# The Lamp of Sacrifice: Professional Identity and Work Culture in a College of Further Education

Submitted by Martin John Price to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of *Doctor of Education in Education*, October 2010.

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(Signature)……..

## Abstract

Britain has a culture of long working hours, resulting in significant levels of work-related stress. Teachers are arguably the professional group most likely to experience pathological stress and burnout as a result of working long hours. Research in schools suggests that teachers' work orientations are strongly influenced by factors of personal identity, social background, career stage and personal resilience to stress. In Further Education (FE) research hitherto has emphasised the impact of Government policy and managerial style on teacher behaviour, and notions of teacher professionalism. There has been less research into the impact of FE teacher identities and attitudes towards work upon their working lives. This thesis investigates the relatively under-researched area of work culture within a single FE College, in an attempt to discover the reasons underlying teacher's reactions to the pressures of overwork. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were carried out with 13 teachers and managers to investigate teacher responses to the work culture of the College. Based upon existing theoretical models of stress and burnout, three groups of potential determinants are explored: personal identity, the social context of the College, and the impact of external political, economic and social factors.

The research confirms the existence amongst College teachers of a culture of working long hours, and identifies examples of stress and burnout. Interview responses support previous research findings concerning the central importance of teacher identity. Interview data underline the importance of personal factors in determining teachers' responses to workload and their resilience to stress. A model is developed which summarises potential teacher responses to workload stress, and proposes ways in which these may be linked to factors of teacher identity and work cultures. The findings also highlight the pivotal role of managers and work teams in supporting teachers, particularly those most emotionally susceptible to stress.

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## List of Abbreviations

ACL - Adult and Community Learning
CIPD - Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CPD - Continuing Professional Development
DfEE - Department for Education and Employment
DfES - Department for Education and Skills
DIUS - Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
ESRC - Economic and Social Research Council
EWTD - European Working Time Directive
FE - Further Education
FEFC - Further Education Funding Council
FENTO - Further Education National Training Organisation
GNP - Gross National Product
HSE - Health and Safety Executive
IfL - Institute for Learning
LLUK - Lifelong Leaning UK
LSC - Learning and Skills Council
NFER - National Foundation for Educational Research
Ofsted - Office for Standards in Education
SFA - Skills Funding Agency
STRB - School Teachers' Review Body
TLRP - Teaching and Learning Research Programme
TUC - Trades Union Congress
UCU - University and College Union
VITAE - Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and Effectiveness project
YPLA - Young People's Learning Agency

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You'll work for about 37 hours a week…. You're also likely to find that you'll do some additional work at home during busy periods. (LLUK, 2009)

I work in further education…and like everyone else I know, work very long hours. At home I've been saying 'Not now' with growing frequency to my three kids and equally hard-working wife, whilst marking, lecture prep and work-based admin all compete with trying to have some semblance of a social and emotional life with them. It's become almost impossible to keep a balance, and the price is high.

(Anon. quoted in Bunting, 2004, p.208)

Last year I did an extra 180 to 200 contact hours, on four different courses, at two levels, and marking, and lesson preparation, and resource preparation. Hundreds and hundreds of hours. (Alec, first level manager, the College)

I've felt very overloaded over the last few years, and that's … one of the reasons why I've … finally decided … I can't do it any more. (Mike, retiring teacher, the College)

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# Chapter 1. Rationale for the Research Topic

*Work in itself is not an end; only a means; but we nowadays make it an end*
*– George Gissing (1892)*

The image of teaching in Further Education (FE) promoted by its Sector Skills Council (Lifelong Learning UK – LLUK) would appear to be at odds with the perceptions of some of its teachers. This thesis explores the reality of teachers' working lives in a single FE College as perceived by the teachers themselves, in an attempt to analyse how they understand and respond to the work culture. Given that teachers play such a pivotal role in creating the conditions for learning (Coffield, 2008), and that staffing typically absorbs more than 80% of a college's budget, teachers' motivation is clearly crucial to the success of FE. In this Chapter, I explain how my personal background in Further Education led me to chose my research topic. I investigate the broad pattern of working cultures in the UK, and describe the context of rapid organisational change within FE.

## 1.1 Personal Context

The idea for this research emerged from a sequence of change events in my own teaching career, and from my reflections upon these events. I started a new post in a new college and commenced my Doctorate in Education in October 2006. Within a month, I was informed that the small teacher training team that I managed was to be the subject of an intensive two-week Ofsted inspection of our 75 students, and all the stresses which that entailed. On becoming acquainted with my new team – and my new line-manager – I was struck both by their dedicated professionalism and their habit of working long hours. I also read a book on the culture of over-work (Bunting, 2004) which resonated strongly with my experiences in teaching. These events, and the personal and work pressures they generated for me, brought into clearer focus aspects of the changing culture of colleges which I had observed over my career in Further Education (FE), and of my own understanding of these cultures.

I commenced working in FE in 1971, teaching academic subjects (GCSE and A levels), in both 16-19 and adult contexts, and subsequently carried out a range of first level managerial roles. For the past 13 years, I have been involved in Teacher Education. This has expanded my awareness of teachers' work patterns across the full range of subject areas within two large colleges, and in a variety of other contexts in the wider Learning and Skills Sector. I have also spent 18 years as a Staff Governor of one college. This depth and range of experience has enabled me to observe, at first hand the changes experienced by FE teachers. It has also involved me in the decision-

making process at various levels, permitting me to view change from a management perspective as well as from that of a classroom practitioner. Having spent 6 years managing teacher training for the Primary sector, and having worked with teacher education departments in five universities, I am able to compare changes in FE with some aspects of concurrent change in both Primary and Higher Education.

Throughout my career, I have been struck by the commitment of my colleagues and managers to their students, and to the pursuit of high standards of learning and vocational training. I have observed that their dedication has frequently manifested itself in a culture of working long hours, sometimes with stressful consequences. I myself have worked increasingly long hours, and experienced times of considerable stress. I am reminded of Ruskin's (2005) *Seven Lamps of Architecture,* originally published in 1880. He attempts to define the basis of good practice in architecture – one could say professionalism –around seven principles, which combine art, craft and ethics, and which are based upon "man's nature, not upon his knowledge" (p.5). There appears to me to be a strong parallel between architecture and education; teaching is as much an art, requiring instinctive emotional judgement, as it is a craft, based upon professional competences. The commitment I have observed in my teaching colleagues seems reflect the first of Ruskin's principles, *the Lamp of Sacrifice*:

> the offering of precious things, merely because they are precious, not because they are useful or necessary….. the opposite of the prevalent feeling of modern times, which desires to produce the largest results at the least cost (p.18).

Maximising outputs for the minimum cost is the definition of *performativity* (Lyotard, 1984) – a central concept in critiques of modern education systems. My thesis is a personal attempt to make sense of my feelings and observations, about the performative work cultures of Further Education, and the impact of these upon teachers. I seek to answer the fundamental question which underpins these: why do teachers work so hard for so little reward? To this end, I have used in-depth semi-structured interviews to investigate the attitudes of a group of 13 teachers towards their work culture, within a single, large further education college in the southwest of England (see Chapter 3). Initially, my aim was to provide opportunities for FE teachers to describe their work experiences in their own words, and to explain their responses to work pressures. I expected to be engaging in discussions of professionalism and the management of change in the College. However, the results of the first six interviews showed that teachers' responses were much more personal in nature, requiring greater consideration of their individual life experiences and their reasons for entering teaching; of the *local ecologies* (Spours et al, 2007) of teams and line managers with whom they

worked; and of the perceived tensions between their own definitions of teaching as an activity (their *teacherhood* – Jones, 2003) and formal management priorities for their performance. Issues of stress and burnout emerged from the responses of my interviewees far more commonly than I had anticipated. As a result, my perspective widened to consider more fully the factors influencing teachers' "resilience" to stress (Day et al, 2006a; Gu & Day, 2007; Day & Gu, 2007; Sammons et al, 2007). School-based research suggested possible links between resilience and those personal factors which my respondents were discussing at interview. These links between stress, resilience and teachers' personal histories thus assumed a central position in my research and analysis. Not least, I wanted to see how useful school-based models of teacher identity were in explaining teacher responses in an FE College. To set the context for this research, I first consider the nature of work cultures in the UK (Section 1.2), and the background of change in education, particularly FE (Section 1.3).

