation to broader expectations, while Elly [746] emphasised the uncertainties of “*contract*” employment. The next subsection illustrates further contextual influences on pedagogical shaping.

**Dilemmas about digital experimentation**

Early in dialogue for this fourth meeting, Jade reported that her original plan to experiment with digital formats in the classroom had produced mixed results (Jade was away for the third meeting):

180. **Jade:** The kids really got into it [the project Jade had designed]. [but] Digital mmmm (dramatic voice) . . Smart Board *issues* . . but we used tablets a little bit, our tablets (high pitched) weren’t working properly for the kids to be able to do stuff on. We’re having major digital technology issues at the school. But we’ve just put in for a grant, so *hopefully* . .

(seconds later)

190. **Jade:** And we did *watch* some great . . videos. Like we watched *parts* of things. But like we watched, a kind of trailer.

In the second meeting, Jade said she had wanted to foster student filmmaking, which in part formed a response to incoming digital curricula. Here, she indicated that this plan had never come to fruition, due to under-resourcing of technology in her school. Several minutes later, Jade commented further:
Jade: Like our Smart board . . . is just about dead.  
(seconds later)
Jade: But, you know, it’s really not keeping up with you 
know, it’s really hard to use things like that. There’s a level of 
frustration that comes with that, and you know, a level of you 
know, non-motivation to be able to use it.

In these additional comments, Jade reiterated how her plan had been 
derailed by lack of technological resourcing. Whether this was due to 
institutional or systemic arrangements, or both, remained unclear.

**Commentary on key dialogues**

Elly, Jade and Sam continued to develop awareness of the broader 
institutional and the communicative landscape in which their literacy 
teaching and learning was situated. A major development emerged 
when Elly and Jade deepened dialogue about contemporary literacies 
imperatives. In parallel, the ECTs identified a need at the system level, 
to differentiate teachers’ professional learning for literacy, beyond one 
size fits all formats (Mockler, 2013; Sachs, 2016). From their 
perspectives, formats such as graduate induction did not respond to 
ECT’s professional or contextual learning needs, and casual ECTs were 
particularly disadvantaged. These challenges seemed to be reinforced 
by ECTs’ perceptions of the need to present “success”, in their current 
contract-dominated employment environment (see Comber, Woods & 
Grant, 2017; Ewing & Manuel, 2005). Jade’s lack of access to digital 
resources seemed indicative of broader resourcing issues and funding 
competition, reflective of complexities in neoliberal reform (Connell, 
2013; Murphy, 2011; Lingard, 2018). Overall, discussions in the fourth 
meeting highlighted that while the ECTs continued to question 
Available Designs for literacy teaching and learning, they remained 
unable to transcend situated understandings, and contextual 
contradictions and constraints. This pattern appeared to impact their 
longer term decisions about staying in the profession.
Follow-up the next year: turning away

Each of these metropolitan ECTs was invited to participate in a follow-up conversation in 2017. Elly replied that she had sought other employment, being unable to find “a good school connection with relief work”. Sam left the country for extensive overseas travel, making no mention of a return to teaching. Jade on the other hand, spoke at length about her new teaching appointment, in the non-compulsory early childhood sector.

Jade

After talking informally for a few minutes, Jade made some comments about her new teaching situation:

Things are going well. My perspective probably has changed because I’m teaching a different class this year, and having my own classroom is also very different. (3mins. 44 sec.)

This comment seemed consistent with Jade’s recognition in the previous year, of contingencies between pedagogy and context. Slightly later, I asked Jade to comment more specifically on her current approach to literacy teaching and learning. She responded:

So much time is spent getting them into routines and getting them settled... I feel like I’ve not really got any sort of rigorous or consistent literacy program happening yet. (5 mins. 45 sec.)

These comments seemed to be underwritten by Jade’s ongoing commitment and sensitivity to student needs. On the other hand, Jade did not seem to recognise very young children’s communications about daily “routines” as implicating learning for literacies. In caveat, I did not prompt Jade to explain these particular comments. A minute or so later, the topic of professional learning came to the fore:

Um, I have been to a couple of PDs... All of the staff at my school do training on phonological awareness, sessions on semantics, on vocabulary, and all that type of thing. (6 mins. 50 sec.)
It seemed that in this new setting, PD was again focused on the basics of literacy.

Late in the conversation, I reminded Jade that in the previous year, she had aspired to experiment with digital formats for teaching and learning. Jade commented:

> I’ve got a school IT person to put a couple of really basic phonics programs on there [the classroom iPad] . . . just free ones, available at the school. (12 mins. 58 sec.)

Jade thus tied technology-use in her context to basic traditional literacy (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013).

To round off our conversation, I asked Jade whether she had been to, “Any other professional learning [events]?” to which Jade replied:

> Not on literacy. (14 mins. 35 sec.)

Again, Jade’s comments were not indicative of teaching and learning support for literacies.

**Summary of ongoing developments**

By the time of follow-up, none of the ECTs in this group had traversed expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), or Designed literacies pedagogies. Two of the ECTs, Elly and Sam, left the profession to pursue other employment, expressing a lack of professional connection to schools. Jade stayed in education, but chose an appointment in the non-compulsory early childhood setting. In this locale, Jade did not attribute young children’s communications about daily routines as literacies learning opportunities.
Chapter conclusion

This chapter has storied findings for the metropolitan case, lending insight into how casual ECTs Elly, Jade and Sam perceived and shaped *Available Designs* for literacy teaching and learning in their various contexts. Distinctly, this group of ECTs shared goals to seek stronger support for literacy teaching and learning, but mainly perceived this support as best drawn from predictable literacy curriculum (Green, 2018), levelled commercial literacy materials (see Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017), and commercial PD (Mockler, 2013; Sachs, 2016). A gradual disenchantment with their lack of professional learning support eventually lead Elly and Sam to leave the teaching profession. The next chapter synthesises and maps these findings and processes, as well as those presented for the remote and regional groups.
Chapter introduction

The current chapter synthesises findings and maps learning processes for each case, before commenting on commonalities and differences between cases. As described in Chapter Four, the chosen qualitative case-study approach (Flick, 2014; Stake, 2006) enabled inquiry into bounded sociocultural phenomena and processes, while the comparative approach enabled discernment of dominant or unique patterns (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Yin, 2014). Inquiry and interpretation was guided by the study's research questions:

- How do ECTs perceive and shape literacy teaching and learning?
- How do ECTs perceive and shape professional learning for literacy?
- How do ECTs perceive and shape teaching and learning entailing digital and multimodal texts?

Conceptual framing advanced unexplored synergies between two sociocultural learning lenses. The first lens drew on the pedagogical content and Design focus of Multiliteracies Theory (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000). From this perspective, pedagogy for contemporary literacies enfolds but goes beyond a focus on print, to enable learners with flexible repertoires of socioculturally and textually diverse communication practices. Early career and experienced teachers evolve pedagogy for multiliteracies through a cycle of Design processes. In Chapter Three, I proposed that scholarship regarding ECTs’ Design processes, might be deepened through the lenses of Engestrom's (2001, 2011) expansive learning schema. This innovative incorporation of Design and expansive learning lenses was depicted earlier in a visual
graphic. For ease of reference, the same graphic is re-presented in \textbf{Figure 8.1} below.

\textbf{Figure 8.1} \\
\textit{Overlay of expansive learning and multiliteracies pedagogical Design processes}

Underpinned by the above framing, Chapter Four described analysis capturing interplays in these processes. Case-based Chapters Five, Six and Seven established a chronology of ECTs’ perceptions and shaping of teaching and learning for literacies, and began to map synergies between the \textit{Design cycle} with \textit{expansive learning}. The next section synthesises these findings and processes. In the present chapter, each case is considered a critical case (Patton, 2002), because each offers distinct insight into the research questions. To orient the reader, the flow of case-based synthesis and mapping is depicted in \textbf{Figure 8.2} below.
Figure 8.2
The flow of sections presenting case findings and mapping of processes of learning

The remote case

Voicing, questioning and analysing Available Designs

Perceiving literacies teaching and learning? In their initial conversations with me, Alese and Charlotte marked the dominance of transmissive and componential literacy teaching and learning in their school (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017). This approach was often mentioned in phrases such as, “repetition of content over and over again” [Alese, Meeting 1]. Routinisation appeared to be a feature of the school’s Literacy Block, which sequenced such activities as “letter flashcards and then segmenting and blending CVC words”, followed by “spelling” and “writing recounts” [Charlotte, Meeting 1]. During the second, third and fourth meetings, Alese and Charlotte reiterated situated application of this skill-based approach to students’ reading, writing, and phonics acquisition. Thus Available Designs voiced by the ECTs, revolved
around narrow literacy basics. This finding accords with other empirical studies in Australia (Cormack & Comber, 2013; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2013; Lewis & Hardy, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014; Wall, 2017). In a further connection to the research corpus, this implementation of the basics was often associated with commercially produced programs aimed to increase students’ measured production of writing outcomes (see Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Hogan, Enright, Stylianou & McCuaig, 2017; Johnston, 2015). Programs such as *Terrific Writing* and *Super Writing* (pseudonyms) were well cited.

