Early Career Teachers’ Experiences of Classroom Observation: A Case Study

Thesis

How to cite:

For guidance on citations see FAQs.

© 2020 Samantha Mildred Love

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher’s website:
http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.00012118

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online’s data policy on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.
Early career teachers’ experiences of classroom observation: A case study

Samantha Mildred Love

Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology

Doctorate in Education

The Open University

February 2020
Abstract

Early career teachers (ECTs) undergo numerous observations of their teaching for various purposes, some of which can be perceived as challenging. Published research exists that examines the process of observation, however, there is little research that uses the voice of ECTs to explore how they experience observation.

Using an inductive case study approach, this study privileged the voice of the participants to explain their perceptions of how observation challenged both their identity and agency. Eleven ECTs in an 11-16 secondary school in the North East of England participated in the study. Data was gathered using semi-structured one-to-one and paired interviews using vignettes. Various aspects of observation were explored during both types of interview, including the purpose of and the method used for observation and how feedback on performance was given.

Thematic analysis of the data identified key themes related to structure and agency. Utilising a theoretical framework based on Giddens’ Structuration theory (1986), three typologies of observation experience emerged: Absent, Brutal and Collegial. The experiences were characterised as ‘critical incidents’ that influenced ECTs’ perceptions of observation impacting, either positively or negatively, upon their identity, agency and practice.

Analysis highlighted the importance of relationships and trust between the observer and the observed. When a collegial approach to observation and feedback was adopted by all parties, the experience was perceived to enhance ECT agency and identity. Absent and Brutal experiences were considered to be restrictive of agency, rendering ECTs’ perceptions of the process as under-developmental. The contributions from this research about ECTs’ experiences of observation will be valuable to schools, providers of Initial Teacher Training, and mentors of ECTs. One recommendation is that the different typologies of observation could be used to help inform future training of teachers, mentors and those who observe.
Acknowledgements

Firstly, thanks to Dr Michelle Haynes. You were the first person to plant the seed of Doctoral studies in my brain and without your suggestions and help with my application I would not be here now.

I would also like to thank my amazing participants. Each of you gave your time freely and your words bring this thesis to life. I only hope that this work does justice to you.

Thank you to June Ayres for her unending patience and answering my ridiculous questions. Your advice and reassurances have been a great support.

Many thanks go to my supervisors: Dr Els de Geest, Dr Gill Adams and Dr Alison Fox. Your help, guidance and gentle nudges (‘There is no right or wrong!’) have kept me motivated throughout the duration of my studies. Thank you isn’t really enough.

Lastly, but most importantly, thank you to my mum and dad, and to my family. Your encouragement, support and sense of humour have helped me through the rollercoaster of the last few years. I am grateful to each of you in so many, many ways.

M and D this thesis is for you both. With love. Always.
# Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... 1

Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... 2

Contents .......................................................................................................................... 3

List of Figures: .................................................................................................................. 10

List of tables: .................................................................................................................... 11

Glossary: .......................................................................................................................... 11

Chapter 1. Introduction and Context .............................................................................. 12

Personal motivation for the study .................................................................................... 12

Background to the research ............................................................................................. 13

A history of classroom observation ................................................................................. 14

Observation of new teachers: Policies and appraisal systems ...................................... 15

The Early Career Framework .......................................................................................... 16

International perspectives on classroom observation ................................................. 17

Research questions ......................................................................................................... 18

The case study school ...................................................................................................... 19

Researcher positionality ................................................................................................. 20

Types of observation used in the case study school ....................................................... 21

Overview of thesis .......................................................................................................... 22

Summary .......................................................................................................................... 23

Chapter 2. Observation of early career teachers: A review of the literature ............... 24

Teacher agency and identity in the structures within which observation sits .......... 25

Early career teacher agency ............................................................................................ 25

Teacher identity ............................................................................................................... 27

Teacher moral values, beliefs and identity ..................................................................... 28
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher pedagogy and identity</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience and identity</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure-agency and classroom observation</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School context and identity</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure-agency and school leadership teams</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The emotional dimension to observation</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and emotions</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation and emotions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress, classroom observation and identity</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observer competency</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust and observation</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods and purposes of observation</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of classroom observation</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of classroom observation</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback and observation</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The emotional connection with feedback</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery of feedback</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusting relationships and observation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegiality, structures and classroom observation</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience and classroom observation</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3. Research Methodology</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The research questions and paradigmatic stance</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My chosen research methodology and the ‘Case’</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Case</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insider researcher: A justification for researching in my own workplace</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher voice ................................................................................................................. 63
Justification for a flexible approach to gathering data .................................................... 64
Research Design ............................................................................................................. 65
The influence of the Pilot Study on the Main Study ....................................................... 65
Choice of research instruments for the Main Study ...................................................... 67
Research instrument one: One-to-one interviews ......................................................... 67
Research instrument two: Paired interviews with vignettes ........................................ 67
Generating the vignettes ............................................................................................... 69
Main Study Data Collection .......................................................................................... 70
Organisation of interviews ............................................................................................ 70
One-to-one interviews .................................................................................................... 72
Paired interviews with vignettes .................................................................................... 76
Ethics ............................................................................................................................... 78
Ethical approach ............................................................................................................ 78
University Ethical Approval ........................................................................................... 79
Permissions from Westward School ................................................................................ 79
The ethics of being an insider researcher ....................................................................... 80
Ethics and management of interviews .......................................................................... 80
Bias and trustworthiness ............................................................................................... 81
Confidentiality and data protection .............................................................................. 82
Summary ....................................................................................................................... 83
Chapter 4. Data Analysis ............................................................................................... 84
Influence of the Pilot Study on data analysis ................................................................. 84
Thematic analysis approach to analysing data ............................................................... 85
Familiarisation with and transcription of interview data ............................................... 86
Coding data and use of ‘Coding Stripes’ ....................................................................... 87
Selection of data to illustrate findings ................................................................. 89
Inductive analysis of data ...................................................................................... 89
Research notes ...................................................................................................... 95
Authenticity and credibility ................................................................................... 95
Reflections on being an insider researcher during data analysis ......................... 96
Reflections on ethics during data analysis ............................................................ 97
Summary .............................................................................................................. 98

Chapter 5. Findings I: Emergent Themes .......................................................... 99

Themes relating to Structures ............................................................................. 100
  Intensity of observations .................................................................................... 100
  Observations lack clarity of focus and purpose ................................................. 102
  Questioning the validity of the observation protocol ......................................... 105

Themes relating to teacher agency ...................................................................... 107
  Feedback ........................................................................................................... 107
  Trusting relationships ...................................................................................... 111
  The impact of the observer in the classroom .................................................... 117
  Non-subject specialists observing .................................................................... 118

The significance of observation-related critical incidents .................................... 120

Additional key themes ....................................................................................... 122
  Participant voice on observation ..................................................................... 122
  Participant motivations to engage with the study ............................................ 124

Summary .............................................................................................................. 125

Chapter 6. Findings II: Typologies of observation .............................................. 127

Experiences of observation .................................................................................. 127
  The Collegial typology .................................................................................... 128
  The Absent typology ...................................................................................... 130
The Brutal typology........................................................................................................131
The Inspection experience ............................................................................................133
The social psychological aspects of observation-related critical incidents ..........136
Observation, critical incidents and teacher agency and identity .........................138
Impact of leadership actions on perceptions of observation ............................140
Teacher well-being and observation ........................................................................142
Summary ......................................................................................................................143

Chapter 7. Conclusions and Implications ..................................................................145
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................145
Addressing the Research Questions ..........................................................................147
Recommendations ........................................................................................................150
  Communication and relationships ...........................................................................151
  Observation pro-forma ..............................................................................................151
  Delivery of feedback .................................................................................................152
  Resilience ..................................................................................................................153
  Regular review of implemented changes .................................................................153
  Summary of recommendations ................................................................................154
Limitations and further research recommendations ...............................................154
  Research approach ..................................................................................................154
  Scale of study ...........................................................................................................155
  Lack of observer voice .............................................................................................155
  Summary of limitations .............................................................................................156
Contributions to theory and practice .......................................................................156
  Methodological contributions ..................................................................................157
  Summary of contributions ........................................................................................158
Relevance of the findings ............................................................................................158
Appendix 14: Findings to feedback to the case study school...............................208

Appendix 15: Findings from research to feedback to Participants ..................213
List of Figures:

Figure 1: The progression of teacher training from ITT to RQT status.......................... 16
Figure 2: The various facets of teacher identity. .......................................................... 27
Figure 3: A quadripartite cycle illustrating how structures influence each other during observation........................................................................................................... 31
Figure 4: Shows part of a lesson observation pro-forma which appears to be typical of those used in schools. .................................................................................. 45
Figure 5: The agency continuum associated with the methods and purposes of observation. ......................................................................................................................... 48
Figure 6: The cyclical process of observation. ................................................................. 49
Figure 7: A conceptual framework connecting observation issues and teachers’ emotions. ................................................................................................................................. 58
Figure 8: The structure of one-to-one interviews............................................................ 74
Figure 9: An extract from my research journal. .............................................................. 75
Figure 10: Structure of the paired interviews with vignettes......................................... 77
Figure 11: A research diagram for the Pilot and Main Study.......................................... 81
Figure 12: The themes identified in NVivo. ................................................................. 88
Figure 13: Concept map of early themes. ................................................................. 91
Figure 14: The positive aspects of observation.......................................................... 92
Figure 15: The negative aspects of observation......................................................... 93
Figure 16: Part of a lesson observation pro-forma, or 'tick-sheet' similar to that used at Westward School for both 'drop-in', longer unannounced and performance management observations................................................................. 102
Figure 17: The three influencing factors of observation that form positive or negative memory traces............................................................................................................. 137
Figure 18: The balance of agency versus structure.................................................. 139
List of tables:

Table 1: The three levels or degrees of agency within leadership, adapted from Wallace and Tomlinson (2012, p.148) ..........................................................34
Table 2: Perspectives on trust ........................................................................40
Table 3: Participant information for the Main Study ........................................71
Table 4: The key characteristics of each type of observation experience ..........135

Glossary:

CPD Continuing Professional Development
DfE Department for Education
ECF Early Career Framework
ECT Early Career Teacher – teacher within first five years of teaching, following successful completion of ITT
FE Further Education
HE Higher Education
ITT Initial Teacher Training – successful completion leads to QTS
NASUWT National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
NEU National Education Union
NQT Newly Qualified Teacher – teacher in their first year after successful completion of ITT
NUT National Union of Teachers
Ofsted The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills
PGCE Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PISA Programme for International Student Assessment
QTS Qualified Teaching Status
RQT Recently Qualified Teacher – teacher in their second to fifth year after successfully completing ITT
Chapter 1. Introduction and Context

The experiences of classroom observation of those within the first five years of teaching, known as early career teachers, or ECTs, formed the focus for this study. The perspectives of early career secondary school teachers in England are relatively under-researched and as a consequence ECTs have been described in literature as ‘voiceless’ (Hobson, 2009, p.312). Using concepts from Structuration theory (Giddens, 1986) as a theoretical framework, this study identified aspects of observation that teachers felt were empowering and those they considered to be problematic. These were then further explored to ascertain how these experiences of observation challenged or enhanced the agency and identity of teachers. The findings highlighted three observation typologies which were influential upon ECT identity and agency. Identification of ‘critical incidents’ were found to influence teachers’ emotional connections with observation. Recognition of critical incidents in this study allowed otherwise unvoiced ‘perceived injustices’ to be revealed (Hobson and Maxwell, 2017, p.181). The findings from this research could be used to help inform how observation could be carried out in Initial Teacher Training institutions and schools and are particularly relevant given the introduction of the Early Career Framework for induction of new teachers in 2021 (DfE, 2019a). The thesis begins with discussion of my personal motivation for the study.

Personal motivation for the study

As the study began, my intention was to draw on the perspectives of classroom observation from a sample of the population of teachers in one school, regardless of the number of years they had been teaching. Having experienced observation and carried out observations of others, I was aware of the emotional responses that observation often provoked. It was the impact of the practice that piqued my curiosity and drove me to investigate which aspects were most affecting and why.

My focus, however, changed early on in the study. The treatment of one teacher in the case study school caused me to want to focus on those who are newly qualified (NQTs) or recently qualified teachers (RQTs), collectively known as ECTs. I had been teaching at the school for about a year when, one morning before school I had gone to use the photocopier and met an NQT in floods of tears
after they had received feedback from a pivotal observation for their qualifying year. Sent via an email attachment, the feedback consisted of a scan of a piece of paper with a few suggestions for improvement written on it. Verbal feedback was not given as the observer was ‘too busy’ to give this in person. This act resulted in my colleague describing themselves as feeling ‘inadequate’ as they were not given the opportunity to defend their teaching choices or performance. Whether the repercussions and impact of this action by the observer was intentional or otherwise, their insensitive approach towards this person angered me. It was this critical incident that was a ‘turning point’ (Tripp, 1993, p.105) for me. The situation emphasised to me the vulnerabilities that ECTs can feel during their first few years in the profession, in particular when they are being observed. The incident reinforced my desire to study further the emotional and motivational effects of observation power relationships that can influence the feelings of powerlessness often felt by those new to the profession (Hobson, 2009). Talking to new teachers about their experiences of being observed would enable them to explain how the process affected them by describing examples of where they felt observation was formative, and those experiences they found less helpful.

**Background to the research**

In 2014 Michael Wilshaw, the then Chief of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), stated that it was a ‘national scandal’ that around two-fifths of teachers had left the profession within five years after gaining Qualified Teaching Status or QTS (The Guardian, 2014). Many of these teachers cited constant observations and monitoring as one of the reasons for them leaving (Cassidy and Clarke, 2015). Describing feelings of being ‘powerless’ and ‘at the bottom of the pecking order’ (Hobson, 2009, p.312), many new teachers have expressed concerns about stress and anxiety induced by observation (Aubusson et al., 2007). These concerns may offer an indication as to why the attrition rate of new teachers has remained consistently concerning over the last few years (NASUWT, 2018 and 2015; Allen et al., 2016; DfE, 2016).

Research focussed on the development of ‘learning communities’ (Stoll, 2013; Montgomery, 2002) and the practice of peer observation (Lofthouse and Thomas, 2017; O’Leary, 2014; Cosh, 1998) offer possible solutions to the issues associated with observation, however, these tend to be from a top-down perspective or of
those looking from the outside in (Taylor, 2017; Perryman, 2011 and 2009) and not from the chalk face of those undergoing observations.

Being aware that there will likely be many factors affecting new teachers’ decisions to leave the profession, it would be naive to assume that it is purely observation causing the exodus reported. It is pertinent to acknowledge that the experience is not always detrimental especially when a collegial approach is implemented. Observation can be developmental for both the observed teacher and the observer, in particular when trust is strong between all parties involved (D’Souza, 2014). When used in a formative way, observation is a powerful tool to develop teacher identity and resilience (Tait, 2008).

A history of classroom observation

Classroom observation of teachers and school inspection in England and Wales dates back to 1834. At this time, inspections were carried out by the Sunday School Union with a view to ‘ascertain the defects of education’ in schools (Maclure, 1986, p.33) to screen, identify and ultimately remove those considered to be ‘poor’ teachers. Despite observations and school inspections, teachers had relative autonomy over the subject content covered (curriculum) and how this was taught (pedagogy) until 1988 when standardised testing and the National Curriculum was introduced in England (Ward and Eden, 2009).

As schools began to compete against each other for a market share of students through their performance in government-imposed league tables, teachers found themselves ‘being gradually stripped of their professionalism and policed by new inspection regimes’ (Tomlinson, 2005, p.3) and placed under new pressures to perform and meet targets. Schools evolved into ‘performance cultures’ (Sachs, 2016, p.414) where the formative aspect of staff observation became overlooked. In order to meet the demands of externally imposed structures such as league tables or the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), school leadership teams increasingly began to use data on classroom performance to evidence teacher and school performance. Adoption of this practice reduces teacher agency at both a micro (within the classroom) and meso (whole school) level, rendering observation a ‘purely bureaucratic activity’ (Lofthouse and Wright, 2012, p.90) consequently providing little professional development for the teacher.
The teacher appraisal system introduced in England in 2000 continues to affect all teachers. Following guidelines given by the DfE (2019b), teacher proficiency in the classroom is measured against the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2011). This prescriptive process erodes trust and agency as surveillance of performance becomes normal practice. There are also claims that the diversity of teaching is restrained as policies and regimes standardise teaching practice (Mockler, 2005), causing teachers to follow ‘tried and tested practices because they are safe’ (Sachs, 2016, p.416). Doing so reduces teachers to ‘technicians’ (Sachs, 2016, p.419) as the human aspects of teaching, such as relationships with students, are rendered unimportant.

In this kind of climate of performativity, where teacher performance is increasingly monitored via prescriptive methods, explained in detail in Chapter 2, alternatives have evolved. Formative methods of observation such as peer observation or lesson study encourage teachers and school leaders to work collegially to develop teacher practice and build trusting relationships. These scenarios encourage teachers to become ‘activist’ teachers (Sachs, 2003, p.54) exercising their agency through continual review of practice as they develop creative approaches to teaching in a trusting and enabling culture (Taylor, 2017).

Observation of new teachers: Policies and appraisal systems

Observation of new teachers has many purposes, including to help inform and shape Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as well as assessing competence. Once Initial Teacher Training (ITT) is completed, teachers in England are classed as NQTs and gain QTS (Training and Development Agency for Schools, 2008). Having gained QTS teachers must then complete an induction period showing they meet the ‘Teachers’ Standards’ (DfE, 2011) to become fully qualified meaning they can then go on to teach in maintained schools¹ in England and Wales. Competency is evidenced through various means including observation, which is usually carried out by mentors, Heads of Department, members of SLT and university tutors. Guidance to assist schools and teachers with how to pass the induction period is given in the ‘Induction for Newly Qualified Teachers in England’ booklet (DfE, 2018). Having successfully completed the induction period teachers are considered to be RQTs up to five years after

¹ Maintained schools in England and Wales are funded by local government.
qualifying, with both NQTs and RQTs being regarded as ECTs. The progression from ITT to RQT status is represented in Figure 1.

Once fully qualified, teachers are required to meet targets as part of the ‘Teacher Appraisal’ system used in England (DfE, 2019b). These observations are usually carried out by members of SLT or Heads of Department. The frequency and number of observations used has been reported as varying between schools, ranging from one ‘Appraisal’ observation per year as suggested in the ‘Teacher Appraisal’ document (DfE, 2019b), to one per half term, or six in total in an academic year. Union guidance suggests that observations should amount to no more than a total of three hours in an academic year, regardless of purpose or type of observation (NEU, 2018; NUT, 2016).

Figure 1: The progression of teacher training from ITT to RQT status.

The Early Career Framework

On average 35,000 people train to become a teacher in England each year (Allen et al., 2016). Costing between £18,200 and £23,500 for non-Teach First and £38,200 for a Teach First² trainee (Allen et al., 2016) loss of teachers from the profession is not only costly financially to schools but also has a negative impact on student attainment (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). In order to try to prevent this loss, the DfE will introduce from September 2021 the Early Career Framework (ECF) for induction of new teachers in England (DfE, 2019a).

The framework is designed to build on and complement the training that teachers have already received during their ITT year. The DfE say it is ‘a fully-funded, two-year package of structured training and support linked to the best evidence available’ (2019a, p.4). It is anticipated by the DfE that by extending the statutory induction period to two years, teachers will be better trained to cope with the

---

² Teach First is a two year employment-based training programme which leads to QTS. Trainees are placed in schools in low income areas of England and Wales.
professional demands of teaching. Five core areas for teacher development feature in the framework: ‘behaviour management, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and professional standards’ (DfE, 2019a, p. 5). The DfE anticipate that through the use of highly trained mentors to guide ECTs, all aspects of their teaching will benefit. Welcomed by many in teaching (Hutchinson and Spalding, 2019; Naylor, 2019; Weston, 2019), the introduction of the ECF should be viewed with caution (Spendlove, 2019). In order for the ECF to be successful in its intentions there is a need for it to be carefully implemented with comprehensive training of the mentors and new teachers who will be using it (Lofthouse, 2019). In spite of the training and finances being offered by the DfE to fund this initiative, I anticipate that there is a danger that schools may not necessarily implement the framework in the way in which it is intended due to the busyness of schools, time constraints, and other structures that relate to the accountability pressures impacting upon schools. Use of the framework may also reduce the agency of ECTs as it provides more criteria which they have to demonstrate in their teaching. This could be counter-productive to the intended purpose of the ECF as a tool for development and as a result could ‘reinforce restrictive rather than expansive professional learning environments’ (Lofthouse, 2019) within the school, inducing further stresses upon ECTs at a time in their careers when they are most vulnerable.

**International perspectives on classroom observation**

While this research focusses on the practice of observation in schools in England, observation of teachers in the classroom is common practice around the world. Concerns about observation raised by teachers in English schools are echoed in literature drawn from a range of countries, including the Middle East, the USA and South East Asia (Shah and Harthi, 2014; Wang and Day, 2002; Lam, 2001). International literature on observation from all levels of education and teachers from a range of experiences share common issues which include: who is observing, the feedback process and the purpose and methods used. While some of the studies are small-scale (Wang and Day, 2002), others are much larger and serve to illustrate that problems with being observed are universal. Examples of these types of study include Shah and Harthi (2014) and Lam (2001). These large-scale studies used interviews and questionnaires to ascertain teachers’ perspectives of observation in a Saudi Arabian university (Shah and Harthi, 2014)
and schools in Hong Kong (Lam, 2001). The data gathered from these revealed that the processes lack opportunities for teacher development, and raise questions of observer subjectivity, something also described as problematic in English schools (Page, 2011). Consideration of the element of trust associated with classroom observation, permeates all levels of educational establishment regardless of location of the teacher being observed (Van Maele and Van Houtte, 2015; Van Tassel, 2014; Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999). The use of literature from a range of countries and from other phases of teaching, including Further and Higher Education (FE and HE), helps to illustrate that the concerns with observation raised in my study of ECTs in an English secondary school are potentially transferable to other settings, including international schools and colleges.

Research questions

The research questions centre on aspects of classroom observation highlighted as causing the most concern from both literature and conversations with my colleagues.

The main research question is:

- How does the experience of classroom observation impact on ECTs emotionally?

The sub-questions which aimed to help address the main question were:

- How is classroom observation perceived by ECTs?
- How does the person carrying out the observation impact on how it is perceived by those being observed?
- How does the method used for observation affect the value placed on it by teachers?
- How does feedback on performance affect the value of classroom observation?
The case study school

The case study school was one where I worked as a middle leader for the first two years of my research. Westward School\(^3\) is an 11-16 mixed secondary school in the North East of England with around 800 students. Based in one of the most socially deprived areas of England it has a higher than average number of students with recognised Special Educational Needs and Pupil Premium students\(^4\).

The leadership team of the school consisted of the senior leadership team (SLT) and the middle leadership team (MLT). The SLT was comprised of the Principal, a Deputy Principal and several Assistant Principals. The MLT included Heads of Department and Seconds in Department.

Academy status\(^5\) was obtained in 2011 with a sponsor taking over governance of the school. Underperformance by students in government benchmark targets for the summer exams of 2016 and 2017 meant that upon returning to work for the new academic year in September 2017, staff were told that there was a strong possibility that the school could lose its sponsor leaving teachers’ jobs under threat. Subsequently, all teaching staff began to experience a range of different classroom observations carried out by members of the SLT and Heads of Department. Some unannounced observations lasted up to twenty minutes and were often carried out by two members of staff, with little or no feedback given. Teachers experienced up to five observations and drop-ins per day, often undergoing both a longer unannounced observation whilst also having a drop-in observation. These were in addition to the observations that ECTs had for performance management and to become qualified.

---

\(^3\) All names are pseudonyms.

\(^4\) Pupil Premium is used as a measure of the number of disadvantaged students in a school. These students are any who receive free school meals or have done so within the last six years.

\(^5\) Academy schools in England are independent, self-governing schools that are funded directly by the government. They are run by not-for-profit academy trusts. (GOV.UK, n.d.)
The Ofsted\textsuperscript{6} inspection prior to commencement of the Main study considered the 
school to be ‘Requires Improvement’ in all areas apart from ‘Leadership and 
Management, which was considered to be ‘Good’.

The Pilot Study was carried out during the 2016–17 academic year and the Main 
Study was carried out during the 2017–18 academic year.

A new Principal was appointed in 2019.

**Researcher positionality**

Whilst carrying out insider research at Westward School, my role was that of a 
middle leader. I was second in science in charge of Key Stage 4\textsuperscript{8}. I considered this 
unique position to be one of an ‘outsider within’ (Hill Collins, 1986, p. S14) as I had 
both teaching and leadership responsibilities. As part of my middle leadership role, 
I worked with colleagues to help them plan lessons to deliver the then new GCSE 
curriculum and provided training for colleagues to develop their knowledge of 
science practical activities. My role did not include carrying out observations of 
colleagues, either formal or informal. This ambiguous position meant that at times I 
felt that my agency was restricted as I too experienced the demands of the 
structures (Giddens, 1986) being used to monitor teaching across the school. 
However, I also understood why these were being implemented by SLT. As a 
consequence, I could empathise to a degree with both parties and their reactions 
to the pressures of performative demands that they were trying to meet.

After the first two years of the study I left Westward School to work at another 
school.

\textsuperscript{6} Ofsted is a government agency that inspects services that provide education to learners of all ages in 
England.

\textsuperscript{7} ‘Requires improvement’ is a judgement given by Ofsted. Categories are a four -point scale with the range 
from 1=Outstanding to 4=Inadequate (Ofsted, 2019a).

\textsuperscript{8} Key Stages are used to determine the age and part of curriculum taught to students in the UK. Key Stage 4 
students are aged between 14-16 years old. In England Key Stage 4 students work towards their General 
Certificate in Secondary Education qualifications (GCSEs).
Types of observation used in the case study school

The practice of observation at Westward School followed that of the national pattern as described in the ‘Observation of new teachers’ section. These observations were carried out by SLT, MLT and by mentors of ECTs. In addition to these, multiple daily ‘drop–in’ and longer unannounced observations also took place. These observations were performed by members of the SLT and Heads of Department. Heads of Department, however, were not exempt from these types of observation and also experienced both ‘drop-ins’ and longer unannounced observations as well. Based on what the observer perceived they saw whilst in the room, lessons were graded following Ofsted grading criteria of 1, equating to ‘Outstanding’, to 4, equating to ‘Inadequate’. All observations, whether formal or unannounced, looked for practice which could be linked to the ‘Teachers’ Standards’ document (DfE, 2011) and also school induced ‘non-negotiables’. The ‘non-negotiables’ were a series of tasks introduced by the leadership team of Westward in September 2017. Teachers had to implement the non-negotiables in all lessons, with the intention of driving up teaching standards. The tasks included such things as having the Bronze, Silver and Gold Learning Intentions on every slide of a presentation and all children having all their writing equipment, planner and reading book on the desk at all times during every lesson, regardless of the subject being taught or possible risks to health and safety in doing so (for example, in practical subjects such as chemistry). Data obtained from the unannounced and drop-in observations was recorded by middle and senior leaders but was not openly shared with the teachers.

In addition to observations carried out by SLT and Heads of Department, unofficial observations were also being carried out between teachers. These collegial observations centred upon teachers aiming to develop an aspect of their teaching that they wanted to improve, such as behaviour management. Carried out in an environment of mutual trust by colleagues including those from similar teaching backgrounds, mentors and at times Heads of Department, these aimed to help teachers develop aspects of their teaching without worrying about a grade.
Overview of thesis

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 introduces my conceptualisation of teacher agency and identity using aspects of Giddens’ Structuration theory (1986) as a theoretical lens to present this. The need for trust and strong relationships during observation are deliberated on, including how stress is manifested and the impact of this on teacher health and motivation. An overview of the methods, purposes, feedback and future pathways for collegial observation are explored. The chapter concludes with a discussion about relationships and their importance in shaping teacher identity during observation.

My chosen methodology of a case study is described in Chapter 3, including why one-to-one interviews and paired interviews with vignettes were selected and how they were implemented. The design of the vignettes is discussed as well as the issues faced when working as an insider researcher and in obtaining ethical approval.

Chapter 4 describes how data was analysed using thematic analysis. An overview is given as to how quotes taken from participants during interviews identified the key themes. The themes are related to the theoretical perspectives of Structuration theory (Stones, 2005; Giddens, 1986) and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 identifies the three typologies of observation: Absent, Brutal and Collegial. The typologies are used to illustrate the impact of different observation experiences on ECTs. The words of participants provide a powerful message about the importance of communication and trusting relationships if observation is to be formative and beneficial.

In the final chapter I build on my findings to propose alternative approaches to observation, to support a move from it being a tool of control to one of development. The research questions are addressed using aspects derived from the typologies of observation and proposals for future research are given. The thesis closes with a reflection which summarises the study and its impact.
Summary

Chapter 1 has provided an outline of the purpose and background to the research including my motivation to study ECTs and the research questions. Discussion of the various observation policies used across schools that ECTs experience as they begin their careers illustrates the demands of performative cultures that ECTs work within which can be enabling or restrictive of their teacher development. The Literature Review follows which introduces my conceptualisation of agency and identity derived from literature. This is then related to the impact of structures through use of aspects of Structuration theory (Giddens, 1986). Elements of observation, such as purpose, methods and feedback, and their impact upon teacher development are then explored.
Chapter 2. Observation of early career teachers: A review of the literature

I begin this review with an exploration of how the impact of structures within a school context, such as classroom observation, can be influential upon new teacher agency and identity. Aspects of Giddens’ Structuration theory (1986) are explored to try to address this. Literature on the psychology of the emotional response to being judged along with the importance of trust is examined in relation to observation of teacher classroom practice. Methods of observation that are used within schools to observe both new and qualified teachers are then explored to establish whether there is evidence to show that these are being used formatively, such as to aid teacher development, or as tools of surveillance to report on teacher performance to leadership and external agencies. Included in this section are approaches that could be described as both developmental and also ‘mutually beneficial’ for all involved (Wang and Day, 2002, p.18). These are deliberated on as possible solutions to the often negative emotional impact of being observed reported in published work. Finally, feedback from observation and trusting relationships are discussed from the perspective of trust and relationships with the observer.

This review covers the following main topics:

- Teacher identity and agency in the structures within which observation sits
- The emotional dimension to teaching
- Observation methods and purposes
- Feedback and observation
- Relationships and observation.

Literature from an international perspective has been included to provide a more in depth coverage to the review, helping to offer a degree of relatability of teachers’ experiences of observation beyond secondary schools in England. This review is not a fully comprehensive literature review due to the length of the thesis, however, it is felt that the literature included strengthens the review to provide multiple perspectives, be they those of ECTs or more experienced teachers. The review begins with an exploration of teacher identity and agency.
Teacher agency and identity in the structures within which observation sits

Aspects of Giddens’ Structuration theory (1986) are used throughout the chapter to help explain the impact of agency and structure upon the formation of a teacher’s identity. Identity is then conceptualised and related to agency in order to illustrate the influence that each has on the other. Agency is discussed in greater depth in the following section.

Early career teacher agency

As a concept, agency has become extensively used in research to address issues such as policy discussion and workplace learning (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). Consequently, many conceptualisations of agency have developed, each with their own characteristics derived from differing perspectives. Central to each perspective of agency is the notion of an individual being able to act independently in response to structural power (Casey, 2006; Fenwick and Somerville, 2006; Jary, 1991; Giddens, 1986). Drawing from Giddens’ social science approach to agency, connections between power, structures and agency can be made to explain the impact of observation on teachers’ perceptions of the practice. Giddens (1986) describes that the agency of an individual is impacted by structures acting upon them. Structures can be both internal, that is within the individual, such as their level of motivation, and external, such as the structure of a school day.

If teaching is related to ideas encapsulated in Giddens’ Structuration theory (1986), then teachers can be described as ‘agents’. Giddens considers each individual to be an agent able to act independently and make their own choices: they have agency. Agency is also the capacity of an individual to act autonomously within the structures with which they work or live. Structures can be both enabling or constraining of the agency of an individual, something Giddens refers to as ‘duality of structure’ (1986, p. 25). Consequently, agency and power can be considered influential upon each other as an individual can choose to exercise their power to act, or implement their ‘active agency’ (Stones, 2005, p.9). When entering a school or classroom, each teacher, or agent, has the capacity, or power, to act in a transformative way, such as implementing their chosen pedagogy in a lesson. To act with agency, teachers need to have ‘knowledgeability’ (Giddens, 1986, p.281) of the structures in which they work, for
example an observation pro-forma. In doing so an individual can act to affect change in a ‘transformative capacity’ (Giddens, 1987, p.7) as they exert a degree of power over exercising their agency. The result is that the actions of an individual and how they interact with others creates ‘social structures’ which can further ‘influence the actions and interactions of humans’ (Burr ridge et al., 2010, p.25). This would suggest that agency is influenced by the motivation and moral values of an individual as they choose whether or not to act with agency and whether it is morally right to do so. In the case of classroom observation, a teacher may change their usual teaching style in order to achieve a higher observation grade and in doing so, use their agency to transform how their teaching is perceived by others.

Within societies, ‘structures’ can enable or restrict the agency of individuals. In a school society, structures, such as the context of a school, the curriculum, school routines and both internal and external politics influence the degree of agency that a teacher can exercise. The degree to which an individual can chose to act with agency can be influenced by their ‘internal structures’ (Stones, 2005, p.9). Stones regards internal structures to be the ‘general disposition’ of an individual (2005, p.85). Encapsulating ideas from Giddens and Stones, the general disposition of an individual can be considered to be influenced by aspects such as their personal level of motivation, their moral values, beliefs and self-esteem. Given that ‘self-efficacy and a sense of agency are fundamental to motivation and commitment’ of a teacher (Day, 2008, p.251), this may explain why reduction in agency can impact on the level of motivation experienced by an individual.

Structuration theory has been met with reproach by some in literature. When presenting different conceptualisations of structure and agency, many are critical of the ideas of Giddens. Parker considers Giddens’ theory to be one that is ‘a tired conventional wisdom’ (2000, p. x), arguing that other theorists have superseded Giddens’ concepts by providing their own interpretations of structuration and agency, for example, Archer (1995) and Mouzelis (1995). Those who criticise Giddens’ approach to agency and structures regard the theory as too abstract as it ignores the need for individuals to experience knowledgeability empirically (Boyne, 1991; Jary, 1991).

Others, however, such as Stones, regard Structuration as a theory which could offer a ‘critical insight to social theory’ (2005, p.2) and as such it could provide ‘an important new direction for the sociology of education’ (Shilling, 1992, p. 69). This
suggests that Giddens’ concepts can be applied to real life educational scenarios moving the concepts he presents from the abstract to the actual. Teacher identity is explored in the next section as it interconnects with how agency is enacted in a social environment such as a school.

Teacher identity

Identity provides a source of meaning for an individual constructed from their ‘history… geography… collective memory… and religious revelations’ (Castells, 1997, p. 7). Relating Castells’ idea of identity to other published literature in the field of educational research, identity can be conceptualised to be built around three main facets; moral values and beliefs (Biesta et al., 2015; Boostrom, 1999), resilience (Mansfield et al., 2012; Tait, 2008) and pedagogy (Banks et al., 2005). Figure 2 shows how each facet of identity interconnect with each other to shape and influence the identity of an ECT.