**1.2 A Culture of Overwork**

The phrase "work-life balance" (Bunting, 2004, p.212; also Lowe, 2001; Guest, 2002; Oswald, 2002; Neault, 2005; Bird, 2006; Bloom et al, 2006) is so commonplace that, in any discussion of work and professionalism in our society, it is in danger of becoming a cliché. However, behind the cliché stands the implied existence of professional cultures which encourage over-work (Brown, 2004) and which are a common feature of developed economies in a post-modern, post-industrial world (Bell, 1973; Whitty, 1997). This culture is linked to continual pressures to raise the productivity of human capital, in the context of intense global economic competition (Brown & Lauder, 1996). In education, such over-work is frequently attributed to excessive political control over the working conditions of teachers: a result of increasingly centralised governance of education (Elkins & Elliott 2004), and of a culture of *managerialism* (Avis et al, 1996; Gunter, 1997; Shain & Gleeson, 1999; Avis, 2002a; Brehony & Deem, 2005).

There is considerable literature showing that British workers put in longer hours than almost all of their counterparts in Europe (Green, 2001; Taylor, 2002a; Bunting, 2004; CIPD, 2004, Cowling, 2005; CIPD, 2007a). One Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2003) survey has estimated that 26% of UK employees work more than 48 hours per week - the proposed maximum under the European Working Time Directive (EWTD). One in ten workers still exceeds a working week of 50 hours, (CIPD, 2006). The UK Government has encouraged this propensity to overwork by negotiating an opt-out from the EWTD, (BERR 1998; CIPD, 1999). Frequently, long hours represent unpaid work, rather than paid overtime - the TUC (2008) estimates that 5 million British workers (nearly 20% of the workforce) contribute some 36 million hours

of additional unpaid work a year. By 2010, the figure increases to 20.3% of workers doing unpaid overtime (TUC, 2010), with 3.6% working "extreme" amounts of unpaid overtime, (defined as 10 or more hours above those contracted). Teaching professionals are the sector most prone to overwork: 53.9% work unpaid overtime, and 21.2% work "extreme" hours (ibid). With teachers working an average of 18.7 hours of unpaid overtime per week, this represents a typical workload of over 55 hours a week for one in five teachers. Research for the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB, 2008) shows that work levels in primary and secondary schools typically stand at between 50 and 60 hours per week, and that these have not changed noticeably since 1994. If anything, workloads of classroom teachers have increased, whilst those of senior staff have decreased slightly. A University and College Union survey of 5000 FE staff (UCU, 2007), reports 36% of respondents working 46 or more hours per week, and 82% indicating that workloads have increased during the previous three years. A smaller UCU survey (Waddington, 2007) records a similar 36% of staff working more than 40 hours per week, against only 0.3% who are contracted to do so; it has to be remembered that some 45% of staff in FE do not have full-time contracts, (ibid). Only 7.4% of the UCU sample report that they do not work more than their contracted hours (Villeneuve-Smith et al, 2008). A DfES survey (Wilson et al, 2005) finds that 62% of FE staff on permanent contracts considers that they have too much work to do – the figure for college staff is 69%. One time-log study of 28 FE teachers' work patterns, (Avis et al 2001) confirms a pattern of overwork: teachers "consistently worked over hours" (p.75), projecting an image of "an overburdened profession" (p.76). This suggests that overwork is endemic in the post-16, FE sector.

The picture is more complex than that suggested by broad statistics about hours worked:

> …when asked about work, the two concerns that emerge most frequently from the CIPD surveys on employee attitudes are long hours and work intensity.
> (CIPD, 2007b, p1.)

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) review (Rick et al, 2002) estimates that 80% of UK workers "have experienced high work pace and intensity" and "about one third" feel "exposed to unpredictable, long, unsociable or inflexible work schedules", (p. xi). According to CIPD,

> - Over a fifth of employees experience high levels of stress and nearly half say that they feel under excessive pressure once or twice a week or more.
> - Less than one in ten employees look forward to coming to work all of the time, and just over a quarter rarely or never look forward to coming to work.
> (CIPD, 2006, p.8)

Within the literature, the term stress is used in two slightly different senses: to describe the state of heightened activity generated by high work rates (deemed a natural corollary of modern work cultures), and in a pejorative sense (Rudow, 1999; Kelchtermans, 1999), to describe the negative consequences of work pressures. To distinguish these two uses, throughout this thesis I refer to negative responses to stress as *pathological stress*. In 2003/04, the HSE estimates that 12.8 million working days were lost in the UK due to *pathological stress*, depression, or anxiety ascribed to work-related stress (HSE, 2004). It estimates that this declined to 11.4 million by 2008/09 (HSE, 2009) – however, overall the data suggest that the rate of occurrence has been "broadly level over the years 2001/02 to 2008/09" (HSE, 2010). Mind (2005) estimates that 20% of UK workers experience high levels of stress, and the resulting illness costs the equivalent of 10% of GNP. HSE (2010) data show that stress levels for teachers are higher than average; for FE, UCU (2009) suggests that:

> More than half the respondents … said their general or average level of stress was high or very high. One third said they experienced levels of stress they found unacceptable, and 6% said this was always the case. (p.27)

A Work Foundation survey finds that 4 million workers – 15% of the workforce - are dissatisfied with their jobs (Isles 2004). The job dissatisfaction levels are even higher amongst full-time employees – 17%, or one in six workers. Conversely, the figures reveal that the majority of people - 64% of full time employees and 67% of part-time workers - are satisfied with their jobs. Indeed 2 million UK workers indicate that they prefer being at work to being at home. Nevertheless, 61% of workers would prefer to work shorter hours. Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) research (Taylor 2002a) suggests that, in all aspects of their work, employees in 2002 were finding their jobs less satisfying than in 1992: specifically, in terms of pay levels, job prospects and opportunities for training, but

> the most dramatic decline in job satisfaction during the 1990s occurred because of the hours people are now required to work and the amount of work that they must accomplish. (Taylor 2002a, p.10)

Only 47% of employees working over 48 hours per week feel that such a workload enables them to achieve a balance between work and life outside work (CIPD, 2003). Professional and managerial groups, including teachers, show a particularly pronounced decline in job satisfaction. Although 54% of teachers (Rose 2003, p.515) report "high job satisfaction", a survey of FE teachers (Davies & Owen, 2001) found that "more staff were negative about their job and their college than were positive" (p.7). ESRC survey evidence by Hill and White (cited in Taylor 2002b, no reference given) suggests growing dissatisfaction amongst workers over the amount of time they

have to spend at work, and the impact this has on their families and life outside work; this is particularly the case for workers who exceed the EWTD limit of 48 hours per week, (CIPD, 2001). 56% of respondents feel “they have dedicated too much of their life to work” (ibid, p.2). Almost a third of their partners identify negative effects of such workloads on personal relationships and on their children. Whilst most workers choose to work longer hours than contracted, 30% report a degree of compulsion to overwork (CIPD 2004). In some sectors, this choice to work extra hours is undoubtedly due to the attractions of paid overtime, which permits lower paid workers to increase their incomes substantially. Overwork is partly a response to financial pressures, such as increasing consumer debt, rising house prices and mortgage costs (Taylor, 2002b, Brown, 2004). The reasons for overwork in professions such as teaching, where overtime is frequently unpaid, remain less clear in these surveys.