**Perceiving professional learning for literacies?** To support implementation of commercial programs, ECTs reported that that their school leaders targeted their attendance at particular PDs. Initially seeming to practice compliance, Alese and Charlotte were nonetheless confused about the purpose of these arrangements. In parallel, they intimated a lack of conversation about professional learning with their school leaders. *Available Designs* were thus seen to be imposed by leadership, rather than debated or co-constructed with ECTs (Honan, Kervin, Exley & Simpson, 2014; Mockler, 2013, 2018; Rowan, Mayer & Kline, 2017; Willis et al., 2017). On a different topic, Alese and Charlotte believed that their learning during ITE had been too “generalised” to inform the literacy teaching and learning valued in their school, and that ITE should instead provide “more specific units on phonics” [Charlotte/Alese, Meeting 1]. These perceptions resonate with policy initiatives such as StudentsFirst, which construct deficits in ECTs’ print-based classroom pedagogies, and unrealistically assume that graduates arrive in schools ‘classroom ready’ (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Mayer, 2014; Mills & Goos, 2017; Skourdoumbis, 2018).
**Perceiving digital and multimodal texts?** Although Alese and Charlotte appreciated the need to offer students a range of multimodal textual experiences, they consistently articulated multimodal engagement as instrumental for orienting students towards traditional reading and writing (see Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Kress, 2010). In the first meeting, they explained that “if they [students] don’t want to look at it [text] they’re not going to want to read it” [Alese]. This voicing is logically consistent with the traditional and print-based Available Designs which the ECTs were immersed in.

**Negotiating contradictions – identifying goals and Designing new activity**

**Shaping literacies teaching and learning?** As 2016 progressed, Alese and Charlotte perceived the school’s emphasis on commercial program implementation as contradicting with their goals to facilitate students’ creative writing. Alese for instance expressed concern about “focusing too much on [teaching] the structure of writing” [Meeting 2], recommending that students should experience more holistic and balanced opportunities (see Cambourne, 1992; Flood, Heath & Lapp, 2005; Sawyer, 2010). Alese sometimes narrated her attempts to foster this balance, through integration of multimodal learning objects such as “My Place” and “The Invention of Hugo Cabret” [Meeting 2]. In these ways, Alese navigated an emerging contradiction (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), as she sought to work beyond Available Designs.

**Shaping professional learning for literacies?** Analysis revealed that many changes in ECTs’ thinking-and-doing appeared to be driven by a specific contradiction (Engestrom, 2001, 2011). That is, over the series of café meetings, Alese and Charlotte increasingly problematised their school leadership’s focus on commercial program implementation, which they felt undermined contextually responsive pedagogy, and authentic professional decision-making. Alese thus decided to enrol in
tertiary postgraduate study, to access “*studies done on everything under the sun . . all these [literacy] programs*” [Meeting 3]. However, by the fourth meeting, tensions with leadership had escalated, motivating both ECTs to relocate schools for the next year. The ECTs believed this would help them to seek opportunities for professional participation, in contrast with the one-size-fits-all implementation-focused PD they had experienced to date (Mockler, 2013, 2018; Sachs, 2016). Such opportunities resonate with those needed for evolving pedagogical *Designs* for literacies.

At this juncture, which was late in 2016, Alese and Charlotte heightened their critique of leadership-driven commercial programming. They were quite overt for instance about being “*forced to*” implement *Terrific Writing* before they had a chance to learn it, and needing to “*whip off*” associated tests which were not used to inform student learning [Meeting 4]. In parallel, ECTs attributed their school leadership as having a performance-oriented agenda (Connell, 2013; Heffernan, 2018; Lingard, 2018). This agenda was perceived as impacting Alese and Charlotte’s access to usable technology, because leadership placed new Smart Boards and other devices in classrooms to “*look good*” for accountability purposes, rather than to be used for daily teaching [Meeting 4] (see Connell, 2013; Lingard, 2018; Murphy, 2011). Teaching in a different school in 2017 seemed to allow Alese new opportunities to access and use digital technology, and to attend professional learning inclusive of digital learning focuses. In contrast, Charlotte perceived her new school leadership as “*pushing*” skill-based reading and writing [Follow-up conversation]. Thus Charlotte seemed to re-encounter the performance-based agenda she had sought to move beyond.
Shaping teaching and learning entailing digital and multimodal texts? In variations on a theme in the third meeting, Alese expressed her perception that teaching of viewing was an “extra”, rather than a "curriculum outcome" to be targeted. In similar vein, curriculum for English was perceived as “too overwhelming” to be actualised, and as needing to be reduced to the “basic stuff” [Alese/Charlotte, Meeting 3]. Thus the fuller scope of curriculum appeared to be reduced to basic literacy components (Green, 2018). However, in a significant development in the fourth meeting, Alese began to advocate for the need to "look into . . . research" about materials and programs which she and her school leaders had been employing [Meeting 4] (see Mills & Goos, 2017).

Over the period of fieldwork, Alese and Charlotte gradually traversed expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), as they made sense of and shaped Available Designs, and professional learning goals. In other words, through evolving thinking-and-doing, they became increasingly aware of the ways in which literacy teaching and learning was actualised in their context in response to particular enablements and constraints. Key findings are visually represented in Figure 8.3 below.
Findings from this case support broader claims that teachers in various career phases can critically interpret and respond to situated priorities impacting literacies teaching and learning (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Connell, 2013; Lingard, 2018). In this way, findings and mapping in the current study, work towards countering the policy suggestion that ECTs are not ready to teach, and need to be ‘fixed’ in regard to basic professional knowledge about literacy (Mills & Goos, 2017; Mockler, 2018; Rowan, Mayer & Kline, 2017). The next section maps how ECTs in the regional group perceived and shaped more rigidly enforced, print-based Available Designs, and commercial literacy interventions.

*Drawing on the incorporated theoretical framework*
The regional case

**Voicing, questioning and analysing Available Designs**

**Perceiving literacies teaching and learning?** In their dialogues, Liz and Laura were quicker than the remote ECTs to question and analyse Available Designs. Similar to circumstances reported in the remote group, the regional setting prioritised routinised and componentional, print-based literacy (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). Liz and Laura’s descriptions of the school’s “set” Literacy Block [Meeting 1], epitomised standardised and routinised phonics, spelling and reading acquisition. Meanwhile, levelled and prescriptive commercial literacy materials played an important role in reinforcing these emphases, bearing out the concerns of many scholars (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Hogan, Enright, Stylianou & McCuaig, 2017; Johnston, 2015; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017). Although Liz and Laura initially expressed dilemmas about their school’s “back to basics” “ideal” [Liz, Meeting 1], at first they appeared to mainly practice compliance (Mockler, 2013, 2018).

**Perceiving professional learning for literacies?** Early in the year, Liz and Laura said they had received very little professional support for evolving their literacy teaching and learning, further than being told what to teach and which materials to use. Thus they seemed to be positioned mainly as passive recipients of their school leadership’s imperatives (Connell, 2013; Mockler, 2013, 2018). On the topic of prior learning, they believed that the “broad perspective” of ITE had not prepared them for doing literacy “this way” [Liz/Laura, Meeting 1]. Such comments suggested that even though literacy was not neglected during ITE, ECTs retrospectively interpreted their learning in ITE against the backdrop of situated priorities.
Perceiving digital and multimodal texts? In these circumstances, Laura perceived teaching with multimodal text as a “scary” prospect which might put her management of Literacy Block routines at risk [Meeting 1]. Thus Available Designs oriented Liz and Laura to facilitate well-managed pedagogy for the basics (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Lingard, 2018), rather than creative experimentation with literacies Designs.

Negotiating contradictions – identifying goals and Designing new activity

Shaping literacies teaching and learning? ECTs’ thinking-and-doing shifted by the second meeting. Liz and Laura now overtly critiqued Available Designs. In different ways, Liz and Laura began to resist implementation of the school’s preferred phonics program, and sought to engage more substantively with professional decision-making. They were critical of the stepwise and scripted commercial comprehension programs utilised in the school, which were aimed to move students “up the levels” [Liz, Laura, Meeting 2], rather than to foster meaningful connections with texts. At times, these critiques echoed concerns expressed in the broader literature, about the increasing uptake of commercial literacy products in schools (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Hogan, Enright, Stylianou & McCuaig, 2017; Johnston, 2015; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017). In counter, Liz experimented with alternate strategies for teaching reading, inspired by the Revolution School (ABC, 2016) documentary. Paradoxically however, many of the strategies endorsed in this TV depiction seemed to parallel the print-based pedagogy already in play in Liz’s context (see Hardy, 2016).
**Shaping professional learning for literacies?** Still lacking school-based or systemic professional learning support, the ECTs narrated how they had been required to video their implementation of school-preferred strategies for teaching writing. Liz recounted this experience in some detail, describing it as, “terrible” [Meeting 2]. Recognising their inability to negotiate this “accountability” measure (Connell, 2013; Lingard, 2018; Lingard & Sellar, 2013), Liz and Laura were aware of unresolved tensions (Engestrom, 2001, 2011) between imposed priorities and their professional goals to facilitate student engagement [Meeting 2].

**Shaping teaching and learning entailing digital and multimodal texts?** Still lacking PD or graduate induction, Liz traversed expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011) by covertly Designing some aspects of her pedagogy. For instance by the third and fourth meetings, she was tailoring classroom learning to include a slightly larger range of texts, and fostering more personally meaningful reading opportunities for students. Thus Liz was beginning to approximate aspects of literacies pedagogy, particularly in relation to textual diversity (Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). In 2017, Liz continued to experiment with text forms, gradually integrating social media formats [Follow-up]. Laura, on the other hand, decided to become a relief teacher, although the following year she re-entered full-time teaching in a more supportive specialist school. It appeared that for Laura, a welcoming school environment was a particularly important factor influencing her pedagogical development (Ewing & Manuel, 2005; Gallant & Riley, 2014; Rowan et al., 2015). These findings and processes are mapped in **Figure 8.4** below.
Like the remote case, developments in the regional case suggest that ECTs can, and need to, engage in expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), to reshape Available Designs which privilege standardised and routinised traditional literacy (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Connell, 2013; Lingard, 2018). The next section maps findings and processes emerging for the metropolitan case, which featured quite a different profile of perceptions, goals, and contextual contingencies.