Figure 2: The various facets of teacher identity.

Each facet of identity has multiple aspects which can be more or less influential on teacher agency at differing times during their career. Tait (2008) considers resilience to be influenced by the emotional intelligence of an individual. This can impact upon their ability to form positive relationships with others, including colleagues. Mansfield et al. perceive resilience to have four dimensions: ‘professional, motivational, emotional and social’ (2012, p.362). Each dimension
can impact upon the collective resilience and as a result the identity of an individual. An individual’s pedagogy is influenced by their ‘personal subject construct’ (Banks et al., 2005, p.336) which is regarded as influential upon identity. Both Mansfield et al. (2012) and Banks et al. (2005) note that moral values and beliefs influence the resilience and pedagogy of a teacher. The degree of agency afforded to a teacher, particularly early in their career, can affect the development of a positive sense of identity (Day and Kington, 2008; Day, 2004).

In order to fully explain this conceptualisation of teacher identity, each facet is discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

**Teacher moral values, beliefs and identity**

Teaching is considered to be a moral profession (Bietsa et al., 2015; Hawkins, 2015; Santoro, 2011; Campbell, 2008; Goodson, 2000; Boostrom, 1999), demonstrated daily as teachers follow their own ‘moral code’ (Hawkins, 2015). Each teacher brings their own moral values and beliefs about teaching and what it is to be a teacher to their classroom (Campbell, 2008). As described earlier, moral values and beliefs can be related to the ‘internal structures’ (Stones, 2005, p.9) that influence the agency of an individual and as such shape a teacher’s identity. Moral values and beliefs can be considered to be woven into all aspects of teaching, from planning a lesson to meet the needs of all students in a class, to forming positive relationships with colleagues, students and parents (Hawkins, 2015). The degree to which a teacher is able to illustrate their moral values and beliefs may be influenced by structures with which they work, such as the context of the school. This can be impactful on the degree to which a teacher exercises their agency to enact their values and beliefs within their classroom.
Teacher pedagogy and identity

A teacher’s identity can be expressed through their pedagogy. Banks et al. describe that a teacher’s pedagogy is built around three types of knowledge:

- Subject- for example, linguistics when teaching English
- School- such as knowledge of coursework requirements and course content
- Pedagogic- that is knowledge of subject specific ways of teaching (2005, p.336).

Central to these three types of knowledge is ‘personal subject construct’ (Banks et al., 2005, p.336) of an individual which can shape facets of an individual’s identity. Banks et al. (2005) describe that an individual teacher’s subject construct is built around their race, gender and experiences of education when at school. This is illustrated in Figure 2 where the interconnections between pedagogy, resilience and moral values and beliefs are shown.

Resilience and identity

Described earlier, teacher identity can be considered to be multi-faceted and influenced by factors such as the degree of resilience a teacher may hold/exhibit. One conceptualisation of how resilience can shape the identity of a teacher draws from the ideas of Mansfield et al. who identified four dimensions to teacher resilience:

- Professional- for example, good time management skills
- Emotional- including a good sense of humour
- Social- whereby strong relationships which are supportive are built
- Motivational- whereby a teacher will persist at and be optimistic about their work (2012, p. 362).

As has already been intimated, when a new teacher joins a school they need to adapt to the structures of its culture and internal politics (Flores, 2001), which can challenge the professional dimension of resilience. To overcome these challenges, teachers need to develop the social dimensions of resilience in order to help them
to adapt to the demands of teaching. If successful in achieving positive relationships with colleagues, parents and students, then other aspects of teacher resilience such as emotional and motivational, will be developed which will further enhance facets of their identity.

Structure-agency and classroom observation

The impact of observation upon agency can be explained using Structuration theory and what Giddens termed the ‘duality of structure’ (1986, p.25). This perspective illustrates that structures have a dual role as being both influential upon the practices and the outcomes of an agent. Stones interprets Giddens’ ‘duality of structure’ (1986, p.25) using a quadripartite cycle to define how agency and structure influence each other. Stones considers the four influencing structures to be:

1. External structures- conditions of action
2. Internal structures- within the agent
3. Active agency- where agents draw upon internal structures to provide practical action
4. Outcomes as external and internal structures and as events (2005, p.9).

Figure 3 shows how each aspect of this quadripartite cycle can be related to the scenario of lesson observation.

Relating the impact of external and internal structures to the practice of observation of a new teacher, there may be conflicts resulting in how the structures are viewed and perceived by the teacher. Teacher agency within the classroom is important in establishing the role of a teacher, such as form tutor or subject teacher. This is again influenced by their identity, context and structures in which they work. Teachers can find themselves beholden to external structures, such as following school policies during lessons to ensure consistency across all subjects. Acting upon their internal structures teachers can exercise their active agency. In some cases teachers can act strategically to comply with the constraints of school structures to receive positive feedback on performance and
promote a positive image of themselves within the school (Lacey, 2012), even if facets of their identity are challenged as a consequence of doing so.

![Diagram of a quadripartite cycle illustrating how structures influence each other during observation.](image)

**Figure 3**: A quadripartite cycle illustrating how structures influence each other during observation.

Acting to comply with school structures can be either conscious or subconscious. When subconscious, teachers can be described as ‘docile bodies’ (Hoskin, 1990, p.31) or ‘puppets’ (Schutz, 1970, p.45) as they conform to the pressures of a school society without question. In other instances, the teacher can act consciously to influence the outcome of the observation by choosing whether or not to conform to prescribed actions deemed to be important during an observation. In this instance the observation process becomes an example of the structure being enabling to the agency of the teacher.

**School context and identity**

Those new to the teaching profession find themselves in a period of transition, evolving from trainee to established teacher. One of the main influencing factors or structures that impacts upon the degree of agency and development of identity is the context of the school in which a teacher works. As already described, new teachers enter a school environment with their own sense of identity shaped by their moral and ethical values as well as personal thoughts about the role of a
teacher. Their transition from student to teacher is often influenced by interactions with others, some of whom may have conflicting perspectives to the teacher (Flores, 2001). These conflicting perspectives can challenge the teacher’s values and beliefs, resulting in their ability to act upon their agency being restricted. Consequently, many new teachers find themselves subject to ‘practice shock’ (Walker et al., 2018, p.8). Deemed to be a time when ‘feelings of disillusionment’ can impact upon ability to cope and lead to stress and burn-out (Gold, 1996, p.556), the first years of teaching are considered to be the hardest in many teacher’s careers (Flores, 2001). For many, negotiating the complexities of the context of a school environment with its internal politics and multi-layered hierarchies is challenging. Dealing with many stressors at once in a short time frame can become overwhelming and have an adverse impact on teacher health and teacher attrition (NASUWT, 2018; Allen et al., 2016; Cassidy and Clarke, 2015; Page, 2011; Borman and Dowling, 2008).

In establishing their identity, new teachers are often subject to ‘impression management’ (Goffman, 1971, p.203) whereby they wish to be viewed as competent by colleagues. The desire to appear proficient in front of colleagues can be problematic as it results in many new teachers avoiding sharing any difficulties that they may be experiencing. This clandestine approach to facing impediments is counterproductive as it leads to teachers’ professional development being impeded (Hobson and McIntyre, 2013) and exacerbates easily remedied problems, which can lead to further problems. This coupled with the isolation that many teachers experience as they work alone within their classrooms means negative feelings can impact upon health (Page, 2011).

In contrast, positive well-being can be associated with an individual having control, whether perceived or real, over their agency (Ofsted, 2019b). A climate of openness and honesty embedded in the whole school culture (Walker et al, 2018) in which ‘supportiveness creates a climate of trust’ (McBride and Skau, 1995, p.265) results in a ‘positive sense of professional identity… associated with well-being and job satisfaction’ (Day, 2008, p.257) where a teacher can thrive. If openness is not part of the school culture, power from the leadership team can impact negatively. In the case of observation, a structure that all teachers experience, an example might include leadership not sharing information with the teacher about their performance. This can be considered to be a ‘manifestation of power’ (Master, 1984, p. 342). Instances such as this can cause teachers to act
against the structures used and instead look for alternatives by seeking others with whom they feel trusting, as demonstrated by Van Tassell (2014). Teachers in this study used their ‘knowledgeability’ (Giddens, 1986, p.281) of the internal politics of the school, to positively shape observation to become developmental. This resulted in power and control being given to those experiencing observation. Acting against the pressures experienced in the school environment, teachers in Van Tassell’s study exercised their ‘active agency’ (Stones, 2005, p.9). This example of ‘duality of structure’ (Giddens, 1986, p.25) illustrates that structures such as surveillance of classroom teaching, can be both enabling and constraining. Teachers can act to exercise their agency in spite of the structures within which they find themselves working. In order to try to address issues of power relations, schools need to try to adopt what Eteläpelto et al. describe as ‘subject centred- socio cultural’ professional agency (2013, p.60). Agency would then be shared by all in the school as each agent would influence outcomes. In doing so, the identities of individuals would be developed in a more positive way than that of a regime that encourages power influences to be top down.

Structure-agency and school leadership teams

At this point it seems appropriate to acknowledge that the actions of leadership teams of schools are often the result of external pressures or structures placed upon them. School leaders can be considered to have three levels or degrees of agency: macro [national], meso [organisational] and micro [intra organisational] (Wallace and Tomlinson, 2012, p.148). The levels of leadership and the relative degrees of agency associated with them are illustrated in Table 1. The micro politics of a school can be influenced by pressures from externally imposed or macro structures, such as meeting the needs of political and public accountability (Sachs, 2016; Møller, 2013). Both macro and micro contexts of a school can restrict the degree of agency that schools and their leaders are perceived to have and often result in policy changes within a school. When trying to change the ‘meso’ layer of the professional culture that exists within a school, leadership and especially Principals can find themselves meeting resistance as staff may not view the proposed changes favourably (Wallace and Tomlinson, 2012). In order to achieve desired outcomes, the Principal may have to adopt the ‘controller’ discourse of leadership (Western, 2012, p.16) or become an ‘authoritative resource’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373). This can be damaging to relationships with staff
as they perceive the Principal to hold all the power and so teacher agency is diminished. While the Principal may be perceived to have the power in the relationship, the external structures at the macro level to which Principals find themselves beholden, is restrictive of their agency and power as a consequence. In attempting to gain ‘followership’ (Grint and Holt, 2011, p.7) the Principal often needs to try to achieve buy in from teachers which can be difficult when the existing (meso-level) culture is one that is established within the politics of the school. This reduces their ‘transformative capacity’ and ‘capability to intervene’ (Giddens, 1987, p.7).

Table 1: The three levels or degrees of agency within leadership, adapted from Wallace and Tomlinson (2012, p.148).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Degree of agency of school leader</th>
<th>Illustrative range of contextual factors</th>
<th>Context of Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>• Strategic vision</td>
<td>Internal influences on school structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Local initiatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>• Existing professional culture</td>
<td>Internal/external influences on school structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Local context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Relationships with intermediaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>• Policy climate</td>
<td>External influences on school structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Social change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although centred on the perspective of leadership, the impact of each of these levels is not exclusive. How each level is acted upon by leadership teams can be impactful upon teacher agency. Macro influences, such as the introduction of new policies or benchmark targets on schools, are not only impactful on leadership teams but also upon the agency of the teachers and other staff members within a school. If changes are implemented quickly and with little staff consultation, the meso layer that the Principal is trying to change or develop can be damaged. This can result in teachers feeling that their micro agency is restricted. In order to alleviate problems with gaining buy in from staff, teachers need to be given a voice about proposed changes. Doing this may earn trust for the leadership team from the staff. During these times, those in middle leadership positions, such as Heads of Department, may be required to try to achieve buy in from members of their department. In doing this, middle leaders may feel that their agency is impeded as they act upon the restrictions placed upon them by senior leaders while trying to ensure that departmental colleagues feel supported and are willing to work with
them. As a consequence, feelings of tension and stress may be experienced by Heads of Department as facets of both their teaching and leadership identities are challenged as they try to fulfil the nuances of being a middle leader. Buy in is considered imperative when trying to change the culture of a school where all associated with it, be they governors, outside agencies or the staff and students need to work together. While openness is important in leadership achieving ‘followership’ from teachers (Grint and Holt, 2011, p.7), there is also a need for teachers’ emotions to be considered in instances such as observation which is discussed in the next section.

The emotional dimension to observation

The emotional aspects associated with teaching and observation are explored here. Included is discussion of both positive and negative stress and the impact of psychological aspects of observation on teacher health.

Teaching and emotions

‘Emotions are an integral part of teachers' lives’ (Sutton and Wheatley, 2003, p.332) and teaching is an emotional process. For many, the ability to separate emotions from their work is difficult, evident in the emotive words such as ‘love’ and ‘annoyance’ used to describe daily lives in the classroom (Nias, 1996). The emotional connection between a teacher and their students is, some would claim, why so many choose to engage in a teaching career. Day and Kington describe how teacher identity, well-being and the emotional contexts of teaching are interlinked and that, during times of instability in a teacher’s life, whether personal or professional, teachers need to be ‘resilient’ and ‘supported emotionally …in order that these periods may be managed in ways that build or sustain positive identities and existing effectiveness’ (2008, p.8–9). If consideration of the emotional health of teachers is ignored by the leadership teams of schools, then this can ultimately impact negatively on student outcomes due to teachers leaving the profession (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).
Classroom observation and emotions

Despite much being written about how effective observations should be carried out (e.g. Barrell, 2017; Taylor, 2017), the emotional connection with observation, particularly from the perspective of ECTs remains relatively under-researched.

During times of observation, stress levels of teachers are likely to rise as the teacher may feel that facets of their identity are being attacked. These feelings can often be accompanied with feelings of anxiety about appearing competent in front of others and can result in physical illness in some teachers (NASUWT, 2018 and 2015; Edgington, 2016).

The varying emotions that many teachers associate with the process of being observed is succinctly illustrated by Page (2011). This short thought piece debates the emotional and psychological impact of the expectation for teachers to constantly improve on their last observed performance. Discussion is provoked about what this means for teachers once they have reached the all-important ‘Outstanding’ rating or in situations where the teacher has been judged as ‘Outstanding’ in one observation cycle and then judged ‘Inadequate’ in the next. The conclusions are that the human dimension that should permeate every level in the profession is removed during the process which can result in stress levels increasing. Stress with its differing manifestations and how these impact upon agency and identity of a teacher are discussed in the following section.

Stress, classroom observation and identity

Stress can be impactful upon facets of the identity of a teacher. How stress is experienced differs between individuals. Some teachers regard the pressure induced by stress in situations such as observation, as healthy in that it can motivate them to improve their performance (ULifeline, 2019). However, for some teachers, observation can induce negative feelings resulting in them becoming physically ill and unable to cope with the demands placed upon them (NASUWT, 2018 and 2015). Stress can be determined as both a physiological and psychological reaction and occurs as a result of ‘perception of imbalance between the level of demand placed upon individuals and their capabilities to meet those demands’ (Lal Kumar, 2016, p.47), hence why physical illnesses such as high blood pressure or anxiety can result as a consequence. Kyriacou described
teacher stress as ‘the experience by teachers of unpleasant negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration and depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher’ (2001, p.28). It is these experiences of stress that have been associated with many teachers leaving the profession within five years of qualifying (Allen et al., 2016; Cassidy and Clarke, 2015).

The triggers for stress are multiple and can include anxiety resulting from reforms introduced in schools, to feelings of disempowerment or loss of agency, especially when teachers feel unable to act on and implement changes effectively due to lack of time to process them (NASUWT, 2018). For many the ‘perception of threat’ or fear of losing face and of dismissal for incompetence leads to manifestations of stress (Kyriacou, 1987, p.147). Feelings of loss of control or agency and unpleasant emotions can occur (Chang, 2009). As a result, aspects of a teacher’s identity can be affected. For example, the consequences of a ‘poor’ observation may cause the social aspect of resilience of a teacher to suffer as they isolate themselves from colleagues. This can lower levels of motivation and impact negatively upon the development of their identity. This cyclical effect may be why observation is one of these events that causes or provokes these reactions, particularly when the reason for unplanned and relentless observations is unclear (Aubusson et al., 2007).

Perceptions of loss of control can be further intensified when being observed, especially when the threat of ‘Capability’ (DfE, 2019b) adds to feelings of stress. If a teacher is deemed not to have met the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2011) during an observation, they are often observed again to further assess their performance. Should a teacher persistently underperform during observations they can be placed on ‘Capability Procedures’ (DfE, 2019b). At this point the school becomes responsible for supporting the teacher during a period of informal support. The process is one that can be extremely stressful and impact negatively upon teacher health (NASUWT, 2018) which can lead to further poor performance of the teacher. If teacher performance fails to improve following a period of support, then formal capability procedures (NUT, 2016) will follow. Whether real or perceived, the threat of capability procedures can affect teacher health and performance. For those new to their teaching role, these threats appear to be a real experience.

---

9 ‘Capability’ procedure is used in schools in England when a teacher fails to meet the required standards for the Appraisal system. Several poor classroom observations can trigger a school to pursue ‘Capability’ procedures (DfE, 2019b)
resulting in further unnecessary stress (Hobson and McIntyre, 2013; Hobson, 2009). The multiple classroom observations experienced by student teachers in their first year alone, have been argued to be unnecessarily frequent, resulting in additional stress on teachers who are already coping with the demands of a new job (Hobson, 2009). The pressure to conform may be influential in a teacher deciding to stay or leave the profession as their identity and agency are challenged and as described earlier in the chapter, this can be impactful upon teacher resilience. When teachers feel that they no longer have control, the smallest piece in a larger problem, such as the pressures placed upon teachers to be observed and perform well, can impact on their decision to stay or leave the profession (Gold, 1996).

The competency of the observer, including the impact of perceived observer bias and how this can be impactful upon teacher agency and identity is explored in the next section.

**Observer competency**

The relationship between the observed teacher and the observer, coupled with trust in the competency of the observer, has been regarded as pivotal to the success or failure of observation practice (Shah and Harthi, 2014; Wang and Day, 2002; Sheal, 1989). Reasons for this are multiple and include concerns with observer bias, issues with observers who are not trained in the basis of forming judgments (Murphy, 2013) and in secondary school contexts in particular, observers who are not subject specialists in the subject they are observing.

Non-subject specialists can be regarded as problematic if they undervalue or do not recognise pedagogies used in certain subjects. When subject knowledge, pedagogy, or ‘knowledgeability’ (Giddens, 1986, p.281) is questioned by a non-subject specialist during an observation, strain can be placed on the relationship between the observer and the teacher (Shah and Harthi, 2014). Feedback which is critical of a teacher’s choice of methodology and planning could be considered an example of ‘Judgementoring’, whereby the judgement of the observer of a teacher’s performance ‘compromises’ the ‘relationship and its potential benefits’ (Hobson and Malderez, 2013, p.90). Defence of teaching choices and methodologies via an emotional response at the feedback stage may be why so
many teachers describe becoming frustrated or upset as they experience feelings of loss of control over their agency.

When those being observed feel that they are being viewed unfavourably compared to colleagues, the process is regarded as futile. While many schools would state that bias does not exist in their observation practice, Roberson (1998) describes that the ‘Halo’ effect (Gronlund, 1981, p.447) is real. In this situation the observer may have a favourable view of those they are observing and so grade them artificially high (Roberson, 1998). Occurrences of the halo effect lead to irregularities of practice of observers. Whether a favourable impression or otherwise is held by the observer of those being observed, Roberson (1998) explains the damage that is caused is unhelpful in aiding teacher development. Feelings of ‘perceived injustices’ (Hobson and Maxwell, 2017, p.181) can further exacerbate frustrations, tainting perspectives of observation as a consequence.

In assessing the various tools and methods that can be used to perform observations, Roberson’s work is reflected in that of Richards (2014). Critiquing an Ofsted inspection framework for assessing teaching quality, Richards concluded that it is also a tool that is not without fault. Both authors described problems with bias of observer judgment and shared the solution that in order to try to overcome this problem, training of the observer needs to be comprehensive and sustained over a number of years. Richards (2014) also emphasised that the status the observer holds within a school does not necessarily mean that they are adequately trained to judge others. Even when training is offered to observers to try to eliminate discrepancies in judgements during observations, it has been reported that they still occur. Bergin et al. (2017) worked with a number of high school Principals in the USA to train them to assess teacher performance to the same standards. Over time, it became apparent that despite all Principals receiving the same level of training, there were issues with their judgements being either too generous or underrated, further revealing the subjectivity of these assessments. These concerns highlight that the apparently simple process of rating classroom performance is, in fact, rife with issues of politics, trust and irregularities of practice, each of which are impactful upon agency and facets of teacher identity, in particular their levels of resilience.
Trust and observation

Holistically, trust can be considered to be a ‘lubricant for knowledge creation: people share and act on ideas when they trust one another. Trust and co-operation are… critical to success’ (Leadbeater, 2000, p.150). This view is how I feel trust should be considered in schools, especially with regard to observation and feedback. Trust has multiple aspects including psychological, communication, competence, contractual and relational, all of which are impactful upon the identity of a teacher, particularly in the early years of their career. The types of trust, their definition and key aspects of each found in literature for this review are shown in Table 2. While not taken from literature based on trust in educational settings specifically, each type of trust can insightfully be related to observation.

Table 2: Perspectives on trust.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of / facet of trust</th>
<th>Definition/ key aspects</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benevolence/ Psychological</td>
<td>The intention to accept vulnerability based on the positive expectations of another</td>
<td>Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999, p.184); Rosseau et al. (1998, p.395).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Grounded in social respect that acknowledges the different aspects of competence, communication, contractual and psychological trust.</td>
<td>Bryk and Schneider (2003, p.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>• Acknowledge people’s abilities • Allow people to make decisions • Involve others and seek their input • Help people learn skills</td>
<td>Reina and Reina, (2006, p.59); Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999, p.184).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty and openness/ Communication</td>
<td>• Share information • Tell the truth • Admit mistakes • Give and receive constructive feedback • Maintain confidentiality • Speak with good purpose</td>
<td>Reina and Reina, (2006, p.35); Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999, p.184); Deutsch (1958, p.277).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractual/ Reliability</td>
<td>• Manage expectations • Establish boundaries • Delegate appropriately • Encourage mutually serving intentions • Keep agreements • Be consistent</td>
<td>Reina and Reina, (2006, p.17); Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999, p.184).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Projecting each type of trust onto the process of observation, relational and communication trust can be regarded as being central to all aspects of observation. When being observed, a teacher could be considered to be vulnerable as their agency and aspects of their identity, such as their pedagogy, are often challenged by both the observer and the method of observation used. If any facet of trust is in some way weakened, for example, if the reason for an observation has not been clearly communicated, then the psychological or benevolence perspective of trust may provoke an emotional reaction.

The personal and emotional nature of observation also requires a degree of confidentiality, a need for trust that the observer will keep confidences about evaluations of performance, which could be described as challenging contractual and communication trust. This can be related to openness and honesty between the observer, observed teacher and leadership teams of schools, and, as can be seen in Table 2, shares commonalities with other perspectives of trust taken from multiple sources of literature. As described earlier, relationships are integral to teachers building resilience and shaping their identity. If these are damaged through lack of trust early in a teacher’s career, then levels of teacher resilience can be reduced (Tait, 2008).

In addition to building relational trust, there is a need for trust in schools so teachers feel ‘safe to experiment with new practices’ (Bryk and Schneider, 2003, p. 43) and take risks, something that directly linked to the Ofsted criteria for teaching in England. Such was the importance of trust in schools that Ofsted had included it in their 2015 framework. In this document in order for school leadership to be considered ‘Outstanding’, teachers in the school needed to ‘feel trusted to take risks in lessons’ (2015, p.47), and yet the evidence base from studies in this context is that the current classroom observation climate is unlikely to support this practice. In spite of this now being a legacy framework, NASUWT reported in 2018, that almost two fifths of teachers still felt untrusted to carry out their roles suggesting that schools have been slow to adopt these changes. Reasons for teachers not taking risks during observations occurs in situations where they feel distrustful either of receiving negative feedback and/or fears about with whom this feedback will be shared (McBride and Skau, 1995). These conditions are detrimental to observation having a developmental purpose, thereby impacting upon teacher agency and identity.
Reasons for leadership teams lacking competency trust in their teachers may be due to the performative business models imposed on English schools, which, Ball (2003) claims, have led to a lack of trust or at least low-trust relations between school leadership and teachers. In these situations, teachers find that their creativity is constrained and restricted by performativity outcomes imposed upon them as they are required to meet the demands of the performative cultures in which they work (Sachs, 2016; O’Leary, 2014; Avis, 2003).

How trust can be established in schools between leaders and teachers is offered by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran who identified ‘five facets of trust’ that school leaders should apply to their relationships with all staff, students and parents. These are: ‘benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty and openness’ (1999, p.184). Each facet closely aligns with the other perspectives of trust as shown in Table 2, such as benevolence relating to psychological trust. While useful in highlighting trust in its many forms, the work lacks detail in how relationships can be built or rebuilt when they may have already been damaged. Solutions are offered by Van Tassell (2014) who presents a teacher perspective on how trust can be built with regards to observation. A classroom teacher in the USA, Van Tassell carried out ‘insider’ research into how trust can be established between colleagues through examining an open-door policy for drop-in observations and an associated two-way discussion process during feedback. Driven to step away from the prescribed ‘best practices’ (Van Tassell, 2014, p.77) that administrators at the school utilised, a club was started to encourage colleagues to carry out short walk through observations of each other. The teachers took charge of their development and exercised their agency to better their practice by working collaboratively. Such was the level of trust and the impact this had on the quality of teaching that the leadership team of the school began to notice. Perhaps counterintuitively, Van Tassell reported that, once leadership of the school became involved, observations became less collegial and increasingly dictatorial. Removing the voluntary aspect and enthusiasm to want to participate by making participation compulsory changed the motivation of the process rendering it less collegial. This ‘top down flow of expertise and knowledge about teaching’ disempowered ‘teachers from improving their own practice’ and is an apt illustration of ‘the trouble with top-down’ leadership (Van Tassell, 2014, p. 77 and p.76). The inability of leadership to trust teachers to have conversations about
their practice that could improve it, ‘hindered’ their ability resulting in teachers experiencing unwanted pressures (Van Tassell, 2014, p.78). Van Tassel’s work helps to illustrate the importance of relational trust between leadership and teachers and that trust is easily tested or lost when teacher agency is challenged. Given that it is imperative to have trust between all parties in situations such as observation where integrity is essential, coverage of it relating to observation in literature so far consulted seems relatively limited.

The next section introduces the methods and purposes of observation and illustrates how agency and identity can be enhanced or inhibited by these.

**Methods and purposes of observation**

This section examines both the methods of observation and also the purposes of observation. Giddens’ Structuration theory (1986) is used to explore the various methods used for observation and discusses how these can be both restricting of and beneficial to teacher agency and identity.

**Methods of classroom observation**

Observation is ‘an ever-present feature of school life’. It is used as a ‘proxy inspection’ tool ‘in some schools’ and to provide ‘meaningful opportunities for shared CPD’ in others (Huntington Research School, 2017), challenging teacher identity and agency either negatively or developmentally. Observation can be regarded as a cyclical process with three parts: planning/discussion prior to the observation, the observation itself and post observation feedback (Cambridge Assessment International Education, n.d.). At each stage of the process, various factors can impact on how observation is perceived especially when communication about the observation purpose is not clear (Shah and Harthi, 2014).

Methods that are regarded as collegial, such as peer observation and lesson study can enhance both teacher and observer agency. The freedom for a teacher to shape their own development, through peer observation, has been shown to impact positively on teacher well-being (Hobson and Maxwell, 2017). Enabling discussion to take place between the teacher and the observer allows for reflection on practice and development of teacher pedagogy eliminating the passive role of
the teacher which prescriptive models promote (Cosh, 1998). Removing grading or judgement, collegial methods are thought to 'emphasise learning' and 'develop learning conversations' by embedding 'observations within general practice rather than one-off performances' (Taylor, 2017, p.17) aiding formation of positive peer relationships. With these methods the observer and teachers each become 'authoritative resources' (Giddens, 1986, p.373) as both parties have control over how the method or 'structure' is used for the observation, resulting in agency and power being shared during the process.

Use of lesson study has been shown to impact positively upon teacher agency (Lofthouse and Thomas, 2017; Cajkler et al., 2015 and 2013). During this process, both the teacher and observer are afforded an equal degree of agency as they work collaboratively with each other to 'plan, observe and discuss together to produce a research lesson' (Cheung and Wong, 2014, p.137). Following a non-judgemental approach, the main aim of this method is to develop the student experience in the lesson by focussing on what the students learn and how they learn, not what the teacher is or is not doing (O'Leary, 2014). Lesson study aims to see 'small, incremental improvements in teaching over long periods of time' which is considered to be useful in enhancing teaching (Stigler and Hiebert, 2009, p.121) and is not a ‘performance focussed observation’ of what the teacher is doing (Cajkler et al., 2013, p.547). In this scenario all parties have equal status so the power to act with agency is shared as there is a collective responsibility to ensure that the content and delivery of the lesson develops practice of the teacher and the understanding of the students being taught.

If both lesson study and peer observation are used collegially, the process, or structure of observation allows for shared agency. All parties involved in the process become equal partners where all views are valued, power is equalled.

Difficulties with observation arise when the methods used become highly prescriptive such as that of the 'tick-sheet' pro-forma. Here the observer has a fixed, pre-determined list of activities or actions that the observer ticks when seen according to how well the observer considers the teacher to have carried out this action (O'Leary, 2014). In this scenario, the agency of both the observer and observed teacher are removed as the structure of the pro-forma or ‘allocative resource’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373) becomes a tool of power created by leadership teams of schools to control the actions of both the teacher and the observer.
The crib sheets are designed to be a simple and easy to complete instrument that non-subject specialists can use to observe teachers and form a judgement of teacher competency from the number of boxes ticked in each criterion. An example of this type of pro-forma typically used in schools is shown in Figure 4 (Jacqui, 2015). As can be seen, one descriptor, for example, of assessment for learning and differentiation, covers multiple aspects of teaching. As teachers strive to meet as many criteria as possible in one observation, they become reduced to technicians rather than professionals (Sachs, 2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching and Learning Area</th>
<th>Outstanding (1)</th>
<th>Good (2)</th>
<th>Satisfactory (3)</th>
<th>Inadequate (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment for Learning &amp; differentiation</strong></td>
<td>Core planning based on thorough assessment results in work being suitable for all students</td>
<td>Based upon thorough and accurate assessment that informs students how to improve, work closely tailored to their different capabilities, so that all can succeed.</td>
<td>Assessment is adequate for teachers to monitor student’s progress and plan their lessons, and students know what to do to improve.</td>
<td>Assessment is not frequent of accurate enough to monitor student’s progress, so teachers do not have a clear understanding of pupil’s needs. Students do not know well enough how to improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent learning</strong></td>
<td>The degree of independent learning entices and extends students.</td>
<td>The well-judged setting of extension and project work encourages independent learning and does much to encourage the skills and confidence needed for independent learning.</td>
<td>The teaching methods include opportunities for independent learning.</td>
<td>Not enough independent learning takes place or students are excessively passive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Shows part of a lesson observation pro-forma which appears to be typical of those used in schools (Jacqui, 2015).

In addition to the removal of agency of both the observer and teacher, this method can be manipulated by both parties. Those observing can be likened to ‘macro actors’ (Mouzelis, 1991, p.39). Roberson (1998) describes that observer status allows them to award either a higher or lower grade as the outcome of an observation according to whether or not they regard those being observed favourably. As such they are in danger of applying the ‘Halo’ effect (Gronlund, 1981, p.447) as they exercise their power to influence the outcome of an observation. As a consequence of the power the observer holds, their actions and decisions are ‘widely felt’ and impact upon more individuals than the observed teacher (Mouzelis, 1991, p.107). Countering this, the observed teacher can manipulate the structure by performing in a way designed to tick a box as they become ‘passive performers’ (Wang and Day, 2002, p.15). In order for teachers to reach what is perceived to be the all-important ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ judgement, the application of this approach to observing classroom practice is in danger of
being counterproductive and, by not valuing originality, creativity or risk taking in teaching, resulting in stagnation and inertia in practice (Barrell, 2017).

Queries also arise as to whether it is the practice/lesson that is being judged or the teacher/performer when tools such as those in Figure 4 are used. If information gathered from the crib sheet is the only source of information considered to be of value in a lesson, then the feedback message that the recipient receives is likely to be one that does little to improve their practice. Nuances in teaching, such as relationships with students, considered to be important in developing well-rounded teachers (Hawkins, 2015) are overlooked.

Tentative language has been used to describe each method of observation as each has the potential to be developmental if used formatively. In seeking to find solutions to meet the demands of structures placed upon them by outside agencies, leadership teams of schools often overlook the formative use of observation (O’Leary, 2014). If not handled in a competent way, observation can have a ‘profound negative’ impact on teachers (Hobson and Maxwell, 2017, p.177). For this reason, the methods of observation used to assess a teacher need to be developmental, used by trained staff and chosen to best suit the purpose of the observation.

**Purpose of classroom observation**

Observation is regarded as a polarising experience, causing teachers to either celebrate or commiserate (Page, 2011). When used by schools as a tool for development, it can empower teachers and lead to improved practice (Barrell, 2017; Van Tassell, 2014). However, when observation is not used developmentally it can result in observation becoming something feared by many teachers inducing feelings of inadequacy, anxiety and sometimes distrust of those observing them (Aubusson et al., 2007). The myriad of types and purposes of observation, be they drop-ins for leadership to assess everyday teaching or for assessments such as performance management are often accompanied by feelings of stress, especially when a teacher is observed by someone in a more senior position (Shah and Harthi, 2014). Regardless of the purpose of the observation, the demands imposed on teachers to demonstrate constant improvement, observation after observation, appears to be having a damaging effect rather than a motivational one. Agency of the teacher can be challenged during observations, especially when the teacher strives to meet fixed criteria for
the observation, which are not always made clear to them before the observation. This can result in confusion and frustration as the criteria change from one observation to the next (Shah and Harthi, 2014). Troman asserts that, through performance-driven incentives, teachers are exhibiting significant levels of ‘existential anxiety and dread’ (2000, p. 349) placing many in unhealthy competition with colleagues, driven by targets and concerns over how they and their performance are viewed by others.

Foucault might describe observations that normalise judgement as ‘hierarchical observation’ (1995, p.170). These can be compared to those methods that are deployed in the constant surveillance of teachers (Ball, 2003). The conditioning of teachers to respond to judgement of their abilities raises concerns. It is seen as a way of surveillance and control (Metcalfe, 1999). As noted already, judgment and its impact can be damaging to teacher health and mental well-being (Page, 2011) with one side effect being to cause teachers to ‘keep problems and concerns only to themselves’ (McBride and Skau, 1995, p.266). The increasing emphasis placed upon observation as a tool to evidence teacher effectiveness, illustrates the power of the ‘panopticon’ (Foucault, 1995, p.201) imposed upon modern society and school cultures (Perryman, 2007 and 2006). Constant surveillance and the judgement of others in its varying guises, be it for an Ofsted inspection, a formal appraisal or drop-in observation permeates the working lives of teachers as observation becomes a tool for power over individuals (O’Leary, 2013). Lack of clarity of the purpose of observation can lead to many teachers harbouring feelings of fear as they begin to regard observation as punishment (Wang and Day, 2002).