Overall, research suggests an apparent contradiction: employees generally like their work (Owen & Davies, 2002), but feel that they work too many hours (CIPD, 2001). Data from CIPD (2004) identify the reasons for overwork as predominantly the volume and intensity of workload, coupled with workers’ perceived need to earn sufficient money to support their desired lifestyles. Pay seems to be less central to job satisfaction than the content of work, and opportunities for personal achievement (Isles, 2004). Employees who express a wish to work longer hours particularly include the 22% of workers who work part-time and/or have low incomes; amongst graduates, long working hours also reflect intellectual involvement in their work and a perception that this is the way to promotion, (Sturges & Guest, 2004). Those wishing to work fewer hours almost always cite positive reasons related to their life outside work: they wish to spend more time with family and friends, or in leisure activities, (Isles, 2004). When asked directly why they work more hours than contracted, workers’ responses are as summarised in Table 1.

These results appear to be consistent with those from the CIPD (2004) research, where workers identify the main benefits of working longer hours as: higher living standards (51%), improved quality of life (46%), higher self-esteem (38%) and enhanced prospects for promotion (24%). Most derive satisfaction from work, but face pressures to overwork from employers (growing workload, threat of job loss,

**Table 1. Reasons for Working Long Hours**

| | Disagree | **Agree** | Neutral |
|---|---|---|---|
| I work long hours because I am scared of losing my job | 34.6 | **39.3** | 26.1 |
| I work long hours because I won't let my colleagues down | 60.1 | **20.2** | 19.7 |
| I work long hours because of the culture of the organisation | 83.3 | **8.3** | 8.3 |
| I work long hours because of the volume of work | 50.4 | **24.8** | 24.8 |
| I work long hours to speed up getting promotion | 19.8 | **60.1** | 20.2 |

*Source (Isles 2004, Table 17, p. 20)*. ***My emphasis.***

managerial culture), from feelings of loyalty to their work team, or from the desire to improve their promotion prospects. As I discuss later, there is considerable research evidence to suggest an additional factor facing teachers: loyalty to their students – what can be termed a *sense of vocation*.

Taken together, the data from these surveys suggest that many workers in Britain experience what could be called *cultures of overwork*. These produce at least intermittently stressful situations for most, leading to dissatisfactions over the balance between work and non-work. For a significant minority workload pressures produce *pathological stress* and *burnout*. Such increasing workloads, long-hours cultures, and related issues of stress and worker dissatisfaction are frequently attributed to rapid economic change within the UK and other developed economies. I shall now summarise these forces for change in FE.

### 1.3 The Changing Culture of Further Education

Elkins and Elliott (2004) summarise educational policy in the UK since 1979 as being aimed at what successive governments have termed 'modernisation'. This reflects a growing emphasis upon education as an economic policy tool, and particularly the creation through Further Education of a skilled workforce for the nation:

> Our future as a prosperous nation depends on our education and training system. (DfES, 2006).
>
> A college of FE exists primarily to serve the needs of an advanced industrial society. (Bristow, 1976, p.10).

This econocentric approach has been regarded as fostering an instrumental attitude towards producing skills, at the expense of broader educational aims, (Avis, 2002a;

Coffield 2008), despite the fact that FE has taken on an enhanced social dimension since 1996, (The Kennedy Report, 1996; also DfEE, 1998a). Nevertheless, as Green (1997) asserts, FE has been one of the less developed parts of the British education system: little real attempt was made to improve its coherence and status until the late 1980s.

To achieve its policy goals, in the 1990s government shifted decision making from Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to central government, in an attempt to create a more competitive market-orientation, and to drive up educational standards (DfES 2002, 2006). The effect has been to impose on teachers a constant stream of changes, increasing teacher accountability for the outcomes of the education system, and making them "more responsible for 'managing their own compliance' to state requirements" (Elkins & Elliott, 2004, p.17). The mechanisms for ensuring this compliance have included:

- emphasis upon stronger leadership from managers - who are set increasingly challenging performance targets with their staff, (Hill, 2000; Ranson, 2003; Hannagan et al, 2007),
- performance-related pay for teachers – often linked to student outcomes, (DfES, 2002),
- closely-defined National standards for initial teacher training, (Lucas, 2002; Bailey & Robson, 2002),
- introduction of national professional bodies, with a remit to raise professional standards through ethical codes and disciplinary procedures, (IfL, 2008),
- statutory minimum requirements for CPD activity, with a threat of losing their licence to teach for those FE teachers who fail to engage sufficiently, (Hamilton, 2007; Orr, 2008).

All of these mechanisms are identified, and advocated, by Barber (2001, cited in Elkins & Elliott, 2004). As former Head of the 'Standards and Effectiveness Unit' of the DfEE, and a major influence on then Prime Minister Blair - Barber states it thus: teachers "can sign up for the crusade for higher standards or they can allow it to trample over them", (1996, p.207). This is the "*performativity* principle" (Lyotard, 1984, p.50; see also Peters, 2004a, 2004b), based upon 'performance management', (Shain & Gleeson, 1999; Avis, 2002b, 2003a; Gleeson & James, 2007; Ball, 2008). Government, employers, and increasingly managers, focus on policies which set measurable outcomes for the teaching process: perceiving "a need to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of 'inputs' against clearly defined 'outputs'," (Elkins & Elliott, 2004, p.19).

This thesis relates specifically to the impact of these changes upon the work culture in a single FE institution: “the College”. Historically, colleges have dominated provision in the post-16 education sector (Bristow, 1976; Cantor & Roberts, 1983), and like most parts of the public sector, FE has been the subject of rapid and continual change during the last 25 years, (for a detailed chronology see Armitage et al, 2007). Faced with rising unemployment in the 1980s, and with an agenda radically to restructure the UK economic base in the face of economic globalisation, the Government began to take a more “interventionist and authoritarian... [*approach*] …to impose new forms of vocationalism on the education system” (Green, 1997, p.19). In order to increase it’s control over FE, (its “dominocracy”, Esland, 1996, p.29), the government took publicly funded FE colleges out of local authority control, and gave them self-governing status under largely un-elected Governing Bodies, with the Further and Higher Education Act (DfEE, 1992). Funding for colleges was controlled by a government quango, the Further Education Funding Council, (FEFC). At the same time, a radical market orientation was adopted (Elliott & Crossley, 1997), on the assumption that competition between providers would raise educational standards whilst driving down costs (Shain & Gleeson, 1999; Ranson, 2003; Smith, 2007).

Local management of colleges had the result of shifting much of the burden of bureaucracy directly onto college managers. At the same time, the complex FEFC funding mechanism necessitated detailed financial audit procedures, whilst the transfer of quality inspections from local councils to Ofsted (Briggs, 2003) substantially increased the amount of administrative record keeping required of FE managers and teachers (Elliott & Crossley, 1997). Hence, colleges have been subject to twin pressures of cost-minimisation (Stronach et al, 2002) and performance maximisation (Lyotard 1984) – *economies of performance* (Stronach et al, 2002). A culture of performance management, self-assessment, target setting, external audit and inspection, has resulted in increased bureaucracy in FE, (Shain & Gleeson, 1999; Avis, 2002b, 2003; Gleeson et al, 2005; Spours et al, 2007). Research in the schools sector (Bubb & Earley, 2004) suggests that non-teaching activity occupies between 61% (secondary) and 64% (primary) of a teacher’s workload. FE teachers are required to provide evidence (paper or electronic) of *compliance* (Robson, 2006) with a growing schedule of standards and performance criteria, (Gleeson & James, 2007), suggesting that a balance of workload similar to that in schools now occurs in colleges. Additionally, as the range of non-teaching activities required of staff has increased, funded time-remission from teaching to undertake such duties has declined, (Robson, 2006).