The metropolitan case

Voicing, questionig and analysing Available Designs

Perceiving literacies teaching and learning? ECTs in the metropolitan group appeared to regard both Available Designs and pedagogical development as synonymous with standardised teaching of traditional literacy basics. Thus they consistently espoused perspectives aligned to current policies pursuing standardised and didactic teaching (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Lingard, 2018).
Along these lines, Elly, Jade and Sam recurrently mused on how standardised curriculum and commercial literacy interventions could help them to improve their teaching of the basics (Mayer, 2014; Mills & Goos, 2017). Elly often underlined the importance of underpinning pedagogy with levelled, commercial materials. In one instance, she explained her distress at needing to “guess” stepwise literacy teaching, believing that standardised curriculum could assist her to better know “How to teach that” [Meeting 1]. These perceptions of the need to standardise pedagogy echo themes in current neoliberal policies (Hardy, 2016; Honan, Kervin, Exley & Simpson, 2014; Skourdoumbis, 2018). It is evident that the ECTs would benefit from further critical discussions of Available Designs, to continue to explore pedagogies which go beyond reliance on stepped approaches and resources.

**Perceiving professional learning for literacies?** The ECTs explained that their learning experiences in ITE had not prepared them to teach literacy practices valued in schools. Elly periodically reiterated that her “step by step” teaching of the basics was “very inadequate”, and that she had left ITE “under-trained” in relation to these practices [Meeting 1]. Jade similarly described herself as entering the classroom with only a “dim feeling” of what to do, even though she admitted to exploring “a lot” of material on literacy learning at university [Meeting 1]. In these ways, as mentioned above, metropolitan ECTs echoed the current neoliberal policy position on ECT deficits (Skourdoumbis, 2018). Self attributing these deficits, Elly, Jade and Sam accorded great significance to accessing print-focused professional learning (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). Again, the potential for these ECTs to continue to co-construct critical understandings about their learning for literacies is evident.
Perceiving digital and multimodal texts? In parallel, all three ECTs expressed uncertainties about concepts such as multimodality, which Elly had studied during ITE, but still didn’t “know” [Meeting 1]. Consistent with Available Designs, these ECTs appeared to overwrite their previous learning in ITE with situated priorities (Honan, Kervin, Exley & Simpson, 2014).

Negotiating contradictions – identifying goals and Designing new activity

Shaping literacies teaching and learning? As fieldwork progressed, interactions in this group sometimes featured peer-led co-construction of print-based Available Designs. In one stretch of dialogue for instance, Elly and Jade made sense of a commonly used strategy for teaching writing. On the other hand, the group reflected more critically on access to commercial PDs, which Elly asserted were “really good” for providing pedagogical “direction”, but Jade recognised as promoting competing and self-vested versions of “the best approach” [Meeting 2]. These comments intimated that ECTs had some awareness that commercially produced Available Designs could be contested (Hardy, 2016; Hogan, Enright, Stylianou & McCuaig, 2017; Johnston, 2015; Rowan et al., 2015). However, there were limits to their questioning and analysis, which never went beyond a focus on teaching and learning for traditional literacy.

Shaping professional learning for literacies? A continued lack of access to school- and system-based professional learning support eventually emerged as a significant contradiction for Elly and Sam, a situation they were unable to transcend (Engestrom, 2001, 2011). That is, by 2017, Elly and Sam decided to leave the teaching profession. When asked about this decision, Elly remarked that she had been unable to find “a good school connection” [Follow-up]. Such a finding echoes attrition factors reported elsewhere in the literature (Morrison,
Jade on the other hand, obtained a full-time appointment in an early childhood setting for 2017. During her follow-up, Jade intimated that she did not recognise communications with early childhood learners as opportunities for fostering literacies. In parallel, she had not planned any formal literacy teaching. Although these comments should not be over-interpreted, Jade seemed to sustain a perception of literacy teaching and learning as formal, fixed and sequenced, rather than as embedded in all interactions and communications per se (Street, 1997).

**Shaping teaching and learning entailing digital and multimodal texts?** Unlike the other groups, ECTs in this group adopted diverging stances on the need to integrate digital formats. To some extent, discussions reflected the traditional positioning often present in public debates about literacy teaching in Australia (Luke, 2018). Eventually in the fourth meeting, Elly reframed the groups’ dissension by suggesting that a balance between traditional and emerging practices might be needed. This reframing hinted that ECTs might eventually move towards the balanced view advocated by theorists such as Cope, Kalantzis and Smith (2018) and Garcia, Luke and Seglem (2018). However, during the period of fieldwork interactions with these particular ECTs, possibilities for broader practice remained largely unvoiced. Findings and learning processes for the metropolitan case are mapped in Figure 8.5 below.
Overall, findings for the metropolitan case suggest that Elly, Jade and Sam were greatly challenged by a lack of professional support and access to critically informed dialogue. The three ECTs consistently valued the traditional print-based literacy they saw as primordial in their school settings. At points however, particularly towards the end of 2016, they generated brief insight into the complexities of contemporary imperatives for literacies. Similarities and differences between findings for the remote, regional and metropolitan cases are considered below, guided by the focus of the three research questions.

**Case comparison**

As reiterated earlier in this chapter, a comparative case-study approach enabled analytical discernment of dominant and/or unique patterns in the whole data set (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Yin, 2014). These themes will be discussed in relation to each of the research questions. A representation of section flow is depicted in Figure 8.6 below.
Research Question One: *How do ECTs perceive and shape literacies teaching and learning?*

Comparing *Available Designs* - the dominance of traditional literacy in schools. School-based priorities reported in each group, consistently aligned to routinised and traditional print-based approaches to literacy (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Lingard, 2018). Routinisation and compartmentalisation was often associated with teaching structures such as Literacy Block, or skills-based acquisition protocols (Comber, 2015; Lingard, 2018). At times, logical connections were made between these structures and broader testing and benchmarking of student performance (Lingard, 2018; Lingard & Sellar, 2013). As one example in the metropolitan group, drilling and assessment through the phonics program *Alphabet Sounds*, was related to broad-scale *On Entry* benchmarking. Another example emerged in discussion with the remote group, where routinised whole-school assessment was
Benchmarked against the commercial comprehension program *Trucks and Ducks*.

The tendency of ECTs to conceptualise *Available Designs* for literacy through the lenses of standardised teaching and evaluation, accords with other empirical Australian studies (see Cormack & Comber, 2013; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2013; Hardy, 2016; Lewis & Hardy, 2014; Lu & Cross, 2014). That is, a range of Australian studies similarly suggest that teachers attribute significance to the teaching of skill-driven reading and writing, in lieu of standardised assessment emphases. Studies such as Cormack and Comber (2013), Klenowski (2014), Lewis and Hardy (2014), Lobascher (2011) and Wall (2017), evidence this phenomenon in regard to the teaching of phonological awareness, traditional grammar, stepwise writing techniques, and spelling. The present study thus bears out concerns expressed elsewhere, that policies pursuing standardised and measured improvement in basic literacy, devalue the perceived importance of holistic and complex teaching for literacies (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Green, 2018; Lingard, 2018). At times, ECTs in the current study argued that school leaders had a strong influence on the formation and reinforcement of these priorities.

**Comparing *Available Designs* - the perceived role of school leadership.** In all three groups, school leaders were seen to be setting and reinforcing traditional *Available Designs* for literacy teaching and learning. In the remote group, school leaders were described as instituting reading assessment protocols “*so you [teachers] have to do it in a certain way*” [Charlotte, Meeting 3]. In the regional group, Liz recursively mentioned that leadership set “*expectations*” for teachers’ practice [Meeting 1], to focus on the production of literacy basics. In a similar way, casual metropolitan ECT Elly, professed that “*the [school] principal dictates*” the direction and resourcing of teachers’ literacy
teaching and learning [Meeting 2]. ECTs across the groups thus believed that leadership decision-making strongly affected access to classroom resources, how ECTs could structure teaching, and if and how they could source professional learning for literacies. More will be said on some of these points later.

ECT descriptions pointed to the strategies used by their school leaders to shape Available Designs for literacy. In the remote setting, school leaders were described as ratifying the creation of Scope and Sequence curriculum documents, for the whole school to use. According to Alese and Charlotte, this steered ECTs towards a pragmatic focus on the basics. Liz and Laura, in the regional setting, explained that their leadership “set” the school’s segmented and timed Literacy Block [Meeting 1 & 4], which seriously diminished their capacities to actualise the official curriculum for English (see Comber, 2015; Klenowski, 2014; Lingard, 2018; Wall, 2017). This finding echoes the broader literature, where researchers outline the challenges teachers face in relation to pedagogical choices in the current policy climate (Exley & Mills, 2012; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Green, 2018). An emerging influence on ECT actualisation of curricula in this study, was the ubiquitous presence and reinforcement of commercial literacy materials in schools.

**Comparing Available Designs - commercial literacy materials.**

In all three cases, ECTs intimated that school leaders reinforced Available Designs for literacy teaching and learning, through highly structured and sometimes scripted commercial programs (see Hardy, 2017; Lewis & Hogan, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017). ECT descriptions of commercially packaged teaching programs, resources and levelled readers were copious. To indicate mentions across the groups, a summary is provided in **Table 8.1** below.
Table 8.1
Summary of commercial literacy programs mentioned in presented findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commercially generated literacy programs (pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Remote group</th>
<th>Regional group</th>
<th>Metropolitan group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decoding approach (spelling); Terrific Writing; Super Writing; Trucks and Ducks (levelled reading).</td>
<td>Wonderful Word Lists (spelling); Scripted Reading (decoding); Learning by Rote (Spelling)</td>
<td>Alphabet Sounds (phonics); Super Writing; Big Ideas (writing); Joyful Phonics; Sounds Make Patterns (phonics); Grammar Points; Connecting Phonics to Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Note - additional commercial programs are mentioned in the fuller set of transcripts.