In contrast to the perspective of surveillance of Foucault, Giddens (1987) describes that if handled formatively, surveillance, or in the case of this study, observation of teachers, can become an enabling rather than restrictive experience. The divisive nature of observation provokes reaction, be it favourable or otherwise and as such it remains inherently political. The prescriptive tick sheet or structure, reduces judgement of effective teaching to a biased practice. Regardless of the perspective assumed it is clear that, with regards to the individuals who encounter the practice, classroom observation is affective and influential both emotionally and motivationally.
Although discussed separately here, the purpose and method used for observation are not exclusive, the two often drive each other and as a result, the degree of agency associated with them. This is illustrated in Figure 5. The arrow represents the agency continuum. The continuum highlights that when observation is carried out for developmental purposes, the teacher is afforded a high degree of agency. This level of agency allows the teacher to have greater freedom to teach how they choose, exercising aspects of their pedagogy or to choose to focus on a specific area of teaching that they would like to improve. Freedom of an individual to act upon their agency is considered developmental to facets of identity of the teacher (Ofsted, 2019b). In contrast when observation is summative, the degree of agency of both the teacher and observer is considered to be reduced as they aim to meet the criteria of a tick sheet. While methods and purposes of observation are impactful, the cycle of observation is not complete until feedback is given. This is explored in the next section.

Feedback and observation

This section discusses the importance of feedback in observation. It is divided into two sections: the affective dimension of feedback and the delivery of feedback. The first section addresses the affective dimensions associated with observation feedback and explores the emotional connection it can provoke. The second section discusses the delivery of feedback, including possible ways in which feedback can be meaningfully given. Methods derived from worlds outside of education such as medical and business perspectives, including the ALOBA technique (Chowdhury and Kalu, 2004), are drawn upon in order to explain how
feedback on observation can be tailored to be collegial and empowering to both teachers and observers.

Figure 6: The cyclical process of observation adapted from Cambridge Assessment International Education (n.d.).

Observation can be divided into three distinct actions: pre-observation, during observation and post observation as illustrated in Figure 6 (adapted from Cambridge Assessment International Education, n.d.). While discussion of the focus before the observation is considered an essential aspect to the process, it is the feedback or ‘post-lesson discussion’ (Lofthouse and Wright, 2012. p.91) which can be considered to be the most influential aspect of the process. This is because it helps to inform future classroom practice of the teacher and impacts upon the focus of future observations (Cambridge Assessment International Education, n.d.).

The emotional connection with feedback

Ways in which feedback can be delivered to the teacher are multiple, ranging from in depth discussion between the observer and teacher, to feedback with no direct contact such as via e-mail. If handled badly, feedback can have a negative emotional impact (Page, 2011) resulting in negative perceptions of the process (Edgington, 2013). The inferences drawn from Edgington’s work are not uncommon as other studies in England and Wales (e.g. Richards, 2014; Page,
also discuss the shame that many teachers talk about when referring to a ‘poor’ observation judgement and the associated feedback.

The affective aspect of feedback can be related to agency. Loss of agency experienced before or during the observation process can cause an emotional response which can continue into the feedback session, particularly if teachers feel that they cannot defend aspects of their pedagogy (Shah and Harthi, 2014; Wang and Day, 2002). Denial of a teacher’s voice brings power relations to the fore between the teacher and observer. In this scenario the observer holds the power to influence the outcome of an observation, a situation Kemper (2006) would describe as an awareness of either the loss or gain of power which leads to an emotional reaction. If power is considered to have been lost, a degree of fear or anxiety results (Kemper, 2006), which may account for the fear of observation that many teachers describe. In this scenario, the observer can be likened to an ‘authoritative resource’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373) whereby they are perceived to have all the power or agency and the teacher none. How teachers respond to, and integrate feedback from observations into their everyday teaching, has been outlined earlier as being influenced by the method of the observation, the delivery of the feedback and assignment of a judgement.

When considering memories associated with observation, they can be likened to ‘essences’ (Husserl, 2012, p.16) which can be described as a unique experience from which memories are created. Related to observation feedback, a negative experience or ‘essence’ may be turned into a ‘universal judgement’ (Husserl, 2012, p.16) of all observations. This may be why negative feelings towards the process form structures which are harboured as ‘memory traces’ as described in Structuration theory (Giddens, 1986, p.377). ‘Memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) or ‘essences’ (Husserl, 2012, p.16) are revisited when undergoing further observations. This illustrates that ‘how the individual feels, becomes how the individual sees’ (Finkelstein, 1980, quoted in Lupton, 1998, p.21) and captures why for many teachers, the impact of ‘essences’ resonate long after the event, rendering perceptions difficult to change. This affective response to being observed can be regarded as an example of ‘Affective Events Theory’ in action (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). This theory explains that a negative experience at work, such as receiving feedback that is confrontational or denies the teacher the right to defend their teaching choices, influences the feelings and motivations of an
individually towards their role. Given that emotions are ‘responses to previous interpretations, understandings and experiences’ (Lupton, 1998, p.22), it is easy to appreciate why a negative experience continues to resonate in the psyche, resulting in a triggered emotional response or ‘universal judgment’ (Husserl, 2012, p.16) when exposed to further observations. In scenarios where the feedback received is positive and delivered in a way where the teacher feels that they are able to defend their teaching choices, positive ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) are formed resulting in observation being viewed more positively.

In contrast to feelings of fear of a judgment grade, or feelings of loss of agency, feedback on performance can give feelings of validation, particularly when given by agencies such as Ofsted (Adams, 2017), evidencing that for individuals, their sense of worth comes from the recognition of others (Honneth, 2004). In the case of Ofsted, this acknowledgement is pivotal in forming the identity of a teacher as they seek approval from the judgements of those external to the school in which they work. The emotions associated with positive feedback or grading from Ofsted can counter negative feelings experienced when receiving negative feedback from a colleague from within the school, giving affirmation to many teachers that they are performing well in their role. Approval from an external observer who is unaware of the internal politics of the school in which a teacher works, may be met with greater appreciation as the external observer may be perceived to not have an agenda influenced by the context of the school, rendering their feedback as a true reflection of the teacher’s abilities.

Whether positive or negative, feedback is nevertheless impactful upon those receiving it. When constructive, such as offering areas of strength and areas to work on, it is usually well received as it affirms practices (Cosh, 1998).

**Delivery of feedback**

Guidance on how feedback on observation should be given is provided in the Appraisal document for use in English schools. Feedback should be ‘constructive …and as soon as practicable after the observation has taken place’ (DfE, 2019b, p.9). According to this guidance, feedback will ‘highlight particular areas of strength as well as any areas that require further development.’ (DfE, 2019b, p.9), importantly, areas for development need to be prioritised so as to lessen any demotivating effects of an exhaustive list of improvements (O’Leary, 2014).
Feedback needs to be timely and take place within a day or week maximum after the observation if it is to be beneficial (O’Leary, 2014).

In order for feedback to be received positively, the observer should be ‘perceived by the recipients as possessing the expertise necessary to judge their behaviour accurately…to be credible the source must be perceived as trustworthy’ (Ilgen et al., 1979, p.351). The ‘source’, in this case the observer, is thought trustworthy when regarded as competent to carry out observations without bias and with accuracy. Coupled with trust in the observer is the need for trusting relationships (O’Leary, 2014; Steelman and Rutkowski, 2004; Silverman et al., 1998). In collegial observation and feedback, the observee needs to take ownership of the feedback process by being prepared to be reflective of their practice, shaping their attitude towards feedback (O’Leary, 2014; Lofthouse and Wright, 2012; Schön, 1995). Taking an active role in receiving feedback means teacher agency is exercised and so aspects of pedagogy, resilience and ultimately identity are enhanced.

Alternative methods to those currently used in teaching for delivering successful feedback on performance are offered in literature drawn from both the business and medical professions (Chowdhury and Kalu, 2004; Goldsmith, 2003; Silverman et al., 1998). These collegial alternatives consider non-verbal actions such as eye contact to be important in establishing a rapport between the observer and person receiving feedback (Silverman et al., 1998). Aspects of the Calgary-Cambridge model can be projected upon the practice of feedback on lesson observation in teaching with relative ease. Viewed as a ‘collaborative partnership’ (Silverman et al., 1998, p.3) between all parties, power is removed from the observer and is shared. Building mutual trust and respect between all involved enables stronger relationships to be fostered, which when lacking, as discussed earlier, is considered as damaging to the process of observation.

Derived from the Calgary-Cambridge model is the ‘Agenda Led, Outcome Based Approach’ or ‘ALOBA’ (Chowdhury and Kalu, 2004). Here agency is shared as power is balanced between the teacher and observer. Achievable goals are set in order to improve practice, driven by the observee, thus helping to raise their self-esteem (Chowdhury and Kalu, 2004), further enabling development of both agency and identity of the teacher.
Adopting many of the ideas from the ALOBA technique, is the ‘Feedforward’ approach (Goldsmith, 2003) which could be used to help shape feedback in an educational setting. In this scenario, information on performance is forward looking thereby allowing the planning of developmental steps leading to improvement over time. Reflecting upon practice and looking to enhance future performance, teachers would become the ‘reflective practitioners’ that Schön (1995) describes as being vital in improving practice.

In each of the above scenarios, agency and power are shared between all parties. Rather than assuming the role of a passive observer, the person judging performance has a high degree of accountability in their role of assisting teachers in their development. Equally the teachers are no longer ‘passive performers’ (Wang and Day, 2002, p.15) as they become active in their own development. The result is an imperative to ensure the process is beneficial for all.

The importance of relationships, collegiality and resilience and their connections with trust are discussed next. The centrality of positive trusting relationships between the observer and observed teacher are debated, along with the impact of relationships on observations having a positive outcome on the observed teacher’s practice.

**Trusting relationships and observation**

Central to the success of observation are the relationships between the observed teacher and the observer. How positive relationships can be created within a school environment is dependent upon many factors discussed throughout the chapter including trust (Bryk and Schneider, 2003), competency of the observer (Murphy, 2013), and the level of resilience of the teacher (Tait, 2008). If observation is considered beneficial there is a need for clear communication between all parties (Shah and Harthi, 2014; Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999) which, as already discussed, enables trusting relationships to be built. In addition to communication trust which aids the establishment of positive relationships, competency trust in teachers is needed. Allowing teachers to exercise their agency to take risks when being observed means they are likely to benefit from observations. Evidence drawn from studies carried out in English schools and colleges where teachers were able to work together during observation illustrates this (Lofthouse and Thomas, 2017; Taylor, 2017; Peacock, 2005). Encouraging
teachers to exercise their agency, leadership teams of schools are more likely to obtain ‘followership’ (Grint and Holt, 2011, p.7) from teachers. As previously explored in this chapter, this is likely to benefit all within a school and aids leadership when they introduce nationally imposed or macro changes at an internal school based micro level. Collegiality and resilience are discussed in greater detail in the following sections to further demonstrate how positive, trusting relationships can be built during the process of observation.

**Collegiality, structures and classroom observation**

A common theme where teachers’ perspectives have been acknowledged in research has been to consider the role of collegiality in observation (Alshawabka, 2018; Lofthouse and Thomas, 2017; Hobson, 2016; Van Tassell, 2014; Stoll, 2013; Shortland, 2010 and 2004; Cosh, 1998). Wragg (1994) describes that observation should be beneficial to both the observer and observed and develop their professional skills, implying a need for collegiality to aid success of the process.

When interviewed about observation, many teachers stated that they would like the process to be a two-way professional conversation, where planning, the observation itself and feedback on performance are discussed in a professional way with the goal being ‘to work together in a collaborative fashion’ (Wang and Day, 2002, p. 17).

To enhance collegiality, open, honest communication between leadership, teachers and support staff is considered pivotal (Barrell, 2017; Miles, 2017; Taylor, 2017; Van Tassell, 2014; Opfer and Pedder, 2011; Peacock, 2005). Peacock described that by encouraging a collegial approach to observation, staff confidence and working relationships can be strengthened in a ‘climate of trust’ (2005, p.92). The creation of what Hobson and Maxwell describe as ‘psychologically safe’ environments (2017, p.187) enables teachers to take risks and enhance their teaching skills without fear of repercussions such as the threat of Capability procedures (DfE, 2019b). This would enhance perceptions of agency and identity.

Evidence from research carried out at a sixth-form college in England, found use of a collegial approach to observation ensured that the teacher became ‘an equal partner in the observation process’ providing the teacher ‘with a greater sense of
agency in deciding what their development priorities are’ (Barrell, 2017, p.32). These kinds of mutual relationships and ways of engaging in collaborative practice can be scaled up into notions such as ‘Professional Learning Communities’ (Stoll, 2013, p.225). Such examples of ways of working in schools could offer a solution to the voicelessness felt by many newly qualified teachers in schools in England.

Resilience and classroom observation

First introduced earlier in the chapter, resilience is considered to be an important facet of the identity of a teacher. How the role of resilience can be used to make observation more effective is explored here.

The ability to keep motivated and sustain positive identities is illustrated by teachers who are resilient, something that is felt to be important in establishing positive well-being (Chiong et al., 2017; Hobson and Maxwell, 2017). Resilience is vital as teachers enter different phases of their profession such as the ‘professional life phase’ of four to seven years teaching experience (Day and Gu, 2007, p.435). At this point the need to adapt is essential as teachers may choose to take on extra responsibilities in their role and further develop their identity.

Resilience can be described as a series of ‘dynamic processes’ (Mansfield et al., 2012, p.358) influenced by time and the context in which an individual finds themselves. This conceptualisation suggests that resilience is not a fixed disposition and can vary according to external and internal influences acting upon an individual. Therefore, schools, ITT providers and teachers have a collective responsibility to ensure that the school is adaptable to the needs of those new to the profession and review provision so resilience is developed and sustained. Suggestions of how to build resilience are provided by Tait (2008) and include: networking groups to share ideas and concerns; assertiveness training in order for teachers to be able to speak up for themselves; ensuring excellent mentors are chosen and trained and the importance of good communication in order to foster social and emotional support. Although not directly related to classroom observation, the conclusions drawn from Tait’s work are relevant to overcoming the frustrations teachers have reported with observation, such as the inability to defend teaching decisions during the feedback process.
While teacher resilience offers a possible solution to teacher attrition, this has been met with criticism due to the onus of teacher success or failure being placed upon the individual rather than on change in the school itself (Johnson and Down, 2013; Fox et al., 2009). The belief ‘that there’s no need to change the system when you can change the person’ (Fox et al., 2009, p. 8) is met with reproach by Johnson and Down (2013) and Coldwell (2016) who assert that the responsibility for building teacher resilience is not exclusive to the individual, it is instead an issue for the society of the school.

Johnson and Down also describe that teacher resilience ‘presumes that early career teachers lack agency and competence’ (2013, p. 703). While many would argue that those new to teaching do lack agency in the sense of freedom to teach how they would like to, the assumption that they lack competency is one that although not necessarily true, is often made by many who observe teachers. New teachers are often deemed to be non-experts by those observing leading to frustration, especially when teachers try to defend their teaching choices during feedback. Again, teacher agency is tested and in some cases removed, further emphasising that teachers face multiple challenges to their identity early in their careers. Deemed a ‘successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances’ (Masten et al., 1990, p. 426), resilience is influenced by environmental factors. If environmental factors are considered within a school to be friends, colleagues, mentors and peer support, all of which can help to eliminate stress and attrition, then it is essential that these are present to help a teacher develop their identity and agency (Tait, 2008). This once again affirms the importance of relationships outlined earlier in this chapter.

**Summary**

It seems that literature on the subject of classroom observation of teachers and its many influencing factors is divisive in nature. While some are deeply critical of the whole practice (e.g. Shah and Harthi, 2014), others try to provide alternatives to the dominant procedural approach currently evidenced in schools in England (e.g. Barrell, 2017; Stoll, 2013).

Even though being judged through observation of practice provokes a profound emotional response and literature about teachers’ emotions is available (Edgington, 2016 and 2013; Hobson, 2009; Nias, 1996), there is very little that
appears to connect observation with agency, identity and emotion. This is especially so in secondary education contexts and for those new to the profession. As they enter the profession, ECTs find themselves trying to meet expectations of external influences (macro), such as government imposed targets and internal influences (meso/micro), such as trying to work with the politics within a school. This can impact negatively upon development of their identity and their ability to act with agency. Giddens’ Structuration theory has been explored and debated in order to explain teacher identity and agency of teachers within an observation context and how ‘knowledgeability’ (Giddens, 1986, p.281) and their ability to act with agency can influence the outcome of an observation. Adoption of this theoretical lens has shown that the structures within which a teacher works can be enabling or restrictive of their agency and development of identity, depending upon how they choose to respond to the structures and whether or not they use their ‘knowledgeability’ (Giddens, 1986, p.281) of the insider politics of the school to act with agency to influence the structure to benefit their development. The theoretical lens also illustrates the restrictive nature of external influences, or structures on school leaders. Figure 7 shows a conceptual framework drawn from the literature to illustrate the main concepts that impact upon teachers’ emotional well-being and challenge their agency and identity when they experience observation and as they begin their careers. The influence and interconnectedness of the impact of micro, meso and macro are shown by the two headed arrows, which is also reflected in the arrow connecting collegiality to trust and relationships.

Literature has shown that for many teachers, observation remains something that is done to them, to be endured, rather than a beneficial, developmental experience (Shah and Harthi, 2014). The commonalities between the studies reviewed seem to suggest that for many there is a disassociation between being observed and any practical value, especially so when feedback is confusing and/or negatively framed (Wang and Day, 2002). Collegiality and its importance in establishing positive teacher identities and building resilience has been explored as a solution to the often performative models used for observation. As Goodson asserts it is vital that teachers work in ‘collaborative cultures of help and support’ (2000, p.187) in order for them to develop over time, which as evidenced in this chapter, is often lacking with the current systems used for observation in English schools. When considering the tumultuous nature of observation, Ball succinctly sums it up in the statement ‘who is it that determines what is to count as a valuable, effective or
satisfactory performance and what measures or indicators are considered valid?’ (2003, p.216) This is an argument that is likely to continue beyond the scope of my research.

Figure 7: A conceptual framework connecting observation issues and teachers’ emotions.
Chapter 3. Research Methodology

This chapter begins with the research questions and discussion of my paradigmatic stance. The decision to use a case study to answer the research questions is justified, along with a description of the 'case' in which the study is set. Discussion about how the Pilot Study influenced and informed the research instruments used in the Main Study is given. My chosen research instruments, with the reasons for their choice and how they were implemented in the study are then described. I include details about the dilemmas I faced with being an insider researcher and the issues associated with gaining ethical approval for the study.

The research questions and paradigmatic stance

The research questions for this study centre on aspects of classroom observation highlighted as causing the most concern to teachers in both literature and conversations with my colleagues.

The main research question is:

- How does the experience of classroom observation impact on ECTs emotionally?

The sub-questions which aimed to help address the main question were:

- How is classroom observation perceived by ECTs?
- How does the person carrying out the observation impact on how it is perceived by those being observed?
- How does the method used for observation affect the value placed on it by teachers?
- How does feedback on performance affect the value of classroom observation?

The decision to use research questions rather than a hypothesis was strategic. Research questions allowed adoption of an interpretive approach to the study. Use of open-ended research questions enabled me to attain a degree of understanding about the emotional and very personal connection that teachers had with being observed. Had testing a hypothesis been used to guide the research instead, then the conclusions would be closed in nature and would have restricted the research
to merely whether or not the hypothesis was proven or disproved. In doing this the very essence of my research, to allow participant voices to be heard, would be neglected.

Given my desire to investigate the perceptions, feelings and the uniqueness of each individual’s interpretation of being observed and receiving feedback on performance, an interpretivist paradigm was adopted. Defined as an approach that has ‘no absolutes…all phenomena can be studied and interpreted in different ways’ (Burgess et al., 2006, p.55), interpretivism allowed the words of participants to be used in shaping my understanding and hence interpretation of their emotional connection with being observed. Adoption of an interpretivist perspective meant that I was exercising my own subjectivity of the situations being described by participants. This could have been regarded as problematic due to my subjectivity possibly influencing how the data was gathered and interpreted.

Subjectivity, however, is considered to be something that should be embraced as part of a case study (Thomas, 2016; Gillham, 2000a). By being open and honest about my position within my study it is hoped my work will still be considered to be of value in spite of any bias that may arise. Influencing my study in a positive way I feel was my ‘subjective humanness’ that is the ‘inevitable preconceptions, lenses and biases’ that every individual has (Counsell, 2009, p.257). This humanness helped me to engage with participants and ‘make meaning’ of the data (Counsell, 2009, p.257) and was the reason for the focus of the study in the first place.

Using an interpretivist approach to choosing methods, conducting interviews, interpreting and analysing data, permitted me to accept that each individual has their own sense of reality and further, I would be placing my interpretation on their words. In doing so I was able to try to establish what the social world of Westward School meant for the observed teacher, or actor (Schutz, 1970), who worked within its context.

My chosen research methodology and the ‘Case’

My chosen methodology was that of a ‘Professional case study’. Defined by the ‘emphasis on professional improvement rather than evaluative decision-making’ (Stark and Torrance, 2005, p.35), adoption of this approach helped to meet the intended outcomes of the research which was to improve the practice of classroom observation for those at Westward School and more widely.
The Case:

The ‘case’ is that of the school in which I worked, a mixed 11-16 secondary school in the North East of England and the experiences of classroom observation of ECTs within that school. Choosing to work with only those new to teaching meant the distinct boundaries for a case study were given. As described in detail in Chapter 1, the context of the case study school during the academic year 2017-18 meant performative demands were placed on the school from the academy sponsor and the DfE to improve performance in GCSE outcomes for students. This resulted in increased numbers of classroom observations. The views of participants within the case study offered an insight into what it was like to be working within the often demanding situation of a highly performative culture.

The uniqueness of participants’ self-interpretation, coupled with the politics at a macro and meso level affecting one organisation, presented the perimeters of a small-scale case study approach (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). My study could have been carried out across numerous schools or duplicated in a different school to the one in which I worked. Whilst either of these options may have accrued further data for interpretation, it would have drawn attention away from the presentation of observation at Westward School where there was a desire not just from myself but also the teachers to improve the practice. The unique situation of conducting the research in the school in which I worked, made it a ‘local knowledge case’ and allowed me to ‘gain access to the richness and depth [of data] that would be unavailable’ to me otherwise (Thomas, 2016, p.98–99).

Focussing on a ‘phenomenon in context’ (Robson, 2002, p.179), whereby the phenomenon was observation, and the context being a school at a unique time in its history, I was able to establish the cause and effect or the ‘how or why’ (Yin, 2003, p.9) aspects of the impact of observation upon ECTs in an extreme situation.

Advocates of case studies reason that they can make a valuable contribution to research and add ‘face-value credibility' meaning readers can readily identify with the evidence they offer (Demetriou, 2009, p.203). Although some claim their findings may not be readily generalizable, and are often regarded as ‘fuzzy generalisations’ (Bassey, 1999, p.12), if a case study is presented with sufficiently rich detail, readers can ‘recognise aspects of their own experience in the case and
intuitively generalise from the case rather than the sample’ (Stark and Torrance, 2005, p. 34).

In contrast there are those who argue that case studies have limitations and as a consequence are often regarded as the ‘weak sibling among social science methods’ chosen by researchers who ‘just do not know any better’ (Yin, 2003, p.xiii). Yin implies that the results from case studies are non-transferrable and are often chosen by researchers as they are regarded as easy to carry out. As a counter to these negative viewpoints, Yin (2003) also describes that case studies can provide rich data and so are not isolated in the experiences that they describe. To claim that case studies are not worthwhile and are in some way ‘weak’ removes the importance and impact that they can have on changing practice.

Insider researcher: A justification for researching in my own workplace

Insider research, where the researcher is deemed ‘inside’ the research context under study, has been used productively in many settings (Barrell, 2017; Taylor, 2017; Van Tassell, 2014; Perryman, 2011), though it is not without criticism (Drake, 2010).

I recognise that the claims from insider research should be treated with caution due to researcher subjectivity (Greene, 2014; Drake, 2010). Drake states that being an insider researcher may ‘compromise the researcher’s ability to engage critically with the data’ (2010, p. 85) and so influence the findings of a study. Being an insider researcher, however, does have advantages. My tacit knowledge of the school was vital, enabling me to recognise perspectives that may not be apparent to outsiders. An example of this was my awareness of the importance of trust associated with relationships within the school and how these were likely to be influencing perceptions of the practice of observation.

I draw parallels of my experiences with Perryman, as I too felt that my ‘familiarity of the micro-politics of the school’ meant that I ‘was able to do more than take comments at face value’ (2011, p.865). I am aware that as an insider there was a danger that I could be considered too involved in the school and the situation in which it found itself for me to be unbiased and not influence the findings of my research (Greene, 2014). This issue could have been alleviated by conducting the study in another school or across several schools, however, this would not have
met the aspirations of my study which was to improve the experience of observation for teachers at Westward.

When deciding whether or not to carry out the study at Westward, I came to feel that it was my moral duty to carry out the study in the school where I worked. The driving force for me to keep the study in the same school was the support I had from willing participants and the Principal.

**Teacher voice**

Observation is a two-way process with one person being observed and the other, the observer, forming a judgment on their performance. Working with those experiencing observation rather than those making the policies, this study gave teachers an opportunity to talk about the process in the hope that their ‘professional experiences’ might help to influence practice through ‘professional discourse’ (Bassey, 1999, p.50).

I deliberately sought to use the voice of the observee in my work so as to ascertain their views about being observed by giving them a platform for their voices to be heard. Although the context of Westward School and the practice of observation within it was wrought with the influence of macro politics impacting on the micro politics of the school, for example, the increased number of observations, the feelings and emotions associated with being observed are not exclusive to the participants in this study as shown in the literature gathered for the Literature Review.

Critics may suggest that my work lacks balance as I chose to only use the voice of observed teachers rather than the voice of both the observer and teacher. This was an important choice as it allowed me to ‘readdress the power imbalances’ that may ‘minimise the voice of key participant groups’ (Rowe, 2014, p. 630), as I considered ECTs to be a key group whose perceptions are often overlooked in literature. While using only one perspective on observation may have caused bias within my work as I neglected the professional discourse of the views of observers, this could be considered to be a by-product of the situation at Westward School.

Initially I had chosen to include the voices of both the observee and observer as I felt that neither of these had been heard in the literature that I had reviewed. I wanted to explore their experiences of observation and how the ‘duality of
structure’ (Giddens, 1986, p.25) of the observation pro-forma, the act of carrying out observation and providing feedback impacted upon their agency and either restricted or enabled them to develop facets of their own teaching identity. However, this did not come to fruition. Members of the SLT at Westward who carried out observations, were aware of my work, with some approaching me about possibly taking part in the study. Ultimately, only one person who was both an observer and member of the SLT volunteered to contribute. Following a request to view the interview questions prior to the interview taking place, they withdrew from the study. Reasons for this decision were not given. In keeping with my ethical stance of virtue ethics, discussed later in the chapter, I chose not to ask about their decision to withdraw from the research. While attempting to ascertain why this occurred would be purely speculative, it may be an example of where the position of being an insider researcher was a disadvantage. The observer may have felt that they would not be able to speak openly for fear of being identified in the research.

Justification for a flexible approach to gathering data

A ‘flexible’ approach (Robson, 2002, p.4) was taken to gathering data. This was reflected in my choice of data gathering methods which were semi-structured one-to-one interviews and paired interviews with vignettes.

Questions for the one-to-one semi-structured interviews were drawn from literature and focussed on an aspect of observation highlighted as an issue. These could be deemed deductive in nature as they channelled discussion towards preselected topics. In all one-to-one interviews, the interview script (see Appendix 1), was followed to ensure all topics I had intended to discuss were addressed. Once the interviews commenced, however, I began to adopt a more open approach to the interviews in order to pursue interesting lines of enquiry that participants offered. Doing so meant participants had the chance to raise issues with observation that may not have been covered in the interview script.

For the paired interviews the use of vignettes could be described as a deductive approach as they guided the participants in their discussions, however, they were not restrictive and allowed for conversations to commence and flow freely about aspects not considered during the one-to-one interviews.
Adoption of an open approach in paired and one-to-one interviews was intentional. It allowed me to begin to probe into the emotional connection that each participant experienced when being observed. This offered richer findings than if I had chosen to adopt a solely deductive approach to gathering and analysing data to prove or disprove a hypothesis or only look for the presence or absence of themes drawn from my analysis of previously published work. I could therefore not only add to the findings of published literature and knowledge already available about observation, but also help to shape how observation is carried out at Westward School by providing suggestions on how practice could be developed by the leadership team.

**Research Design**

As a result of trialling the research tools during the Pilot Study, for the Main Study one-to-one interviews and paired interviews with vignettes were selected as the research instruments. How the Pilot Study influenced the tools used in the Main Study is discussed next.

**The influence of the Pilot Study on the Main Study**

The Pilot Study was carried out between January and February of 2017. A total of five one-to-one interviews and two paired interviews with vignettes were carried out.

The interview questions used during the one-to-one interviews in the Pilot Study were loosely based around issues that had been highlighted in published research as problematic with being observed. Following consideration of the interview transcripts from the Pilot Study, it became clear that for the Main Study I would need to change the questions to be more open so as to afford participants the opportunity to respond in greater depth than a simple ‘yes/no’ question.

As a result of responses given to questions during the Pilot Study, one-to-one interview questions for the Main Study were expanded to include additional questions on trust. Trust had not been part of my interview questions for the Pilot Study but had been mentioned in numerous interviews as significant to the participants. This adaptation illustrates the iterative design that was implemented in order to adapt the Main Study to include aspects drawn from the Pilot Study.

65
The revised questions (see Appendix 1) meant that participants were asked ‘Do you feel that trust is an important aspect of being observed and in what context do you mean trust?’ This was followed by ‘I’d like to find out more about the role of trust in observations. Do you think the level of experience of the observer impacts on the trust that you have of them and their judgement of your teaching?’ While the first of these questions was closed with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response, those that followed meant participants could expand their answers. This enabled me to ascertain the level and type of trust that participants considered to be important when being observed. When trialling the interviews, aspects which are often overlooked but considered vital in making interviews successful such as how to stage the interviews and where to sit in the room were practiced (Gillham, 2000b).

In addition, when carrying out interviews I learned the importance of using prompts, probes and encouragement for participants. Using elaboration probes (RECOUP, n.d.) such as ‘What do you mean by …?’ allowed a greater insight of participants’ experiences. This helped to provide greater detail and clarification than adherence to the script would have given.

In the paired interviews, use of vignettes proved to be a successful methodology in the Pilot Study. Discussion flowed freely between participants and meant that there was very little interaction with participants from me during the session. Their design and how they were implemented in both the Pilot and Main Study are discussed in the next section of the chapter.
Choice of research instruments for the Main Study

Research instrument one: One-to-one interviews

Use of one-to-one interviews was selected as a research instrument in both the Pilot and Main Study in order to build upon methods used in other works such as Hobson and McIntyre (2013) and Wang and Day (2002). Interviews allowed me to experience talking face to face with someone, enabling me to see and hear the emotional connection that each individual had when discussing their performance. This can be absent or misconstrued when interpreting a written response. Using one-to-one interviews enabled my research to ‘tell- it- like- it- is from the participants’ perspective’ by explaining ‘the complex realities of implementation and the unintended consequences of policy in action’ (Stark and Torrance, 2005, p.33), by providing participants the opportunity to have their voices heard.

While useful in hearing emotions and thoughts of another, interviews have limitations meaning their value can be contested. People may be guarded in their responses, or offer the response that they think is desired by the interviewer. As such a full insight into the feelings of another or whether they will acquiesce to those around them and behave as expected in social situations (Goffman, 1971) may never be overcome through interviews. As the interviewer, I myself could have been considered to be a ‘research instrument’ (Kvale, 1996, p.147). I had to be mindful of how I interacted with interviewees as my actions, such as my body language and my attentiveness to participant responses and needs, could have affected the engagement of participants. Being attentive to participants’ needs helped aid the creation of a safe space environment, which hopefully resulted in participants feeling comfortable enough to answer questions as openly as possible.

Research instrument two: Paired interviews with vignettes

When I first proposed the use of focus groups for ethical approval (discussed later in the chapter) to the university ethics committee, my proposal was rejected. There were concerns that focus groups could result in ‘dominant voices’ (Smithson, 2000, p.107), which may have caused some participants to become distressed. For this reason, I then proposed the use of paired interviews, which was approved
by the ethics committee. Although there were only two people within these interviews, I still had to consider how best to organise them in order to protect my participants and allow their voices to be heard without the fear of dominant voices. For example, I considered issues of gender balance and attention to any potential power imbalances in the pairing which can manifest when there are ‘one or several dominant individuals within a group, permitting only one opinion to be heard’ (Smithson, 2000, p.103) which can cause others to become introverted.

In spite of ethical concerns, I was committed to exploring paired interviews as I wanted to investigate whether the responses given by participants were different when they spoke about their experiences with someone else present. Although using paired interviews seemed to contradict the notion of a ‘safe space’ created for the one-to-one interviews, I felt they would be an important data collection tool. Their use would enable me to investigate the ‘risky shift phenomenon’ (Thomas, 2016, p.192), whereby it is thought that people are increasingly likely to share their thoughts when in the presence of more than one person. Given the personal aspect of being judged by another I thought it would be interesting to ascertain whether there was a shift in the confidence of participants during the paired interviews compared to the one-to-one interviews.

To try to further minimise and mitigate against incidents of power struggles and provide a common focus for personal reflections, I decided to use vignettes for my paired interviews. This method enabled two people to talk about their experiences of observation by using the perspectives of others from research to focus their discussion and draw the attention from the individuals to what was being said in the quote. This proved to be a successful way of gaining information from both participants by helping conversation to flow and removing the risk of dominant voices during the interviews.

While I describe the sessions as being ‘interviews’ which would suggest a degree of questioning of participants on my part, this did not happen. I refer to them as ‘interviews’ as the participants effectively interviewed each other during them, guiding the sessions and their content using the vignettes as cues for discussion and so leaving me to become an ‘attentive listener’ (Limberg, 2008, p.614).

Recognising the subjectivity in this method, I accept that I was not necessarily hearing fully thought-through opinions and views as the individuals were responding to stimuli in real-time and distant from the events themselves. I
accepted that each individual may have amended their private opinions in response to others in the room to avoid confrontation or that they may have been reacting to my presence in the room and anticipated what I wanted or expected to hear. As a researcher, I felt that I had to trust my participants in the responses that they gave and that these were their thoughts and they were not overly guided by my presence or the presence of another participant (Burgess et al., 2006; Robson, 2002). How honest their responses were would be related to how safe they felt in the space created for the paired interview and how comfortable they felt in talking about their experiences in front of another member of the pair and myself as a researcher (Gillham, 2000b).