Since the mid-1990s, constant restructuring of management and staff structures has been a feature of colleges (Harper 2000, Avis et al, 2002a). This is seen partly as an axiomatic consequence of the need to respond rapidly to a changing economic and technical environment. It has also been promoted as a necessary mechanism to help colleges meet the increasingly rigorous demands for greater efficiency and effectiveness (DES, 1987). Previous expensive management hierarchies alluded to in Harper (2000), have been reduced in size, shifting much of the day-to-day administration onto ordinary teachers. Increasing the direct business management role of schools and colleges has resulted in a growth of non-teaching support posts (Simkins & Lumby, 2002), which sometimes can be perceived by teachers as depriving them of both professional autonomy and resources (Ainley & Bailey, 1997). These factors, combined with the growing bureaucratic demands of an *audit culture* (Elliott & Crossley, 1997; Briggs, 2003), have served to increase the workloads of teachers and managers alike. Wilson et al (2005) find that FE teachers principally blame "too much paperwork, bureaucracy and lack of administration support" (p.53) for excessive workloads. In the UCU/ATL survey, 92% of teachers blame increasing workload on 'more administration' and 46% on larger classes, (UCU 2007). Bureaucratic managerialism is directly implicated in workload *intensification* (Avis, 1999; Butt & Lance, 2005) and teachers' *extended role* (Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Bartlett, 2004). Waddington's (2007) research for UCU found that 66.5% of respondents in FE Colleges "strongly supported" campaigning by the union to reduce or regulate the workload of members; in the UCU/ATL survey, 87% of respondents in colleges identified management cultures which "actively contributed to stress", (UCU 2007).

Since the introduction of self-governing colleges under the 1992 Act, negotiations about pay and conditions have largely transferred from national to college level. Previously, a nationally negotiated "Silver Book" agreement on workloads defined maximum contact hours: typically 21 hours per week for a main-grade lecturer, with usually 30 hours per week attendance at College and a 36-week teaching year. Since 1993, this model has been replaced by locally negotiated agreements, which reflect local conditions, (Robson, 2006). In a context of constant change, and faced with increasing pressures on funding, college managements have progressively increased workloads: staff now teach more hours per week (typically 24), over more weeks per year (38 plus), than they did in 1992. FE teachers have experienced reductions in the number of days holiday, increases in class sizes (Jephcote et al, 2008), and the imposition of a statutory requirement to engage in compulsory professional development (DIUS 2007b).

Bunting (2004) notes how increased workload is typical of the public sector in the UK, as are levels of stress, (see also, Oswald, 2002; Day et al, 2006b;). Brown (2004) defines "work overload" as:

> when the total demands on time and energy associated with multiple activities and roles are too great to perform tasks adequately or comfortably. (p.11)

A culture of overwork is typified by: working above and beyond contracted hours, working through meal breaks, taking work home, answering e-mails from home in the evenings and at weekends, and failing to take the full amount of statutory leave (CIPD, 2003; Bartlett, 2002, 2004; Naylor, 2001). The pathological consequences of overwork are noted to include: increased levels of absence due to stress or ill health, marital problems or strained relations within the family, physical or emotional breakdown leading to burnout (Byrne, 1999) and increased early retirement, (Troman, 2000, Bunting 2004). Heavy workloads have also exacerbated recruitment and retention difficulties for FE (DfES, 2002; Wilson et al, 2005). In education, "stress", has been defined as those "aspects of the teaching job that are experienced by teachers as frustrating, dissatisfying, or demotivating", (Kelchtermans, 1999, p.176). Such a definition emphasises the point that stress is not necessarily unusual in the modern work context; nor are its results always negative (Lens & Neves de Jesus, 1999; Smylie, 1999). Within this thesis I refer to situations where stress has negative consequences for health, work and family life as *pathological stress*. Given that current teacher workloads can lead to stress, a key issue is to discover why different teachers react to it in different ways, (ibid; see also Woods, 1999; Troman & Woods, 2001). In particular, it is important to ascertain the circumstances under which pathological stress can lead to "burnout". Rudow (1999) defines these terms as follows:

> "Teacher stress" is the general term for negative emotions of teachers that are reflected in aversive demands to their work. (p.53).

> Burnout can be described as a *crisis…..* Teachers subject to burnout are those who are involved, devoted and conscientious. Their involvement is determined by social caring and helping motives, which make up the personal purpose of the job. (Ibid, p.55).

UK work cultures, especially those of teachers, appear to be characterised by high and rising rates of overwork, which can lead to increased job dissatisfaction, pathological stress and ultimately burnout. Given the political and economic priority afforded to education within our society, and the high costs of training teachers, any research which can throw light upon the causes of workload stress, and the factors which make certain teachers more vulnerable than others to burnout, must be welcomed. There is a paucity of research into these issues as they affect teachers in Further Education. It is

the purpose of my research to explore teacher responses to their work cultures within the context of a single College. In the following Chapter, I review the state of current research concerning teacher identities and working contexts, and summarise some key models of how work pressures can generate stress and burnout.

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# Chapter 2. Literature Review – Teacher Identity and Work Culture

*Work consists of what a body is obliged to do, and Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do - Mark Twain (1876)*

## 2.1 Defining the Research Field

> Compared with the schools sector, there is relatively little research into becoming and being a teacher in further education…. There is more research into accounts of initial training and early years' experiences, a growing literature on further education (FE) about 'professionalism', but much less about the working lives of experienced teachers. (Jephcote et al, 2008, p.163)

The research literature is replete with descriptions of the impact of increasing workloads upon teachers. However, whilst most writers acknowledge that *teacher emotional commitment* to their students and their subjects – *cathexis* - causes them to accept this growing workload, research, particularly in FE, rarely explores why teachers do so. As Bartlett (2004) points out: "current explanations of overwork do not adequately account for the case of teachers' overwork" (p.565); teachers' notions of professionalism, perhaps linked to outdated methods of working (Timperley & Robinson, 2000), may provide part of the explanation. In a sense, there appears to be a gap in the research literature. The question that I pose in this thesis seeks to explore that gap:

***"How do teachers in a Further Education College perceive and respond to their work culture?"***

This Chapter reviews the research literature under three broad headings, (the rationale for this is returned to in Section 5.6). Firstly, (Section 2.2), I consider factors in the personal background of teachers, including their reasons for entering the profession, which may affect their attitudes and behaviours towards their work. In Section 2.3, I summarise how *teacher identity* can be shaped by social factors, such as team cultures, college environments and notions of professionalism. Thirdly, in Section 2.4 I consider the impacts of management culture and external policy change upon teachers – in particular, the effects of three mechanisms for controlling teachers' work: surveillance, control of time, and bureaucracy. Finally, in Section 2.5, I review key theories relating to teacher responses to work pressures, and the nature of stress and burnout.

## 2.2 Teacher Identity: backgrounds and motivations

This Section considers how teacher identity is shaped by factors affecting teacher self-image, teacher background and career stage, and by issues of motivation and emotional response to work cultures.