Notably, skill-based writing and phonics were predominant focuses in these commercial materials. In my independent investigations, noted in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I found that these programs also tended to support: explicit teaching; diagnosis and measurement of students’ basic skills; levelling of student ability; and prescriptive teaching sequences. These emphases and approaches are integral to traditional literacy teaching (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). In contrast with the inordinate presence of these commercial materials, resources for actualising literacies were mentioned far less frequently, if at all. On the few occasions when ECTs did mention non-commercial resources, these had been sourced by the ECTs. One of the very few examples was Alese’s use of the “MyPlace” digital narrative [Meeting 2].
Emerging Australian research suggests that commercial literacy interventions may work to sustain the standardised and didactic approaches invoked by current policies for education (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016). For metropolitan ECTs Elly, Jade and Sam, print-based commercial programming and materials were seen as helpful for underpinning their gradual movement towards standardised and explicit teaching of the basics. As outlined above, Elly was particularly articulate in this regard. In contrast, ECTs in the remote group questioned their leader’s imposition of commercial program implementation. Later in 2016, Alese and Charlotte became openly critical of such implementation, remarking that leadership was strategic about choosing commercial programs and PDs which "tick[ed] the box" of systemic performance management requirements [Meeting 3]. My own investigations of these commercial programs were unable to reveal any theoretical underpinnings, a problem noted by various researchers (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Hardy, 2016; Hogan, Enright, Stylianou & McCuaig, 2017; Johnston, 2015). But rather than remaining subject to these arrangements, some ECTs acted on the basis of their own professional purposes.

Comparing ECT Designs of literacies teaching and learning.

Some ECTs in this study eventually recognised and responded to significant contradictions (Engestrom, 2001, 2011) between Available Designs for literacy teaching and learning, and their emerging professional goals. A small body of research in Australia illustrates that other teachers have recognised similar contradictions. For instance, experienced primary and secondary school teachers in Victoria and South Australia (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2013), as well as secondary school teachers of English in Queensland (Allard & Doecke, 2014), have articulated tensions between culturally responsive teaching for literacies, and imperatives enjoining standardisation. Gannon (2012)
represents dilemmas and conflicts raised by ECTs, in regard to standardisation and professional regulation.

From the sociocultural standpoint of the present study, ECTs’ shaping of literacies teaching and learning was expected to be diverse, due to varying social, cultural, political and historical influences. On the other hand, case comparison demonstrated a common tendency towards the dis-enablement of literacies teaching and learning in schools. It has been argued that this dis-enablement was associated with neoliberal policy influences (Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Lingard, 2018; Luke, 2018). The next section turns to case comparison in regard to the second research question.

**Research Question Two: How do ECTs perceive and shape professional learning for literacies?**

**Comparing Available Designs of professional learning for literacies.** Like other studies involving teachers in Australia (Hardy, 2016; Rowan, Mayer, Kline, Kostogriz & Walker-Gibbs, 2015), this study evidences teachers’ perceptions of PD focused on traditional literacy (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). In relation to PD, ECTs described their attendance at ‘one-off’ workshops, where literacy teaching and learning content was prescribed for implementation (see Johnston, 2015; Mockler, 2013, 2018; Sachs, 2016). Formats and content were consistently associated with stepwise and componental literacy basics. In all three cases, ECTs found it difficult to access alternate learning opportunities.

In a surprising contrast with the established research (see Broadley, 2012; Doecke & Parr, 2011; Hardy, 2016; Hardy & Boyle, 2011; Mockler, 2018; Lingard, 2018), ECTs in this study did not at any time articulate a connection between PD and policy imperatives. Instead, they ascribed PD as fulfilling local leadership priorities. For Alese and Charlotte, leadership-legitimated PD was plentiful. Later,
Alese and Charlotte adopted the more critical view that PD was imposed to focus their learning on program implementation. Gradually, Alese and Charlotte perceived this positioning as contradicting their goals to foster contextually responsive teaching and learning, and informed professional judgement.

In contrast with the remote group, the regional ECTs, Liz and Laura, accessed little or no formal professional learning support, PD or otherwise. This too was to lead to the emergence of a contradiction. Navigating this lack of support, Liz covertly sourced alternate learning materials, and Laura decided to relocate to other schools. In some similarity, metropolitan ECTs’ opportunities to attend PD were rare and sought after. Jade narrated how she interpreted one principal’s arrangements for her to attend a commercial phonics PD as unusual in the fiscally constrained setting of schooling. Elly on the other hand was quite proactive about seeking to attend commercial PD focused on phonics, which she believed would help her to teach the basics of literacy.

ECTs in the remote and regional groups did-or-did-not access PD at the behest of their school leaders. At no time were these arrangements negotiated with ECTs. In this sense, ECTs in these groups were mainly subject to a managerial approach to their professional learning (Mockler, 2013, 2018; Sachs, 2016). Informed by neoliberal logic, managerial arrangements for PD make teacher learning conform to the standardised and performance-oriented emphases valued politically (Connell, 2013; Johnsen, 2015; Mockler, 2013; Parr, 2010; Wall, 2017). Although ECTs did not connect these arrangements to policy agendas, they described a-contextual and implementation-focused PD aligned with current policy rhetoric. Clearly, this alignment was not aimed to encourage teaching and learning for literacies.
Further, while ECTs intimated that leaders were important mediators of taught curriculum, and propagators of commercial literacy materials, leaders were presented as having little or no conversation with ECTs about professional decision-making. This finding supports claims made in other empirical literature, that in a neoliberal environment for education, school principals tend to manage staff in regard to efficient business principles, rather than through substantive learning relationships (Connell, 2013; Eacott, 2011; Hardy, 2016; Heffernan, 2018). According to the same literature, this approach in turn positions experienced and early career teachers to comply with imposed imperatives.

Meanwhile, casual ECTs like Elly experienced distinct challenges in trying to access school-based and systemic professional learning support. Early in the year, Elly described a lack of opportunity to engage in collegiate discussion, and difficulties in accessing system-based induction. Ultimately, as mentioned, this lack of professional connection was to have serious consequences for Elly's retention in the profession. The career attrition which emerged at the conclusion of this study seems to replicate patterns identified in other research. For instance, some studies highlight how a similar lack of professional continuity, and lack of access to formal and informal learning conversations, impacts the retention of casual ECTs (Buchanan, Prescott, Schuck, Aubusson & Burke, 2013; McCormack & Thomas, 2005; Morrison, 2013; Weldon, 2018).

In regard to professional learning in ITE, all ECTs in the study were unanimous. They consistently viewed ITE as inadequately preparing them to teach literacy in schools, and did not perceive concepts taught in ITE as matching implementation priorities. While these findings have been discussed above, it is important to signpost how this disconnect sits in relation to broader critiques of ITE.
(Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Mills & Goos, 2017; Mockler, 2018). In earlier chapters, this thesis outlined ECT-deficits as a salient policy theme (see Australian Government, 2014). In particular, StudentsFirst proposes that standardised curriculum, pedagogy and professional learning should remediate weaknesses in ECT teaching and learning, which are designated as stemming from ITE (Skourdoumbis, 2018). Less well acknowledged in policy, is that efforts to immerse pre-service teachers in complex and socioculturally sensitive literacies, are intended to conflict with and counter the back-to-basics approach advocated by such policies (Mills & Goos, 2017; Rowan et al. 2015). It seems that ECTs in this study were intuitively aware of this counter positioning, but mainly relied on situated discourse to make sense of it.

Comparing ECT Designs of professional learning for literacies.
Without leadership support for learning about literacies, and with few opportunities to access systemic or collegiate support, all ECTs perceived their situated literacy landscapes as problematic. In the remote and regional settings, ECTs sometimes sourced alternative professional learning opportunities. For instance remote ECT Alese, enrolled in postgraduate studies, and both Alese and Charlotte eventually moved to different schools. In the regional setting, Liz and Laura resisted imposed professional positioning. In the metropolitan case on the other hand, Elly and Sam perceived system arrangements as creating insurmountable obstacles for achieving deeper learning connections with schools.

The present study's mapping of expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), and processes of pedagogical Design (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000) is significant. It details how ECTs' shifting thinking-and-doing speaks back to simplistic policy constructions of their professional learning capabilities. Variance in ECT trajectories
illustrates the diverse ways in which ECTs were motivated to negotiate conflictual professional learning circumstances (Engestrom, 2001, 2011). Importantly, this section has illuminated how ECTs’ situated professional learning was predominantly tied to PD, which was shaped by standardisation and back-to-basics imperatives. The next section considers how this positioning created challenges for teaching and learning entailing digital and multimodal texts.

**Research Question Three: How do ECTs perceive and shape teaching and learning entailing digital and multimodal texts?**

**Comparing Available Designs entailing digital and multimodal texts.** Case-based findings point to the marginalisation of contemporary literacies in these ECTs’ schools (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018). Marginalisation was indicated in ECTs’ reports of, and allusions to, the privileging of print-based, componential literacy teaching and learning (Christie & Mcken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013). Such privileging was described in previous sections. In relevance to this section, teachers additionally admitted that they did not have a good understanding of curriculum concepts such as multimodality (Lu & Cross, 2014; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Wall, 2017), even though they had encountered them in ITE (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Honan, Kervin, Exley & Simpson, 2014; Mills & Goos, 2017).