Generating the vignettes

Typically vignettes used in research consist of a fictitious scenario generated for participants to give their responses to with the aim of providing participants the opportunity to discuss often sensitive topics, or as an ice breaker at the start of an interview (Barter and Renold, 1999). While the intention of using the vignettes in this study was to provide a focus for the paired interviews, they differed in content from those of the typical scenario vignette. I strategically chose to use direct quotes from literature about observation rather than fabricated scenarios as I felt that the words of other teachers would give a degree of relatability for the participants and their situation. Vignettes were generated by revisiting works from the Literature Review that had used participant voices about being observed across a range of teaching experiences, subjects and ages taught (see Appendix 2 for the vignettes). The selected quotations were extended quotes taken from participants in the selected studies, each of which related to a research question. These served to illustrate the rich examples of experiences of observation from other teachers and thereby provided stimuli for the participants to discuss. This enabled the participants to engage with the information at a more personal level than they may have done had they felt the scenarios were not relevant to them (Barter and Renold, 1999; Hughes, 1998). Although I tried to ensure that each research question had equal coverage in the quotes used for the vignettes, many of the quotes covered more than one research question in its content.

The following quote provides an illustration of a quote which relates to the sub-research question on perceptions of observation:
The early years of teaching are frequently characterised by intense pressure and disillusionment.

(Hobson, 2009, p.299, RQ1).

For smooth management of these sessions, each quote was printed on card and coloured according to which of the research questions it most closely related to. The purpose of this was to ease identification during the gathering of data and to prevent any interference from me during the sessions. This highlighted which aspects of observation were most contested or polarising to the participants and meant their regularity of coverage in paired interviews could be examined further to allow emergent themes to be identified at the analysis stage.

**Main Study Data Collection**

**Organisation of interviews**

Data was gathered for the Main Study via one-to-one and paired interviews using vignettes between October 2017 and March 2018. After agreeing to take part, each participant was asked which type of interview they would be willing to undertake. In total eleven of a possible fifteen ECTs from Westward School decided to participate in the study. All eleven participants agreed to take part in the one-to-one interviews, however, three chose not to take part in paired interviews. Participant information for the interviews is shown in Table 3.

All names are pseudonyms so as to try to ensure participant confidentiality to increase the protection that they might be recognised. All participants were colleagues who I knew but did not have contact with outside of school.
Table 3: Participant information for the Main Study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Teaching status</th>
<th>Route into teaching</th>
<th>Duration of one-to-one interview</th>
<th>Clarification interview? Duration?</th>
<th>Paired interview?/pairing</th>
<th>Duration of paired interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hayley</td>
<td>NQT-in induction year</td>
<td>Teach First</td>
<td>35 mins</td>
<td>Y- 22 mins</td>
<td>With Peta</td>
<td>42 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>RQT- 3 years post induction</td>
<td>PGCE</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>Y-12 mins</td>
<td>With Olivia</td>
<td>53 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan</td>
<td>NQT-in induction year</td>
<td>Teach First</td>
<td>42 mins</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>ITT in training</td>
<td>Teach First</td>
<td>25 mins</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>With Xanthe</td>
<td>34 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xanthe</td>
<td>NQT-in induction year</td>
<td>Teach First</td>
<td>46 mins</td>
<td>Y-14 mins</td>
<td>With Sarah</td>
<td>34 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvonne</td>
<td>RQT-3 years post induction</td>
<td>PGCE</td>
<td>49 mins</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>RQT- 2 years post induction</td>
<td>Teach First</td>
<td>20 mins</td>
<td>Y- 14 mins</td>
<td>With Selena</td>
<td>40 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selena</td>
<td>RQT-2 years post induction</td>
<td>PGCE</td>
<td>38 mins</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>With Zoe</td>
<td>40 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peta</td>
<td>NQT-in induction year</td>
<td>Teach First</td>
<td>41 mins</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>With Hayley</td>
<td>42 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>ITT in training</td>
<td>Teach First</td>
<td>31 mins</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>With Rebecca</td>
<td>53 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugh</td>
<td>NQT- in induction year</td>
<td>PGCE</td>
<td>34 mins</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants decided the time and location of the interviews, which was usually their main teaching room either before or after the end of the school day. Giving participants the choice of where and when they wanted the interviews to be conducted was deliberate in further helping to reduce any feelings of power that participants may have felt from me and helped to reduce any possible anxiety about being in a location that they did not feel comfortable in. By selecting the time and location of the interviews participants ensured that they were not scheduled during times of additional pressure, such as when they were due to be observed as part of their induction or for performance management. While this did not remove the stress induced by the drop-in observations and other unannounced observations, it helped to minimise extra stress about being interviewed. The hope was that this would mean that participants would be more balanced in their responses than they may have been during times of increased stress. This enabled interviews to progress at their own pace in a ‘psychologically safe’ environment (Hobson and Maxwell, 2017, p.187) which I feel aided conversation to flow about situations that some participants may not have wished to discuss openly in front of others (Cohen et al., 2011).

The decision to establish a safe space for interviews was ethical. It offered a degree of privacy for participants so they felt ‘secure’ and could ‘talk freely’ (Cohen et al., 2011, p.422) without feelings of dominance from others during interviews. Throughout interviews I regularly offered reassurances to participants that they could stop at any time if they wanted. It was hoped that by doing this feelings of power from my presence were lessened. Given that observation and the receiving of feedback is personal, it was important to acknowledge that participants may have felt vulnerable during interviews, which could have resulted in them becoming emotional. The safe space provided an area where participants could become upset without fear or shame. In order to further support participants, they were asked if they had anyone that they felt could support them post interview if they were to become distressed. Although all participants said they did not require this, I felt it was important to address as it was in keeping with my ethical stance of ensuring participants did not come to harm.

Literature has described that power dynamics can impact upon the quality of interview responses (Gillham, 2000b). During interviews participants decided
where to sit in the room and I usually sat opposite them with my laptop placed on a desk to the side of us. At the start of each interview participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time and if they wanted to terminate the interview, they could. There was no time limit for the interviews, participants talked for as long as they wanted to, giving them the power to shape the interview. This helped to minimise any possible power influences from me over the participants.

Before the interviews commenced all participants had completed the Informed Consent Form after reading the ‘What it means to take part’ information (See Appendix 3). The eleven one-to-one interviews averaged around thirty minutes in length. Interviews were recorded on my personal password protected laptop using Audacity, a free digital audio editor.

During the one-to-one interviews, the interview schedule (see Appendix 1) was used to provide some structure to the sessions. As the interviews progressed, however, they became less structured. Figure 8 illustrates where the interviews were semi-structured (with structured and unstructured elements). This approach allowed a degree of freedom during the interviews for the participants to expand upon their responses but also ensured that all participants were asked the same key questions so as to provide data for the study (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995).

When carrying out the interviews I felt a responsibility to my participants to try to ensure that they were able to talk with ease and not feel rushed in giving their responses and that I was considerate of their answers. Following each interview, I took time to reflect on and review my performance, mentally noting how I could improve for the next interview. As the interviews progressed in number, I learned that although a script is useful to keep pace and the interview content focussed, individuality is removed from an interview if it is rigidly adhered to. Given that each person has their own opinions and feelings, as more interviews were carried out, I decided to be less regimented with my questions and began to simply focus on listening to replies.
When clarification was needed, I tried to tease more detail from participants by deviating from the script. In doing this I was reminded of Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) and Swain who implemented this approach to their work in order to give ‘the interviewer the flexibility to probe on certain issues with more open and follow-up questions’ (2018). This provided an added depth to data that may have been missed had I not done this. Doing this meant I was likely to capture a new insight (Wilson and Fox, 2009) into the emotional dimension of being observed which may have been overlooked in previously published literature.

Reflection on practice is considered to be important in order to develop as a researcher (Burgess et al., 2006) and to help ensure trustworthiness in my findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Regular reflection on my performance during and after interviews gave me the opportunity to think about where chances to expand an answer during interviews were missed and how to try to avoid this in subsequent interviews. The period of post interview reflection enabled me to become more confident when carrying out further interviews as I had learned from prior experiences. These thoughts were recorded in my research journal as shown in Figure 9.
Physically being in the presence of the interviewee meant that the context in which a statement was made was not lost, I had the ability to go back to my transcripts and add notes about context or, if needed gain further clarity from participants in later clarification interviews. Appendix 4 illustrates where questions were asked off script in order to ascertain alternative perspectives on observation. This more flexible approach, which had been trialled during the Pilot Study, meant that I was able to examine deeper into the understanding of what it meant to be observed for my participants. In adopting this approach, I became aware that flexible designs are ‘necessarily interactive, enabling the sensitive enquirer to capitalise on unexpected eventualities’ (Robson, 2002, p.6). In order to ensure that data obtained from those who were interviewed early in the process was as rich and comprehensive the later ones I took the opportunity to re-interview some of the participants in clarification interviews. These occurred with Hayley, Xanthe, Rebecca and Zoe as shown in Table 3. Carried out in the same way as the original
interviews, they were shorter in length. Their use enabled me to further probe on something I had identified as unclear in the early interviews. This gave participants the opportunity to be ‘self-correcting’ (Kvale, 1996, p.190) and allowed me to clarify whether or not I had interpreted their responses as they intended. As before, participants were asked permission to be interviewed and decided the time and location for the interviews.

**Paired interviews with vignettes**

Pairing for the interviews with vignettes was decided by the participants who had conversed about my work amongst themselves. Allowing participants to decide who they felt comfortable to be interviewed with was intentional as I did not want anyone to be placed in a situation where they could not speak openly about personal experiences by being paired with someone who instigated feelings of unease. Participants guided and led the discussion based around their opinions of the content of the vignettes or by relating their experiences of observation to those on the cards. During these interview sessions, I purposefully had little interaction with the participants, merely asking for clarification of a point if needed. This gave me the opportunity to note how the interviewees interacted when relating their experiences of observation to each other. The structure of the paired interview sessions is given in Figure 10. This shows where the interviews were structured and guided by me and then unstructured, whereby the participants guided the session. The unstructured aspect of the interviews helped to illustrate that this technique ‘provided a less threatening way of exploring a sensitive topic’ (Barter and Renold, 1999), which was as I had intended the sessions to run and why I initially chose to select this as a methodology. An example of how these interviews were shaped by the content of the vignettes is shown in Appendix 5.

At the start of each of these sessions, informed consent was reviewed with the participants. I briefly introduced the vignettes by talking about the content on the vignette cards being taken from literature about observation. I explained that the participants could choose how to use the cards. Some pairs decided to comment on the content of every card while others chose several cards with quotes that they could relate to or seemed to strongly agree or disagree with. As with the one-to-one interviews, the paired interviews were recorded on my password protected laptop using Audacity.
Figure 10: Structure of the paired interviews with vignettes.

Perhaps counterintuitively, given my original concerns that one-to-one interviews would offer the safest spaces to discuss the emotional connection with observation, these were revealed in more detail during paired interviews. Participants seemed more willing to talk about their performance when they could base their experiences on the words of a quote. Having decided to investigate whether or not there was a difference in the participants’ willingness to contribute during the paired interviews, in this research, it appeared that participants felt safe enough to speak out about the process of observation when in pairs. Those who had been quite reserved and taciturn during the one-to-one interviews became more vocal. This safety in numbers situation illustrated that the ‘risky shift phenomenon’ (Thomas, 2016, p.192) had materialised. Giving participants the freedom to use the vignettes how they wanted also meant that the asymmetry of power usually played out in interviews (Kvale, 1996) was overcome. Instead of me as the interviewer having power and participants none, power was given to the participants as they used their agency to shape the experience as they chose.

This type of interview could be regarded as ‘philosophical discourse’ (Kvale, 1996, p.20) whereby all parties involved in the interview were considered equal and power was shared.

Although the participants all knew each other, they had not spoken openly about observation before. Participants were given the chance to talk to those in a similar situation to theirs and importantly to realise that they were not alone. Their
experiences and concerns were not unique, they were shared. Anxieties were salved by the reassurances of others who justified concerns as real and not as a result of ‘being overtired or over sensitive’ (Sarah, paired interview). These conversations gave individuals the opportunity to talk in a non-threatening environment about an aspect of teaching regarded as important to them. Many of the participants described how they found the paired interviews to be ‘cathartic…like therapy’, with one asking ‘When can I do this again?’ (Selena, paired interview). These comments illustrate that use of this methodology gave teachers a safe space to come together and discuss shared perspectives on observation.

**Ethics**

**Ethical approach**

To inform my ethical decision-making I adopted a ‘virtue’ ethical stance throughout my research (Israel, 2015, p.15) as the values of trust, respectfulness, humility and ethical reflexivity (Carpenter, 2013; Macfarlane, 2009; Gewirtz and Cribb, 2006) that I considered central to my research integrity were deemed important in this approach. I was aware that in talking about their personal experiences, participants may have become vulnerable, and as a researcher, they would need to feel able to trust me to treat them in a respectful manner during the entirety of the research process. Although my ethical stance remained unchanged throughout the duration of my research, the need for reflexivity and to adapt my research to meet the needs of my participants (Perryman, 2011; Schön, 1995) was and continues to be an issue I pay attention to. Consideration of ethics therefore did not end with clearance from the Open University’s Human Research Ethics Committee. In order to try to exercise ethicality throughout my research, time was set aside for me to reflect on my practice and its impact on participants during the gathering of and analysing of data. Any negative influence my research may have had on the participants was considered and, if deemed necessary, I was prepared to change my research practice in order to lessen any harm. An example of this was prompted in response to the application for ethical approval early on in the study where I changed my intended research instruments to allay fears of harming participants.
University Ethical Approval

In order to be able to carry out my research, I first had to undergo an ethical approval process overseen by the Open University’s Human Research Ethics Committee. This process began at the beginning of my EdD studies in August 2016 before my Pilot Study had been carried out. An overview of the intended research instruments that would be used in the Pilot Study, was sent to the University Ethics Committee along with the completed form. Approval was denied and so, after careful consideration, I changed my research instruments to one-to-one interviews and paired interviews with vignettes. This led to approval finally being given for the entirety of the study in late December 2016. The approval letter is shown in Appendix 6.

Although the delay in gaining ethical approval had been frustrating, the period of reflection it afforded me was beneficial as it gave me the opportunity to undertake further reading into the practicalities of gathering and analysing data that I may otherwise have missed had ethical approval been granted straight away.

Permissions from Westward School

In keeping with my ethical stance, I wanted to ensure that I had permission to carry out the research at Westward School. In order to achieve this, I met with the Principal to discuss my intended research. During this meeting I assured the Principal that the school and all participants would be given pseudonyms so that they would not be able to be identified. The Principal gave me their full support to carry out my research at the school and provided a letter explaining this for me to submit to the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee.

Following university approval, I spoke at an afterschool training session to inform potential participants about the study. In the session I explained the intentions of and the data gathering tools I wanted to use for the study. Potential participants were told that if they wanted to take part, they could ask me for further information and a consent form (Appendix 3). Participants were given the option to withdraw from the research at any time until the submission of Progress Report 11 in July 2019, which none of them chose to do.
The ethics of being an insider researcher

Being an insider researcher raised concerns for me as I was aware of the influence of power at Westward School and the hierarchy endorsed by the SLT. When embarking on this research, I thought that I may be viewed with suspicion by research participants due to my middle leadership role and as a result they may have been cautious about talking to me, fearing repercussions for participating in my study. My concerns were alleviated however, as participants were more than willing to take part with many approaching me to ask to participate having heard about my work from colleagues and their knowledge of me from training sessions and staff meetings. Being both a classroom teacher and middle leader at Westward School meant at times I felt that I faced professional, ethical and political dilemmas when carrying out my study (Humphrey, 2013). I had several roles including researcher, classroom teacher and middle leader responsibilities, which at times were challenging to balance. I too had to meet the requirements of the structure of the observation pro-forma in my teaching, while experiencing the increased observations, as well as fulfilling my other duties. I could empathise with both SLT and also my participants but had to remain impartial in order to carry out my research with integrity. In spite of having to balance the various ‘dilemmas’, I found carrying out the research empowering. Participants chose to exercise their agency by sharing their experiences with me and in doing so, they provided an opportunity for me to act upon my agency.

Ethics and management of interviews

Consideration of the sensitive nature of describing experiences of observation meant that I had to be mindful of the possible impact that being interviewed may have had upon participants. I worked to try to minimise any possible distress to participants during all interviews, both paired and individual, illustrating that my ethical stance of ‘virtue ethics’ was regularly revisited (Israel, 2015, p.15), for example, when considering the emotional support needed for participants. Had any participants become distressed during interviews, the interview would have been terminated and the participant given the choice to withdraw from the study completely.
I was also considerate of possible issues with ethicality that could have occurred (BERA, 2019), such as participants making derogatory comments about colleagues or the leadership team of Westward School, who were voiceless in this study. Participants, however, maintained their professionalism throughout interviews speaking only about their observation experiences.

**Bias and trustworthiness**

I considered trustworthiness as vital throughout the research process, not only the trust needed to generate data between myself and my participants but also in the relationship I built between myself and the data. In aiming to realise this I utilised the 'developmental sequence' discussed by Bassey (1999, p.75) to allow me to reflect at each stage of data generation, thereby building trustworthiness in my findings. Although it is often written that bias needs to be avoided where possible, in an interpretivist study where subjectivity of all involved is accepted, bias should at least be recognised. Interview data was reflected upon to try to ensure rigour and also show transparency, and if needed, it was re-addressed in order to gain trustworthiness in the findings (Bassey, 1999). Figure 11 shows how the developmental sequence was carried out at each stage of the study.

Figure 11: A research diagram for the Pilot and Main Study (adapted from Research Computing Governance Committee, University of Arizona, 2019).
Through adoption of a critical stance when gathering data, I tried to remove my personal feelings about observation from influencing participant responses when conducting the interviews. This was easier to aspire to than to realise. Engagement with a critical friend offered me a channel to discuss my work with someone who could challenge my interpretations without judgement (Foulger, 2010). The critical friend worked within an educational setting, and so was aware of the pressures placed upon teachers, however, they did not work at Westward School. I felt consultation with a critical friend gave my work a degree of perspective, allowing me to recognise my assumptions and biases when interpreting data, so allowing me to apply a criticality that it may otherwise have lacked. Discussing my work with someone else gave me the opportunity to reflect upon the situations that participants described and in some cases ‘find new meanings in the situation’ (Schön, 1995, p.135) which lead me to re-evaluate some of the situations as I was able to see alternative perspectives which had I not discussed my work with another, may have been missed. An example of this was consideration of the impact on the agency and identity of the observer when they carried out observations.

Confidentiality and data protection

In showing respect to the promises made to the participants and to meet my obligations to the agreed ways of working approved by the University Ethics Committee, all work for my research was carried out exclusively on my own personal password protected laptop so as to handle data safely and in confidence. Recordings made during interviews and paired interviews were coded and names of participants changed. Data was backed up on a password protected external memory drive. These actions were promised on the information sheet for participants (See Appendix 3) and met the criteria of the Data Protection Act (2018). Upon completion of the study, all audio recordings and transcripts were deleted from my computer and the memory pen in order to maintain the anonymity and privacy of my participants.
Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the overall research design in terms of data collection, including discussing the design and conduct of the methods used to obtain data in order to address the research questions as part of a case study methodology. The rationales for using and the accepted limitations of both one-to-one semi-structured and paired interviews have been considered, along with why changes were made to the Main Study following the outcomes from the Pilot Study. The reflective process of gathering data, revisiting it and then re-gathering through further interviews for clarity is shown in Figure 11.

My continued struggle with the ethical side of research and how I tried to overcome this by revisiting my ethical stance throughout the gathering of my data has been described. I tried to exercise ethical reflexivity during this period of ‘knowledge production’ (Gewirtz and Cribb, 2006, p.145). While I write about the choices I made during this knowledge production phase in ways which may appear that they were easy, occasionally they were challenging. The process of selecting methods to gather data was messy and at times frustrating but also immensely rewarding. As I began to carry out the interview process, I began to realise that I was not alone in my research, and that participants were interested in my work and wanted to contribute to make a difference in how observation is carried out. I also learned the importance of flexibility as a researcher as at times unforeseen situations can occur beyond your control which have to be accepted and worked with.
Chapter 4. Data Analysis

This chapter explains how the data collected was analysed using thematic analysis in order to identify key findings and address the research questions. Authenticity in the study is deliberated along with further discussion of ethics throughout the analysis stage. The chapter begins with discussion of the influence that the Pilot Study had on analysis of data.

Influence of the Pilot Study on data analysis

During the Pilot Study I decided that I would analyse the data both quantitatively and qualitatively in order to provide greater dependability in my findings (Bryman, 2001). To do this I began by coding the data to look for both positive and negative statements about observation. Having transcribed the interviews, I re-read each of them, highlighting positive and negative statements about observation. Organising the data in this way, I was able to capture the ‘essence’ of my research (Thomas, 2016, p.205). As I carried out the organising of data into positive and negative statements, themes began to emerge. I then began to look for frequency of the aspect being described as positive or negative so as to obtain quantitative data and provide a degree of ‘generalisability’ (Denscombe, 2010, p.298). Although this was useful in enabling me to familiarise myself with the data, in trying to make qualitative data quantitative, the human and emotional connection of using the voices of my participants was neglected, rendering their input to merely statistical. To address this, I decided that for the Main Study I would use only a qualitative analysis approach of using the words of my participants to illustrate my work in greater depth. Should future research on a greater scale be undertaken then a blended, ‘multi-strategy’ (Bryman, 2001, p.443) approach may be used to address analysis of data.

In the past, as a secondary school science teacher, my tendency had been to take a positivist, quantitative approach to data analysis, dealing with principally quantitative data as part of the scientific method. This was shown throughout the Pilot Study where I tried to identify a neat, logical pattern to my results. As an interpretivist approach to educational research was more fully adopted, I began to appreciate that qualitative data is messy in its nature and while at times, this was exasperating, I also found it compelling.
Thematic analysis approach to analysing data

Following completion of the one-to-one and paired interviews, decisions needed to be made about how data was going to be interpreted and analysed. Although I talk about this as ‘after the event’ it had been something that I had been planning for prior to beginning the Main Study. Whilst I was considerate of how I might begin to analyse the data when collecting it, actually sitting down and starting the process was daunting. This was for two reasons. Firstly, ethically, I did not want to do injustice to my participants by not interpreting the data in an effective and meaningful way. Secondly, practically, interpreting the data felt like it could become an all-consuming task that could engulf me and lead to key points being missed by focusing on one aspect in too much depth whilst possibly neglecting others.

When deciding how I was going to analyse the data I found multiple methods discussed in published literature and ‘Discourse Analysis’ and ‘Grounded Theory’ (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 450 and 598) were considered before deciding to follow a loosely ‘Thematic Analysis’ approach. This was chosen after reading several articles mainly from a psychological perspective that had used this approach to give ‘voices’ to their participants (Grogan and Mechan, 2017; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Although relatively underutilised as an approach to analyse data from an educational perspective, I felt that this method had advantages for what I aimed to achieve in my work. Adoption of a thematic approach would offer ‘an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.77) and permit me freedom to analyse my data in a less constricted way than other methods. Given my small sample number of eleven participants I wanted to use an approach where there was no ‘minimum to the depth of detail provided in the content of the data for the information to constitute a theme’ (Hawkins, 2018, p.1758). This I felt was important as it meant that all question responses, even if only mentioned in one interview, would be equally as important as a response noted multiple times and therefore could be considered a theme in its own right. Braun and Clarke (2006) provided a simple explanation of how to carry out thematic analysis which, as a novice researcher, I found useful.

This offered a reference point for verification that I was systematic in following the same guidance in identification of each theme so as to try to ensure trustworthiness in my work.
Familiarisation with and transcription of interview data

In order to follow a thematic approach to analysing data I began by revisiting the audio data of the one-to-one and paired interviews. Prior to transcribing the interviews, I simply listened to each recording in full as soon as possible after the interview. This act was important in giving me time to reflect on my performance as an interviewer and to begin to mentally note the types of responses given to questions.

I then transcribed the interviews verbatim, using Microsoft Word. Listening to the interviews again during transcription became ‘an interpretive act’ as I began to make meaning of what had been said when typing the words of participants (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999, p.82). At this point I began to recognise in the participant responses their emotional connection with being observed as I could hear the inflections in their voices. From these, initial thoughts developed about how their responses may connect to literature and, drawing on my local knowledge, as discussed in Chapter 3, how the situation at Westward School related to their answers.

As suggested by Kvale (1996), to ensure that I was not misrepresenting interview data, all participants were given the opportunity to read a paper copy of their transcript and amend any of the responses that they had given should they wish. This helped to ensure trustworthiness in the study by providing ‘respondent validation’ (Bryman, 2001, p.273). Most of the participants took the opportunity to read their transcripts but none of them chose to change the record of what they had said. To ascertain whether or not I had understood what participants had discussed and to ensure I was not extrapolating too far from what they had said or distorting their meaning, clarification interviews were carried out with some participants following transcription of their first interview. Those who took part in these are shown in Table 3, Chapter 3.

Following clarification from participants, each transcript was re-printed and re-read. These were then highlighted with coloured pens to identify key thoughts or feelings of participants that stood out as important to me and notes were added to emphasise context or emotive language used. Appendix 7 shows an example of an annotated extract from an interview transcript.
Coding data and use of ‘Coding Stripes’

Once transcription and highlighting of scripts were completed, coding the data began. To do this I once again read my transcripts and selected from them quotes I deemed as relevant. These included quotes that were different to what had been said by participants in other interviews or illustrated where participants collectively shared the same view on an aspect of observation. Quotes were then copied onto sticky notes and colour coded using a highlighter pen according to which research question their content related to. When selecting information to form the codes I wanted to ensure that the context of what participants had said was not lost. This is a common criticism associated with the coding strategy (Bryman, 2001) whereby the context of the social setting and the narrative flow can be missed in selecting only parts of an interview transcript. To attempt to overcome bias I tried to make sure when choosing the quote that the context remained in order to try to recognise its influence on the quote. This helped assure that the analysis considered the fuller meaning offered by the quote and so remaining truer to the intentions of what participants had said. Use of inductive analysis meant that I was able to identify issues arising which were either different to or further developed those identified from published literature.

Each quote was then grouped with others of similar content (Burgess et al., 2006) and placed on my home office wall according to which aspect of observation they addressed (See Appendix 8). This led me to ‘generating initial codes’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.87) to examine my data in more detail. It became apparent that, although I only had a relatively small number of interviews, contained within each was vast quantities of information and I realised that organising and keeping track of the data could become overwhelming if I continued analysis in this way. To help organise the data more efficiently NVivo 11, a Microsoft program, was utilised. Having imported the Word documents of the interview transcripts into the program ‘Nodes’ or ‘codes’ drawn from the interview data were then created. These were derived in a similar way to that used when highlighting by hand in that I had to read the interview transcripts and copy and paste quotes from participants into ‘Nodes’. Use of this facility allowed ease of access to the quotes as I was then able to select a ‘node’ which then identified all aspects of the interviews that discussed similar content.
Using the ‘Coding Stripes’ aspect of NVivo permitted me to see where themes merged, for example, ‘critical incidents’ and ‘feedback’ as seen in Figure 12. This part of the program allows you to select a ‘Node’ or code from part of an interview and then compare whether an interview quote contains more than one code. This enabled easy recognition of connected themes relating to the experiences of observation of participants, for example, by identifying the emotional impact of observation with different scenarios. This once again helped ensure transparency of data analysis.

Figure 12 shows on the right-hand side of the picture what a ‘Coding stripe’ looks like. In this example part of an interview from the ‘Negative emotion’ node was selected. The interview extract was first shown in Appendix 7 as a highlighted transcript, illustrating how interview data was interpreted from transcript to coding. Using Coding Stripes shows that this quote cross referenced with the critical incident and negative feedback node as well as having cross over with multiple themes. A list of some of the different ‘nodes’ identified when using NVivo is shown in Appendix 9.

Figure 12: The themes identified in NVivo.

I continued to use both paper and NVivo 11 to help derive early themes from the data. NVivo provided another way of storing the data rather than solely paper copies and offered me assurances that there was a backup to my paper thoughts should these be destroyed. In spite of the ease of access of quotes that NVivo offered, the kinaesthetic and visual approach of physically handling the paper quotes and being able to move them helped to develop my thoughts about my
choices of themes and coding which I found was restricted when using only a computer.

Selection of data to illustrate findings

As quotes were selected to illustrate a theme, data was de-contextualised and re-contextualised as decisions were made about what to include in a theme and what to eliminate (Starks and Trinidad, 2007). Selection of the quotes from interview transcripts is regarded by King (2004) as critical to adding depth to the final report, as well as helping ensure validity or trustworthiness (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and interpretive rigour (Rice and Ezzy, 1999). I felt a responsibility to my participants to select quotes that best illustrated a theme and were representative of all the information obtained from the data. In doing this I tried to act with ‘sincerity’ (Carpenter, 2013, p.5; Macfarlane, 2009, p.91) in order to adhere to my ethical stance of virtue ethics. Being an insider researcher meant that I had been part of the incidents described by participants and as such had to demonstrate ‘the dual position that analysts need to take: as both cultural members and cultural commentators’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.94). As a teacher at Westward School I was able to understand situations and the culture that participants described as I too had experienced them and as such I became a cultural commentator. Collectively, the quotes that were selected illustrated why an aspect of observation was considered to be beneficial or problematic.

When using participant quotes to illustrate a perspective on a theme, hesitations or repeated phrases were removed so as to make the quote more succinct. In doing this I was mindful of maintaining the context in which the words were spoken, which is vital in ‘describing the world as it is perceived by different observers’ (Dey, 1993, p.36). An example of the type of editing used is shown in Appendix 10.

Inductive analysis of data

Having decided on the codes, I then needed to try to draw them together to determine potential themes. To do this I found my sticky note quotes useful as they provided a kinaesthetic aspect that allowed me to freely move the quotes. At this point I ignored colour coding for research questions and simply began to group the quotes together for similar content. Once this had been done I drew
from the content to find the themes that were recurring in my data but not dismissing those that only occurred in one interview. This was carried out multiple times and eventually I found that there were several key themes that the data seemed to provide. I then turned to NVivo to carry out similar grouping of the ‘nodes’ and found that the emergent themes mirrored those of my paper copies. This offered dependability to the analysis, albeit recognising that one round of analysis would be informing a second round in what I paid attention to. Once the early themes had been identified I discussed them with my critical friend. Engaging in conversation about the early themes enabled me to describe how I had carried out analysis and also whether or not there were any possible aspects that I may have overlooked at this stage of analysing the data. Using visual presentation of data aided me as I began to draw these early themes together by representing them as a hand-drawn concept map shown in Appendix 1. This map was further developed to become one drawn in Word as shown in Figure 13.

Analysis was then revisited and the themes readdressed in order to try to streamline the themes so as to remove any repetitions where I may have been using ‘two or more words or phrases to describe the same phenomenon’ (Bryman, 2001, p.398). Eventually a ‘thematic map’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.89) was designed to show the overriding themes of positive and negative aspects of observation indicated from participants’ interview accounts. During analysis and identification of themes such as feedback and communication, shown in the oval shapes in Figure 13, I recognised that some of the aspects of observation were critical in affecting how participants perceived observation. In order for me to identify whether an incident could be classed as critical was if participants recounted the incident multiple times during an interview. This then indicated to me that this could be classed as an emotional ‘memory trace’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) which could be likened to a critical incident as it was clearly something that had impacted upon the participant and shaped their views of being observed.
The concept maps in Figures 14 and 15 show the developing themes based around positive and negative aspects of observation drawn from the words of participants. The inner oval shapes show practical things that participants felt could be carried out to improve observation or as in Figure 15, aspects that they felt made observation a negative experience. The outer boxes provide the rationale or explanation as to how these helped to improve or impede observation.
Figure 14: The positive aspects of observation.

- Relationships are described as strong. No fear of repercussions.
- Open and honest communication
- Relationaltrust are strong
- Colleagual-usually with peers or those with similar teaching background
- Unthreatening-power is equal
- Observation: Positive aspects
- At a mutually agreed time/class
- Participant agrees time and class for help with a specific focus e.g. discipline or to show progress and that recommendations have been acted on
- Feedback involves open discussion about the purpose and focus of observation
- Removes judgement aspect of observation
- Developmentally beneficial- not designed to catch anyone out or emotionally impact on them negatively
- Ungraded
Figure 15: The negative aspects of observation.
When I began to designate initial themes to the data I became concerned and frustrated that they all seemed to link to what I was to term ‘critical incidents’ linked to observation which impacted on participants’ ongoing observation perceptions. These were mainly relating to the feedback procedure. This simplistic summation worried me as it seemed to limit the focus, perhaps implying that the outcome may have been solely a recommendation to review how feedback is delivered. This would neglect the how and why aspects of the emotional connection of being observed which my research questions aimed to address. I felt that there was a need to look in detail at the data and began to implement a critical approach to analysis of the findings, moving from an inductive to a deductive phase of analysis. Doing this allowed me to relate what my participants said more closely to theories in the literature and to identify which offered differing or contrasting perspectives. This provided me a critical lens for the analysis as it moved from the abstract to more concrete ideas linked to theories in literature (Punch, 2009). The themes identified were able to be placed together according to whether they impacted upon teacher agency and identity or were themes that related to the structures imposed upon teachers thereby restricting their agency.

The emergent themes from the data that related to the impact of structures on teachers were:

- The intensity of observations
- Observations lack clarity of focus and purpose
- Validity of observational protocol.

The themes that related predominantly to teacher agency were:

- Feedback often lacks purpose and empathy
- Trusting relationships
- Impact of the observer in the classroom
- Non-subject specialist observers.

Of note is even though some participants had been teaching up to five years and therefore were more experienced than those new to the profession, they still found observations stressful. This was illustrated in their interview responses which drew
upon both ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) from early observations and observations that they were experiencing at the time of the interviews.

**Research notes**

I began to write research notes as I carried out and transcribed the interviews. An example of these notes can be seen in Appendix 12. Notes were made as soon as possible after the interviews in order for them to be contemporaneous with the event (Emerson et al., 1995). Allocating this time for critical reflection was beneficial to me in my development as a researcher (Schön, 1995). Writing allowed me to begin to link themes and thoughts to literature and to contemplate the influence of the context of the school in interview responses, when thinking inductively, and whether these were unique or related to literature, when thinking deductively. My notebook became ever evolving as it filled with sketches, diagrams, notes and thoughts. Its evolution became a useful reference point for me throughout my analysis to see how my thoughts developed and changed as themes began to emerge or coalesce. In order to try to create balance in my work when writing my notes, I queried participant responses in interviews and the themes that emerged by playing a form of devil’s advocate. I tried to consider the position of a participant as to why they may react negatively to feedback or find the tick box system easy to mock. As I analysed my notes I noticed that links began to materialise between different disciplines such as ‘memory traces’ taken from Structuration theory (Giddens, 1986, p.377) and connections with the psychological aspect of emotions as described by Lupton (1998). This organic way of working was a valuable experience for me as it allowed me to contemplate links to literature and reflect on the data differently to merely analysing it for content.