### *2.2a Self-image and Personal Identity*

Much research into teaching cultures in FE tends to focus either upon structural factors, such as educational change (Fullan, 1991; Avis et al, 1996), or upon the tensions between structure and agency (Gleeson et al, 2005). Where attempts are made to investigate agency per se, these tend to do so using a discourse of professionalism (Gleeson & James, 2007; Hamilton, 2007). Teacher identity tends to be equated with *professional identity*. Research in schools has often followed a different path, emphasizing the role of personal background and career factors in shaping teacher identity. Consideration of such factors is often incidental to studies of FE teachers, where identity is frequently regarded as just one factor amongst many determining teacher dispositions and behavior, perhaps acting as a filter on agency, (Gleeson & James, 2007). In FE, the emphasis is upon "professional identities" (Edwards et al, 2007, p.157), the "professional 'soul'", (ibid p.156) of teachers. In schools, Lortie (1975) produces one of the earliest and most complete analyses of the profession. Despite its age and US focus, Lortie's study provides a strong basis for much subsequent research, which builds upon and reinforces the validity of his findings (Sikes et al, 1985; Nias, 1989; Hargreaves, 1994; Acker, 1999; Troman & Woods, 2001). Central to Lortie's analysis, is his view of the nature of teaching, and of the processes by which new teachers are socialised into the profession: an aspect little studied in Further Education (Jephcote et al, 2008). Lortie sees the teaching profession as essentially low status and low paid; people become teachers for reasons other than income or social standing. People enter teaching through a need for strong interpersonal relationships within their work; because they possess a strong service ethic; due to the influence of role models (parents or former teachers); and through their love of their subject. This sense of *vocation* strongly reflects the self-image (Kelchtermans, 1993, 1999) and motivations of the would-be teacher. Furthermore, Lortie's research indicates that, in the mid-1970s, only limited training was provided for new teachers, with the consequence that they tended to learn on the job:

> What students learn about teaching, then, is intuitive and imitative, rather than explicit and analytical; it is based on individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles…. socialization into teaching is largely *self-socialisation*; one's personal predispositions are not only relevant but, in fact, stand at the core of becoming a teacher. (1975, pp. 62-79, emphasis in original)

This “biographical orientation” (p.81) to understanding teachers’ work attitudes is common within the research literature (Acker, 1999; Troman & Woods, 2001; also Avis & Bathmaker, 2004a, 2004b, 2006).

Lortie (1975) also emphasises the individualistic nature of teaching: large parts of the working day can be spent “isolated from other adults” in “cells” (p.14). Cocooned in their classrooms, teachers present what Hargreaves (1994) refers to as *fragmented individualism*. Because, within the classroom, “the manner in which each teacher behaves is unique” (Nias, 1989, p.13), this requires a person who is comfortable with the exercise of autonomy and involves significant “investment of personal resources” (ibid). Although more recent decades have experienced deliberate attempts by policy-makers and managers to foster more collegial, team-based approaches, most teachers still spend significant proportions of their time alone in class with their students. Hence, research frequently emphasises the primacy of teachers’ relationships with the learners (Nias, 1989): a relationship based upon caring (Acker, 1999; Hinchcliffe, 2004) and the opportunity to exercise individual judgement - *autonomy* - in creating effective classroom environments. According to Lortie (1975) this work environment results in two key characteristics of teaching. Firstly, the difficulty of assessing (and hence rewarding) teachers’ efforts: much of what they achieve with students is hidden from view. The outcomes of teachers’ efforts are difficult to measure, given the range of other influences on learners, and disagreement over the goals of education. Hence, attempts to measure teacher effectiveness can be uncertain, even contested; teachers tend to give greatest credence to their own evaluations of their success, and, as a result, tend to be their own harshest critics. Acker (1999) refers to the “high expectations teachers held for themselves, (p.115). A second and linked factor is what Lortie (1975) terms *cathexis*: the investment of intellectual or emotional energy into the task of teaching. This, again, is a major source of ambiguity (Troman, 2008). On the one hand, emotional commitment is one of the main ways in which the teachers derive satisfaction from their work, (Bogler, 2002; Butt & Lance, 2005; Day et al 2006b). As one large-scale study of FE teachers concludes:

> intrinsic job satisfaction is primarily influenced by factors directly related to the education and care of learners rather than to the matters concerning college management, systems and structures that were the focus of our survey. (Owen & Davies, 2002, p.43)

However, emotional commitment is also a potential source of stress, when teachers’ efforts do not reap the rewards:

> teacher personality plays a part in the amount of psychic reward they receive. The demanding perfectionist will feel depressed by outcomes which cheer a more easy-going colleague. (Lortie, 1975, p.141)

This suggests that differences in teachers' emotional responses to stress, may explain why workload pressures have more pathological consequences for some teachers than for others. Surprisingly little has been written on teachers' emotional differences; instead, the discourse revolves around teacher identities and self-image (Sikes et al, 1985; Weber & Mitchell, 1996), the impact of significant others (Nias, 1985, 1989), and of "critical incidents" (Measor, 1985, p.61) on identity. Among the few studies which shed some light upon the importance of personal characteristics, Morrison and McIntyre (1973) emphasise the values-orientation of teachers, and their tendency to be "people-oriented" (p.45). Teachers place emphasis on "personal relationships, 'helping other people' and 'working with people'", and place less value on "what is seen as useful, efficient or economic", (ibid). In general terms, teachers tend to be emotionally stable, socially well adjusted and conformist. Nias (1989) finds that "the substantial self of the teacher is stable and well-defended" (p.62), and identifies "commitment" (p.29) as the central element in creating and sustaining the teacher's self-image. This commitment is demonstrated through a primary focus upon the needs of the student, and the teacher's central goal of supporting and developing student potential. To this extent, teachers' *professionalism* is frequently a combination of personal dedication to students, to the moral purposes of education and to their subject area. Professionalism involves teachers' commitment to developing their subject knowledge and practical teaching expertise. A highly professional teacher displays "reliability, punctuality, efficiency and classroom competence", (Nias, p.35). Such commitment implies a strong sense of vocation: "teaching is a 'total' occupation in a quasi-religious sense", (p.36). However, setting high standards for their own performance carries with it implicit risks of over-involvement and over-work, often resulting in "self-doubt, strain, fatigue and ill-health", (p.37). Jones (2003, 2005) clearly distinguishes between the personal and professional identity of teachers: especially the need for new teachers to align their …

> personhood and teacherhood … the process of reconciling their personal beliefs and values with the realities of teaching and in developing positive identities as teachers. (2003, p.385),

Or, as Malm (2008) puts it, to achieve unison between ''what I am'' and ''what I do'', (p.373 – see also Briggs, 2007). As I discuss below, in FE much of the discussion relates to *teacherhood,* using concepts of *professionalism* and *professional identity*. Research in schools has made more progress in exploring the personal characteristics (personhood) which influence teacher responses to work cultures – hence my emphasis within this section upon research derived from studies in schools.

Research for the Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives and Effectiveness (VITAE) project for the School Teachers' Review Body consistently shows that teacher identity is shaped, "positively and negatively, by classroom experiences, organizational culture and situation-specific personal and professional events" (Day et al, 2006a, p.190). How managers deal with educational changes that teachers perceive to threaten their norms and practices "is key to teacher resilience and effectiveness, (ibid). For teachers, a "positive professional identity is associated with well-being" (Sammons et al., 2007, p.699). Low teacher effectiveness can be due to age or personal circumstances, and is often symptomatic of "high levels of professional stress", (Day et al, 2006b, p.614). Day (2008) concludes that

> Teachers' sense of positive professional identity is associated with well-being and job satisfaction and is a key factor in their effectiveness. (p.257).

This can create a vicious cycle, where stress has negative impacts on teachers' personal lives and becomes pathological; if unresolved, this may lead to "loss of some of the best teachers or loss of their energy, commitment and sense of purpose" (ibid) - burnout. Even teachers who do not leave teaching altogether may lack commitment; hence one must distinguish between:

> two forms of retention in the teaching profession: their physical continuation in the role; and, the maintenance of motivation and commitment as key indicators of quality….. quality retention. (Gu & Day, 2007, p.1314).