While the ECTs often engaged aesthetically with the multimodal texts I shared with them, they viewed these texts as mainly useful for facilitating print-based teaching and learning (Kress, 2010). Other times, multimodal texts were received with resistance, such as when Elly and Sam found the prospect of introducing a digital version of the narrative we were exploring as “confusing” [Meeting 3]. However, ECTs’ responses were not uniform or straightforward. Eventually by the fourth meeting, the metropolitan ECTs became interested in
debating the purpose of integrating multimodal and digital texts, eventually acknowledging the need to balance traditional and contemporary imperatives (Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Luke, 2018). In doing so, these ECTs were developing awareness of tensions between traditional and contemporary standpoints, particularly in relation to the sociocultural use of digital devices and texts (Botelho et al., 2014; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Rowsell, Morrell & Alvermann, 2017). On the other hand, the remote and regional ECTs were more active in shaping Available Designs of multimodal and digital text.

**Comparing ECT Designs entailing digital and multimodal texts.** As remote and regional ECTs gradually interrogated Available Designs in their schools, they experimented with a small range of multimodal and digital texts (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018). As these particular findings have already been described, I will turn to other points. First, ECTs sometimes oriented towards digital integration, but on no occasion did they acknowledge the importance of evolving substantive understandings of multimodal configurations (Kress, 2010, New London Group, 2000). Even when Alese eventually relocated to a school which valued the integration of digital and literacy learning opportunities, student production-of, rather than understanding-of digital objects seemed to be the ultimate goal. This observation is not meant to suggest any critique of teachers or schools, but to point to the potential appropriation of contemporary literacies, into neoliberal agendas focused on constructing digital literacies as fiscally measurable knowledge outputs (Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Lingard, 2018). If this appropriation is realised more broadly, the creative and conceptual potential of meaning-making with diverse texts is likely to be overshadowed.
It seems ironic, in lieu of the above policy agenda, that ECTs in this study rarely had ready access to operational digital technologies. That is, it is perhaps surprising that not all schools in which the ECTs were located, possessed operational digital devices. Remote and metropolitan ECTs viewed this as a serious obstacle to their motivated experimentation. For instance, despite Jade’s expressed intention to introduce her young metropolitan students to film-making [Meeting 2], inoperable iPads and Interactive Whiteboards in the school eventually made this plan unachievable. The remote ECTs mentioned similar problems with inoperable devices, although their situation was attributed to their leadership’s accountability agenda. Although not empirically generalisable, these ECTs’ lack of access to operable digital technology suggests that broader resourcing may need to be improved. Notably, previous widespread reforms to improve technological infrastructures in Australian schools have proved largely unsuccessful (Connell, 2013; Luke, 2011; Murphy, 2011).

Chapter conclusion

This chapter’s synthesis, mapping and case-based comparison, suggests that ECTs’ teaching and learning for literacies, at least for those in the current study, was vulnerable on a number of fronts. This chapter has mapped the creative and active ways in which ECTs shaped Available Designs (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000), as they made sense of contradictions between traditional literacy priorities in situ, and expanding professional teaching and learning goals. Chapter Nine considers implications arising from these findings, as well as the study’s limitations, and suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER NINE
IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Chapter introduction

The first chapter of this thesis introduced a gap in our empirical knowledge, about how Australian primary school ECTs perceive and shape literacies teaching and learning, in the current policy environment. The following questions guided inquiry into this gap:

- How do ECTs perceive and shape literacy teaching and learning?
- How do ECTs perceive and shape professional learning for literacy?
- How do ECTs perceive and shape teaching and learning entailing digital and multimodal texts?

Drawing on the study’s qualitative case-study approach (Flick, 2014; Stake, 2006), Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight unveiled how ECTs’ thinking-and-doing about literacies teaching and learning emerged over time. A particular interest was taken in mapping how and if ECTs activated the multiliteracies pedagogical Design cycle (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group, 2000), and expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), as they navigated emerging contradictions between situated and professional goals for literacies teaching and learning.

As outlined in Chapter Two, many researchers believe that the current neoliberal policy landscape does not support experienced or early career teachers in Australia to evolve contextually sensitive teaching and learning (Mills & Goos, 2017; Lingard, 2018; Mockler, 2018). Policies such as StudentsFirst (Australian Government, 2014) represent ECTs as needing to have their practices and knowledge fixed and monitored, to create better alignment with fiscally valued
educational outcomes (Lingard, 2018). This thesis has argued that such presumptions and arrangements impoverish ECTs’ exposures to, recognition of, and shaping of, substantive literacies pedagogies, which inform communicative participation relevant to the twenty first century (Baroutsis & Lingard, 2017; Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Lingard, 2018). Some international scholars point out that this impoverishment is extant in post-industrialised nations such as the UK and USA, where similar reforms have been put into play (Alexander, 2011; Lewis & Hardy, 2014). The circumstances in which ECTs in this study found themselves, and their demonstrated capacities to analyse and make decisions about these circumstances, have important implications for broader arrangements and priorities in Australian education.

Implications

ECTs in the three groups of this study were heavily impacted by many arrangements decided upon by others. However, the complex and particular ways in which ECTs made sense of teaching and learning conditions, and navigated various challenges, demonstrated professional learning strengths rather than deficits. Multiliteracies theorists assert that these capacities are needed for teachers to evolve literacies pedagogies relevant to the twenty first century (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000). The following section reflects on key touchpoints for enabling these capabilities into the future.

(Dis)enabling teaching and learning for literacies. This study has illustrated how particular ECTs in Western Australia, complicated and enlarged their notions of teaching and learning, as they traversed the multiliteracies pedagogical Design cycle (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Kress, 2010; New London Group,
2000), and expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011). Scholarly commentary suggests that in current times, where real-life imperatives for literacies teaching and learning have become increasingly complex (Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Cumming-Potvin & Sanford, 2015; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; Rowsell, Morrell & Alvermann, 2017), ECTs’ critical and creative professional engagement is pivotal to reshaping the print-based literacy approaches which dominate Australian education (Connell, 2013).

The current study suggests that such shaping can take place when ECTs reflect on everyday experiences, knowledge, problems, routines and aspirations (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Mockler, 2018). Evidence of ECTs’ reflective, critical and creative engagement in this study runs counter to current policy assumptions of deficits in ECTs’ teaching and learning capacities, and the necessity of teaching and learning for traditional literacy. Even though these ECTs were just beginning to journey towards literacies teaching and learning, their comments and struggles provoke us to think about what it really means to be a learner and teacher of literacies in the current policy environment. Further research is needed to support ECTs more broadly to shape literacies teaching and learning, at the coalface of multiple sociocultural and neoliberal influences.

Capacitating substantive learning relationships with school leaders? As noted in Chapter Eight, ECTs in this study unilaterally perceived their school leaders as promoting traditional literacy routines and structures (Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013), and as imposing PD for implementing these routines and structures (Mockler, 2013, 2018). Analytically, school leaders thus emerged as pivotal mediators of literacy teaching and learning in schools (see Allard & Doecke, 2014; Heffernan, 2018). Insightfully, ECTs sometimes perceived these leadership activities as aimed to satisfy
broader performance and accountability agendas (Eacott, 2011; Lingard & Sellar, 2013).

While it remains possible that ECTs misattributed or misunderstood their school leaders’ intentions, there seemed to be few substantive interchanges between them about their respective goals and arrangements. Remote and regional ECTs claimed they would like to collaborate with principals, who they saw as important in shaping access to professional learning resources. Various researchers go further, to conceptualise how teachers and leaders in schools, as well as university personnel, employing authorities, and professional associations, might better support ECT learning through linked-up collaboration and debate (Crosswell & Beutel, 2017; Price & McCallum, 2015; Rowan et al., 2017). Ideally, these collaborations could shape better continuities between teacher preparation, and ECT induction, in relation to substantive teaching and learning for literacies.

In the main however, ECTs perceived that school leaders did not trust them to make professional judgements about literacies teaching and learning. This lack of substantive and relational connection had a critical impact on the retention of casual ECTs in this study. Findings thus suggest broader issues in how ECTs’ access substantive learning conversations about literacies teaching and learning, and impacts on their decisions to stay in or leave schools, and the profession (see Buchanan et al, 2013).

**The need to scrutinise commercial literacy learning materials.** The study suggests that ECTs’ innovations of literacy teaching and learning largely rested upon their own professional sense-making about, and resistance to commercial literacy teaching and learning materials. In current times, researchers recognise that commercially published literacy materials may provide school leaders with economical ways to standardise and measure the aspects of
literacy pursued in the current policy milieu (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017; Lingard, 2018). Future research may play an important role in investigating if and how ‘off the shelf’ commercial interventions affect ECT pedagogy (see Lewis & Hogan, 2016; Lingard, Sellar, Hogan & Thompson, 2017), and informed teaching and learning for literacies.

**Deepening curriculum connections?** As argued in previous chapters, a desire to evolve literacies teaching and learning requires us to debate how curriculum and its assessment are presented to, and conceptualised by, teachers in all phases (Comber, 2015; Green, 2018). This is a particular challenge in contexts subject to neoliberal goal-setting, which privileges standardised and didactic approaches to literacy teaching and learning, and the measurement of successful outcomes in relation to these approaches (Lingard, 2018). Findings from this study suggest that ECTs’ literacies teaching and learning might be better supported by more transparent and seamless articulation in official curricula (Exley & Mills, 2012; Lu & Cross, 2014; Sawyer, 2010; Wall, 2017), and opportunities for ECTs to see and dialogue about pedagogy integrating these emphases (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017). This seems pertinent in view of various uncertainties and resistances expressed by ECTs in this study, for instance in relation to concepts such as multimodality. Further, when ECTs did experiment with a slightly broader range of textual practices inclusive of multimodal texts, they did so with little or no conceptual support from curricula, or accomplished peers. In summary, while current curricula for subject *English* are acknowledged as offering a broad scope for teaching and learning *literacies*, this scope may need to be better unpacked with and for ECTs in schools.
The need to strengthen technological resourcing. Further to a lack of opportunities to discern and learn about concepts underpinning teaching and learning for literacies, ECTs also seemed to lack access to operational digital technologies which they might use to teach them. Remote ECTs claimed that Smart Boards in their classrooms were inoperable, and only provided for display. Meanwhile, metropolitan ECT Jade, described Interactive Whiteboards in her setting as being simply broken. This lack of working technology presented ECTs with significant challenges when they sought, on rare occasions, to experiment with digital textual integration. Unfortunately this was the case for Jade, who needed to downsize her planned facilitation of student film-making. As mentioned early in this thesis, the Digital Education Revolution (Australian Government, 2008), appears to have had little sustained effect on the long term resourcing of some schools (see Murphy, 2011). Ostensibly, many changes are needed.