**Authenticity and credibility**

This chapter and its associated appendices offer a transparent ‘chain of evidence’ (Yin, 2003, p.105) to help provide trustworthiness, credibility and authenticity in my study. In order to try to ensure trustworthiness in my work, I included steps such as ‘dependability’ (Bryman, 2001, p.273) by keeping records of transcripts, audio recordings and evidence of how themes were derived from the data. When contemplating the links between theories to my interpretation of the words of participants, I exercised ‘confirmability’ (Bryman, 2001, p.274). At each stage of
analysis, I questioned my thoughts and the interpretations I placed on my findings, trying to reduce the influence of my personal values on my findings. By trying to ensure that I was not misrepresenting what participants had said, researcher bias and ethical concerns about power differences were mitigated for. Returning the transcripts to participants for them to read and verify provided ‘respondent’ or ‘member validation’ (Bryman, 2001, p.273) and interpretive confidence that the words they had said had been correctly interpreted.

As a result of trying to achieve a degree of trustworthiness at each stage of the study, as well as a detailed account of the context of the study, I feel that the potential for ‘transferability’ (Bryman, 2001, p.272) has been provided as others may relate to the experiences described in the findings.

Use of multiple data sources to draw my claims from could be considered a version of ‘triangulation’ (Thomas, 2016, p.67) which helped to further emphasise my efforts to achieve trustworthiness in my work.

**Reflections on being an insider researcher during data analysis**

Whilst the context of Westward School was unique during the period of study, the responses and emotional connections described during the Main Study showed little difference to those given during my Pilot Study carried out in the previous academic year.

As noted earlier, my insider knowledge of the school at the time of the interviews gave me an awareness of what participants were describing and the importance of how context affected the meanings that could be attributed to what was said during an interview (Dey, 1993). An example of this is shown in the following quote:

‘I trust them and they trust me. I would trust them that if I’ve had a bad observation they wouldn’t then go and tell every other member of staff. They might mention that “You know that Hayley has had a bad observation?” but they wouldn’t go into detail about it and they definitely wouldn’t place the onus on me for that bad observation, whereas I think that sometimes members of SLT can definitely place poor progress immediately on the teacher.’ (Hayley, one-to-one interview).
In this quote, Hayley described the trusting relationship she had with her Head of Department during observations, however, she goes onto describe trust issues with the leadership team. These were a consequence of the result of her ‘bad’ observation and the outcome of which Hayley felt should have been confidential, being shared with others. Had I not been an insider researcher, I may not have appreciated the openness with which Hayley spoke about her situation meaning that I could have missed the context with which Hayley talked about ‘telling the whole staff’ and the violation that she felt accompanied this. Perryman (2011) stresses the need to constantly reflect on data that is gathered to ensure that the distinctions of the school politics are not ignored or overlooked because of assumed insider knowledge of the reader. The quote from Hayley gave an example of where the context of the school at the time of data collection was influential upon some of the responses given.

**Reflections on ethics during data analysis**

In order to maintain my ethical integrity when framed in terms of ‘virtue’ ethics (Israel, 2015, p.15) in the analysis of data, I tried to ensure that at no point was I doing harm to any of my participants. This included members of the leadership team and those associated with the school in the wider community. In doing this I was mindful of the ‘respectfulness’ (Carpenter, 2013, p.5; Macfarlane, 2009, p.63) aspect of virtue ethics whereby I showed respect towards all involved in the study.

This became apparent when I began to review and transcribe the interview audio recordings. I used codes for participant names in order to protect both participants and those that they were referring to. I also removed other personal identifiers, such as subject taught, from any quotes used in coding. This helped to ensure that participant anonymity remained in any quotations which might be circulated in a public forum through my published thesis and reports to the school’s leadership team. I revisited my ethical standpoint during the analysis phase where themes became apparent that may not always portray the leadership team of Westward School favourably. In doing this I remained as true as possible to what participants said but removed any potentially sensitive comments in order to help show respect to the wider school context.
Summary

This chapter has discussed the approach to data analysis and the methods employed throughout the Main Study. The messy dilemmas faced when trying to make sense of my data have been discussed along with the solutions that I used to try to overcome these problems. Although themes were selected and findings generated, I imagine that I am not alone in asking 'when is analysis of data really completed?' I accept that what I am presenting in this thesis is only one of many possible routes through the data, which might have used different techniques and different conceptual frameworks. The findings I present represent my systematic and unashamedly subjective interpretation of the data revealed to me by my respondents. The themes identified from use of thematic analysis and their links to literature are described in detail in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5. Findings I: Emergent Themes

This chapter provides an overview of the findings drawn from analysis of data. The themes that were derived from the data in the study are presented. These are then linked to those deductive elements identified as relevant to the topic of this thesis within published literature. Participants’ responses are related to Giddens’ Structuration theory (1986) and elements of social psychology and phenomenology to help address my interpretivist perspective.

How quotes were edited to illustrate a theme and discussion about the possible impact of the context of Westward School on the themes is explained. As previously described, the themes identified from a deductive approach that match similar findings to those in literature and relate predominantly to structures are:

- The intensity of observations
- Observations lack clarity of focus and purpose
- Questioning the validity of the observational protocol.

Themes that relate to impacting upon teacher agency are:

- Feedback lacking purpose and empathy
- Trusting relationships
- The impact of the observer in the classroom
- Non-subject specialist observers.

Two additional key themes of participants’ voice on observation and participants’ motivations for engaging in the study are addressed at the end of the chapter. These were considered significant to the study as they arose purely as a result of the inductive approach taken during the interviews, illustrating that this approach can allow unanticipated findings to be revealed.

When discussing observation, participants identified differences in their experiences and views of the various types of observation used at Westward School. Owing to the context of Westward and the particular timing of data collection for the Main Study relating to the academic year 2017-18, the themes of ‘intensity’ and ‘the purpose of observations’ could be classed as being unique to one school and so difficult to generalise. In spite of possible contention of their
inclusion, these themes are worthy of discussion in the research findings. Many new and recently qualified teachers begin their careers in schools with similar issues to those of Westward. In addition, those participants who began their teaching careers in other schools recounted similar observation experiences to those who had only worked at Westward. This illustrated that the perceptions of observation were not exclusive to those trained at Westward and so a degree of transferability of the findings is offered.

At times during analysis of data it was difficult to place the content of interviews into a single theme and as such, many subthemes resulted (See Figures 14 and 15 in Chapter 4). At first this was a concern, however, this is considered commonplace when analysing qualitative data due to the complexity of the situations being studied (Pope et al., 2000). As outlined in Chapter 2, structures and agency interrelate when impacting on any situation. Accepting this and for ease of reporting, each of the themes identified is discussed separately. The content of each quote is related to literature utilising a theoretical framework based upon Giddens’ (1986) ideas on structuration. While this theoretical framework describes how observation can impact upon teacher agency, it does not directly address the emotional connection. In order to try to explain the emotional connection that teachers have with observation, links to psychology and phenomenology are also made. I purposely chose to relate the findings to literature rather than presenting the interview quotes in isolation. This approach moved the findings from 'a descriptive to an interpretative level' by connecting the 'claims to existing literature' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.93) thereby producing a 'coherent story of the findings' (King, 2004, p.267).

**Themes relating to Structures**

The themes discussed in this section align strongly with the impact of structures upon teachers and those who carry out observations. The issues of intensity of observation, clarity of focus and purpose and validity of observation are covered.

**Intensity of observations**

During interviews, participants acknowledged that there was a need and purpose to observations that contributed towards performance management or for gaining QTS. The benefit of observations such as ‘drop-ins’ or ‘patrol walks’, however,
were questioned, particularly when little or no feedback was given. While participants recognised that standards at Westward School had to improve and there was a need for changes to be implemented to aid this, the methods chosen, such as the ‘non-negotiable’ drop-ins and longer unannounced observations, were contentious. Both types of observation were considered to be unbeneﬁcial to the development of teaching standards and were viewed with suspicion by participants. The various experiences described illustrate the impact of the actions of this type of observation:

‘I’ve found that I have been observed so much, like a ridiculous amount. I had five observations in the same day and when it happened, when the same person kept coming back, my heart just sank a little bit more each time.’ (Rebecca, one-to-one interview)

‘Err, yesterday I had lots of people watching me, it was very nerve wracking. I had seven people watch me teach yesterday…which was quite daunting and I haven’t heard anything from it apart from general feedback, I don’t enjoy that [laughs]. In my head I’m like "Did I do something really awful?" I’m sure I didn’t, well I hope I didn’t.’ (Selena, one-to-one interview)

‘I am observed a lot and for different reasons. Obviously for training and then from the school coming in and observing me. The school ones are really scary and not a good experience.’ (Xanthe, one-to-one interview)

Here the quotes illustrate the emotional impact inﬂuenced by the number of constant unannounced observations. Given the guidelines for the number of observations should total three one hour observations maximum in one year (NUT, 2016), it is clear that in the case of Westward School, teachers were subject to a greater number than they should have been. The sheer volume of observations caused undue stress to teachers who were already having to negotiate multiple stressors induced by being a new teacher at the school. Vulnerabilities and self-doubt began to harbour when information on performance was not shared with those being observed, resulting in feedback becoming a form of control. This was an example of what Master would describe as secrecy being used as ‘a manifestation of power’ (1984, p.342). Talking directly about observations, Master described that in not sharing information about performance with the teacher, the process is rendered unbeneﬁcial. As illustrated in participant responses, removal of agency and control from the teacher left them feeling vulnerable, affecting their
confidence and self-esteem, making participants begin to doubt their abilities. These situations demonstrated that the ‘psychologically safe’ environment (Hobson and Maxwell, 2017, p.187) of the teachers’ own classroom had been damaged and became one of mistrust between the teachers and the observer. One participant described how observations:

‘Made me feel like I wasn’t doing well generally, not just in one lesson.’
(Olivia, paired interview)

Whether the actions of the observer were intended or inadvertent they demonstrate that when information about performance is not shared with the observed teacher it can lead to lack of trust and the harbouring of negative feelings towards the observer and the process of observation.

**Observations lack clarity of focus and purpose**

Figure 16: Part of a lesson observation pro-forma, or 'tick-sheet' similar to that used at Westward School for both ‘drop-in’, longer unannounced and performance management observations (jacqui1974, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching and Learning Area</th>
<th>Outstanding (1)</th>
<th>Good (2)</th>
<th>Satisfactory (3)</th>
<th>Inadequate (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Progress</strong></td>
<td>Students make exceptionally good progress.</td>
<td>Virtually all students make good progress.</td>
<td>Most students make the progress that should be expected of them.</td>
<td>Students generally, OR PARTICULAR GROUPS OF THEM, do not make adequate progress because the teaching is unsatisfactory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour and enjoyment of students</strong></td>
<td>Students thrive as a result of the teaching.</td>
<td>Students show good attitudes to their work.</td>
<td>Students enjoy their work and are motivated to do well.</td>
<td>Students do not enjoy their work and behaviour is often inappropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Teacher has high level of expertise and evident interest in what they are teaching.</td>
<td>The teacher has good subject knowledge and this lends confidence to their teaching style.</td>
<td>Teacher has secure knowledge of the curriculum and course requirements.</td>
<td>Teacher’s knowledge of the curriculum and course requirements is inadequate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge of learning</strong></td>
<td>Work is very well pitched and suitably challenging for every student.</td>
<td>Level of challenge stretches without inhibiting.</td>
<td>Level of challenge is sufficient for groups of students most of the time.</td>
<td>Level of challenge is often wrongly pitched.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the interviews, participants were asked about whether or not they viewed the observation differently according to the type of observation they experienced, for example, drop-in or performance management, they were then asked for clarification of why they did/did not view the observation differently. Participants described how they felt that they had to perform in all types of observation to meet a fixed set of criteria in order to be viewed as competent by the leadership team at Westward School. The observations, based around a series of ‘tick boxes’ appeared to assess the actions of the teacher rather than the quality of learning.
Part of a lesson pro-forma similar to that used at Westward School for drop-ins, longer unannounced and performance management observations at the time of the study is shown in Figure 16.

Many of the actions that were deemed as important in quality of teaching were drawn from the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2011). In addition, Westward also integrated the ‘non-negotiables’ into the crib sheet. It was therefore possible to be deemed ‘Good’ or better in all the requirements of the teaching standards but have an overall judgement of ‘Inadequate’ should any of the non-negotiables fail to be met. Participants expressed views on the purpose of the observations that ranged from staff being ‘checked up on’ (Yvonne, one to one interview) through to considering that the leadership team did not trust teachers to do their jobs properly. All participants explained that they tried to implement the ‘non-negotiables’ in every lesson in order to try to alleviate further observations and a negative view of them being held by the leadership team. There were occasions, however, such as when dealing with behaviour problems, or being engrossed in teaching that the ‘non-negotiables’ were unintentionally neglected. When this happened, participants explained that they were deemed to be an inadequate teacher as they were not following school policy. Whether intentional or unintentional, this could be considered as another example of the leadership team using the structure of observation and the non-negotiables to reduce teacher agency. Many participants questioned the purpose of these types of observations and were reticent about the perceived benefit of the ‘non-negotiables’ improving their teaching abilities, with some participants describing resistance towards them:

‘I understand that policy following does add to consistency which does improve your teaching but I think some of the stuff especially that we are doing here at the moment is a lot of box ticking rather than anything that has been researched and has any actual benefit. I don’t see much point but you have to do it because otherwise you get told off and you are told you are not as good as a teacher who is doing that.’ (Hayley, one-to-one interview)

The actions of the leadership team affected teachers and their perceptions of trust:

‘I feel like trust is a massive issue because I feel like there’s been an element of people not trusting us since the beginning of the year… them
trusting us to have Bronze, Silver, Gold up, them trusting that the kids are engaged in our lessons.’ (Rebecca, paired interview)

Here, doubts as to the level of trust that the leadership team had in the teaching staff to carry out their roles effectively are described. Such perceptions of not being trusted to carry out their job, described by Rebecca, are not unique to Westward School. Participants in Shah and Harthi’s (2014) research describe feelings of both helplessness and haplessness being induced when observed by those they felt untrusting of.

Lack of focus and clarity of purpose of the observations was highlighted as problematic by participants in this study. They felt that they were being observed in order to meet a criteria imposed upon the leadership team by outside agencies such as the DfE or Ofsted, but also that the observations were not to benefit the teachers as little or no feedback was provided. This resulted in teachers beginning to deem observations as fruitless and frustrating, as one described:

‘If we don’t get feedback, what’s the point?’ (Rebecca, paired interview)

Confusion about the focus of observation arose as problematic as not only were participants unsure of why they were being observed, but also of what the focus for the observation was. The lack of clarity as to the focus of observation is demonstrated in this extract taken from a paired interview:

Selena: ‘Since I’ve started teaching I’ve lost track of what their main focus is.’

Zoe: ‘It’s like, what do you want now?’

Selena: ‘When I was a trainee it was progress over time, then they wanted active learning. I did this observation for progress over time and I planned the lesson with my mentor and he was “This lesson is so good, you will get outstanding with it. You’ve ticked this, you’ve ticked that” and he went to a meeting afterwards and they were like “What has she just done?” He was furious, he was “How many hoops can you jump through?” because they are changing their criteria and the school doesn’t always go with what Ofsted are actually looking for.’ (Selena and Zoe, paired interview)
Rebecca also reflects these sentiments in an extract from her paired interview:

‘I do think that the goal posts change for observations. I think the boxes change. Sometimes you can think you are doing it right and then some new initiative will come along and then you are not doing it right anymore because so and so says that actually what you’ve got to do now is something else.’ (Rebecca, paired interview)

These interview extracts show that by not providing clarity about the purpose of observations, negative feelings and frustrations towards observations began to grow.

Had the purpose of the observations been made transparent, then hostilities may not have manifested as teachers would not have felt that their ‘active agency’ (Stones, 2005, p.9) was threatened. The lack of clarity about the focus and purpose of observation, coupled with shifting criteria which were not communicated openly may have been an unintentional action from the leadership team and reflected the removal of agency and pressures exerted on leadership teams of schools to implement changes quickly to meet the requirements of external structures acting upon them.

**Questioning the validity of the observation protocol**

Research participants found the tick-box protocol used for observations to be problematic. It was viewed as a tool for control and also one of ridicule, as participants had little agency in its design and implementation, but could exercise their agency by manipulating the outcome of observation when it was used. One of the participants expressed how they:

‘Like the boxes… I enjoy the game. I am ridiculing their boxes that’s true.’

(Zoe, paired interview)

To some this may appear that participants did not take observation seriously, however, given the context at Westward, it is possible to understand that the participants may have felt jaded by relentless tick sheet observations:

‘I think I even became a bit complacent about it… "Someone else is coming in and what now?"’ (Zoe, paired interview)

‘But it is not teaching, it is just box ticking.’ (Xanthe, paired interview)
Feelings that this method of observation was not a suitable method of assessing the true ability of a teacher were expressed by participants, which is aptly described in the following statement:

‘I think that a bad teacher will tick the boxes for the sake of ticking the boxes. A good teacher will tick the boxes and know how to make those boxes useful.’ (Selena, paired interview)

This statement encapsulates the faults with a tick sheet method in that those teachers that Selena regards as ‘bad’ are the ones who know how to manipulate the system by putting on an act in order to tick all the boxes which would result in the teacher being considered ‘Good’ when measured by this method.

Responding to ‘box ticking’ through implementation of the pro-forma, both the observer and those being observed could be described as acting like ‘puppets’. In doing this I draw from a phenomenological perspective and the ideas of Schutz who suggested ‘puppets’ were the ‘creation of habitual ideal types, in which personal motivation is replaced by culturally standardised behaviour patterns’ (1970, p.45). The ‘behaviour patterns’ in this example can be compared to the actions that are noted on the tick sheets. Schutz would say this shows how individuals can ‘pursue their interests and affairs by manipulating objects’ and by ‘dealing with people’ (Schutz, 1970, p.14–15). If both the tick sheet and the observers are viewed as objects that can be manipulated, then it is easy to see why participants felt that the system was open to ridicule and one that could be influenced to afford a favourable outcome. This demonstration of teacher agency is clearly shown in the following quotation:

‘It depends what situation I am in. Sometimes it’s a really good opportunity to play your cards right [laughs], it’s a way of playing the game, observations… it is just playing the game.’ (Ivan, one-to-one interview)

Regarding observation as a social interaction allows parallels to be drawn with Goffman (1971) and his ideas of how we control how we are perceived by others. Participants described not only a knowledge of how to tick the boxes but also an awareness of how to change their teaching to suit their knowledge of observer preferences when carrying out observations. In these instances, participants exercised their ‘active agency’ (Stones, 2005, p.9) by using and manipulating the system to their advantage, illustrating the duality of the pro-forma structure. This showed that the system is open to manipulation, misinterpretation and is as
described by one of the participants, ‘Flawed’ (Ivan, one-to-one interview).

Comparing the observation pro-forma to an ‘allocative resource’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373) means it can be considered as a tool of power, which the ‘authoritative’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373) observer uses in order to gain power and to remove agency of the teacher. In this example, teachers were also able to exercise their ‘knowledgeability’ (Giddens, 1986, p.281) of the micro politics of a school to manipulate the structure to enable them to secure a higher teaching grade, indicating that the thoughts of Goffman (1971), whereby people manipulate situations by changing their behaviour, are not theory but lived.

Removal of teacher and leadership agency during observation is articulately defined by Foucault’s ‘panopticon’ (1995, p.201) vision of the constant surveillance both Principals and classroom teachers are subject to. Participants’ words aptly described how implementation of structures through increased numbers of observation meant they were effectively working within a panoptic environment. The situation at Westward could have been considered as an example of ‘panopticism’ in action where inspection and surveillance become normalised practice (Foucault, 1995).

**Themes relating to teacher agency**

Themes in this section relate strongly with agency of the teacher and observer and include feedback, the various aspects and importance of trust associated with observation, the impact of the observer and non-subject specialists.

**Feedback**

Feedback on performance was one of the main instigators of emotions tied to critical incidents discussed during interviews. Experiences of feedback described by participants ranged from exasperation, to confusion on how to improve from the feedback given as illustrated in the following quote:

‘We’re still, as teachers constantly changing and developing aren’t we? We’re all of the time adapting to changing criteria, having to change to this, to that and if we haven’t, if we are hearing all different conflicting feedback all the time, which one is right and who are we jumping for to make them happy and
who are we slightly dismissing because you can’t bend yourself that many different ways all at once?’ (Selena, one-to-one interview)

Further examples were multiple, however, the following interview excerpts demonstrate the emotional connection that still resonated with experiences of feedback:

‘So if even if you were working with a really difficult class and they knew that, that was always really hard. They would still be like “Well actually you still need to do this” and by the nature of observation you always focus of the negative part of it and that’s the thing that sticks in your head even though there normally is a lot of positives.’ (Peta, one-to-one interview)

‘If you get really negative feedback, you don’t even look at it, you don’t even take it into account because you are so angry, so upset with yourself that you just put it to one side and you don’t even take on board the feedback.’ (Zoe, paired interview)

The above quotes illustrate the emotional impact of ‘critical situations’ (Giddens, 1986, p.61) and relate strongly to ‘Affective Events Theory’ or AET, as described by Weiss and Cropanzano showing that ‘affective experiences have a direct influence on job satisfaction’ revealed by the emotional language used in many of the quotes (1996, p.12). When participants discussed observers questioning their teaching methodology, similar reactions were noted along with feelings of powerlessness related to an inability to defend their choices. Emotions such as anger and anxiety that feedback initiated were articulated by interviewees:

‘I felt that I, when I wanted to defend what I had done and explain the specialism to them, I felt like the position of equals was reduced because I wasn’t, they weren’t prepared to listen to the expertise that I had. I felt like they didn’t see me as an expert in any way. I was just a trainee.’ (Zoe, one-to-one interview)

‘I have got myself into trouble for trying to stand up for myself when I have been annoyed.’ (Zoe, paired interview)

‘If you are justifying it, it shouldn’t feel like you are having to, like you are being defensive. This has upset me. I mean if it is the wrong decision fair enough. I’m learning that’s the point, but I just don’t want to feel, it’s not happened often, it is just sometimes. You don’t always agree with the
feedback and there should be a platform for you to express your thinking behind that so that you can learn.’ (Sarah, paired interview)

These reactions are not unique as others described how they felt that their teaching methods were questioned and dismissed by those observing. This illustrated the hierarchy of power (Master, 1984) and feelings of being ‘voiceless’ (Hobson, 2009, p.312) of those new to the profession when they felt unable to speak out to defend themselves. These instances could be deemed an attack on teacher pedagogy, as the agency of the teacher was reduced by the observer. The actions of the observer can once again be compared to that of an ‘authoritative resource’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373) as power was exercised over the teacher by removal of their ability to defend their pedagogy. As discussed in Chapter 2, teacher identity can be shaped by the ‘personal subject construct’ aspect of pedagogy of a teacher (Banks et al., 2005, p.336). When teacher pedagogy is questioned, it may well resonate as a criticism of facets of their identity, provoking an emotional connection as a result.

Feedback deficient in empathy had the biggest impact on participant motivation in the classroom. This is described in the following quote from Xanthe who was in her induction year at the time of the interview but still drew on memories of her earliest observation:

‘Especially when I first got here they didn't give me the chance to discuss the lesson. They were just "You need to do this" and "maybe you could have done it like this." They always looked for negative points.’ (Xanthe, paired interview)

Participants who were new to teaching were subject to a period of instability in not only starting their careers, but also in the context of the school in which they were working. In deeming their teaching to be inadequate but failing to offer suggestions on how to improve, the experience of observation became damaging. This was demonstrated in the negative ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) discussed in the quote from Xanthe. Feedback lacking in empathy or developmental aspects can be damaging to facets of identity of a teacher, such as being impactful upon their resilience. As described by Mansfield et al. (2012), resilience is affected when the emotional and social dimensions are not considered by others, such as in the case of this study, the observer. This can lead to damage of the professional and
motivational dimensions of resilience which collectively if these are eroded can impact upon the agency and facets of a teacher’s identity.

Although it is easy to criticise the observers, their actions can be defended. The language they used and the subjectivity they displayed during feedback on an observation may have been influenced by their identity. Each observer had their own ‘personal subject construct’ (Banks et al., 2005, p.336) and pedagogical knowledge that they may have allowed to permeate into the feedback they provided. This may be why the act of delivering feedback can sometimes be deemed confrontational as two parties, each with their own values, beliefs and pedagogies are challenged with neither party willing to concede. Coupled with lack of relationship and trust of the observer, this may help to explain why observation instigated the emotional reactions that it did with participants in this study.

In contrast to those experiences considered to be negative, feedback from collegial observations was felt to be the most empathetic and developmental to all participants:

‘I’ve found when I get feedback from my Head of Department, it is useful. They know the subject and the classes and I can try new things and discuss them after I have been observed. He [Head of Department] always asks about how we felt the lesson went and what we feel we could improve. I get to guide my development with his help.’ (Hugh, one-to-one interview)

‘I know when I am observed by my Head of Department that they are there to help. They are not going to make my life difficult if something didn’t go well. It is purely developmental.’ (Rebecca, one-to-one interview)

In these examples Hugh and Rebecca talked about their experiences of observation feedback given by their Heads of Department. Although not explicit in their quotes, it is clear that when being observed by someone they felt trusting of, relationships and trust were strong, which are vital in making observation successful as is also highlighted in literature (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999). The importance of trusting relationships are discussed in more detail in the next theme.


**Trusting relationships**

This theme is divided into relational and communication trust. Participants described both as essential to the success of forming positive trusting relationships during the observation process.

**Relational trust**

Treating the problems with the school as a whole, the leadership team at Westward School failed to address the needs of individual teachers within it. Focussing on ‘problematic behaviour rather than enabling behaviour’ (Johnson and Down, 2013, p.703) such as what the teacher was doing wrong rather than how this could be changed and improved in future observations, has been shown to cause teachers to harbour hostilities towards the process (Shah and Harthi, 2014).

Adoption of this approach by the leadership team at Westward caused participants in this study to react unfavourably towards the actions of the leadership team. Participants began to view observers from leadership with contempt as teachers described how they felt that leadership were looking to find fault for the sake of finding fault:

‘I think it’s an atmosphere… you know we have patrol walks, we are a ‘Requires Improvement’ school that aren’t hitting targets so they are wanting to find out where the weaknesses are and I feel like that’s what they are looking for rather than the strengths.’ (Hayley, one-to-one interview)

‘They [the observer] come in and they follow a tick sheet and they focus on not necessarily negative points but it’s easy to get negative points on it, like for example, if you’ve not put up your Bronze, Silver, Gold.’ (Rebecca, paired interview)

This feeling was not unique to these participants. The change in culture at Westward saw teachers begin to collectively support each other emotionally and defend each other during the observations. This can be considered an instance of participants enacting ‘third party’ trust (Deutsch, 1958, p.277) as they developed a ‘them and us culture’ as shown in Ivan and Xanthe’s quotes:
‘I don’t view myself as a problem, I’m not scared of them coming in. I’m not the problem in this place.’ (Ivan, one-to-one interview)

‘Trust as in a relationship where you know the person whether they be someone that’s mentored you or that you have a good working relationship with as a colleague. I think it’s really necessary for observations because taking that feedback on board, if you didn’t trust that person, or respect that person you would just maybe throw that feedback away. It is human nature to maybe not take on board somebody’s advice that you weren’t so keen on.’ (Xanthe, one-to-one interview)

Xanthe’s quote reflects that having a good working relationship with the observer was regarded as pivotal to whether or not feedback was acted upon in subsequent lessons. Of note is the concept of feeling distrustful of the person observing and an unwillingness to accept the feedback given regardless of whether the feedback was positive or otherwise. The need for supportive relationships is further demonstrated in the following quotes:

‘Yeah, I think it is important… you need to trust that that person is there for support and not for judgement firstly and you need to trust what they are saying. You need to trust that what they are saying is genuine and that it is something that you actually find is valuable.’ (Rebecca, one-to-one interview)

‘I feel that when I am observed by my Head of Department that because he tries to help us and take the stress out of observation, he usually goes through what he is looking for before and so I trust him to give me balanced feedback. I don’t always feel this with others observing me, but I do when he does.’ (Hugh, one-to-one interview)

Here both Rebecca and Hugh describe not only relational trust but also competency trust in the observer as being important, particularly when Rebecca describes that what the observer tells you should be ‘genuine'. This is reflected in Hugh’s words as he describes the trust he has in his Head of Department built around clear communication about the focus for the observation.

The above extracts illustrate a hierarchy associated with different types of trust, whereby relational trust was regarded as the most important aspect when being observed. Relational trust was best demonstrated when participants knew their
observers as colleagues or peers. Recognition of the need for positive relationships is not unique to this study and is acknowledged by Hobson and McIntyre (2013). Their work describes that teachers work best in environments where they ‘feel trusted by and are able to trust their colleagues’ (Hobson and McIntyre, 2013, p.359) and where there is a feeling that mentors and others are ‘on their side’ (Hobson, 2009, p.306). The connectivity of emotion with power relates directly to what participants described when they talked about the ease with which they could be observed by colleagues or those from similar teaching backgrounds, for example, a Teach First trainee observing another Teach First trainee. When being observed by those in a more senior post within the school, issues arose. This further illustrated ‘third party’ trust (Deutsch, 1958, p.277) where teachers had built trust amongst themselves to counter the lack of trust that they appeared to feel towards the leadership team of the school.

The impact of trusting relationships, or relational trust, was demonstrated in the paired interviews with vignettes. Interestingly, when participants decided the pairings for the interviews with vignettes, Rebecca chose to work with Olivia. Rebecca was a mentor to Olivia and the two had formed a strong friendship during this period and so felt at ease discussing observation in front of each other without fear of recrimination.

Relational trust was also reflected in responses given in one-to-one interviews. Both Rebecca and Yvonne differed from the other nine participants (see Table 3, Chapter 3) as they acted as mentors to new teachers. As such I felt the need to ask additional questions during their interviews to ascertain if they viewed observation differently to others given their dual role of observed teacher and mentor. Extracts from these interview transcripts to show the different questions that Rebecca and Yvonne were asked, can be seen in Appendix 4.

As seen in the following quote from Yvonne, she felt as a mentor and Head of Department that she needed to work to make her department feel that observations are something to be viewed in a positive light:

‘When I was younger I would automatically assume that someone walking into my room meant that they were checking up on you and now I know that is not the case. I know that I go into colleagues’ lessons purely to steal ideas when I see something good. I think I need to personally make sure
that my department feel the same feeling with formal observations as well. I
think I have to work on getting them to understand they are not being
checked up on. I think we are getting there but I don’t feel as comfortable
doing formal observations as I do informal observations.’ (Yvonne, one-to-
one interview)

Her decision to try to work on changing the views on observation of members of
her department was drawn from her knowledge of the concerns that her team
experienced when formal observations, such as for gaining fully qualified status,
were carried out. This reflects the trusting relationships she had built with her
department. Here the nuance of being a middle leader is shown as ‘duality of
structure’ (Giddens, 1986, p. 25). Yvonne exercised her agency as a middle leader
to try to better the experience of observation for those in the department, reflecting
that the structure of observation can allow agency to be exercised in a
developmental way. In contrast, however, the restriction of agency that the role of
middle leadership can lead to is also illustrated. This is reflected in her words
describing feelings of being uncomfortable when carrying out formal observations
of departmental colleagues. As a middle leader, Yvonne was also influenced by
the power of the ‘allocative resource’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373) when observing and
through her implementing the pro-forma, became an ‘authoritative resource’
(Giddens, 1986, p.373), exerting power over colleagues as a result. The feelings
of unease that accompanied this responsibility and the possible impact on her
relationship with departmental colleagues are revealed not only in her words but
also her desire to improve the practice of observation for her colleagues.

Rebecca’s extract shows that she values the relationship that she had with her
Head of Department during observations and regarded it as important when
receiving feedback on her performance:

‘Depending on the person that’s observing me. So I have quite a lot of
conversations with my Head of Department who I’m quite close to as a
colleague and friend, so I don’t really mind them observing me because I
know it is a completely supportive measure. Whereas if it is someone else,
like a member of SLT or the Head [Principal] who observed me a couple of
years ago for my NQT, that makes me really nervous, like negative.’
(Rebecca, one-to-one interview)
The level of concern about the development and welfare of others within her department illustrated that Yvonne had a degree of empathy with those she worked with and as a result this may have helped her to gain trust from colleagues within the department.

There seemed to be a more trusting relationship with those from similar backgrounds when it came to regarding the observer as competent to judge them, as shown in the following extract:

'I think that the closer they are to kind of your experience, I think you feel more trust of them and their judgement of your teaching. So if someone is senior [in position] to you then it's quite difficult to relate to them or trust them too. See you want them to have empathy with the position you are in and what kind of, where you are meant to be at.' (Zoe, one-to-one interview)

In this quote use of empathy towards the person being observed is of note. A sense of comradery at being observed by those either new to the profession or those that had entered the profession in a similar way, was described as lacking when being observed by members of the leadership team.

**Communication trust**

When participants talked about examples of where they felt aspects of 'communication trust' (Reina and Reina, 2006, p.35) were broken or damaged, this seemed to occur most when what was perceived to be confidential information about an observation outcome was shared openly with others:

'Yeah I think trust is a big issue. You have to trust the person that they are not going to go away and then tell somebody else what went wrong… that it is a private matter between you and them [the observer].' (Hayley, one-to-one interview)

'I think if you don't trust your observer and their judgement, if you don't trust their professional opinion, you don't trust them not to walk out the room and go "Oh they were rubbish!" then I think you are not going to get anywhere. It comes back to what I said about the professional respect and whether you respect a person’s trust is all tied into that. If you don't trust their professional judgement or trust their opinion on the matter, like their
observing you, it's irrelevant. You always dismiss it before you've heard it.’
(Selena, one-to-one interview)

Wanting to understand why the sharing of information was viewed unfavourably, I began to apply both a phenomenological and a psychological interpretation to participant responses. If observation is considered to evoke a sense of vulnerability and exposure, then it is possible that participants felt violated when information about their performance that they considered to be confidential was shared. Relationships were tested as power was lost by teachers and gained by the observer (Kemper, 2006). This resulted in teachers experiencing ‘feelings of isolation and fear of evaluation’ (McBride and Skau, 1995, p.266). The quotes demonstrated that when confidentiality is broken and others have knowledge they can share, teachers can feel anxious ‘about appearing incompetent to their colleagues and themselves— along with— insecurity, embarrassment and shame associated with the fear of being judged’ (Hobson and McIntyre, 2013, p. 354). The reactions of participants in this study implied a fear of shame and the importance they placed upon ‘impression management’ (Goffman, 1971, p.203) of appearing competent in front of peers.