Day and Gu (2007) identify five consequences of "performativity agendas" (p.424) for teacher identities. They:

> (i) implicitly encouraged teachers to comply uncritically (e.g. teach to the test so that teaching becomes more a technical activity and thus more susceptible to control);
> (ii) challenged teachers' substantive identities;
> (iii) reduced the time teachers have to connect with, care for and attend to the needs of individual students;
> (iv) threatened teachers' sense of agency and resilience;
> (v) challenged teachers' capacities to maintain motivation, efficacy and thus, commitment. (p.425)

The VITAE Project builds upon the work of Kelchtermans (1993), who suggests that the professional self, like the personal self, evolves over time and consists of five linked elements:

- ‘self-image’: how teachers describe themselves though their career stories;
- ‘self-esteem’: the evolution of self as a teacher, how good or otherwise as defined by self or others;
- ‘job-motivation’: what makes teachers choose, remain committed to or leave the job;
- ‘task perception’: how teachers define their jobs; and
- ‘future perspective’: teachers’ expectations for the future development of their jobs.

  (p.687; see also Kelchtermans, 1999, p.186).

While there has not been the same degree of specific research into teacher identities within FE (Edwards et al, 2007), similar themes do emerge, especially from the various ESRC-funded projects of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP, 2008). In considering teaching and learning cultures, the TLRP touches upon the impact of change on teachers as an incidental element (Coffield et al, 2008). The impact of change upon FE teachers is analysed in other TLRP projects in terms of professional values, college cultures, or responses to policy levers (Spours et al, 2007). Whilst less focussed on personal factors than schools-based research, the TLRP research confirms a number of characteristics of FE teacher identities which mirror those observed in schoolteachers. *Commitment* to learners is paramount for FE teachers, (Edward et al, 2007; Coffield et al, 2008; Jephcote et al, 2008) – indeed, this is seen as both a potential source of workplace stress, and as a potential survival trait:

> Our research suggests that it may be the strength of commitment to learners which helps some staff keep in perspective and cope with the bureaucratic demands which might otherwise overwhelm them. (Coffield et al, 2008, p.102)

Elsewhere, Edward et al (2007) highlight the stresses caused by trying to balance conflicts between institutional demands for change and teachers’ “own cultural and professional values” - *role conflicts*. Tutors often seek to protect their students from the impacts of changes, producing increased workload and stress for themselves, (Hodkinson et al, 2004). Several important concepts arise from the TLRP studies; one of these is *emotional labour* (Hargreaves, 1998; Avis & Bathmaker, 2004b; TLRP, 2008). Like cathexis, this refers to teacher’s investment in caring for learners with a range of social and emotional needs. Responding to these needs can lead to “underground working, whereby tutors routinely engaged in working well beyond their job descriptions”, (Hodkinson et al, 2005, p.2). Gleeson and James (2007), suggest that these pressures can lead to a “multiplicity of identities” (p.459), where teachers seek to comply with external pressures whilst simultaneously resisting them – *strategic*

*compliance* (Shain & Gleeson, 1999; see also Robson, 1998b). Wallace and Hoyle (2005) refer to this as "principled infidelity", (p.12). A key emerging theme, therefore, is one of conflicts between teacher identities and teacher roles, between personhood and teacherhood, which may overlie broader role conflicts generated in a situation of complex change.

A final concept commonly used within the TLRP and other literature is that of *habitus*, (Gleeson & James, 2007). In particular, James and Diment (2003) emphasise the relationship between this concept and that of field (Bourdieu, 1977; Fuchs, 2003). Bourdieu's (1977) definition of habitus provides a useful starting point for considering the role that an individual teacher's identity plays in their response to work and non-work. Bourdieu defines habitus as:

> Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, *structured structures* predisposed to function as *structuring structures*, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices … (1990, p.53, cited in Lizardo 2004, p.378)

Bourdieu's concept of habitus implies a model of the individual shaped by a combination of personality and social background (King, 2005). This background consists of *cultural, educational and social capital* (Bourdieu, 1983, 1984) inherited through socialization. This implies that a teacher's identity will reflect a combination of personal characteristics and social upbringing. Social class is not seen as a determinant of behaviour; however, a teacher's progress in life would be expected to reflect their own parental, educational and community influences. Nash, (1999) emphasizes how "habitus is conceived as a generative schema" (p.177) whereby people are socialized into dispositions in such a way that they become unconscious habits. Gleeson et al (2005) point out that Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus is an attempt to reconcile the dialectic between structure and agency. *Structure* operates to frame the professional "by external processes of policy and funding" (Gleeson et al, 2005, p.446, after Hoyle, 1995); *agency* operates "in the way professionals construct identity and meaning in the contested contexts of their work" (ibid). Habitus, therefore, both defines the teacher's "second nature" (Crossley, 2005 p.105) of attitudes and perceptions, and forms the basis for *agency*. There is potential for tensions between a person's self-image and emotional characteristics and the structured structures of the habitus (see also Benwell & Stokoe, 2006); more importantly, there is a strong possibility of personal crises (Crossley, 2005) resulting from a misalignment of the habitus with the social environment (the *field*) – for example, when changes to the education system challenge the established dispositions of the teacher.

Existentialist approaches to self-identity see "the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography", (Giddens, 1991, p.53). Such a conceptualization of *identity as narrative* has been taken by some to suggest that identity is the outcome of social interaction (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006) or is a dramatic presentation of self (Goffman, 1971). Indeed, Stronach et al (2002), in a comparative study of teachers and nurses, suggest that teachers may employ a set of "mini-narratives of identification" (p.116) to make sense of professional contexts. Existential and related models of identity raise a fundamental dichotomy: whether an individual's identity is an objective, explicable and largely unconscious reality, or a subjective, consciously constructed persona (Berger & Luckman, 1967). Bourdieu's (1977) use of habitus can be seen as a deliberate attempt to overcome this dialectical tension. Hence, one important aspect of any attempt to understand how individual teachers respond to their work environment must be an awareness of the extent to which their behavioural responses are self-aware, and how far they are automatic, or conditioned. Giddens' (1991) suggests that "ontological security" (p.36) lies at the heart of our self-identity – without a capacity to bracket-out (in phenomenological terms) inappropriate conceptions or responses, our lives would become chaotic and unmanageable: preconditions for work-related stress and burnout. Stronach et al (2002) see the resolution of this potential chaos, or identity conflict, as *selfwork* (p.110), a discursive process by which the professional seeks to resolve their conflicted or problematic status, (multiplicity of identities). Another useful coping mechanism is an ability to create a "defensive carapace or protective cocoon" (Giddens, 1991, p.40) – those teachers who lack the capacity to protect their "psychological integrity" (ibid) from external pressures, or whose sense of self-identity is weak, will be more vulnerable. For Giddens, anxiety and risk are features of modern societies; key emotions generated by rapidly changing conditions are guilt – "feelings of wrongdoing" - and shame – "feelings of personal insufficiency" (p.65). Given that, by the nature of their work and their isolation, teachers tend to be self-critical, and, at the start of their careers, quite insecure (Nias, 1989), it is not surprising that shame can be a strong emotional reaction. In an education environment dominated by "the audit culture, performativity and managerialism " (Gleeson & James, 2007, p.457), the increasing external imposition of performance criteria encourages feelings of guilt alongside existing shame, with the result that "the framework of ontological security becomes fragile", (Giddens, 1991, p.167).