Tailoring and providing access to ECT induction. Some of the ECTs, particularly in the metropolitan group, asserted that induction should be more tailored towards ECTs’ contextual needs. Paradoxically, the finding that regional and metropolitan ECTs did not have access to induction support is quite striking. Such a finding contradicts the ways in which Western Australian induction supports are sometimes promoted as representing a ‘gold standard’ (Crosswell & Beutel, 2013). ECTs’ desires to access these supports seemed to align with their aspirations to participate in substantive professional learning (Mockler, 2013, 2018). Such participation is pivotal for evolving teaching and learning for literacies, where pedagogy is expected to emerge out of complex and contextually sensitive professional dialogue (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000).
Becoming better informed about sociocultural diversity.

Despite their aspirations to evolve more contextually sensitive pedagogies, ECTs often voiced uncertainty about students’ sociocultural diversities. Additionally, there was a noticeable silence across their accounts in regard to sociocultural dimensions of literacies teaching and learning. This silence has implications for progressing pedagogy for multiliteracies (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Collier & Rowsell, 2014; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000), which seeks to appreciate and respond to diverse learners, and their communicative and social needs.

It seems significant that in initial encounters with the remote ECTs, their notions of situated sociocultural diversity were assimilated into normative conceptions of student ability ranking (Green, 2018). Similar misrecognitions have been found in the research of Crosswell and Beutel (2017). Literature reviewed earlier in this thesis, suggested that teachers’ appreciation of sociocultural diversity is likely to be undermined by a neoliberal model of education, which pursues standardisation and homogenisation (Ball, 2015, 2016; Connell, 2013). Yet in a world where schools now facilitate the learning of increasingly diverse students, it seems more important than ever to reframe standardisation and sociocultural homogenisation (Collier & Rowsell, 2014; Comber, 2015). This theme was not probed in discussions of the current study, but could prove a worthwhile focus for future research. Educational participants of all kinds, would do well to reflect on and respond to such gaps and contradictions, as they go about their work in diverse communities, schools and systems. Below, Figure 9.1 provides a visualisation of implications presented in this section.
Looking back: limitations of the study

Further to considering research quality in Chapter Four, this section outlines some limitations which may impact interpretation of the findings. First, despite a range of recruitment strategies, both online and offline, ECTs who volunteered had much in common. For example, they were all female, and all but one spoke only English at home. As a whole, the group also lacked sociocultural diversity. In view of these commonalities, it would be of benefit to access a broader sociocultural cross-section of ECTs in future research.

Notwithstanding, the profiles of these teacher participants reflect general trends in English language use in Australian education (Oliver, Rochecouste & Nguyen, 2017).

Second, the placemat guide contained a small unintended anomaly. In some of the visual prompts, teachers were asked to describe ‘your’ literacy teaching and ‘your teaching context’, but in others the word ‘your’ did not appear. Additionally, the word ‘literacy’ rather than ‘literacies’ was used. The effect of these errors remains
uncertain. Additionally, my own use of terms such ‘literacy’ and ‘literacies’ when conversing with ECTs, was not consistent. However in the main, my own language use was intended to connect with the situated understandings and language forms used by the ECTs. Again, the effect of shaping my own language around participant practices is uncertain. In retrospect, this conforming reflects a challenge often facing qualitative researchers, who seek to facilitate rapport with participants (Cumming-Potvin, 2013; Pillow, 2003).

Further limitations of the study, such as its restriction to certain contexts and participants, provide worthy opportunities for exploration in future. On the other hand, the small group conversations facilitated in the present study, potentially invited ECTs to speak in depth, in ways they might not have in a larger group (Barbour, 2007). Some of these limitations might be considered in future research designs, a theme taken up below.

**Future research possibilities**

The study has presented several pertinent insights into the research questions under inquiry. Stimulating possibilities for future research remain. A few suggestions are made below.

**Broaden the research to include a more diverse range of ECT participants.** Powerful situated influences on the (dis)enablement of ECT teaching and learning for literacies have been acknowledged and demonstrated. There is obvious potential to continue to explore the literacies learning landscape in collaboration with more socioculturally diverse ECT participants. Further, although the current study involved ECTs identifying as female, as is predictable in a workforce dominated by women (Weldon, 2018), there is latitude to include participants across a broader range of genders.
Consult with casual teachers. As findings for casual ECTs were in some ways distinct, particularly in relation to attrition, it would be worthwhile to investigate the literacies teaching and learning circumstances of casual teachers more closely. Such a direction resonates with other research interested in the precariousness of ECT employment in neoliberal landscapes (Buchanan et al., 2013), and emerging impacts on literacies teaching and learning (Comber, Woods & Grant, 2017).

Consult with school leaders. Although school leaders were much talked about by ECTs, school leaders’ voices were not represented in this study. Given strong tendencies for ECTs to perceive their school leaders as unsupportive, it will be important to consider their standpoints in the future. Other experienced teacher-colleagues in schools might also have important perspectives to contribute. Whilst gaining access to this range of participants could be challenging on an operational level, including in relation to the ethical gate-keeping of institutions (see Cumming-Potvin, 2013), access could lend depth and diversity to future accounts of the ECT experience. Interrogation of potential variations in leadership approaches, and relationships between leaders and ECTs, could involve a number of stakeholders in participatory inquiry.

Explore literacies teaching and learning continuums between ITE and school classrooms. ECTs in this study were unanimous in their perceptions of literacies learning in ITE. A broadening of participants could support further exploration and perhaps innovation of continuums between teacher education and early classroom practice. This seems particularly important against the backdrop of findings garnered from the present study, which points to dissonances between the rich literacies capacitated in ITE, and the rigid traditional literacy priorities encountered in schools (see Honan, Kervin, Exley & Simpson,
As mentioned, all participants in education have a responsibility to support ECTs to develop quality literacies pedagogies with relevance to a twenty first century world. As literacies teaching and learning is socially constructed, variable and contestable (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000), rather than a practice of uniformity, it is important to stimulate collective inquiry and debate about the different forms in which such continuums might take shape (Lingard, 2018).

Continue to elaborate the theoretical innovation embodied in the present study. Replication of the current research design might offer opportunities to elaborate the applied conceptual framing in relation to a broader range of participants and contexts. As mentioned, replication might account more comprehensively for sociocultural, political and situated dynamics impacting ECT teaching and learning for literacies. Future research could additionally re-examine themes in the current set of data, which have not been explored through the present conceptual framework, such as themes to do with evolving ECT identities (see Gannon, 2012). On another note, other methodologies besides a comparative case-study approach might enable important insights into the formation of ECT literacies teaching and learning. Ethnography is a notable example (see Stich, Cipollone, Nikischer & Weis, 2012). Such an approach could represent shifts in loco, in ECTs’ pedagogical Designs (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000) and expansive learning (Engestrom, 2001, 2011). I believe there is also potential to interpret the joint pedagogical Design activities of ECTs and other educators, through Engestrom’s (2001, 2011) Activity System schema.
Locating ECT meaning-making activity in relation to pedagogical design (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000) and expansive learning processes (Engestrom, 2001, 2011), has enabled this study to represent strengths in ECT literacies learning capabilities. This thesis has argued that such layering may continue to enable new ways for researchers to explore and represent the conditions, understandings and goals important to ECTs’ teaching and learning for literacies. Further than this however, the study’s multidimensional heuristic may be of interest to school leaders, teacher mentors and teacher educators, wishing to support substantive literacies learning conversations with pre-service and early career teachers. For instance, the heuristic could be used as a conversation stimulus to cultivate pre-service and ECT reflexivity, as well as to signpost the complex and potentially conflictual nature of pedagogical development in the current policy environment, where notions of literacy and literacies collide. Such usage might constitute a participatory approach to professional learning (Mockler, 2013, 2018; Sachs, 2016), consistent with the vantage of Multiliteracies Theory (Bull & Anstey, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2013; Cope, Kalantzis & Smith, 2018; Garcia, Luke & Seglem, 2018; New London Group, 2000) and CHAT (Daniels, 2004; Edwards & Daniels, 2012; Stetsenko, 2005). This positioning runs counter to the transmissive professional development approaches predominant in Australian schools (Doecke & Parr, 2011; Hardy, 2016; Mockler, 2018). In parallel, such moves might assist leaders and mentors to foster substantive learning relationships with ECTs (see Willis, Crosswell, Morrison, Gibson & Ryan, 2017). All of these professional applications could be documented and represented through research projects, perhaps enabling ECTs to be the principal architects of their own inquiries (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Mills & Goos, 2017). In this sense, research inquiry employing the framework conceptualised in
Looking forward as a researcher: growth and paradox

At the beginning of this thesis, I mentioned that my undertaking of this study had personal significance, driven by my wish to explore the literacies learning conundrums potentially experienced by ECTs. At this end of the study, I see that while undertaking this exploration, I have transformed as a researcher. In Chapter Four, I shared some entries from researcher journaling. One entry showcased my perspective at that time, of research as a mirror for unveiling hidden aspects of the socio-political world. Writing up the final version of this thesis, I recognised that the mirror metaphor no longer rang true for me. Worrying at this shift, at first I thought that perhaps I had become the mirror. That is, if I worked hard enough, I could justly represent my participants’ voices. Only much later, it came to me that there would never and could never be a perfect correspondence between ECTs’ voices and my research articulations. Ergo, contradictions and tensions in representation would remain, and I would never in any sense be ‘finished’ (Pillow, 2003). Now, the words of Michael Taussig (2006) seem to offer a better distillation of my researcher-ly positioning:

To step into the river means to immerse oneself in the beingness of the world, which is messy, as well as to ride the incandescent wave of instability and contradiction whereby the rule is both followed and broken, which is even messier.