McBride and Skau consider trust as ‘relations built upon confidentiality, consistency, risk taking, honesty, sincerity, and a climate of mutual exchange’ (1995, p.264). All of these were considered to be either diminished or absent when teachers were observed by the leadership team which appeared to impact on how observations by these observers were viewed:

‘Just because they can hold me accountable and make my life a misery, doesn’t mean I necessarily value their feedback. I might fundamentally disagree with their credentials, but if they have the potential to make my life very difficult, I am going to unfortunately jump through that hoop to get what they want.’ (Ivan, one-to-one interview)

Ivan’s quote expresses his concern at the possibility of being treated unfairly if he failed to meet the expected standards. To alleviate these concerns he felt the need to adapt his teaching to fit what the observer wanted to see, demonstrating ‘duality of structure’ (Giddens, 1986, p.25) in action as he used his agency to manipulate the observation outcome. The impact and influence of the observer in the classroom and their impact on practice is discussed in detail in the next theme.
The impact of the observer in the classroom

The presence of the observer in the classroom caused mixed responses in interviews. For many, the presence of an observer induced feelings of anxiety, stress and unease, particularly when existing relationships were either non-existent or lacking with the person/people observing:

‘I always think that I’m doing something wrong. I think it’s the idea of being judged and having someone there… watching every single move and there’s something about that that’s going to be negative. Formal ones I hate… I am absolutely a nervous wreck. I am visibly nervous, I stutter, my words go wrong, all sorts of stuff so I think that’s probably not a true reflection.’ (Selena, one-to-one interview)

Here anxiety was described as physically felt or embodied, including struggling to speak and becoming nervous and flustered. Reasons for this may have included the perceived loss of power from Selena being gained by the observer as they entered into the space of the classroom, which is usually perceived to be owned by the teacher. When power is felt to be taken away from the teacher, the resulting shift in power (Kemper, 2006) is a further example of teacher agency being removed or threatened during observation.

Concerns were also raised with the number of observers present during each observation. One participant described during their one-to-one interview, the anxiety they faced when being observed by more than one observer at once, as was common practice at Westward:

‘I cannot stand two people in my classroom and I am under that pressure at the moment as an NQT to have two people in my room and I think it is unreasonable. You are immediately ill at ease because you are performing to a class but also two adults that usually sit in separate positions in the room. Now I have asked before that they sit together so I only have to focus on my class and I can ignore the observers but they refused and said that that wasn’t acceptable. I think that that was wrong I think that should be my choice.’ (Hayley, one-to-one interview)

Here again power relations appear to be at play when requests of the teacher were ignored. The lack of communication about the need for observers to sit apart
induced feelings of stress which impacted upon the benefit of the observation as the teacher felt their agency in this instance was challenged.

Having an observer in the room was not regarded as problematic when relationships between the observers and observed were strong and trust had been built over time. In these instances, participants described that it was not an issue as they felt that the observer was there to offer advice and not judge performance and so teacher agency was not challenged by the presence of another. Empathy with the teacher was shown as knowledge of the students and their sometimes challenging behaviour was not deemed as an issue caused by the teacher:

‘Just because I think they know what it’s about, they understand the difficulties that some students face with the subject. They understand the hurdles you have as a teacher when it is so subjective, everything you’re doing and like that understanding is important I think … and that empathy you know from one teacher to another teacher sort of thing.’ (Peta, paired interview)

In this quote, Peta described a sense of comradery she felt with the observer who had acted as her mentor during her first year at the school. Participants described this as being strongest when pre-existing relationships were strong. The impact of non-subject specialist observers on perceptions of observation is discussed next.

**Non-subject specialists observing**

When analysing the impact of who carried out an observation, it was noted that there were problems with non-subject specialists judging the performance of a teacher. Participants felt that being observed by someone who did not understand the nuances of the subject meant that appreciation of some of the teaching methods chosen by teachers who were subject specialists was missed. This was described as problematic during crucial observations, such as those for gaining QTS or to pass the first year of the Teach First program as shown in the following explanation:

‘I think since then I’ve changed what I do. That’s what I was practising at the time… and they didn’t recognise those techniques as kind of legitimate pedagogical practice because they weren’t subject specialists and I felt like
I wasn't listened to when I tried to defend my stand point.’ (Zoe, one-to-one interview)

‘It’s now about doing what they want me to do just because they want me to do it in the next observation and then not doing it in the rest of my teaching and just doing it because they want to see it even though they aren’t a subject specialist.’ (Xanthe, paired interview)

‘If it is a non-subject specialist, I know I’ve got to play that general game. Are the students making progress in the subject? Not necessarily. Are they making progress in their [the observers] eyes? Yes.’ (Ivan, one-to-one interview)

The quotes illustrate that participants felt that their agency was reduced as they acted to comply with imposed standards. This suggests that observers were increasingly preoccupied with technical abilities rather than teacher professionalism (Sachs, 2016). The sense of not being listened to because of inexperience was not unique to Zoe as other participants shared her concerns. Once again teacher pedagogy was challenged by lack of ‘school knowledge and pedagogic knowledge’ (Banks et al., 2005, p.335) on the part of the observer. This resulted in teachers questioning their ‘personal subject construct’ (Banks et al., 2005, p.336) facet of their identity. Given that aspects of this are moulded very early in the career of a teacher, any criticism of it, be it direct or perceived, can be taken personally and expressed as a frustration as shown in the participant quotes.

The preceding statements also demonstrate that teaching practice was changed to fall into line with what was expected by observers and again that teacher agency was challenged because of this. Autonomy of the individual was again removed and the freedom to take risks in teaching reduced due to the constraints of the structures imposed by the tick sheet system. Subjectivity between observers was regarded as negative both in literature (Shah and Harthi, 2014, Roberson, 1998) and by participants in this study as demonstrated in the quote:

‘You are trying to fill the criteria that someone else wants rather than what might actually be useful for the lesson.’ (Sarah, paired interview)

While it is useful to be observed by those who are subject specialists, there is a case to reason that if all observers are trained to the same standards then
specialist subject knowledge should not be an issue. While all the previous themes have described the impact of multiple aspects that shape the observation experience, those considered to be the most impactful, referred to as ‘critical incidents’ here, are described in the next theme.

The significance of observation-related critical incidents

What was surprising during both the one-to-one and paired interviews was the emotional connection associated with memories of being observed, in particular receiving feedback, when participants first began teaching. For many participants, these early career critical incidents had shaped their experiences of observation and continued to impact on their perceptions of the process. Affective ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) or ‘essences’ (Husserl, 2012, p.16) drawn from experiences of the process mostly centred on the delivery of feedback, relationships and trust. The influence of these incidents on early career observations was not unique to those completely new to the profession, as those who had moved into their ‘professional life phase’ of four to seven years in teaching (Day and Gu, 2007, p.435), still described early observations and how these continued to influence their opinions of the process. Examples of ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) associated with observation are discussed in the following interview extracts:

‘So like I said going back to my previous example where I’d only been teaching for four days and had had five weeks training to be told, “You’re not doing this, you’re not doing this, you’re not doing this” and things like "when, when you were standing at one end of the classroom there was student at the other end of the classroom using a pencil you need to know that." When I’m four days in my priorities aren’t necessarily him using a pencil or not. One of the things that I’ve been told in my training that I’m really good at is being reflective and when someone gives me some feedback taking it on board quite quickly but if somebody doesn’t tell me how to improve on something then that’s what I find quite difficult.’ (Xanthe, one-to-one interview)

‘I think when certain people walk in, I think you know their expectations and, I think it affects your confidence when there are people that come in that have maybe said things in the past that have not been quite so helpful and
then suddenly you think “Are they going to say something again or…?” and that’s difficult.’ (Yvonne, one-to-one interview)

‘The feedback was incredibly demoralising. If you get knocked by that one small observation it knocks your whole teaching practice because you’ve put everything into that lesson and if they say, "Well we don’t like the lesson" then it’s kind of like saying in your head at the time that they don’t like anything that you do.’ (Hayley, one-to-one interview)

Drawing upon memories of receiving feedback for an observation sent via an email attachment:

‘That made me feel awful because there didn’t seem to be any understanding of the context of the class or the lesson or the fact that I was teaching for like three weeks when that observation happened and the comments still make me feel a bit uncomfortable. I am still aware of that member of staff coming back in and observing me again because I remember them watching me so early in my career.’ (Peta, one-to-one interview)

These quotations show that the emotional connection participants had formed towards observation were a ‘response to previous interpretations, understandings and experiences’ (Lupton, 1998, p.22) and that in future observations ‘what will be felt is shaped by what was felt’ (Denzin, 2007, p.79). Many participants described how they ‘Hate observations, always have’ (Selena, paired interview). Where emotional support for teachers to be observed was lacking, they felt untrusting of observation and observers. The quotes indicate that teachers perceived their agency to be restricted during negative experiences as they were unable to defend their actions both during the observation and at the point of feedback, where the observer could be regarded as an ‘authoritative resource’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373). In this situation, power was taken from the observed teacher as the observer became the structure or ‘authoritative resource’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373) who restricted teacher agency. Power exerted by the observer when acting in this way was impactful upon the emotional dimension of resilience of the teacher causing their stress levels to rise. Consequently, the emotional, social and motivational aspects of resilience were impacted upon. Given that identity, agency and resilience are intertwined with each other, if any of these are diminished early in the career of a teacher, then the repercussions are likely impact on the
professional dimension of resilience resulting in underperformance in the classroom as a result.

For some, early negative experiences continued to harbour feelings of anxiety about being observed, whereas for others, observation was viewed with contempt, deeming it to be merely a game that they had to play in order to succeed in teaching:

‘My first observations… my first one here with SLT went badly because I didn’t play the game. So the next one I did, I played the game and I’ve played the game ever since and I think I’ve done quite well out of that.’
(Ivan, one-to-one interview)

This quote provides a further example of how participants manipulated the structures of the observation pro-forma to their advantage by exercising their ‘knowledgeability’ (Giddens, 1986, p.281), once again illustrating ‘duality of structure’ (Giddens, 1986, p.25) as a real life scenario.

**Additional key themes**

Two additional themes were identified as a result of the inductive approach to the study: participant voice on observation and participant motivations to engage in the study.

**Participant voice on observation**

The contents of this additional theme are drawn from the inductive approach taken to both the one-to-one interviews and also the paired interviews with vignettes. The open approach gave participants the voices that have been described as lacking in other studies (Hobson, 2009). When participants were asked to describe how they would like observation to occur, their responses were all similar in calling for the process to be more collegial and less judgemental. Some participants described a ‘buddy system’ reminiscent of those described by Stoll (2013):

‘I think it’s quite nice, what we do at the moment, like the buddy systems where I observe you, you observe me and then we could almost say, “Well this worked well, why don’t we teach a lesson together?”’ (Selena, one-to-one interview)
At the heart of this response is collegiality and trusting relationships. As participants described in the main themes this was lacking and often tested by the methods employed by the leadership team at Westward. In this example, the structure of observation becomes empowering rather than authoritative. It is possible to give teachers and observers equal status and power, even with the use of an ‘allocative resource’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373) such as the prescriptive observation pro-forma. This was best shown when all parties worked together to overcome the restrictions imposed by the pro-forma by communicating clearly with each other about all aspects of the observation process. This allowed each agent, both the teacher and observer, to increase their ‘transformative capacity’ to bring about changes (Giddens, 1987, p.7).

All participants acknowledged that there was a need for observation in order for their teaching to develop, suggesting that they were more informed about their teaching than they were perhaps believed to be by those who observed them. This again could be likened to ‘knowledgeability’ (Giddens, 1986, p.281) in that the teachers had an innate understanding of what it is to be a teacher drawn from their identity, but how they were able to act was restricted by structures imposed upon them. In purposefully seeking others to work with whom they felt trusting of, the participants positively developed aspects of their resilience and consequently their identity. Choosing to act against the prescriptive observation pro-forma they enhanced and acted upon their ‘active agency’ (Stones, 2005, p.9), shaping the structures to achieve what they wanted from observation. By exercising their ‘knowledgeability’ (Giddens, 1986, p.281) and agency to influence the actions of others, participants made the experience empowering rather than restrictive, mirroring the actions of teachers in Van Tassell’s study (2014).

Given that teachers felt they were in control when working in collegial situations participants created their own ‘psychologically safe’ environments (Hobson and Maxwell, 2017, p.187). This allowed trust to be built and enabled mistakes to be made. Being able to make mistakes in a safe and trusting environment, their resilience was built, helping to shape their identity positively:

‘So in an ideal world I have time to prepare, I choose the day, the class, and the topic and it would be a lesson I could either plan from scratch or be prepared and have a chance, so it would just be, I control it as much as
Participants described how they felt feedback was beneficial when handled as a professional conversation:

‘Feedback that is constructive is always useful. It can be delivered in such a way that it starts on a positive, builds on what could be improved in the middle, and ends on a positive. That is really important, as if you end on a negative you never really think about anything else you have been told you just focus on the negatives. The bit in the middle needs to be framed around questions like "How would you improve such and such?" rather than just giving a list of what has not gone well.’ (Rebecca, paired interview)

Some may argue that allowing teachers control over their observation, such as the choice of the class to be observed, could skew an observation to show the teacher in a favourable light as they may only pick their 'good' classes. This was not something that was mentioned by any of the participants, as all discussed the desire to improve and learn from observation rather than feel demoralised by the experience. The need to be able to choose the class and focus for the observation illustrated the desire held by participants to shape their own agency and remove the ‘mobilization of bias’ (Giddens, 1986, p.15) that they felt the prescriptive pro-forma encouraged when used at Westward.

**Participant motivations to engage with the study**

Although not a theme identified during analysis, the reasons participants gave for wanting to take part in this research are worthy of discussion. Most participants felt frustration with not being able to shape the process of observation to be valuable in helping them develop as a teacher which was coupled with the view that observation is something done to them rather than being useful. Others added that they felt it was useful to be part of research that could better the process as shown in this quote:

‘Observations are something I feel strongly about and I don’t think necessarily they are undertaken in the way that I want them to be, or they haven’t been anyway in the last four years while I’ve been teaching.’ (Rebecca, one-to-one interview)
Other participants, rather endearingly, explained:

‘It is only a few minutes of my time to help try to make something better and help you out.’ (Hugh, one-to-one interview)

This was a sentiment shared by all the participants who gave their time freely. A sense of comradery at being able to affect change by talking to me was also described. Many felt that the research was worthwhile and a platform for them to try to better the process as described by Hayley in a one-to-one interview:

‘I think it is important that we reflect on how we are doing observations because it is such a pivotal part of teaching at the moment and it seems to me that there is a lot of pressure surrounding it. As an ITT and an NQT I’ve been observed a lot and I think that it is a valuable experience, but I also think that it has damaged my teaching sometimes and I think it would be interesting to get answers in order to rectify this problem and give a bit more power to teachers.’ (Hayley, one-to-one interview)

The desire of participants to take part could be likened to them exercising their agency as they were able to give their voices on an aspect of their career which was important to them but which they were often unable to control. Their motivations to participate seemed to be influenced by their moral values and beliefs in trying to make observation a formative process. The sense of ‘giving power to the teachers’ described by Hayley endorsed the sense of agency that offering their voices to this study provided.

Summary

Use of thematic analysis and drawing upon connections from literature throughout this chapter allowed different perspectives of observation to be identified. Relating these themes to teacher agency and identity has enabled the emotional connection with observation to be established. Using key aspects identified in the themes, the next chapter discusses the different typologies of observation and relates ‘critical’ incidents to social psychological perspectives framed within Structuration theory. The themes highlight issues such as trust and also problems associated with feedback that lacks both developmental aspects and empathy. At the centre of all the themes was the importance of relationships between the observer and teacher. When these were regarded as strong, the observation
experience was considered to be formative as teachers felt they were trusted to do their jobs and had a degree of agency to do so. Some observations carried out were considered to be lacking in developmental aspects and restrictive to teacher agency as teachers were unable to defend their teaching choices at the point of feedback. The different typologies drawn from these findings are discussed in Chapter 6.
Chapter 6. Findings II: Typologies of observation

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section of the chapter introduces the different typologies of observation identified from the reported experiences of ECTs at Westward School. These are explored using aspects of Structuration theory (Giddens, 1986) to illustrate the impact of the typologies on teacher agency and identity.

The second part of the chapter discusses the impact of critical incidents induced by each of the typologies of observation. Social psychological concepts are used to highlight how agency and identity of all involved in observation are challenged and how these can impact on perceptions of observation as a result.

Experiences of observation

Using the words of participants, thematic analysis allowed three main observational experiences, or typologies to be identified. Within each of these typologies were aspects of multiple themes, such as different experiences of receiving feedback, each of which were influential upon teacher agency and identity. The typologies were classified as: Absent, Brutal and Collegial. In addition, another experience of observation was identified: that of the Inspection experience.

Viewed as impactful on teacher moral values and pedagogy, occurrences of each of these typologies could be deemed as ‘critical incidents’ as for many participants, their impact became a turning point in how they viewed observation, whether positively or negatively.

Each of the typologies are described in the chapter in the order of how often they were reported by participants, with the most favoured placed first- that of the Collegial observation, followed by the ‘Absent’ and then the least favoured but most prevalent in discussion, the ‘Brutal’ experience. Participants experienced up to five ‘Absent’ experiences a day, and around one ‘Collegial’ observation a week, depending upon their ability to incorporate these into their teaching week. The regularity of the Brutal experience was not discussed by participants in interviews and so it is difficult to quantify how often it occurred.
The Collegial typology

In this study the ‘Collegial’ experience was the most preferred of the observation typologies. Participants described this experience as one where they were involved in all aspects of the observation process from the outset and that they felt that their opinions and knowledge was valued by all parties involved:

‘I think that level of choice of being able to show what you want to show at the right time is important. I think if you are in like a really good part of your teaching where you know that you’ve got this class and you are doing some really great things you should be able to say, "Okay I want to have my observation now with this class because I think you will see some really good stuff that I’m doing." Last week my Teach First colleague came and watched one of my lessons and then he said, "What do you think the issues are? Why do you think those issues occurred and what are you going to do about it?" He didn’t share his opinion of the lesson. So more like teacher focussed reflection. I think this is ideal.’ (Zoe, one-to-one interview)

Here the collegial and trusting aspect of being observed by another who has shared a similar route into teaching or experienced ‘critical situations’ (Giddens, 1986, p.61) such as the changing context experienced at Westward is demonstrated.

Removal of formal judgement grades allowed participants to be open and honest about an aspect of their teaching that they may have been struggling with, such as classroom management. Considered to be beneficial, these types of observations were:

‘Building and developing altogether in a less critical way. "I can learn this from you" and "I can learn this from you." You are looking at things to learn from each other… always looking for positives. "You did this really well, I’m going to try this in my lesson, why don’t we try and do this together?" rather than, "Didn’t do that great, don’t do that again." Always pick out the positives’ (Selena, one-to-one interview).

In this quote previous observations experienced with other ECTs are recounted. Through the use of positive language during feedback Selena described how she felt it was possible to develop the skills of a colleague. Working collaboratively to
try to improve an aspect of teaching, demonstrated how participants used their ‘transformative capacity’ (Giddens, 1987, p.7).

The ability to defend their teaching choices in an environment without fear of repercussions was considered an important aspect in allowing them to exercise their agency:

‘It’s being given the opportunity [during feedback] to explain. Even if what you did wasn’t right, you can have an opportunity to explain and say, "I did it this way because of this, however, it didn’t go quite so well, so in the future I can do it another way."’ (Sarah, one-to-one interview).

Parallels can be drawn with the various collegial methods of observation and feedback discussed in Chapter 2, to those described by participants. When teachers felt that they had control over their professional development, observation was more likely to be viewed favourably. This resulted in feelings of empowerment which appeared to be integral to driving participants’ motivation. Being motivated seemed to help to improve participants’ self-esteem and resilience and illustrated that ‘supportiveness creates a climate of trust’ (McBride and Skau, 1995, p.265). In this typology both the identity and agency of teachers and observers was not challenged but developed constructively. Clearly in the scenarios described, the ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) or ‘essences’ (Husserl, 2012, p.16) that participants associated with being observed were positive. This illustrates that calls from literature for collegiality during observation (Van Tassell, 2014; Stoll, 2013) are justified as the perceptions of all participants in this study were positive when experiences of this typology were recounted. Participants found and enacted their own agency by designing their own structure for observation as a response to the often un-developmental observation crib sheets or pro-forma used at Westward School. Using observation to share ideas for lessons, develop pedagogy and aid each other in enhancing aspects of teaching such as classroom management, participants rejected the confines of a crib sheet pro-forma. The Collegial typology demonstrated that aspects of ‘third party’ trust were strong (Deutsch, 1958, p.277), helping participants feel that they were in control of their development. This meant they could act to exercise their agency, something which was felt to be lacking, in particular, when they were observed by the leadership team of Westward. This typology showed not only the need but also the usefulness of trust and clear communication during observation.
If leadership teams of schools were to draw upon aspects of this typology and make the structures used for observation less inhibiting, this may aid teachers in building resilience and responsibility for their professional development. This will be especially important once the ECF (DfE, 2019a) has been introduced as ECTs will need to take control of their development needs. Ideally, the framework will be used as a structure of empowerment for ECTs rather than one that may cause extra undue stress and anxiety if used as another pro-forma to judge ability.

**The Absent typology**

During the ‘Absent’ observation experience, the observer arrived, scrutinised a section of the lesson and then left, either failing to give any feedback or providing feedback which was minimal and unbeneficial, such as a copy of the completed tick sheet:

‘I mean a couple of times I’ve just had forms emailed to me like learning walk forms and there has been no opportunity to defend your teaching choices… how do you improve?’ (Peta, one-to-one interview).

This type of observation resulted in frustration and caused participants to question the purpose of the observation when little or no feedback was given:

Rebecca: ‘Like ‘drop-ins’, have you ever had any feedback from them?’

Olivia: ‘No never, have you?’

Rebecca: ‘No. If we don’t get feedback, what’s the point?’ (Rebecca and Olivia, paired interview)

Frustration may have been the result of participants’ agency being restricted and identity being challenged indirectly due to them being denied the opportunity to defend their teaching choices at the point of feedback. Rendered by participants in this study to be unhelpful in developing the practice of the teacher, it resulted in feelings of power abuse on the part of the observer, in particular when findings from observations were not shared with the teacher. The secrecy enshrined in this form of observation meant that many of the participants began to harbour distrust of the leadership team as discussed in Chapter 5 in the ‘Trusting Relationships’ theme. Adoption of this type of observation impacted upon aspects of teachers’ emotional and motivational resilience (Mansfield et al., 2012; Tait, 2008) and consequently their level of agency to teach how they wanted. As a result, many
participants described how they changed their teaching to try to meet the criteria of the pro-forma.

Participants also began to question if there was a reason why they were being observed so many times in a day and became fearful of repercussions if they were deemed to be not teaching adequately:

‘In my head I’ll be like "Have I done something wrong and they are just not telling because they don’t want me to be uncomfortable?"’ (Selena, one-to-one interview)

This was also articulated when participants described that they felt that ‘Leadership look for negatives’ (Xanthe, paired interview) which, coupled with lack of clear communication about the purpose of observations, caused distrust to grow. This typology illustrated the power that external structures can have on internal structures within a school. By responding to feedback from Ofsted, a macro structure, the leadership team of Westward chose to implement this approach to observation. Observing teachers for short periods, multiple times a day without meaningful feedback meant the internal micro structures of the school challenged teachers’ agency and facets of their identities, such as their levels of motivational resilience. Given that aspects of resilience help to shape the identity of an individual, it is easy to understand why an emotional response to observation may follow, particularly when a teacher feels aspects of their resilience are being reduced. Persistent experiences like those described in the Absent typology could, and in some cases with participants in this study, did, lead to an emotional response, reducing teacher views of observation to be negative as a consequence.

The Brutal typology

The ‘Brutal’ experience was one where participants described feelings of inadequacy following observation:

‘It was possibly the worst experience I’ve ever had. I’d only been teaching for four days and had had five weeks training to be told, “You’re not doing this… when you were stood at one end of the classroom there was student at the other end of the classroom using a pencil”… It isn’t really helpful.’ (Xanthe, Paired interview)
'They didn't tell me what progress I had made, it was just "Yeah that is bad, what are you going to do about it?" It wasn’t framed well, it was so demoralising. It was more like a telling off rather than a supportive measure which I think observations should be.’ (Hayley, one-to-one interview)

This was perhaps the most affecting of all the observation typologies described by participants, illustrating that removal of teacher agency can result in teacher identity being negatively affected. Described as ‘Brutal’ by one participant (Peta, one-to-one interview), these observations were taken personally and seen by participants as criticism of their teaching abilities. This resulted in feelings of being ‘fearful of observation’ (Selena, one-to-one interview) suggesting a perceived lack of power by the observed teacher (Kemper, 2006).

Participants’ opinions were often ignored, in particular at the point of feedback, as they were regarded as ‘just a trainee’ or ‘not experts’ (Zoe, paired and individual interviews). An example of experiencing this typology is described by Peta in the following statement:

‘They didn’t give me any useful feedback. It was just brutal.’ (Peta, one-to-one interview)

Literature describes how fear of receiving a poor observation outcome can be demotivating (Page, 2011), which is echoed in the words expressed by participants in this study. A sense of dismay was articulated by participants as to the unhelpful and unfeeling feedback given and the lack of concession afforded to new teachers who had only just started their teaching career:

‘I’ve had quite a lot of feedback sessions where it has all been negative and you’ve been judged as a teacher on that one lesson and it might be that that lesson has gone terribly. You can’t judge all of my teaching on that one lesson that might not have gone well.’ (Rebecca, one-to-one interview)

This could be considered as another illustration of a structure being used as a tool of manipulation and compliance rather than of benefit. The external influence of government imposed structures was manifest as an internal structure that was unhelpful and lacked the developmental elements that were considered as vital to the success of observation by participants. The ramifications of introducing an externally influenced structure as an internal structure at Westward was hugely influential upon teachers’ agency and identities early in their careers. Both the
Absent and Brutal typologies demonstrated that internally and externally influenced structures continued to resonate in the psyche long after they were experienced.

The above typologies described observations that were carried out at Westward for internal accountability, whereas the next experience describes observations carried out for external accountability of the school, that of the ‘Inspection’ experience.

**The Inspection experience**

When describing experiences of being observed by Ofsted or DfE, participants focused on how the feedback made them feel but did not relay their experiences of the actual observation itself. As a result, it was not possible to estimate the extent to which Collegial, Absent and Brutal observations were experienced by participants during Ofsted.

Many participants felt that Ofsted was a ‘gold star’ of judgement as it allowed them to receive developmental feedback and positive recognition of their choice of pedagogy and teaching actions which had often been lacking in observation feedback from observers from Westward. While relationships with the person observing were considered to be important when being observed by someone within the school, this was not the case with Ofsted or the DfE. Participants considered themselves to be:

‘On an even playing field. They don’t know me and I don’t know them so I feel that what they tell me is the truth.’ (Sarah, Paired interview)

For some the validation of their work by Ofsted gave them a sense of satisfaction knowing that they were doing something positive in their teaching:

‘I think that when Ofsted did give me positive feedback, I was kind of like "Oh this big company thinks that I’m good."' (Zoe, one-to-one interview)

‘I’ve been observed once by Ofsted and I think when they say you have done something well it is kind of a nice boost.’ (Hugh, one-to-one interview)

The feedback delivered by Ofsted was seen to be supportive and was almost always respected more than that given by members of the observation team at Westward. In spite of this though, participants were also fully aware that an Ofsted
visit was only a ‘snapshot’ of their teaching and so participants were also willing to take on board the views of other observers:

‘But they also only saw something really small so I do value someone who’s seen me more than once over a kind of blank of that.’ (Zoe, one-to-one interview)

‘But at the same point if I’ve been observed by Ofsted and then say I was observed by a teacher here and they both gave me aspects to improve on I’d still take all at hand.’ (Hugh, one-to-one interview)

Importantly for some participants, they felt that a good grade or feedback from an external observer offered validation of their work:

‘So I had Ofsted observing me and the feedback that they gave me, yeah I’m definitely more likely to take that on board more than somebody from this school, like somebody just doing like a learning walk or something like that. I think that you’ve got that and you can say, "I’ve got an outstanding from Ofsted."’ (Rebecca, one-to-one interview)

Participants’ views of external observer judgement are not unique to this study and has been noted in other research to enhance teacher enthusiasm by offering teachers reassurances about their performance and providing often much needed validation of their work (Adams, 2017).

Possible reasons for the different perspectives offered about Ofsted and DfE observation may relate to teacher agency. As an external structure, Ofsted is often considered to limit teacher agency, especially when the consequences of a poor inspection can be used by leadership teams in a punishing way as shown in incidents of the Absent and Brutal typologies. Ofsted or DfE visits in this study were viewed as an opportunity for participants to show off the best aspects of their teaching. The freedom to deliver a lesson in whichever way the teacher wanted was considered liberating as the structures of school policies and the regimes that participants had to adhere to that restricted their agency were not used by external observers.
The key characteristics of each type of observation typology and experience are shown in Table 4. As can be seen in the findings from this study, the Collegial and Inspection experience were most likely to induce feelings of positive self-esteem and offer a degree of validation of quality of teaching.
The content of the dark grey headed columns relate to the structural aspects that impact upon observation, the final column describes the inferences from ECTs perspectives and highlights the subjective and emotional experiences described with each type of observation typology.

The next section of the chapter relates the social psychological aspects of the observation typologies to agency and identity caused by critical incidents when being observed.

**The social psychological aspects of observation-related critical incidents**

The observation typologies highlighted the impact of critical incidents during observation and how these influence the agency and identity of ECTs. There appeared to be three overarching and interconnecting aspects that made an observation experience ‘critical’ as identified from participants’ responses during the analysis and discussion of findings section. They were:

- Challenges to aspects of teacher identity
- The delivery of feedback on performance
- Relationships with the observer, including trust.

The interrelation of these key aspects is shown in Figure 17. This diagram illustrates how the key aspects relate to and influence each other. The resulting emotional connection/memory traces associated with observation is positioned at the centre of the circles where they overlap. The circles are placed in a box representing the structure of observation that teachers and observers are accountable to during the process of observation. When one or more aspects were challenged or developed during observation, then a negative or positive ‘memory trace’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377), or ‘essence’ (Husserl, 2012, p.16), was formed which impacted on teacher identity and resilience. When negative ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) associated with observation were formed, their impact upon the benefit and acceptance of observation in the future and the effect on trusting relationships was noted as lasting. Instances such as the Absent and Brutal typologies resulted in a perceived lack of agency of the teacher. This resulted in feelings of identity, trust and agency being attacked when trying to
defend performance during delivery of feedback, triggering in an emotional connection, or a critical incident.

Figure 17: The three influencing factors of observation that form positive or negative memory traces.

![Diagram showing three overlapping circles labeled Feedback, Trusting relationships, and Identity, with a label for Emotional connection/memory traces.]

When each aspect was regarded as positive, such as trusting relationships with the observer, coupled with feedback that was developmental, then observation had a positive emotional connection. This resulted in teachers feeling confident as facets of their identity were developed during the experience and were best illustrated in this study during instances of the Collegial typology of observation.

The importance of the Collegial typology was revealed during interviews when participants described actively looking to each other for comradery in order to build their own support network to help them to improve their teaching. Teachers found their own sense of agency and control over their development by working positively with others they felt trusting of, developing their resilience and shaping their identities in an empowering way. Whether the collegial approach was a reaction to the unfavourable approach that leadership of Westward were adopting towards observation, or a method implemented in order to cope with the demands
of the ‘panopticon’ (Foucault, 1995, p.201) within which participants were working, was not made explicit during interviews. In seeking out others who were experiencing similar situations to theirs, both social and moral support was gained through talking openly about perceived weaknesses, helping to overcome feelings of ‘perceived injustices’ (Hobson and Maxwell, 2017, p.181) that were manifest when being observed by the leadership team. This approach is vital in not only building resilience (Tait, 2008), but also in aiding teacher professional learning (Opfer and Pedder, 2011) where strong trusting relationships are built to help ongoing development, something all teachers need if they are to remain in the profession.

Observation, critical incidents and teacher agency and identity

It appears that observation can and does impact on teacher agency by challenging personal beliefs, moral values, self-esteem and motivation. When teacher agency is tested by critical incidents caused by instances of the Absent and Brutal typologies, negative emotional connections with observation can form, rendering the practice to be unsuccessful. Figure 18 shows the balance between influences to teacher agency and the structures that can challenge or restrict their agency in schools. Structures and agency are often perilously balanced with different structures impacting upon different aspects of teacher agency at different times. Furthermore, the process of observation can be classed as polemical with agency and structures often acting in opposition to each other consequently impacting on teacher beliefs, moral values and motivations. Ultimately this effects a teacher’s emotional connection with their work which can force many to question their teaching identity.

The polemical positions of teacher agency and structures shown in Figure 18 can be explained using ‘duality of structure’ (Giddens, 1986, p.25). Teacher agency or the micro aspects, acted in opposition to the macro structures used and imposed by the school. This duality can be both constraining and enabling to the identity of a teacher. Teacher identity would ideally sit at the centre of the scale whereby balance is given between structures and agency. Given the fluidity with which situations can change in schools, teacher identity is shaped by aspects of both poles and at times is drawn increasingly towards one pole or another, or on occasions both. When both poles pull in opposite directions this could be taken to
represent a time when teacher identity is most challenged, such as when beginning their career. As the teacher strives to meet the multiple demands of structures placed upon them, not just by observation, aspects of both their agency and subsequently their identity are placed under pressure. In these examples, it can be inferred that the moral values and ethics of a teacher are placed under strain, sometimes to their limit. This may be why observation experiences such as the Absent and Brutal provoked the emotional reactions that they did.

Figure 18: The balance of agency versus structure.

Currently constraining in nature, as perceived by participants in this study, the practice of observation at Westward School could become an enabling, developmental process. In order for this to occur, observation would need to be more collegial and feedback on performance would need to be transformed to follow an open approach such as ‘Feedforward’ (Goldsmith, 2003) discussed in Chapter 2.

This may help to lessen the impact that observation appears to have on aspects of teacher identity by allowing teachers to exercise and build facets of their teacher identities, such as their pedagogy and morals to shape the observation process to be useful.
Observer agency can also be challenged during the process, hence why they are included in the diagram. They too have their own identity whose aspects may well be challenged or restricted when they have to carry out observations. They are also beholden to the external and internal structures imposed upon schools as they try to implement them when they observe. External structures such as the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2011) or the ECF (DfE, 2019a) can and could become constraining or enabling of agency of both the observer and teacher, depending upon how they are used. If used to solely observe teachers in a non-collegial way, each of these structures could become constraining and disempowering to teachers and observers. If approached collegially, both the Teachers’ Standards (DfE, 2011) and the ECF (DfE, 2019a) could become empowering structures to all who use them, shaping and forming positive critical incidents, enhancing resilience of both the teacher and observer as a result.

**Impact of leadership actions on perceptions of observation**

The leadership team at Westward School had to instigate changes to try to move the school quickly from the ‘Requires improvement’ Ofsted grading during the 2017–18 academic year. In doing so they had to act in an assertive manner to execute the changes as they were under pressure from both the academy sponsor and also the DfE to move forward quickly with improvements. The rapidity with which the changes were implemented appeared to cause a break-down of trust between teachers and the leadership team. This could be likened to a critical incident or the ‘critical situations’ Giddens (1986, p.61) describes whereby those who experience extreme changes in a short space of time are subject to periods of high anxiety and a breakdown of trust. In failing to discuss the routine changes and their purpose with teachers, ‘communication trust’ (Fullan, 2003, p.66) between leadership and teachers was tested.