### *2.2b Educational Background and Career Cycle*

People are attracted to teaching for a combination of reasons. A systematic research review for the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), identifies such

motivating factors as: the enjoyment teachers gain from working with young people; their desire to share a personal passion for their subject; and (particularly for women) the assumed compatibility of the job with family life - an opportunity to escape the home and to earn money which fits in with child-rearing role (Edmunds et al, 2002). Morrison and McIntyre (1973) identify similar motivations. Lortie (1975) isolates five themes: service to others; the attractions of interpersonal relations with students; a "continuation theme" (p.29) which prioritises handing on knowledge of their own subject and social values to subsequent generations; "material benefits" (p.33) such as job security and the fact that teaching is an accessible route to social mobility (especially those on the cultural margins); and the "time compatibility" (p.31) of holidays and perceived working hours, particularly for women with families. He also emphasises other "life contingency" (p.40) factors, such as a family tradition in teaching, or the impact of "significant others" (p.45) such as their own teachers or work colleagues, (see also Sugrue, 1996; Younger et al, 2004; Bathmaker & Avis, 2005b). Lortie also raises the case of those who enter teaching as a second career, often where they perceive progress as blocked in their first profession. Such life contingency factors may be especially important in FE, where many staff are recruited in middle age, on the basis of previously acquired vocational skills and experience. These teachers bring with them existing work identities (Robson, 2006), which can result in a "fractured professionalism" (Avis & Bathmaker, 2006, p.176). Conversely, many younger entrants drift into teaching, and do not necessarily see it as a long-term career, (Sikes et al, 1985; Lortie, 1975).

Although only a minority of teachers enter the profession as part of a family tradition, (Lortie, 1975), the entry requirements presuppose either considerable *educational capital* (Bourdieu, 1984), or encouragement from significant others who possess such capital. As Sugrue (1996) points out, this has important consequences for the socialisation of new recruits into their role as teachers, since their "person identification with teaching" (p.163) is derived from their own teachers, families or friends, and tends to encourage stereotypical views of what the task involves:

> Their apprenticeships of observation, general socialization and typical teaching episodes which support and encourage their identification with teaching, implicitly suggest that they are 'born teachers'. (Ibid)

This comment reinforces Lortie's (1975) observation that, while entry to professions is typically "mediated" (p.59) by long formal apprenticeships, this is relatively limited in teaching. The long academic or vocational preparation required by teachers can be contrasted with the relatively short period of teaching-specific training – perhaps a year, in the case of a graduate. The vocational teacher in FE often commences teaching

before receiving any significant training. Furthermore, teacher training tends not to produce a unified and coherent professional conception of the role, due to the emphasis upon subject specialist training (Ball & Goodson, 1985). Since 2007, teacher training in FE has emphasised this subject-specific pedagogy (Ofsted, 2003; DfES, 2004; LLUK, 2006). Despite more recent improvements in the quality and relevance of teacher training, there is still much veracity in Lortie's (1975) conclusion, that teaching style tends to reflect "individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles" (p.62), what Eraut (2000) terms *tacit knowledge*. Hence we could expect personhood to have a strong influence upon teacherhood, or professional identity.

Given the isolated, cell-like environment within which novice teachers work, and the fact that they are pitched into full-scale responsibility for students very quickly following (or even before) training, it is unsurprising that teachers develop a degree of self-reliance on their capacity to make autonomous decisions at an early stage. Nevertheless, new teachers do find the task daunting; both Lortie (1975) and Nias (1989) emphasise that a teacher's early *career phase* is one of high anxiety. Ball and Goodson (1985) talk of a "rite of passage experience, the baptism of fire in the classroom" (p.16). Nias (1989), in her longitudinal study of primary and middle school teachers, identifies this as the "survival stage" (p.65) of their career, typically lasting 3 months to 2 years. During this phase, workloads for new teachers are excessive - often 80 hours per week or more - due to the need to prepare classes thoroughly, with no fund of resources and experience to rely on. Overwhelmingly, new teachers "had massive doubts about their personal adequacy in the job" (p.67). However, most new entrants survive, and pass into a phase of "identification" (p.68), where they start to see themselves legitimately as teachers. However, it may take several years before they become secure in their skills and knowledge: Nias suggests that "concern with task performance" (p.72) still affected half of her sample after 8 years of teaching. Day and Gu (2007) identify a similar timescale for the formation of professional identity. Lortie (1975) asserts, that teaching is relatively *career-less*, in that the majority of teachers do not pass through a staged promotional ladder. This can be the case for women who take a career break, or who scale back their commitment to teaching, in order to raise a family. This career-less structure is largely true for FE, where careers start later, and management structures tend to be very flat. Sikes et al (1985) point out that mid-career teachers may reach a point where they are unsuccessful in gaining (the limited number of) promoted posts, and consequently express a dislike of management and administrative duties, and profess a strong desire to stay 'in the classroom'. This

> may be a contingency-coping strategy used to protect both public and personal self-image in the event of failure to achieve promotion. (1985, pp. 46-47).

Towards the later part of their career, teachers may experience two further emotional shifts. One is a sense of failure, having failed to progress to a senior management position (Sikes et al, 1985), the other is a gradual decline of "energy and enthusiasm" (p.52); a natural consequence of ageing. Hargreaves (2005) suggests that:

> Towards the end of their careers, as their bodies begin to deteriorate, their experiences of repetitive educational change wear them down, and impending retirement weakens the grip that others have over them, most teachers become resistant to and resilient toward change efforts outside the classroom, and concentrate their remaining energies and rewards on a more relaxed sense of accomplishment within it. (p.981)

Hence, it is unsurprising that older teachers tend to prioritise their emotional commitment into their students, or to their subject - *cathexis*. With official retirement ages still as low as 60, mature teachers soon come to focus upon exit from their career (Hargreaves, 2005). Whereas teachers were once able to direct some of their energies into interests outside of their teaching role - even towards "sequential careers" (Nias, 1989, p.74), the impact of increasing workload may now be limiting this option for mid-career teachers in FE unwilling or unable to gain promotion; instead they concentrate all of their emotional energies on the task of teaching, which now becomes the defining element of their personal identity. Hence, for many teachers the focus of their professional life becomes their subject and their learners – the process of teaching (Huberman, 1993). Other older teachers become more disengaged and seek satisfaction in life outside of teaching (Hargreaves, 2005; Troman, 2008).

### *2.2c Motivation, Emotion and Work Satisfaction*

In a comparative study of teachers across Australia, New Zealand and England, Dinham and Scott (2000) investigate the Herzberg (1959) model of worker motivation. They conclude that:

> the major dissatisfiers are located not within the school…but within the broader societal context and environment. (Dinham & Scott 2000, p.390).

Intrinsic rewards from teaching ('motivators' - Herzberg, 1968) include: engagement with their subject, interaction with the students and colleagues, (a collegial atmosphere – Hargreaves, 1994; Acker, 1999), and the satisfaction derived from helping students to achieve their goals. Teacher dissatisfaction derives from external factors such as; the rapid pace of change, increasing workloads, lack of promotion opportunities, lack of resources to support change, and low levels of public esteem for teachers. These are extrinsic motivational factors - Herzberg's (1968) *hygiene factors*. Hancock and Tyler (2001), echoing Maslow (1970), summarise this model as follows:

> work is meaningful and motivating only if it offers security and opportunities for achievement and self-actualization. (p.131).

Nias (1989) identifies a similar list of positive motivators or "satisfiers" (p.86; see also Troman, 2008) in primary teachers: she also adds self-esteem from doing a good job, affective rewards ("a felt need to love and be loved", p.87), opportunities for personal growth, and "the pleasure of 'feeling in control'," (p.99). Dissatisfiers include poor working conditions, limited promotion prospects, lack of resources and lack of public esteem. Nias also considers a category of "non-satisfiers" (p.103), irritant factors which are capable of being solved by effective management: these include inefficient administration, poor communication, lack of influence, fatigue and stress. Her longitudinal study, indicates that stress and fatigue become more important for established teachers, where factors of work-life balance and lack of autonomy are important. The implication is clear: many of the most stressful causes of dissatisfaction amongst teachers are beyond their control, but several are open to mitigation with effective leadership and management. There is an obvious link here with the concept of "locus of control" (Byrne, 1999). Teachers who perceive stress as being a consequence of their own actions are distinguished from those who see stress as resulting from events "beyond their control" (p.26): "teachers who manifest external locus of control are more likely to suffer from burnout" (ibid). Evans (2001) encapsulates these factors within her notion of "proximity to an 'ideal job'," (p.296); teachers become dissatisfied with their job the further it deviates from this ideal. If this is true, then motivation and job satisfaction will be linked to the expectations of teachers, to their professional self-image, and hence to their initial reasons for entering the profession (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1999).