(p. ix)

Hoping to go forwards, I realise and value the messiness and imperfection of the research process. But I also appreciate that this messiness and contradictoriness, is the very stuff which qualitative researchers seek to “cross over, converse and tap into” (Weseen & Wong, 2000, p. 51).
Concluding remarks

In conclusion, I note the crucial contribution of ECTs participants to this study. Previously, there was a significant gap in our research knowledge about ECTs’ literacies teaching and learning in Western Australia. To gain insight into ECTs’ perceptions and shaping of literacies, a conceptual framework was developed, a layered analysis designed, and a multiplicity of factors impinging on ECT experience were theorised. The ‘take-home’ message emerging from the study is that ECTs’ perceptions, experiences, circumstances and opportunities were quintessentially pervaded by back to basics literacy routines and imperatives. Despite this circumscription, ECTs still set their conceptual compasses towards broader horizons, often with little or no help from those around them in schools.

It seems a good time to put ECT voices forward into the fray of broader debate. Currently, Federal Education Minister Simon Birmingham plans to introduce further standardised testing into Australian primary schooling, drawing explicit attention to students’ phonics progressions. Bolstering the already formidable standardisation of literacy, this move does not bode well for teaching and learning for literacies. The present study intimates that even in these times, ECTs are nevertheless courageous, and capable of richer thinking-and-doing (Ball 2016, p. 1057). It is my hope that I might have many more opportunities to collaborate with teachers, pre-service educators and school principals to capacitate this thinking-and-doing for literacies.

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## Appendix A: Presentations of the study for peer review

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<td>Public lecture</td>
<td><strong>Dempsey, H., &amp; Gardiner, V.</strong> (2017). <em>Early career teaching: mapping professional participation and constructing professional identity.</em> Mondays@Murdoch, 28th August 2017, Hill Lecture Theatre, Murdoch University, Western Australia.</td>
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Appendix B: Ethics approval letters

Friday, 02 October 2015

A/Prof/Dr Wendy Cumming-Potvin
School of Education
Murdoch University

Dear Wendy,

Project No. 2015/205
Project Title Expanding Professional Literacy Learning with Western
Australian Early Career Primary School Teachers: Learning
through Multiliteracies and Cultural Historical Activity Theory

Your application in support of the above project was reviewed by the Education Expedited
Sub-Committee of Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Decision of Education Sub- Committee:

APPROVED – subject to the following CONDITIONS:

a) Refer to Qn 9 on the Application Form. Once obtained, forward letters of approval from
the Department of Education WA and Catholic Education of WA to Research Ethics and
Integrity.

b) Refer to Qn 10 on the Application Form. Ensure fieldwork approval is obtained prior to
commencing the research.

You are not authorised to commence data collection until all conditions listed have
been addressed to the satisfaction of the Human Research Ethics Committee. Your response
to the conditions should be forwarded in writing to the Research Ethics and Integrity Office.
Once the Committee is satisfied that the conditions have been met, you will be issued with a
formal approval.

Please quote your ethics project number in all correspondence.

Kind Regards,

Dr. Erich von Dietze
Manager
Research Ethics and Integrity

cc: Dr Chris Glass and Veronica Gardiner
School of Education – Lindy Norris
Friday, 04 March 2016

A/Prof/Dr Wendy Cumming-Potvin
School of Education
Murdoch University

Dear Wendy,

Project No. 2015/205
Project Title
Expanding Professional Literacy Learning with Western Australian Early Career Primary School Teachers: Learning through Multiliteracies and Cultural Historical Activity Theory

AMENDMENT: Recruitment to take place wholly through professional snowballing and social media promotion
Teachers to have option to use Skype to participate in meetings of the Learning-Collectives

Your application for an amendment to the above project, received on 3/3/2016 was reviewed by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee and was,

APPROVED

Approval is granted on the understanding that research will be conducted according the standards of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and Murdoch University policies at all times. You must also abide by the Human Research Ethics Committee’s standard conditions of approval. All reporting forms are available on the Research Ethics and Integrity web-site.

I wish you every success for your research.

Please quote your ethics project number in all correspondence.

Kind Regards,

E. von Dietze
Manager
Research Ethics and Integrity

cc: Dr Chris Glass and Veronica Gardiner
Appendix C: Facebook recruitment invitations - Flyer and script

HELLO WA PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS!

ARE YOU IN YOUR FIRST 3 YEARS OF TEACHING?

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN ACCESSING LITERACY RESOURCES, AND DISCUSSING LITERACY AND TEACHING WITH PEERS OVER COFFEE IN YOUR AREA?

To find out more, please contact Veronica’s email address or her mobile (phone or text)
Y.Gardiner@murdoch.edu.au
0400 453 257

THIS IS A PhD RESEARCH PROJECT, APPROVED BY THE MURDOCH HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (APPROVAL 2011/203)

Dear early career K-6 teachers, I am launching an exciting non-commercial (free) professional learning format for 2016, to support relaxed, social literate learning over coffee and nibbles, in various locations around WA. Groups will be tailored around the needs and interests of K-6 teachers in their first 5 years of practice (including casuals, part timers and full timers). Please like this post to encourage early career collaboration. To chat about the sessions, contact me by - direct message/text or phone 0400452257/ email me on
Appendix D: Teacher information letter

Teacher Information Letter
Study: Multiliteracies-Learning-Collectives

Dear early career primary school teacher,

My name is Veronica Gardiner and I am a PhD candidate in the School of Education at Murdoch University. I am conducting research aiming to support innovative professional literacy learning for primary school teachers in their first five years of practice, and final-year students who are preparing to transition to classroom practice.

Nature and purpose of the study
The first years of teaching can be an exciting and challenging time. Most early career teachers receive formal professional learning in relation to literacy and professional practice. Final-year students also receive some support as they begin to explore potential practices and are involved in a long-term practicum in schools. This study is designed to complement these supports by facilitating informal professional learning in relation to contemporary literacy practice. This would involve regular group meetings in a community space close to your location.

What the study will involve
If you decide to participate in this study, you will be invited to:

- Attend 4 local meetings of a ‘Multiliteracies Learning Collective’ during the 2016 school year. We will explore a wide variety of contemporary forms of text, literacy practice and resources. This will involve you in collaborative work and discussion with up to 9 others, plus the researcher. The first and last meetings will include an informal focus group segment, where you can discuss your current understandings and experiences of literacy and professional learning.
- Access a closed-group Facebook page for sharing teaching and learning resources.
- Complete a general questionnaire about your background and professional interests before the first meeting.

Where and when?
It is anticipated that meetings will each take approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours, in a local community centre, at a time suitable for the group. Although times will be negotiated, meetings will likely take place in the late afternoon or early evening on a weeknight. The researcher will bring tea, coffee, cakes and savouries. Meetings are planned for the period between February and December 2016. Facebook participation will be flexible and depend on interest.

What information will be collected?
All collaborative face-to-face discussions will be audio taped. Printouts of Facebook activity will also inform the study. Teacher-made posters and objects may be of interest to the researcher, although classroom student work samples and products will not be used. You are asked to grant the researcher 3rd party copyright of learning objects generated in the group, as data for analysis. You will be invited to complete a general background questionnaire, asking about your years of teaching experience and any professional interests you may have. You will be asked to keep the identities of other participants confidential outside the group, and to not refer by name to people or children who are not participants in this study. In particular, you will be asked not to share any sensitive or personal information on the Facebook page, which is provided specifically for sharing teaching and learning resources. This restriction includes naming or using photographs of yourself or students, or sharing details about your personal or workplace contexts.
Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. This decision must be made entirely by you, and must not be part of workplace expectations or arrangements. The study does not aim to contribute to formal professional learning requirements at your workplace and is not subject to performance management routines. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without discrimination or prejudice. Given the nature of the data, individual contributions to discussion will not be deleted from the group recordings. However, all information will be treated as confidential during and after the study, and no names or other details that might identify you will be used in any publication arising from the research.

Privacy
Your privacy is very important. You will not be asked for personal or sensitive information. Additionally, whether you elect to participate or not will be kept entirely confidential. Although your school was approached to assist with access to interested teachers, school staff and administration will not know whether you have elected to participate in this study, even after it is finished.

Benefits of the Study
While it is possible that there may be no direct benefit to you from participation in this study, the aim of the study is to explore how ‘Multiliteracies Learning Collectives’ help early career teachers and final-year education students to develop literacy knowledge and understandings. This is very relevant at the current time, when Western Australian teachers are encountering new concepts and language in English curricula. This study offers early career teachers collaborative and conceptual support for building this knowledge.

While there is no guarantee that you will personally benefit, the knowledge gained from your participation may help others in the future. New ways of considering professional learning are an important contribution to the educational field. Professional literacy learning is a core concern of every educator and every school, and ultimately concerns the potential learning of students. At a deeper level, the study explores theoretical issues to do with contemporary literacy, teacher knowledge, and social formats for professional learning.