The sudden changes imposed by the SLT and enacted by SLT and MLT of the school without teacher consultation aligned with the ‘Controller’ discourse of leadership (Western, 2012, p.16). While implementation of this form of leadership has strengths in improving results and efficiency in a crisis, it can damage trust and create ‘employee alienation, resentment and resistance’ (Western, 2012, p.16) demonstrated in some of the participant quotes used in the themes.
Whilst it is easy to criticise the actions adopted by schools such as the SLT of Westward, it is important to note that their actions were influenced by pressures being placed upon them by others, principally in the case of Westward, from the academy sponsor and government agencies. In these circumstances, leadership have their autonomy or agency reduced when the structures of outside agencies, or macro structures, begin to impact on them. At Westward the ‘macro’ influences upon leadership had to be addressed in order for them to meet the demands of political and public accountability (Sachs, 2016; Møller, 2013). In doing this the Principal had to try to influence the ‘meso’ layer- that of the ‘existing professional culture’ which can be difficult to achieve (Wallace and Tomlinson, 2012, p.148). From my position as a teacher, it seemed that in order to try to change the prevailing culture at Westward, the leadership team, in particular the Principal, needed to be seen to be acting in a timely manner to confront the problems that had been in danger of overwhelming the school as a result of challenging Ofsted ratings. Interpreting Giddens’ work, Stones would describe this position as one where ‘structure enters into the constitution of the agent, and from here into the practices that this agent produces’ (2005, p.5). The actions of the Principal or ‘agent’ were initiated by outside agencies or ‘structures’ and as a result of the pressures created by these, I perceived that the Principal had to change their usual leadership style to one that was better suited to trying to instigate change rapidly. This I believe resulted in actions including unannounced observations, book trawls, drop-in observations and duty checks. For those new to the school, what had become unrelenting pressures must have impacted as a first impression on how they felt about the leadership team, particularly SLT, and the school as a whole. As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, ‘third party’ trust (Deutsch, 1958, p. 277) began to be harboured as a ‘them and us’ culture of the teachers supporting each other while the leadership team were viewed unfavourably. SLT were considered to be the ‘third party’. This situation created a negative atmosphere where trust was tested and ironically felt unlikely to be conducive to moving the school forward in its aim to improve. The actions of the leadership team seemed to be out of character to my experiences of them and were an example of an ‘unintentional breach of trust’ (Reina and Reina, 2006, p.7) which damaged relationships that had otherwise been quite amicable between leadership and teachers. In striving to instigate changes quickly, the leadership team illustrated that they too were constrained by the structures imposed by outside agencies. In this instance, on
reflection, I appreciate that the Principal and the leadership team of Westward, in a similar way to the teachers under scrutiny, had their agency challenged and consequently could be described as ‘voiceless’ (Hobson, 2009, p.312).

Had the leadership team chosen to action the ‘Five facets of trust’ (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999, p184), introduced in Chapter 2, their actions may have been better accepted and the negativity towards them may have been minimised. Allowing teachers to be part of the changes, leadership would have been likely to gain ‘followership’ (Grint and Holt, 2011, p.7) from the teachers which may have helped build trust during this turbulent time. As noted in this study, some Heads of Department were aware of the impact of the increased pressures that the new routines introduced at Westward were having on members of their department and acted to try to alleviate extra stress on colleagues where they possibly could. In doing this they exercised their agency to try to make the imposed structures of the ‘allocative resources’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373) more developmental. In doing so trusting environments for those within their departments were created.

As McBride and Skau state ‘School leaders need to create an environment in which teachers develop a sense of empowerment and connectedness’ (1995, p. 262). If a more trusting approach had been adopted and efforts made to establish it, then the changes may have been more readily accepted.

**Teacher well-being and observation**

Many participants described the impact of observations upon their well-being including the pressure to perform for observations:

‘I find it quite stressful and it can affect my confidence in terms of how I am in the classroom.’ (Yvonne, one-to-one interview)

Feelings of inadequacy and denial were described when comparing their performance to others:

‘It’s this disillusionment that you live this perfect, like you can do it and all these other teachers can do it and everyone else is pulling it off. What you actually need is someone to say, “Do you know what? It is crap for me too.”’ (Selena, paired interview)

Comparing performance to others and denial of acceptance of struggling with the stress of observations and the role of teaching illustrate the pressures that many
ECTs allude to and further illustrates feelings that have been described in literature (Hobson and McIntryre, 2013). By putting on a false impression that participants are coping with the stress of being a new teacher and the pressures of observation, Goffman’s (1971) ideas that individuals change their behaviour to appear competent in front of others is demonstrated.

In contrast to feelings of inadequacy, occurrences of the Collegial observation, were regarded as positive:

‘I find it very positive actually, especially when being observed by my Head of Department and members of my department. They are quite good at giving you positives and asking you what you think you can do to improve. A lot of the times they just give useful hints and tips.’ (Hugh, one-to-one interview)

‘When the member of staff that observes me is my line manager [former mentor], they are very, very supportive. I feel comfortable in saying, “That went really badly, can I do it again?” I do feel supported. When it is a drop-in observation and stuff like that, then I find them to be not as supportive.’ (Yvonne, one-to-one interview)

‘I know when I am observed by my department colleagues, I see them a lot and they know me, so I trust them and their feedback on my teaching. I never get that feeling of “What if I am doing something wrong?”’ (Olivia, one-to-one interview)

The difference in the way in which observation appeared to impact indirectly upon ECTs’ well-being illustrates the importance of positive, trusting relationships. When these are established, ECTs feel that they are able to exercise their agency and control development of their teaching identity, then positive ‘memory traces’ are formed (Giddens, 1986, p.377).

**Summary**

This chapter has brought together the different typologies of observation related to experiences of ECTs at Westward School from analysis of the data they provided to this study. In instances of the Collegial typology, teachers controlled their own agency as they were motivated to look beyond the Absent and Brutal typologies to find a method that enabled them to develop and improve their self-esteem and
facets of their teaching identity. As a consequence of exercising their agency, aspects of the identities of participants, such as their levels of resilience were increased.

Chapter 7 draws the thesis to a close and discusses contributions to knowledge, recommendations as well as possible further research that could occur to build upon the findings of this study.
Chapter 7. Conclusions and Implications

This final chapter draws the thesis to a close. The research questions are addressed using aspects of Structuration theory (Stones, 2005; Giddens, 1986) and recommendations for future approaches to observation are given. The contribution to theory and practice, and the limitations of the study along with possible future research are discussed. Also provided is my experience of sharing the findings with Westward School. The chapter concludes with a final reflection on the study.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to identify which aspects of observation affected ECTs’ perceptions of the process. Prior research discussed in the Literature Review focussed upon aspects of observation such as the protocols implemented, the emotional aspects associated with teaching and reasons which can be used to explain teacher attrition (Page, 2011; Gold, 1996). This study contributes further to this body of knowledge by giving ECTs their ‘voice’ on their perceptions of observation and the emotional responses triggered by these. The data generated was able to provide insights beyond an analysis of the practical aspects of observation to consider the role of structure and agency on ECTs’ experiences and how they impacted on the development of their teaching identities.

The findings from this study build on those identified in literature by highlighting the important role of trusting relationships when being observed and receiving feedback on performance. Using aspects of Giddens’ (1986) Structuration theory has helped to further develop understanding of how classroom observation as a process can be considered paradoxical: it can both constrict and enable teacher agency, demonstrating ‘duality of structure’ in action (Giddens, 1986, p.25).

The main findings of the study were:

- The three main typologies of observation experience: the Absent, Brutal and Collegial. Each of these impacted upon the level of agency that ECTs could exercise and resulted in an emotional connection being associated with the practice.
• When carried out as described in the Collegial typology, observation was considered to be developmental to facets of teachers' identities allowing them to exercise their agency as they chose. Participants regarded this type of experience to be empowering as they became ‘authoritative resources’ (Giddens, 1986, p 373), taking charge of their development needs and building their resilience as a consequence.

• The Absent experience was felt to be unhelpful in aiding ECTs in development of their teaching identity. Issues with this experience centred on lack of or feedback that was minimal. This was exacerbated by the volume of this type of observation that ECTs experienced daily. Consequently, the intensity of this type of observation often left participants feeling that they had done something wrong due to the number of times that they were being observed on a daily basis. For some participants this led to fear of repercussions of poor performance.

• The Brutal experience was deemed to be the most negative of the observation experiences. Feelings associated with this type of observation were both damaging to teacher resilience and restrictive of the degree of agency that ECTs could exercise. The emotional connection, or ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) that ECTs associated with this type of observation was affective, impacting upon their confidence and at times their 'emotional dimension' of resilience (Mansfield et al., 2012, p.362).

• In addition, participants talked about the validation provided by feedback from Inspection observations which offered a different perspective to the often negative experiences described in literature (Perryman, 2007).

The different typologies of experience identified in this study revealed that when aspects of trust, relationships and facets of identity were damaged during observation, the consequences impacted upon teacher agency and identity, shaping teachers’ ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) of the process. Feelings of disillusionment and for some participants, a fear of being observed were triggered as a consequence. For other participants, the damage to trust and aspects of their resilience resulted in feelings of contempt towards the process reducing it to be a game that could be manipulated. Both scenarios illustrate that damage to aspects of trust, relationships and identity are not conducive to the process of observation being beneficial.
Addressing the Research Questions

The research questions are addressed using examples from each of the typologies identified in this study and aspects of Structuration theory (Stones, 2005; Giddens, 1986).

Addressing the main research question:

- How does the experience of classroom observation impact on new teachers emotionally?

It is clear from the sample of participants in this study that classroom observation does have an emotional impact upon ECTs. The impact is a result of the two significant elements to the observation; the observation itself and the feedback (if offered). As defined in the themes identified in this study, participants described emotions ranging from fear to frustration as well as becoming upset during the observation process. When participants talked positively about being observed it was usually when they worked collegially with those they considered to be trustworthy and had good working relationships with, as described in the ‘Collegial' typology identified in Chapter 6. In instances of the Collegial typology, ECTs were able to act upon their agency, using their ‘knowledgeability’ (Giddens, 1986, p.281) of the internal politics of the school to affect the structures used for observation such as the pro-forma, the purpose of the observation and the way in which it was carried out. When observations were not regarded as collegial, such as described in the Absent and Brutal typologies of experience, participants regarded observation unfavourably. As described in Chapter 5, there were many interconnecting reasons as to why being observed impacted upon participants emotionally. It appeared that when an aspect of their teaching identity was challenged and their agency in the classroom was reduced, teachers in this study perceived a loss of power and felt their knowledge was not valued. This resulted in negative emotional connections and vice versa when the experiences were positive.

- How is classroom observation perceived by new teachers?

The reported perceptions of ECTs at Westward School offered a mixture of both positive and negative experiences of observations. These differing accounts seemed to centre on the purpose of observation and how feedback about performance was presented. Unannounced and drop-in observations were
interpreted from the words of participants to be viewed with an air of suspicion, whereas those of the Collegial typology were viewed more favourably. The reasons for this have been discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6 but are thought to stem from feelings of lack of trust of the observer, be they SLT or those who observe and feedback their findings from observations to the SLT.

A lack of trust seemed to arise when feedback was either not shared with the teacher, or was scant and/or perceived to be of little benefit by the ECT receiving it. This seemed to be related to participants recalling experiences of a critical incident of the Absent or Brutal typology. These experiences were described during the one-to-one and paired interviews, particularly when participants spoke about their early experiences of being observed. In these instances, delivery of feedback, when given, was considered to be damaging, resulting in the formation of negative ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377). As noted in this study, if early observations are perceived to be negative, then the impact of being observed can have long lasting consequences on how a teacher engages with observation and receives feedback on their performance.

- How does the person carrying out the observation impact on how it is perceived by those being observed?

Participants in this study described that when the observer was of a higher status than they were feelings of distrust of the observer often materialised, something also highlighted as problematic in literature (Shah and Harthi, 2014). When the observer was of equal status or had similarities to the teacher being observed, such as being a fellow ECT who had entered teaching via the same route, for example, Teach First, perceptions of the observer were positive and could be likened to those described in the Collegial typology. The distrust of a higher status observer again suggested that participants were drawing upon ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) of either the Absent or Brutal typologies, where relationships with the observer were non-existent or had been damaged through past interactions. This can be related to the interconnectedness of aspects of observation, described in Figure 17, Chapter 6, where trusting relationships were considered to be one of the most influential aspects of observation and whether or not it was considered to be beneficial.
How does the method used for observation affect the value placed on it by teachers?

The tick sheet pro-forma used for many observations at Westward School was met with criticism and in some cases ridicule by participants. All participants realised that it was a simple way to assess their teaching but questioned its value when they could merely change their regular teaching methods to suit a box being ticked. They also felt that the pro-forma restricted their agency as they worked to try to meet the multiple criteria in the boxes of the pro-forma (see Figure 16, Chapter 5). This could be regarded as an example of ‘duality of structure’ (Giddens, 1986, p.25) in action as these scenarios show that the pro-forma was both enabling and constraining of teacher agency. The preferred type of observation pro-forma had no boxes to tick and instead focussed solely on helping a teacher to develop a specific aspect of their teaching, such as behaviour management or questioning technique. When this approach was adopted, where the focus for the observation was chosen by both the teacher and the observer and the tick sheet pro-forma was either adapted or not used, participants felt that the observation experience was developmental. This resulted in a sense of shared agency and control over the structure of the pro-forma as both the observer and observed teacher could be considered ‘authoritative resources’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373). In these instances, the collegial approach was used by participants when they were observing each other for developmental purposes and illustrated that when structures and agency act together rather than in opposition, teacher identity is positively influenced. This was in contrast to when observation was used for performative measures, which participants perceived as constraining of their agency and so unbenefficial.

How does feedback on performance affect the value of classroom observation?

This was a key sub-question as feedback on teacher performance was regarded as one of the most influential aspects of observation. Reasons for this included challenges to identity and pedagogy as well as perceived lack of empathy from the person delivering the feedback. When observed by those of higher status all of the participants reported feeling unable to speak out and defend their teaching pedagogy and their subject expertise during feedback on their performance. They felt that they were viewed by observers as only trainees and as such their
contributions during the feedback stage of observation were often ignored or rejected. This was not unique to the five NQTs in the study, as those participants who were no longer trainees still felt that they were unable to defend their teaching choices during feedback sessions. This was illustrated in the comments of Zoe, who had two years post induction teaching experience. As discussed in Chapter 5 in the Feedback theme, Zoe admitted that as a result of speaking out to defend her teaching choices during feedback she ‘got into trouble’ for it. Other participants described how they tended not to speak out during feedback on their performance. Whether or not this was because of the perceived threat of repercussions it appeared to be the most likely reason why participants held their counsel during the feedback stage. This summation of the fear that many participants inferred during their interviews was based upon my insider knowledge of the context of Westward School at the time of the study. The perceived lack of power of the teacher illustrated the observer acting, unintentionally or otherwise, as an ‘authoritative resource’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373). The structure of the observation pro-forma, coupled with the actions of the observer, removed teacher agency. In this example, both agency and structures acted to challenge the identity of teachers. This was not noted in instances of the Collegial typology where its inclusive, developmental approach was considered to be successful. Teachers felt that this approach to observation allowed mistakes to be made but that these could be discussed openly at the point of feedback without fear of repercussions or feelings of inadequacy.

Recommendations

Although the recommendations given here are drawn from the perspectives of ECTs at Westward School and so could be considered to be specific to the context of one school, they have a degree of relatability to other schools, as illustrated by their connections to literature. The findings from this research have several potential audiences including:

- The leadership and observation team at Westward School
- Initial Teacher Training establishments
- New teachers
- Mentors and those who train them.
Each of these audiences could draw upon aspects of these recommendations to enable observation of teachers to become beneficial to all involved throughout the early years of a teacher’s career.

Communication and relationships

The findings of this study identified that clear communication and trusting relationships were central to observation being beneficial. This allowed teachers to feel safe to take risks with their teaching and was best illustrated in this study by examples of the Collegial typology of observation. In this instance, participants worked against the structure of the observation schedule used by leadership at Westward by seeking out others they felt trusting of and had formed trusting relationships with.

In order to try to encourage the development of trusting relationships, those who observe and work with ECTs, such as mentors, are advised to communicate openly about the purpose of observation and involve teachers in each stage of the process. This may help to reduce occurrences of mistrust, and feelings of anxiety which, as described in the findings from this study, seemed to stem from a lack of clear communication between leadership and teachers. While mentors observing ECTs was the practice at Westward at the time of the study and was commonplace across many schools in England, this need not always be the case. In keeping with suggestions from ONSIDE Mentoring (Hobson, 2016), mentors should only observe at the request of the ECT. Adoption of this approach could aid the introduction and success of the implementation of the ECF by providing a conduit for ECTs to discuss their development independently and without judgement, while also helping to develop trusting relationships between the mentor and mentee.

Observation pro-forma

In addition to the need for clearly communicating the purpose of observation, was the need for the method of observation, such as the pro-forma to be enabling rather than restrictive of practice. The pro-forma, or ‘tick box’ often used during observations at Westward was deemed by participants to be a tool open to manipulation both by the observer and the teacher. Participants viewed the pro-forma as something that stifled their teaching creativity and challenged their
agency. If teachers, observers and mentors worked collegially to produce their own ‘allocative resources’ or structures for observation, teachers and observers would become ‘authoritative resources’ (Giddens, 1986, p. 373). This may then result in perceptions of power being shared during the process. By encouraging both teachers and observers to partake in the design of the observation pro-forma, perceptions of observation may change to be more favourable as demonstrated in the comments of participants in this study and other research (Barrell, 2017; Taylor, 2017). In doing so, development of teacher pedagogy and feelings of agency may be enhanced. Adoption of a lesson study approach to observations would enable both the observer and observed teacher to be involved in all aspects of the observation, allowing all parties to exercise their agency during the process.

**Delivery of feedback**

As highlighted in this study, feedback on performance was described as under-developmental particularly when delivered as a list of what the teacher had not done.

Tailoring feedback around a professional conversation would mean both the observer and teacher would potentially have shared agency and the ability to influence the outcome positively. Using techniques such as those provided by Ilgen et al. (1979), Steelman and Rutkowski (2004), the ALOBA (Chowdhury and Kalu, 2004) or ‘Feedforward’ (Goldsmith, 2003) techniques to deliver feedback, introduced in Chapter 2, may help to achieve this. These techniques may ensure that the ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) shaped around early career observations are positive instead of negative. Encouraging teachers to adopt a more ‘reflective attitude’ towards observation and receiving feedback would help to enhance their sense of agency and address their development needs (Lofthouse and Wright, 2012, p.98). Building trusting relationships between the observer and observed teacher may result in a culture change in schools such as Westward. This could be encouraged through the creation of safe spaces for ECTs to talk openly about any issues they may be having, aiding the reduction of instances of the ‘Brutal’ typology. Observation would then become an opportunity for ‘transformative capacity’ (Giddens, 1987, p.7) of all teachers and observers in the organisation to be enacted by giving them the power to exercise their agency and develop their identity. Findings from the research, in particular, the three main
typologies of observation could be used as a training tool for those who will be mentoring or observing new teachers. In doing this, the vignettes used for the paired interviews (See Appendix 2) could become a resource to illustrate how teachers experienced and perceived each of the observation typologies. The quotes from the participants in this study could also be used in a similar way. Each of these methods, whether vignettes or quotes from this study, would provide prompts for discussion and reflection on how impactful observation and feedback can be on teacher resilience. While these recommendations centre on Westward School, they could be used by other schools, those responsible for CPD in schools, mentors and teacher educators. The perspectives of ECTs from this study may resonate with others in similar situations and illustrate the lasting emotional connection that each typology of observation experience can have.

Appendix 13 shows a power point presentation to show how the findings from the study could be used in a training session for ITT providers, school leaders and mentors of ECTs. This type of training could be further developed in the future in order to try to reduce the number of critical incidents by promoting a collegial approach to help to enhance teacher agency and identity.

Resilience

This study has highlighted that teachers need to be resilient if they are to stay in the profession. The findings suggest that there is a need for a shared understanding of resilience on the part of both the observer and observed teacher, and in particular how it can be enhanced during observation. In order for the multiple dimensions of resilience (Mansfield et al., 2012) to be developed, there is a need for clear and open communication and for teachers to feel that they have a degree of control over their development, enabling them to exercise their agency throughout the process.

Regular review of implemented changes

In order for the process of observation to become more developmental it is vital that the recommendations provided here, if implemented, are regularly revisited to assess whether or not they are considered to be successful for those experiencing them. The views of all involved be they leadership, mentors, ITT providers, observers and ECTs, need to be heard. Adopting this open and reflective practice
would enable all parties to have their voices heard and help to build trusting relationships between all involved.

**Summary of recommendations**

These recommendations aim to reduce instances of the Absent and Brutal typologies and encourage the Collegial typology across schools and with those who work with ECTs. Clear communication and establishment of trusting relationships would help create a ‘psychologically safe’ environment (Hobson and Maxwell, 2017, p.187), in which teachers could be vulnerable and admit any impediments. Establishing an open approach would allow teachers to experiment with facets of their identity such as their pedagogy without fear of repercussion. If the recommendations were to be adopted by leadership teams of schools, then this would demonstrate their commitment to changing the power dynamics within schools as all teachers, including ECTs would be encouraged to exercise their agency to impact upon structures.

**Limitations and further research recommendations**

This section highlights aspects of the study that could be considered limiting of the claims made from the findings. Each limitation and ways in which these could be overcome through future research are discussed.

**Research approach**

I acknowledge that my impact on the claims made from the findings were influenced by numerous factors, not least the context of the school, the participants and my ‘subjective humanness’ (Counsell, 2009, p.257) enacted when placing my interpretation on the words of participants. Had another researcher engaged the same methodology, at the same time, with the same participants in the same school, the outcomes may have been different. Responses given by participants to interview questions may have differed to those given to me had participants been interviewed by an outsider researcher due to power relations being perceived differently to when being interviewed by an insider (Gillham, 2000b; Kvale, 1996). Participants may have felt that power was more equal when being interviewed by an outsider and so been more open in their responses. In contrast, participants may have been more closed during interviews, possibly
feeling that they could not speak out for fear of repercussions for taking part. It is hoped that through careful selection of data collection tools, creation of safe spaces for interviews and being attentive to the needs of participants that any possible contestation of the depth or quality of the data obtained in this study is reduced.

In addition, my choice of a case study approach may have been considered as restrictive of the claims that I make as case studies are notoriously difficult to generalise or apply transferability to (Yin, 2003). Although I could have chosen to adopt an alternative approach to my research such as a narrative approach, I stand by my choice of using a case study. While the context of the school at the time the study was carried out was unique, it does not restrict the degree of relatability of the findings to situations in other schools as all teachers are observed as part of the performative measures implemented in all schools.

**Scale of study**

Only eleven participants were interviewed in this study, which although a large portion of the ECTs at Westward, was a small sample size relative to all ECTs working in schools in England. Due to the small scale of this study from one school, the typologies identified could be regarded as unrepresentative of the views of all ECTs. In spite of this, I feel that the findings from the study do have a degree of transferability. It is important to consider that hundreds of new teachers are trained in schools across England each year who may well find themselves in a ‘Requires Improvement’ school and subject to similar observation typologies as experienced by participants in this study.

To overcome the limited scale of the study, it would be useful to carry out the research with a greater sample number of teachers from both primary and secondary schools. This would gain a greater perspective of how observation is perceived across a broader spectrum of school types and teacher experiences.

**Lack of observer voice**

One of the main limitations of this research is the lack of observer voice. Future research is recommended to engage with observers to give them their voice about carrying out observation. During the observation process their agency and
identities may also be limited by the restrictions of the structures that they work within, such as lack of time to give purposeful feedback due to pressures to meet other demands of the school placed upon them. As such it would be useful to ascertain their perceptions and views on the process of observation. This would achieve a more balanced view of the whole process, enabling a greater degree of credibility to be claimed from the study as all involved would be able to have their voices heard.

Further possible research questions derived from the themes that materialised from the data but were not identified or addressed specifically by the original questions include:

- How do observers/teachers perceive the process of observation?
- How do relationships with others affect perceptions of observation?
- How does observation enhance or restrict agency of an individual?

**Summary of limitations**

The small scale case study approach adopted for this study has limitations which have been openly discussed in this section. This openness to accepting the limitations of this study shows transparency of reporting in the study which Yin argued is essential in case studies (2003).

**Contributions to theory and practice**

This study provides an insight into the perceptions of ECTs, which has been described in literature as being relatively under-researched (Hobson and Maxwell, 2017). Giving voice to ECTs and connecting their insights with a conceptual framework combining notions of structure and social psychological concepts allows the following contributions to be claimed:

- An understanding of the emotional connection to both being observed and receiving feedback
- A typology of observations as experienced by these teachers identifying more and less positive experiences of observations
- An enhanced understanding of the impact of trust on giving and receiving feedback from observation
- An appreciation of the lasting impact on agency and identity of previous experiences of being observed
- A classification of key features of observation and feedback which are likely to have a lasting impact
- A new terminology to describe and classify experiences of observation
- Application of aspects of Structuration theory to practical situations.

Literature has already identified the aspects of observation that are deemed to be problematic to teachers (e.g. O’Leary, 2013; Wang and Day, 2002), which are further emphasised in this work, however, this study contributes to theory in its pursuit of how the various aspects of observation impact upon teacher identity and agency. Using a theoretical lens drawn from aspects of Structuration theory (Giddens, 1986) has enabled a different perspective on observation to be developed. Previously criticised as a theory for its abstraction (Boyne, 1991; Jary, 1991), this study has shown that Structuration theory can be taken from the abstract and applied to practical scenarios to provide new insights into the theory and its application. The emotional association with observation and in particular the lasting emotional connection formed from ECTs’ experiences has been identified from the findings. The themes drawn from analysis have shown that observation is impactful upon teacher agency and identity. Whether these impacts are perceived or real, they nevertheless can have a long term impact especially when negative ‘memory traces’ (Giddens, 1986, p.377) have formed as a result of the experience. Identification of the typologies of observation has introduced new terminology to explain experiences of observation described by participants. These provide a new perspective on how observation could be described in literature.

Methodological contributions

This study provides a contribution to practical research knowledge by illustrating an under-reported and innovative methodology for using vignettes in educational research, particularly when studying perceptions of individuals. Vignettes allowed the views of participants to be heard as they helped to remove dominant voices and gave participants the opportunity to discuss their observation experiences based around those of others. This ensured participants felt comfortable enough to speak out about their experiences more so than they had during the one-to-one
interviews, which demonstrated the ‘risky shift phenomenon’ (Thomas, 2016, p.192) in a real life scenario. Participants revealed that talking to others openly about observation was ‘cathartic’ (Selena, paired interview) further emphasising the importance of openness of communication and how talking to others can help to eliminate feelings of stress and anxiety.

Summary of contributions

This section has highlighted the main contributions of this study to theory and practical research through the use of elements of Structuration theory (Giddens, 1986) and an innovative tool to gather data. The relevance of the findings is discussed next.

Relevance of the findings

Ofsted introduced a new Inspection Framework for schools in September 2019. Based around research on teacher well-being commissioned by Ofsted (2019b), the framework emphasises the need for school leaders to be responsible for enhancing staff welfare, recruitment and retention, something which had been neglected in previous inspection frameworks. To be judged to be ‘Good’ or better, school leaders are required to:

Engage with their staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload. (Ofsted, 2019a, p.74)

Leadership have a duty to:

Focus on improving teachers’ subject, pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge to enhance the teaching of the curriculum and the appropriate use of assessment. The practice and subject knowledge of staff, including newly qualified teachers, build and improve over time. (Ofsted, 2019a, p.74)

The findings from this study suggest that methods used at Westward School to assess teaching during observations need to be revised and the pro-forma readdressed so as to allow teachers to demonstrate progress in their teaching over time rather than the ‘snapshot’ that is presented by a ‘drop-in’ type observation. In order for staff pedagogy to develop, Ofsted have rightly included
the ‘over time’ (Ofsted, 2019a, p.74) aspect which allows teachers the time to share and develop ideas, something highlighted as problematic in the findings of this study.

Of note within the statements taken from the Ofsted framework is the requirement for leadership to ‘engage’ with staff. Many of the participants in this research felt that the leadership team of Westward were not always willing to listen to them during observation, especially when teachers tried to defend their teaching choices during feedback. This scenario illustrated the importance of teachers feeling listened to in order to feel valued.

Time for all parties to be able to adapt to any changes introduced within a school is considered important in the revised framework. The participants in this research described in their responses that the introduction of multiple changes in quick succession caused confusion resulting in undue stress and anxiety. Again lack of clear communication between the leadership team of Westward and the teaching staff seemed to instigate these feelings. Engaging with teachers and communicating clearly about changes to observation would help to alleviate any future scenarios of confusion and stress.

Implementation of the structures from the updated inspection framework are likely to place extra pressures upon leadership teams to meet the requirements. Inadvertently, as a result, teachers may find that their workload increases, be it via increased observations or other means as leadership teams rush to implement changes to requirements to demonstrate to Ofsted that these are being met. This could be yet another example of how externally imposed structures impact hierarchically from the top-down, constraining leader agency and ultimately influence and impact upon teacher agency and identity.

**Early Career Framework**

As of September 2021, all new teachers will have a two-year induction period using the Early Career Framework or ECF (DfE, 2019a) to become a fully qualified teacher. Although the desire to improve and develop professional standards is well intended by the DfE, it is imperative that the framework is implemented correctly
and those who become mentors to new teachers are extensively trained to use the framework as intended, to be a developmental tool, not a tool for assessment, which is a concern highlighted in literature (Lofthouse, 2019). As demonstrated in the findings from this research, the long term impact of early career observations, be they of the Collegial, Absent or Brutal experience, are influential upon the identity and emotional health of a teacher. For this reason, those who will become mentors and observers need to ensure that there is development of a collegial approach to observation, such as through the adoption of ONSIDE Mentoring (Hobson, 2016), which may help to reduce undue stressors on ECTs. This would provide ECTs the time to develop the five core areas of teaching: ‘behaviour management, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and professional standards’ (DfE, 2019a, p.5), which form the essence of the ECF and are deemed important in developing committed professionals. If collegiality and consistency in how the framework is used across all schools is not adopted, there is a risk that some teachers may continue to experience the Absent or Brutal typologies and so the potential benefits of the ECF will be lost.

Reflections on researcher positionality

Throughout the duration of my research I tried to remain true to my intention of working with ECTs to better the experience of observation. Reflecting upon my positionality throughout my study, when I began my research I could have been considered an ‘outsider within’ (Hill Collins, 1986, p. S14) given that I empathised with colleagues over the collective experiences of the multiple observations at Westward. Despite this shared empathy, I felt that my perspective of the situation was different to that of my participants due to having around seventeen years of teaching experience at the time of the study. As a result, my reality of the situation was viewed through a different lens to that of my participants (Hill Collins, 1986). I was able to see the need for changes to be implemented by the leadership team, but could identify with why the changes caused the reactions they did from the teachers. This was due to my dual role of being both a teacher and a middle leader. I too was answerable to the structures or ‘allocative resources’ (Giddens, 1986, p.373) imposed by the leadership team upon teaching staff which resulted in the degree of agency that I could exercise when teaching my classes being reduced. I was also influenced by the actions of the ‘authoritative resources’
(Giddens, 1986, p. 373) of the leadership team whilst they were carrying out observations as I too experienced the changes introduced at Westward. Given that many of those observing no longer had a full teaching load they may have been unaware of the impact of the actions of the changes on those who were teaching full time. My dual role provided me with a high degree of ‘relatedness’ (Rowe, 2014, p.628) with those I was working with, however, I was also able to understand the reasons for the actions of the leadership team. I appreciated that leadership too had their agency challenged by structures imposed upon them by outside agencies.

Since leaving Westward School my positionality as a researcher has now become that of ‘reciprocal collaboration’ (Herr and Anderson, 2005, p.31). I still have contact with a small number of people who work there and so feel a moral obligation to the school and wider community to ensure that my work causes no harm to anyone involved.

**Dissemination of findings**

My moral obligation to my participants to give them a voice was exercised when I shared the findings with Westward School. In order to exercise ‘cultural sensitivity’ (Stutchbury and Fox, 2009, p.494), I considered the possible impact of the study on all parties involved be they myself, my participants, Westward School, the Principal and the wider community. I was mindful that the leadership team were themselves working within the constraints of a system described as ‘Flawed’ by one participant (Ivan, one-to-one interview). Although I wrestled with the thought of the findings being shared with the leadership team and a wider audience, I felt it was my moral imperative as a researcher to reflect the ‘courage’ (Carpenter, 2013, p.5; Macfarlane, 2009, p. 49) shown by participants in taking part, and share the findings.

When preparing to feedback the findings I was aware of my responsibility to do no harm to any involved in the research (BERA, 2019) and act with ‘sincerity’ (Carpenter, 2013, p.5; Macfarlane, 2009, p.91). To try to address this, feedback was based around the 2019 Ofsted framework (2019a) and phrased to include positive aspects of observation as well as those that were thought by participants to be in need of improvement (see Appendix 14).
When the findings were shared with Westward, the school was supportive of the research but keen to emphasise that the study had taken place in previous academic years and the school had since undergone many changes, including the appointment of a new Principal. This experience demonstrated my lack of agency, as although I felt the need to share the findings, ultimately I was unable to influence whether or not the suggestions provided would be acted upon.

Should participants wish to share in the findings, a brief overview of the findings (shown in Appendix 15) has been prepared for them. If participants would like to read the whole thesis, then this will be made available to them. In addition, I am willing to answer any questions they may have as a result of reading the findings or thesis.

Aspects of this study, such as how I designed and implemented the vignettes, and how I overcame challenges such as ethical dilemmas throughout my study, have been shared with other doctoral researchers at conferences. Doing this has helped me realise how these aspects are of interest to other researcher audiences and hence form part of the study’s contribution to knowledge.

**Final reflections**

The views shared by participants in this research could serve to explain how collegial observation is best carried out to eliminate occurrences of the Absent and Brutal typologies identified in this study. Participants described how they found themselves subject to ‘practice shock’ (Walker et al., 2018, p.8) as they adjusted to their new role of a teacher. This shock was at times intensified by being observed.

If schools such as Westward were to adopt a ‘subject-centred socio-cultural’ approach to professional agency’ (Eteläpelto et al., 2013, p.61), by encouraging teachers to be involved in decision making at a whole school or meso level, agency of individuals would be exercised. Development of individuals’ ‘internal structures’ (Stones, 2005, p.9) would result. Facets of their identity, such as their levels of resilience would be enhanced. It is hoped that by increasing the resilience of teachers, the high attrition rate of teachers from schools in England, may be reduced, helping to ensure continuity in teaching for students who deserve to have happy and healthy teachers teaching them.
From a personal perspective engaging in this study has changed me in many ways. When working with and observing colleagues I am more reflective of their practice and my own and am more mindful of how I give feedback to others about their performance. I have started to try to use techniques such as ALOBA (Chowdhury and Kalu, 2004) not only with colleagues, but also the students that I teach in the hope that their resilience may grow as a consequence. The compelling and at times frustrating aspects of engaging in this research have taught me that I am more resilient than I anticipated myself to be. Multiple aspects of my resilience, such as motivational and professional (Mansfield et al., 2012) have been both tested and enhanced as a result of engaging in this study. In addition, my confidence has grown as demonstrated through the presentation of my work at conferences. This is something that would have been inconceivable four years ago.
References


Department for Education (DfE) (2019a) *Early Career Framework* [Online]. Available at


Department for Education (DfE) (2019b) *Teacher appraisal and capability: A model policy for schools* [Online]. Available at


174


Jacqui1974 (2015) *A Guide to Grading Your Lesson*, *tes* [Figure]. Available at https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/lesson-observation-form-and-checklist-6101516. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike Licence https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/ (Accessed 23 September 2020)


University of Arizona (2019) *Research Computing Governance Committee: Data Management and Curation* [Figure]. Available at [https://rcgc.arizona.edu/datamgmt-curation](https://rcgc.arizona.edu/datamgmt-curation) (Accessed 4 January 2019).


Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview schedule for one-to-one interviews

Explain the purpose of the research is to try to find out how the experience of classroom observation can be improved or if not what is done well and can be shared in other schools.

1. Can you tell me about your last observation?
2. Is being observed a positive or a negative experience for you?
3. Have you always felt this way about observations? If no, can you give an example of an observation where you felt differently?
4. I’d like to find out more about the value you place on observations and what influences that value. Does the way observation is carried out influence the value you place on it? Can you please explain, or give an example?
5. Does the way you are given feedback affect the value you place on what you are told?
6. Do you think the way you view observation is different according to who it is that is observing you? Why?
7. Do you think the experience of the observer affects what you think about the feedback they give you? Why?
8. I’d like to find out more about the role of trust in observations. Do you think the level of experience of the observer impacts on the trust that you have of them and their judgement of your teaching?
9. Do you feel able to take risks during observation lessons? That is to try something new? Why?
10. Do you feel that trust is an important aspect of being observed and in what context do you mean trust?
11. Does the purpose of observation affect the value of it to you? For example, if Ofsted observe you and give you positive feedback does that affect how you then regard feedback from a colleague?
12. How would you like observations to occur…imagine you are living in an ideal world but one where observations are still part of that world. Can you please explain why?
13. Would you prefer the same observer each time you are observed? Why?
14. Why did you want to take part in this research?

Thank you for your participation, the data you have given me will be content analysed, main categories will be identified where any issues may lie. This will help to shape future experiences of classroom observation.
Appendix 2: Vignettes for paired observations showing their reference and the sub-research question they relate to

The sub-research questions are numbered as follows:

1) How is classroom observation perceived by ECTs?
2) How does the person carrying out the observation impact on how it is perceived by those being observed?
3) How does the method used for observation affect the value placed on it by teachers?
4) How does feedback on performance affect the value of classroom observation?

‘The early years of teaching are frequently characterised by intense pressure and disillusionment’

(Hobson, 2009, p.299, RQ1)

‘You don’t feel like you’re being your actual self… You feel even more like you are putting on a performance, you are kind of doing that with the students anyway, to a certain extent. [But] when someone else is watching you, it just… I don’t know… it kind of makes you more self-conscious about what you are doing.’

(Edgington, 2016, p.141, RQ1 and 2)

‘I wasn’t anywhere near as comfortable as I would normally be (…) but I did forget they were there, but they were still at the back of my mind, still, you know…’

(Edgington, 2016, p.142, RQ1 and 2)

‘When there’s a buzz- there’s a buzz in the class, and you hit the nail on the head and you’re keyed into their thinking and what together you, the class, are working on, in harmony, to produce something that particularly is of benefit to them, a learning experience- and that’s satisfaction.’

(Edgington, 2016, p.143, RQ1)
'You know it is still a huge amount of pressure, an unnecessary amount of pressure and its unfair, being judged on your whole performance on fifty minutes once a year. It's just ridiculous. Definitely. But you still see people walking up and down the corridor, crapping themselves still, really working themselves into a frenzy.'

*(Edgington, 2016, p.141, RQ1)*

'I don’t think, I think people can get used to being watched, I think, it doesn’t bother me too much, because I’ve done, I’ve been watched lots, you know, but um, it’s that thought of being judged, isn’t it and of course that’s part of the difficulty.'

*(Edgington, 2016, p.141, RQ1)*

'[I] couldn’t be myself. It was awful'

*(Edgington, 2013, p.140, RQ1)*

'I haven’t slept for weeks preparing for this TLO [observation]. I’m just too exhausted to teach…'

*(Edgington, 2013, p.140, RQ1)*

'[Y]ou never want to mention any potential failings that you might have to your [school-based] mentor or your line manager… because you don’t know what’s going to go down in writing… I have got the acting down to a fine art… Don’t let it show to anybody at all; let nobody know.'

*(Hobson and McIntyre, 2013, p.357, RQ1)*

'I still find teaching, apart from when it’s doing my head in, fun, enjoyable, I think I have … I think I understand the range of different students much better than I did.'

*(Edgington, 2013, p.143, RQ1)*

'I know how to tick all their stupid boxes…'

*(Edgington, 2013, p.140, RQ3)*

'I use the same lesson- plan I always do when I’m observed- it works like a dream.'

*(Edgington, 2013, p.140, RQ3)*
‘… and I found her (the observer) quite supportive. I think it’s how it’s done. I would say some of the observations have been supportive and developmental, but a teacher, you know, it’s a two-way thing… You’ve got to be prepared to listen… to look at your, you know, your strengths and your weaknesses.’

(*Edgington, 2013, p.142, RQ2, 3 and 4*)

‘…When I’m observed, I tend to get extremely self-conscious’


‘It is never a realistic look at the classroom because the students are aware that you are being observed and behave differently.’

(*Wang and Day, 2002, p.8, RQ1 and 3*)

‘Usually, it is a very nerve wracking experience to be observed by the principal. He writes, writes, writes and you always wonder what could he be writing!’


‘We (the new teachers) want people who:

Empower us and give us confidence through recognition, encouragement and trust’.

(*Hobson, 2009, p.306 RQ2 and 4, paraphrased*)

‘My supervisor (mentor) generally observes every 1-2 months. She comes in, observes and leaves. Rare feedback…Read lesson plans occasionally- comments such as ‘Thankyou’ or ‘Nice job’.

(*Wang and Day, 2002, p.9, RQ2 and 4*)

‘I no longer regard evaluation-observation by a principal or colleague as a ‘judgement’ with no room for growth. Instead, this is a team effort based on objective goal and reflection.’

'The experiences which have been most beneficial were ones in which there was a feeling of respect, safety and trust, where the goal was to work together in a collaborative fashion. In my opinion, it is important to feel that the goal is to draw out the individual's strengths and to improve the areas in which there are weaknesses.'

*(Wang and Day, 2002, p.17, RQ2, 3 and 4)*

'I don’t necessarily agree with the observers’ feedback and point of views, I do express myself, but in the end nothing happens. They believe they are always right and teachers are always wrong. They never change their opinion.'

*(Shah and Harthi, 2014, p.1598, RQ2 and 4)*

'I express myself in the feedback stage, I give the observer my points. Sometimes he agrees but it doesn't make much difference. So it’s better not to argue.'

*(Shah and Harthi, 2014, p.1598, RQ2 and 4)*

'Subjectivity is something that you never get rid of and it negatively affects your teaching.'

*(Shah and Harthi, 2014, p.1598, RQ2, 3 and 4)*

'The element of trust is certainly not there. The observers do not trust the teachers… In order to be positive, observers should be trainers first. They should have a good teaching experience.'

*(Shah and Harthi, 2014, p.1598, RQ2 and 4)*

'My classes were observed by those who were not qualified in my subject. They followed the tick sheet, however, they would always look for negative points.'

*(Shah and Harthi, 2014, p.1598, RQ2 and 4, paraphrased).*

'The observers’ qualifications, relevant teaching experience and teacher training experience should be shown to the teachers.'

*(Shah and Harthi, 2014, p.1599, RQ2)*

'To be honest, it really is a threat. I always feel nervous and it is never a very good experience for me.'

*(Shah and Harthi, 2014, p.1599, RQ1)*
Appendix 3: Consent form and information for participants

Consent form for persons participating in a research project


Name of participant: 

Name of principal investigator(s): Samantha Love

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written statement in plain language to keep.

2. I understand that my participation will involve one-to-one semi-structured interviews and focus groups and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.

3. I acknowledge that:
   a. the possible effects of participating in this research have been explained to my satisfaction;
   b. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project without explanation or prejudice and to request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from me until it is anonymized at the point of transcription point on 1st July 2019. After this point data will have been processed and it will not be possible to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
   c. the project is for the purpose of research;
   d. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
   e. I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored on a secure memory pen and password protected laptop and will be destroyed after five years;
   f. If necessary any data from me will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;
   g. I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I request this.

I consent to this interview being audio-taped/video-recorded □ yes □ no (please tick)
I consent to this focus group being audio-taped/video-recorded    □ yes    □ no
(please tick)

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings    □ yes    □ no
(please tick)

Participant signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PI AND RESEARCH ORGANISATION/DEPARTMENT

Samantha Love
School name and address
Email: ___________________________
Tel: ___________________________

Supervisor: ___________________________
The Open University.
Email: ___________________________

Research organisation: ___________________________
Faculty of Education
The Open University,
Walton Hall,
Milton Keynes.

What is the purpose of this research?
This research aims to focus on teacher perspectives of the area of measuring performance via classroom observation, often referred to as ‘monitoring’. The study will involve secondary teachers from a range of subjects who are new to the profession or within their first five years. It aims to gather qualitative data to identify teachers’ views and values of the full process, how observation induced stress is handled and whether this can be lessened. Through the use of semi-structured teacher interviews it intends to ascertain whether relational and competence trust between teachers and the school leaders is a barrier to the success of the process, and if so how this can be alleviated. It is anticipated that the results of this research could help to shape and improve future observation schedules by utilising teacher voice to develop the activity to be beneficial for all. The data gathered from interviews will be analysed looking for commonalities in language about being observed and the experiences of it. The interviews will be audio recorded with hand written notes taken.

What does it mean if I decide to participate?
You will be interviewed and take part in focus groups (if you do not wish to take part in a focus group but only be interviewed then you can choose this option) about your experiences of classroom observation. The interviews and focus groups will be audio recorded and also handwritten notes will be taken. You will be able to listen to the interviews again should you choose to and check the transcripts of them so that you can check what has been said. Any information that you give will be confidential and also the data will be anonymised so you will not be able to be identified. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time up until 1st July 2019 where after this your data will need to be included in the thesis and so will not be able to be removed.

What to do if you want to participate:
Complete the consent form and return it in the envelope provided to Samantha Love either in person or via her pigeon hole.

Thank you for taking the time to read this it is appreciated.
Appendix 4: Transcripts from one-to-one interviews where the interview schedule was changed to accommodate the different role of the participants within Westward School

Participant: Rebecca - Mentor to a Year 1 trainee.

Interviewer: Do you think the way you view observation is different according to who it is that is observing you?

Rebecca: Yes, definitely... [laughs] ... I think I have picked up on it already. Yeah definitely. I suppose on one hand if my Head of Department is observing me, because of the relationship that I’ve got with them, I probably don’t think that it is as important, so it makes me feel more relaxed whereas if it’s, if it’s like a member of SLT or the Head it makes me feel like it’s a bit more serious, so.

Interviewer: Do you think the experience of the observer affects what you think about their feedback, so if it’s a member of staff that’s been teaching longer do you think that you value their feedback more or do you just- how does that affect what you think about it?

Rebecca: I think, yeah, I think, it completely depends I suppose, umm, every, the issue is I think, that dependent on who is observing you, the feedback is different, so you could do, you could deliver the exact same lesson, umm to, and it could be shown to two different members of staff and they could have completely different views on it. So one of them could think that something was amazing and the other might not have even picked up on it. Umm and I think it is just down to different teaching styles I suppose.

Interviewer: So do you find when they do that, do you find, if you have had, for example, two observers and they are coming at it from different angles, or if you do one thing that one person suggests you do and then you do it and you are criticised for it, do you find, how does that make you feel, confused?

Rebecca: Definitely confusing, and I’m a mentor now as well so with the NQT that I mentor I find that they get told different information from about five different sources who come in and observe them and it can be completely different, it can be contradictory which is just not helpful at all.

Interviewer: It isn’t is it?

Rebecca: No.
Interviewer: How do you think that the level of experience of the observer impacts on the trust that you have of them with their judgement of your teaching?

Rebecca: I think, I think yeah, that the less experience that the observer has got I suppose the less likely I am to trust the feedback that they are giving me.

Yvonne: Head of Department and Mentor to a second year trainee.

Interviewer: So what do you think it is about the formal observations that stress you? Is it that judgement that relates to you, is it just because it’s that one snippet or…?

Yvonne: Yeah I think some of it is the process that you go through to get ready for a formal observation so obviously with your seating plan, it’s quite a sort of strict process that you go through and that in itself stresses me a little bit because it gets you sort of ramped up for it in a way that you are not for informal stuff. Umm I think probably also yes because it relates directly to your performance management and your success in your career umm and I find, I do find that quite stressful I think so yeah both of those things.

Interviewer: Do you think the way you view observation is different according to who it is that is observing you? Why?

Yvonne: Oh yeah, definitely.

Interviewer: So why is that?

Yvonne: I don’t know really [laughs] that’s my own insecurities probably but my, I, my line manager as I’ve said is very, very good and is very, very supportive so I know that if something went wrong in a lesson it wouldn’t matter really because we can then, we will sit together and sort it out. Which is similar to what happened with my, I mean it wasn’t a disaster my observation but it was good and I didn’t want it to be. I wanted it to be more than good and they were, they were very supportive in that saying, ‘Well it would be this, this and this that we need to do’. Umm but yeah I think it would affect it. I think when certain people walk in I think you know their expectations and I, I think it does affect it, and it affects your confidence as well when there are people that come in that have, maybe have said things in the past and that have not been quite so helpful and then suddenly you think ‘Are they going to say something again?’ and that’s difficult.
Interviewer: How would you like observations to occur - e.g. imagine you are living in an ideal world – but one where observations are still part of that world? How would you like… Can you please explain why?

Yvonne: At random.

Interviewer: At random?

Yvonne: I’d far prefer it if somebody said ‘Right you are going to be observed at some point during this week, just make sure that you have printed your seating plan out for that class, class profiles we should have anyway so make sure that you have that, that’s there and we will come to you at some point that week’. I’d far rather that then anything else because then at least I’d feel like I could relax and just get on with my week rather than worrying about period 2 on Thursday or whatever. I think that would be much, much better. That’s what I would like.

Interviewer: I was going to ask- do you think you now view observations differently because you now in your role observe others? Are you mindful of how you feedback to people?

Yvonne: Yes, I think, I think again it depends on what the, on what sort of observation we are talking about. In formal observations I think, I think everybody, I don’t think my view of those have changed particularly since I’ve started doing them because you very much know what to expect in those. I think in terms of progress walks and, and more informal observations it’s certainly changed because when I was younger I would always assume they would go. I would always assume that someone walking through the door would mean that they were checking up on you and now that I know that that’s just not the case I know that I will go into my colleagues’ lessons purely to steal ideas when I see something good. So I think that that’s definitely changed, I think that I need personally to make sure that my department feel the same feeling with formal observations as well. I think I have to work on getting them to understand they are not being checked up on. I think we are getting there but I think that I don’t feel that I feel as comfortable doing formal observations as I do informal observations still so until I get over that then they won’t either, I know that.
Appendix 5: Transcript selection from paired interview to illustrate how participants used the vignettes to discuss their thoughts and experiences

Zoe: What do we think about this one ‘The early years of teaching are frequently characterised by intense pressure and disillusionment’ (Hobson, 2009, p.299)?

Selena: One hundred percent. I think there is some disillusionment but when I was training I was under so much pressure not just, observations was part of it, but also ‘Can you go and observe this meeting because we want you to see what is happening’. But what they were actually saying was ‘None of us can be bothered-can you go to this meeting and pretend that you are representing the department?’

It’s this disillusionment that you live this perfect, like you can do it and all these other teachers can do it and everyone else is pulling it off whereas actually you just need someone to say, ‘Do you know what? It is crap for me too.’

Zoe: See I feel, it’s kind of a positive and a negative. Last year because of the nature of the department I was very much left to my own devices so I wasn’t, other than with Teach First, I wasn’t really under that much pressure. People came to see me when Teach First asked them to. I didn’t have book scrutiny’s because that wasn’t happening in the department and I think if I had been a different type of teacher then I would have let things slip but being the kind of person I am a control freak and someone who is personally not just because of scrutiny, I want to be a good teacher. So I think in that case, scrutiny and pressure is good and I think for some teachers it is required.

Selena: But I think it can be too intense.

Zoe: But also the freedom that I had I think has allowed me to be a better teacher and not just jump through the hoops but actually do my own journey.

Selena: I would agree with that. One of the things that I really struggled with when I was training was that I was being watched that often and by that many different people that one teacher would say, ‘Right well you’ve got to do it this way’ and you go and get observed by another teacher and they would be like ‘Right well you’ve got to do it this way’. So they were just completely contradictory statements and I never really found my own ground as a teacher.
Appendix 6: Ethical Approval Letter

From
Chair, The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee

Email

Extension

To
Samantha Love, Education

Subject
Investigating Teacher Perspectives on the Motivational and Emotional Impact of Classroom Observations on New Teachers in Secondary Education

HREC Ref

AMS ref

Submitted 01/08/16

Decision date 20/12/16

Memorandum

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, has been given favourable opinion by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

Please note the following:

1. You are responsible for notifying the HREC immediately of any information received by you, or of which you become aware which would cast doubt on, or alter, any information contained in the original application, or a later amendment which would raise questions about the safety and/or continued conduct of the research.

2. It is essential that any proposed amendments to the research are sent to the HREC for review, so they can be recorded and a favourable opinion given prior to the any changes being implemented (except only in cases of emergency when the welfare of the participant or researcher is may be effected).

3. You are authorised to present this memorandum to outside bodies such as NHS Research Ethics Committees in support of any application for future research clearance. Also, where there is an external ethics review, a copy of the application and outcome should be sent to the HREC.

4. OU research ethics review procedures are fully compliant with the majority of grant awarding bodies and their frameworks for research ethics.

5. At the conclusion of your project, by the date stated in your application, you are required to provide the Committee with a final report to reflect how the project has progressed, and importantly whether any ethics issues arose and how they were dealt with. A copy of the final report template can be found on the research ethics website - http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human-research/human-research-ethics-full-review-process-and-proforma#final report.

Kind regards,
Chair OU HREC http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (number RC 000391), an exempt charity in England & Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (number SC 038302)
Appendix 7: Annotated transcript to show my thoughts about the interview and my interpretations

Interviewer: Okay, is being observed a positive or a negative experience for you?

: So erm, for my fourth day, I was observed, so I’d only been teaching for four days and they came in and ripped my lesson apart. And I don’t think that they knew who I was, that I’d been teaching for four days, that I was Teach First. It was possibly the worst experience I’ve ever had, I thought. I went down for feedback because I knew how bad it had gone but they didn’t give me any... It was more you need to do this, you need to do this, you need to do this, and you need to do this with no advice on how to do it. So I’ve had some negative ones but I’ve had some really positive ones as well from, now that I am better and I’m getting on with it more- some really positive feedback on the lesson today. So I think it’s been a bit of a mix when they don’t not necessarily the context of me.
Appendix 8: Example of ‘Codes’ written on sticky notes on my office wall
Appendix 9: Nodes from Nvivo

Where there is a + sign next to a node this was expanded to include different aspects such as positive or negative as shown in the figure below. Using this aspect of NVivo, I was able to select ‘emotions about observation’ and then easily find quotes about positive and negative emotions associated with observation.
Appendix 10: Edited and unedited quotes from transcripts to show how they have been reduced

‘So if it’s, it’s unannounced, I do definitely feel more negative towards it and I am more probably likely not to listen to the feedback that has been given to me, so like more recently, do you know how we’ve had people coming in unannounced and staying. I had one member of SLT come in and sit for twenty minutes, completely unannounced and whereas other staff members might go down and get some feedback, I didn’t go get feedback… [Laughs].’ Rebecca (one-to-one interview)

Edited:

‘So if it’s unannounced, I do definitely feel more negative towards it and I am more probably likely not to listen to the feedback that has been given to me. I had one member of SLT come in and sit for twenty minutes, completely unannounced, I didn’t go get feedback… [Laughs].’ Rebecca (one-to-one interview)

Another example:

‘Err, yesterday I had lots of people watching me, it was very nerve wracking. I had seven people watch me teach yesterday. So X came to see me in the morning and I got my praise post card, which was positive, I think they are really, really good and effective. And then I had X and a visitor, X and a visitor and X, which was quite daunting and I haven’t heard anything from it apart from general feedback which is quite nerve wracking, I don’t enjoy that [laughs]. In my head I’m like "Did I do something really awful?" I’m sure I didn’t, well I hope I didn’t.’ Selena (one-to-one interview)

Edited:

‘Err, yesterday I had lots of people watching me, it was very nerve wracking. I had seven people watch me teach yesterday…which was quite daunting and I haven’t heard anything from it apart from general feedback which is quite nerve wracking, I don’t enjoy that [laughs]. In my head I’m like "Did I do something really awful?" I’m sure I didn’t, well I hope I didn’t.’ Selena (one-to-one interview)
Appendix 11: Hand drawn concept map of early themes
Appendix 12: My research notes showing how I began to associate themes and responses to literature

RQ3 - Non-subject specialists are a problem in that they can miss some of the nuances of the subject that specialists wouldn’t. Why is this a problem, and why are they not trained to be aware of it?

Again brought up in literature (Clark & Hart, 2004) to support this.

Teachers will not have issues simply as (centre to hub or vice versa) because if it goes wrong what will this lead to?

Thoughts about ‘Be Kind’ & this.

Participants describe their frustration at the ‘Be Kind’ exercise but they do it to get observation grades. Is this a concern for teachers?

Why do we act in such ways? Is it to please get a favourable judgement?

The process is one shrouded in emotion -

- Why? Psychological impacts?
- What? - Keeping up pace

Is this an exercise at how structures control us? Is what an agency wants -

(1998)

- Roles here - Rivalry of structure or dual structure?

Do these controls impact

everyone?
Appendix 13: Power point presentation for new teachers, observer and mentor training
Appendix 14: Findings to feedback to the case study school

Findings from research to feedback to Westward School

This aim of this study was to investigate the experience and perceptions of classroom observation of early career teachers at Westward School. Data was gathered from one-to-one interviews and paired interviews during the academic year 2017-18. This was at a time when Westward School had been inspected by Ofsted and judged to have moved from ‘Good’ to ‘Requires Improvement’. This situation appeared to have affected the experiences of observation during this period.

Positive findings from the research were:

- Participants felt supported when observed by colleagues with similar teaching experiences as shown in the following quote:

  ‘I think that the closer they are to kind of your experience, I think you feel more trust of them… see you want them to have empathy with the position you are in and what kind of, where you are meant to be at.’ (Zoe, one-to-one interview)

- Participants found observing each other was developmental to their teaching pedagogies, again illustrated by the words of a participant:

  ‘I think it’s quite nice, like the buddy systems where you have, I came to observe you, you came to observe me and then we could almost say, "Well this worked, well why don’t we teach a lesson together?" You are building and developing altogether in a less critical way. "I can learn this from you" and "I can learn this from you." You are looking at things to learn from each other rather than, like it’s a much more positive way. I don’t know if it’s possible at all or if it’s realistic but I think like guiding… so you are always looking for positives. "So you did this really well, I’m going to try this in my lesson, why don’t we try and do this together?" rather than "Didn’t do that great, don’t do that again" like always pick out the positives.’ (Selena, one-to-one interview)

- Participants enjoyed teaching and even when under extreme pressure were able to find positives in their teaching day:
'There are always positives in everyday, even when it has been really hard work, there is something to make me smile or laugh.’ (Peta, paired interview)

The most effective observation experiences were:

- Collegial observations where teachers worked together to try to help each other to improve an area of their teaching such as behaviour.

In this type of observation, the purpose of the observation was clear to both the observer and the observed teacher and clear communication existed between all parties. There was a sense of trust between the observer and the observed teacher which helped to build strong relationships. Feedback was a two-way process where teachers felt able to discuss their thoughts about their performance.

Aspects of observation practice that could be improved were:

- The building of relationships between the leadership team of the school and teachers
- Feedback that is developmental and not just a list of what the teacher has not done during a lesson
- Time during the feedback session for teachers to discuss their teaching choices and pedagogy
- Opportunities to build reciprocal trust in which teachers feel trusted to do their job by the leadership team. Information about how observation outcomes would be used and with whom it would be shared with would help build this trust
- Feedback delivered with empathy.

The findings suggest that the methods used to assess teacher performance during the 2017-18 academic year caused emotional impacts which affected ECT’s development of agency and identity. In particular, the implementation of multiple unannounced drop-in observations caused stress to teachers as well as how feedback was often given to those new to the school. This was felt to be undevelopmental and damaging to teacher motivation. Participants were aware that they were accountable for their teaching and the impact of this on students.
In addition to the collegial observations two further types of observation were experienced by participants, A and B. The key characteristics of the three are compared in the table that follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of observation</th>
<th>Who is likely to carry it out</th>
<th>Likely purpose of the observation</th>
<th>Characteristics of the observation</th>
<th>Characteristics of the feedback</th>
<th>Inference from ECT perspective (subjectively/ emotionally)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Heads of Department / Member of Senior Leadership team</td>
<td>To check that the teacher is carrying out school 'non-negotiables' and engaging students</td>
<td>Unannounced, Short, drop-in style observation, less than twenty minutes in length could have several in a day and more than one in a lesson.</td>
<td>Either non-existent or minimal, usually a copy of the observation pro-forma attached to an email. Usually graded 1-4 according to Ofsted criteria.</td>
<td>Feelings of being 'checked up on' and lack of trust of observer. Emotionally feelings of anxiousness at purpose of the observation induced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Any observer of the teacher- including members of the Leadership team and external agencies. Paired or individual</td>
<td>To assess teacher capabilities and check they are carrying out the school non-negotiables</td>
<td>Planned or unannounced observation lasting twenty minutes or more.</td>
<td>Non-developmental, delivered with little or no empathy, Observer lists what the teacher has done wrong/ or not done with little or no suggestions on how to improve. Graded 1-4</td>
<td>Feelings of defensiveness at not being able to speak out about teaching choices, feelings of inadequacy. Emotionally feel upset or angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Head of Department/ Mentors/ Colleagues from similar teaching backgrounds</td>
<td>To help teacher development with issues such as behaviour or trying new teaching strategies</td>
<td>Agreed time and class, could be short or a longer observation depending on agreed purpose</td>
<td>Developmental/ two-way conversation that allows teacher to explain their choices and concerns, ungraded</td>
<td>Feelings of trust and positivity from strong relationships, feelings of being part of a team- building relationships, positive self-esteem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendations

Looking to the future for the school, the leadership team may want to consider how they use observations in ways which teachers perceive as developmental. This is considered important as Ofsted (2019a) are now looking at the impact of the actions of leadership teams on the health and well-being of staff. This sentiment is echoed in the Early Career Framework (DfE, 2019a) which will be used with ECTs from 2021.
The new Ofsted framework includes emphasis on the roles of the leadership teams of schools to be regarded as ‘Good’ or better, they need to:

Engage with their staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload. (Ofsted, 2019a, p.74)

Leadership have a duty to:

Focus on improving teachers’ subject, pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge to enhance the teaching of the curriculum and the appropriate use of assessment. The practice and subject knowledge of staff, including newly qualified teachers, build and improve over time. (Ofsted, 2019a, p.74)

Collegial observation methods:
The participants in this research were complementary of observation when it was considered to be collegial and allowed them to decide on an aspect of their teaching that they wanted to improve. They regarded observations by their peers to be the most beneficial. Observation and feedback can be seen as an opportunity to build relationships with teachers by allowing them to work with one another and leadership in order to develop their pedagogy, as outlined in the Ofsted framework in the previous section (2019a). This finding was not unique to my study and is shared in literature about a collegial approach towards observation such as Taylor (2017) and Barrell (2017) who used discussion between the leadership team of their respective schools and the teachers to shape and improve the process of observation. By engaging with staff, positive, trusting relationships were formed and so observation became a developmental tool that enabled teachers to enhance their performance in the classroom. The openness of discussion between all parties also removed the fear that many teachers described as being associated with the observation process. If these practices were to be utilised, then this would help evidence for Ofsted that leadership is engaging with staff to aid their development as well as helping to manage staff workload by reducing undue pressures placed upon them by unnecessary observations.

Strategic use of observation:
One aspect participants reported as problematic was when they felt they were not given enough time to act upon suggestions for improvement from one observation
to the next and so a strategic and sustainable framework for observation would be welcomed.

**Training in giving and receiving feedback:** Feedback on performance was deemed to be the most damaging aspect of observation in the findings. Training of all observers about how to deliver feedback in a constructive way, aware of its potentially high emotional impact, would be effective. This could focus on the purposes for the observation and feedback such as the ‘feedforward’ approach (Goldsmith, 2003) be included, which could increase teachers’ motivation to improve their future practice. This therefore includes the recommendation to include teachers who will be observed in the training to increase their engagement with the feedback.

**Future suggestions for observation:**

- **Adoption of a more collegial approach would help to build trusting relationships between leadership and teachers**- allow teachers to play an active role in observation organisation.

- **Possible ways to do this include use of lesson study**- this means all parties involved in observation have an active role to play- the observers and teachers become less passive and also have a goal to try to improve an element of their teaching.

- **With regards to the introduction of the Early Career Framework**- look to using ONSIDE Mentoring (Hobson, 2016) whereby the role of the mentor becomes one of support and development for the ECT. In doing this the mentor would not observe the teacher unless this is specifically requested by the teacher. Implementation of this approach could potentially help trusting relationships to develop between the mentor and mentee and allow for the mentee to feel that they can be more open in discussing any challenges that they may face with their teaching and importantly, help to address their emotional needs. Having someone that the ECT feels trusting of has been shown to aid resilience of teachers and recruitment.

- **Clear communication between leadership and teaching staff**- this would help to eliminate the feelings of distrust that were harboured when teachers felt they were not involved in decisions about the school.
Appendix 15: Findings from research to feedback to Participants

Findings for Participants

This aim of this study was to investigate the experience and perceptions of classroom observation of ECTs at Westward School. Data was gathered from one-to-one interviews and paired interviews during the academic year 2017-18. This was at a time when Westward School had been inspected by Ofsted and judged to have moved from ‘Good’ to ‘Requires Improvement’. This situation appeared to have affected the experiences of observation during this period.

The research identified three typologies of observation: Absent, Brutal and Collegial. The Absent and Brutal arose when feedback was either non-existent or was detrimental about your teaching which could be challenging to aspects of your identity. All participants described that observation was positive when it was carried out in a collegial fashion whereby you were able to shape the observation to benefit an aspect of your teaching.

Positive findings from the research were:

- Participants felt supported when observed by colleagues with similar teaching experiences as shown in the following quote:

  ‘I think that the closer they are to kind of your experience, I think you feel more trust of them…. see you want them to have empathy with the position you are in and what kind of, where you are meant to be at.’ (Zoe, one-to-one interview)

- Participants found observing each other was developmental to their teaching pedagogies, again illustrated by the words of a participant:

  ‘I think it’s quite nice, like the buddy systems where you have, I came to observe you, you came to observe me and then we could almost say, “Well this worked well, why don’t we teach a lesson together?” You are building and developing altogether in a less critical way. "I can learn this from you" and "I can learn this from you." You are looking at things to learn from each other rather than, like it's a much more positive way. I don't know if it's possible at all or if it's realistic but I think like guiding… so you are always looking for positives. "So you did this really well, I’m going to try this in my lesson, why don’t we try and do this together?" rather than "Didn’t do that great, don’t do that again" like always pick out the positives.’ (Selena, one-to-one interview)
Participants enjoyed teaching and even when under extreme pressure were able to find positives in their teaching day:

‘There are always positives in everyday, even when it has been really hard work, there is something to make me smile or laugh.’ (Peta, paired interview)

The most effective observation experiences were:

- Collegial observations where teachers worked together to try to help each other to improve an area of their teaching such as behaviour.

In this type of observation, the purpose of the observation was clear to both the observer and the observed teacher and clear communication existed between all parties. There was a sense of trust between the observer and the observed teacher which helped to build strong relationships. Feedback was a two-way process where teachers felt able to discuss their thoughts about their performance.

Aspects of observation practice that you felt could be improved were:

- The building of relationships between the leadership team of the school and teachers
- Feedback that is developmental and not just a list of what the teacher has not done during a lesson
- Time during the feedback session for teachers to discuss their teaching choices and pedagogy
- Opportunities to build reciprocal trust in which teachers feel trusted to do their job by the leadership team. Information about how observation outcomes would be used and with whom it would be shared with would help build this trust
- Feedback delivered with empathy.

The findings suggest that the methods used to assess teacher performance during the 2017-18 academic year caused emotional impacts which affected development of your agency and identity. In particular, the implementation of multiple unannounced drop-in observations and the way feedback was offered to you caused additional stress. This was felt to be un-developmental and damaging to your motivation.
Recommendations that have arisen as a result of this research:

Looking to the future for the school, you as new teachers may want to consider further shaping how you develop your teaching through observations. This offers new opportunities for you to have an input and drive into how observation is carried out at Westward as Ofsted (2019a) are now holding leadership teams more accountable for the health and well-being of staff and with the introduction of the Early Career Framework (DfE, 2019a) for new teachers from 2021.

As part of the revised framework, Ofsted now require that leadership teams:

Engage with their staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload. (Ofsted, 2019a, p.74)

Leadership have a duty to:

Focus on improving teachers’ subject, pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge to enhance the teaching of the curriculum and the appropriate use of assessment. The practice and subject knowledge of staff, including newly qualified teachers, build and improve over time. (Ofsted, 2019a, p.74)

Collegial observation methods:

You were complementary of observation when it was considered to be collegial and allowed you to decide on an aspect of your teaching that you wanted to improve. All of you regarded observations by peers to be the most beneficial. Observation and feedback was seen as an opportunity by you all to build relationships with fellow teachers as you worked with one another and leadership in order to develop aspects of your pedagogy. This finding was not unique to this study and is shared in literature about a collegial approach towards observation such as Taylor (2017) and Barrell (2017) who used discussion between the leadership team of their respective schools and the teachers to shape and improve the process of observation. By engaging with staff, positive, trusting relationships were formed and so observation became a developmental tool that enabled teachers to enhance their performance in the classroom. The openness of discussion between all parties also removed the fear that many of you described as being associated with the observation process. If these practices were to be
utilised at Westward School, then this would help evidence for Ofsted that leadership is engaging with staff to aid their development as well as helping to manage your workload by reducing undue pressures placed upon you by unnecessary observations.

**Strategic use of observation:**
One aspect reported as problematic was when you felt you were not given enough time to act upon suggestions for improvement from one observation to the next and so a strategic and sustainable framework for observation would be welcomed. As a result of the new Ofsted framework, the leadership team should be encouraged to give you time to act on suggestions for improvement.

**Training in giving and receiving feedback:**
Feedback on performance was deemed to be the most damaging aspect of observation in the findings. Training of all observers and you as new teachers about how to deliver feedback in a constructive way, aware of its potentially high emotional impact, would be effective. This could focus on the purposes for the observation and feedback such as the ‘feedforward’ approach (Goldsmith, 2003) be included, which could help to increase your motivation to improve future practice. Recommendations have been given to the leadership team to include you in the training to increase your engagement with the feedback process.