Possible Risks
There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study. If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself, Veronica (Ronnie) Gardiner on mobile 0400 452 257 or my supervisors: Dr Wendy Cumming-Potvin, on Ph. 9360 2192 (w.cumming-potvin@murdoch.edu.au) OR Dr Chris Glass, on Ph. 9360 2176 (C.Glass@murdoch.edu.au). My supervisors and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have, and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

Once we have analysed the information from this study, you will be emailed a summary of our findings. You will also be given the opportunity to verify and comment on transcriptions of meeting discussions.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the Consent Form. Thank you for considering this invitation,

Veronica Gardiner

This study has been approved by the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval 2015/205). If you have any reservation or complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, and wish to talk with an independent person, you may contact Murdoch University’s Research Ethics Office (Tel. 08 9360 6677 (for overseas studies, +61 8 9360 6677) or e-mail ethics@murdoch.edu.au). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully; and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix E: Teacher consent and re-consent forms

Teacher Participant Consent Form
Study: Multiliteracies-Learning-Collectives

I have read the teacher participant information sheet, which explains the nature of the research and the possible risks and benefits of participation. The information has been explained to me and all my questions have been satisfactorily answered. I have been given a copy of the information sheet to keep.

I am happy to attend 'Multiliteracies-Learning-Collective' meetings in my local area. I am happy for all discussions to be audio recorded, and for Facebook interactions, as fore-mentioned, to be used as part of this research. I am happy to complete a general background questionnaire, about such details as my academic qualifications and professional interests. I also agree to collection of learning objects such as teacher-made posters. I understand that I do not have to contribute to particular discussions, including Facebook interactions, if I do not want to, and that I can withdraw from participation at any time without consequences to myself.

I agree that research data gathered from the study may be published provided my name or any identifying data is not used. I have also been informed that I may not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study.

I understand that all information provided by me during face-to-face interaction is treated as confidential. It will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law. I also agree not to identify school colleagues and students by name.

----------------------------------------------------------
Signature of Participant/Date                          Print Name

I wish to receive feedback about the study   YES/ NO. If yes, please provide your email address here:

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Investigator

I have fully explained to __________________________ the nature and purpose of the research, the procedures to be employed, and the possible risks involved. I have provided the participant with a copy of the Teacher Information Letter.

----------------------------------------------------------
Signature of Investigator/Date                          Signature of Chief Investigator/Date

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Print Name                          Print Name

Name
Teacher Participant Re-Consent Form  
Study: Multiliteracies-Learning-Collectives

Follow-up Focus Group/Interview

Further to my consenting participation in Multiliteracies-Learning-Collective meetings, I am happy to participate in a ‘follow-up’ focus group or individual interview in 2017. This interaction is intended to provide an opportunity for me to share my ongoing reflections about literacy teaching and professional learning. It will take place at a time and place of my convenience, for instance either in a local meeting place, through skype interaction or phone call. Discussion topics will be similar to those we have engaged with previously in the study. The focus group or interview is expected to take about 1 hour.

I understand that participation in this focus group/interview is entirely voluntary, and that if I participate, I do not have to contribute to particular discussions if I do not want to. Also, I can withdraw from participation at any time without consequences to myself.

I agree that research data gathered from this focus group/interview may be published provided my name or any identifying data is not used. I have been informed that I may not receive any direct benefits from participating in this focus group/interview.

I understand that all information provided by me during this interaction is treated as confidential. It will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law. I also agree not to identify school colleagues and students by name.

___________________________________  ______________________________
Signature of Participant/Date          Print Name

Investigator

I have fully explained to __________________________ the nature and purpose of the focus group/interview, the procedures to be employed, and the possible risks involved. I have provided the participant with a copy of this Re-consent Letter.

___________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Investigator/Date         Signature of Chief Investigator/Date

___________________________________  ______________________________
Print Name                           Print Name
Appendix F: Background survey

Name (pseudonym):

**Instructions:** You are invited to circle or reply to each of the following questions. You may omit some questions if you wish.

1. Which grade level are you teaching now? (If teaching more than one, please circle as appropriate)
   - K-2
   - 3-4
   - 5-6
   - Other?

2. How many years since you graduated as a teacher?
   - 4
   - 3
   - 2
   - 1
   - Less than 1

3. Where did you complete the majority of your teacher education? (Please give the name of the university or other institution, country and state)

   [ Blank space for text input ]

4. What are your main academic qualifications?

   [ Blank space for text input ]
5. Do you have any other training or qualifications that you believe are relevant to your teaching practice? (If yes, please describe them)

6. Where were you born?

Country

State

7. Which language(s) do you use on a regular basis?

8. Where have you mainly practiced as a classroom teacher? (e.g. country, state, or region)
9. What main teaching roles or duties have you performed during your teaching career so far?

10. Are you interested in any particular topics for discussion during meetings of our group? (If yes, please describe them)

11. What is your age range? (please circle as appropriate)
   - 56 – over
   - 46 – 55
   - 36 – 45
   - 27 – 35
   - 18 – 26

Thank you for responding to this brief questionnaire.
Appendix G: Institutional approval of fieldwork safety

20 October 2015

Veronica Gardiner
School of Education
Murdoch University

Dear Veronica

RAMP No. RAMP 0345 – October 2015
Project Title Study: Multiliteracies-Learning-Collectives

FIELDWORK SAFETY

The fieldwork safety application related to this project has been reviewed by your School and has been

Approved

Fieldwork Start Date: December 2015
Fieldwork End Date: July 2017

Approval is granted on the understanding that the fieldwork will be conducted according to the approved protocol and applicable Occupational Health and Safety standards, and that your School fieldwork officer or School Office will be provided with details of each trip and the individuals who will be going on the fieldwork.

This application is valid for 4 years.

Please quote your RAMP number in all correspondence.

Vanessa Hahn
Safety in Research and Teaching Coordinator
Tel +61 8 9360 6326
v.hahn@murdoch.edu.au

Sarah Dias
Safety in Research and Teaching Administrative Assistant
Tel +61 8 9360 6506
s.dias@murdoch.edu.au
Appendix H: Facebook header

This page is intended to allow members of the group to share resources, texts and strategies, for teaching and learning to do with multiliteracies. Although access to the page is provided through a closed group, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed on the Facebook platform. As a measure towards preserving personal and professional confidentiality, it is recommended that posts do not contain:

- personally identifying information such as addresses, phone numbers or name, or details about friends and family;
- professionally identifying information such as details about workplaces, colleagues or students;
- recounts of professional or personal dilemmas.

The researcher-administrator will moderate and maintain the page on a regular basis. In respect of your informed consent to participate in this study, you will be consulted if any changes are made to participation on Facebook.

I hope you enjoy this opportunity to share resources with each other,

Veronica
Appendix I: Placemat guide
### Appendix J: Description of picture book and professional learning texts which the researcher shared in meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture Books</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Professional Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Texts</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IPAD APPLICATIONS - Meet Millie (Megapops LLC, 2011) and StoryKit (Apple, 2010).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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26 Children’s Book Council Award winners are listed at [https://cbca.org.au/previous-winners](https://cbca.org.au/previous-winners)

27 The Kate Greenaway medal is described at [http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/greenaway.php](http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/greenaway.php)
Appendix K: Transcription protocol

Adapted from the work of Gee (2011), and McLellan, MacQueen, and Neidig (2003)

Structure:

- Each transcript header is labelled with start and finish time, venue, and people present (using pseudonyms)
- Numbered utterances are justified left, with a new line for each numbered utterance, labelled with the speakers’ pseudonym
- Time elapsed is recorded at the bottom of each transcript page

Content:

- Nonverbal sounds – typed in parentheses, for example (group laughter) or (scrapping noise)
- Mispronunciations, hesitations and grammar are uncorrected – speech is transcribed verbatim
- Inaudible information – identified by the phrase ‘inaudible segment’ in parentheses
- Overlapping speech – identified with the phrase ‘inaudible cross talk’, or brackets at the beginning of contiguous utterances
- Linked turn taking – identified using the symbol =
- Intonation – rising intonation noted with question marks at the end of utterances. Speech emphasis noted in italics and parentheses, for example (speech emphasis)
- Pauses – short pauses are described using dots for example …
- Substantial pauses denoted by parentheses. For example (long pause)
- Sensitive information, such as names of students, schools or school personnel deleted, for example replaced with XXXXX

An image of a transcript segment is provided below to demonstrate the application of conventions.

141. Jo: This is my first coffee all day. (laughing)
142. Ronnie: Teachers certainly deserve... and that’s the thing isn’t it? People don’t know!
143. Jo: =I haven’t had a chance to have a coffee=
144. Ronnie: =that teachers might not, you to put off going to the toilet for 4 hours (and they might not have any coffee
145. Tash: (Oh, that’s what it’s like.
146. Jo: We had um book um parade today. So we were all dressed up at school today (ha ha ha)
147. Tash: I was the evil witch last Wednesday.
148. Jo: he he he
149. Tash: I mean the evil queen sorry not the evil witch. Evil queen from ‘Snow White’. I thought I did that quite well.
### Appendix L: PDs attended by the remote ECTs before the first café meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PD (pseudonym)</th>
<th>Main focus</th>
<th>Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decoding Approach</td>
<td>Phonemic awareness</td>
<td>Whole school, through a sequence of sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Commercial PD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System based language specialists</td>
<td>Vocabulary and grammar</td>
<td>Selected teachers, through a sequence of sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super Writing</td>
<td>Stepwise practices for producing writing</td>
<td>Whole school attendance at one event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Commercial PD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Points</td>
<td>Phonological awareness, letter-sound knowledge (phonics), vocabulary and reading</td>
<td>Whole school attendance at one event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Commercial PD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrific Writing</td>
<td>Students are facilitated to draw on shared oral expression to produce writing</td>
<td>Whole school attendance at one event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Commercial PD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System based PD</td>
<td>Phonological awareness</td>
<td>Whole school attendance at one event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note – I ascertained the main focuses of each PD from ECT dialogue, and by investigating descriptions of each PD available in the public domain. Links to this information have been withheld to avoid identifying contexts in which ECTs were located.*