Hancock and Tyler (2001) discuss the critical importance of worker emotions in our understanding of how organisations work (see also Fineman, 2000; Day et al, 2007). Whereas bureaucratic systems deliberately seek to separate emotion from role (Weber, 1964), more recent models of organisational effectiveness emphasise the human factors in success, (Peters & Waterman, 1982). The focus has been upon *emotional intelligence*:

> abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathise and to hope. (Goleman, 1996, p.34)

These qualities are closely linked to worker motivation, and hence the capacity to withstand stress and avoid burnout (see Fig 1, p.58 below); however, emotional

intelligence can also be used as a tool for managers to control worker behaviour, (see Section 2.4a). Worker dissatisfaction, for example over loss of autonomy, is linked to motivation. Research in Scotland concludes that "employee control over individual work boundaries, a necessary element for securing genuine balance between work and non-work, was not really evident," (Hyman et al, no reference, cited in Taylor 2002b p.13,). Given teachers' expectations to be able to operate with a high degree of professional autonomy (Goodson, 2003), it is important to identify whether teachers tend to blame politicians or managers for this deprofessionalisation of their role (Gleeson & James, 2007).

## 2.3 Social contexts of teachers' work

Having considered teacher identities as a product of their individual backgrounds, attitudes, and emotional responses, this Section considers the ways in which identities can be regarded as social constructions. Aspects of family, vocational and cultural backgrounds are explored, together with workplace cultures and notions of vocation and professionalism.

### *2.3a The Social Construction of Self*

As discussed in Section 2.2b, family background (especially a family tradition of teaching), social class, and the attitudes of significant others, all influence people's decision to enter teaching (Lortie, 1975; Sikes et al, 1985; Nias, 1989; Bell, 1995; Acker, 1999). Although Lortie (1975) questions the impact of initial teacher training, it is clear that Government and professional bodies increasingly seek to use the training process to socialise new entrants into the profession (Wallace, 2002; Steer et al, 2007). This has particularly been the case since the introduction of prescriptive standards for trainee teachers, (DfEE 1998c; FENTO, 2001). Ball and Goodson (1985) highlight the role of training "to prepare and socialise aspirants for separate and ideologically distinct social and institutional roles" (p.19). In reality, the socialising impact of teacher training may be more limited than other influences which shape the attitudes and behaviours of teachers, and I now consider these.

Nias (1985, 1989) considers *reference groups* more influential than training in shaping teacher attitudes in primary schools. New teachers often adopt an unofficial mentor from among their colleagues, a *significant other*, as a source of support, (see also McNally & Gray, 2006); as teachers consolidate their professional skills, they either increasingly identify with an "in-school reference group" (Nias, 1989, p.69) or with external ones. Acker (1999) emphasises the strength of the collective strategies in schools in supporting individual survival – the concept of *collegiality* (Hargreaves,

1994). Some observers note the impact of the teaching subject as a source of collective identity (Sikes et al, 1985). Robson (1998, 2004) argues that FE teachers also bring with them an identity derived from their previous vocational work:

> … it is this very experience that gives them the expertise and credibility they need for their FE role and historically they have prioritised it over, for example, their knowledge, role and identities as teachers. (2004, p.187).

Theorists (Merlau-Ponty, 1963, 2002; Foucault, 1991a; Berger and Luckmann, 1967) suggest that people construct their reality through social processes, mediated through language (Barthes, 2000; Derrida, 1994). Different individuals, with different identities and social backgrounds, will experience different realities (Bauman, 2000). Hence, in the work environment of an FE college, individual teachers will perceive the work culture differently, because of their different character, their varied social backgrounds and their different life histories, the sum total of their personal experiences in society, as well as through their shared social experiences. We would expect these variables - what Nias (1989) refers to as "the uniqueness of the individual, the specificity of context and the primacy of the person"- (p.16) to influence teachers responses to their work culture. Again, we see that teacherhood owes much to both the personal identity of the teacher and to informal aspects of their socialisation into the profession.

Habermas' (1987) concept of the *lifeworld* is useful here. He identifies three elements of this concept:

- *Culture* - the "stock of knowledge" (p.138) which people use to understand the world; culture is the historical and linguistic environment that we inhabit.
- *Society* - the system of regulation by which social cohesion is achieved;
- *Personality* - the set of "competences that make a subject capable of speaking and acting" (ibid) in order to participate in society.

New generations are educated into their environment by what Habermas (1987) terms *"cultural reproduction, social integration and socialisation* (1987, p.138). Central to Habermas' view, is the belief that one can only understand human behaviour in terms of both an individual's socio-cultural background and their internal subjective reality. Hence the lifeworld, or personal culture, is contrasted with the 'system' in society: a distinction similar to that in sociology between informal and formal cultures. The *colonisation of the lifeworld* (ibid, p.196) by the state tends to destroy the social relationships upon which healthy cultures depend, producing anomie at a group level, and alienation at an individual.

Research already cited (Section 2.2b) emphasises the extent to which teachers are formed by their previous life experiences, family background and socialisation, subsequently modified by significant others, principally teacher colleagues, (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989; Robson et al, 2004; Robson, 2006). In FE, much research has also looked at the formative impact of initial teacher training (Robson, 1998a; Wallace, 2002; Avis & Bathmaker, 2004a, 2004b, 2006; Bathmaker & Avis, 2005a, 2005b; Burn, 2007). Bourdieu summarises this *social conditioning* as "[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice" (1984, p.101). Field is defined by James and Bloomer (2001) as a…

> structured system of social relations, at micro and macro level, rather like a field of forces in which positions are defined ... in relation to each other, (p.5).

Teachers' work contexts will also affect their social behaviours and attitudes. Acker (1999) usefully distinguishes between *occupational cultures* and *workplace cultures* (pp. 22-23). The former relate to shared values and ideologies, such as Lortie's (1975) model of a teacher culture characterised by "conservatism, individualism, and presentism" (p.183), and the latter to a "collegial" model (Hargreaves; 1994; Bush, 1995). However, Acker (1999) argues strongly that institutions also shape teachers:

> in the course of working in the same setting and sharing the same material and other conditions of work, perspectives develop that are best described as a "workplace culture". (p.25).

Coffield et al (2008) confirm the importance of workplace cultures in FE, at "both at institutional and at team level" (p.111). In an earlier paper, Edward & Coffield (2007) emphasise the diversity of cultures within the learning and skills sector, but also the "very different 'subcultures' coexisting within the same organization" (p.124).

In considering the influence of the lifeworld upon individual teachers perceptions of, and responses to, rapid and continuing change, Fullan (1991) underlines the extent to which change is viewed subjectively both by individuals and groups within educational institutions. He emphasises that change often involves teachers in challenges to existing beliefs, which can pose a direct threat to their personal identity. More recently, government policy has sought to define the status, expected behaviours, workloads and professional models of teachers, all areas where we could expect collective, as well as individual reactions (Coffield et al. 2007, 2008; Edward et al, 2007). Giddens (1991) has pointed out that individual meaning is socially constructed through "the emergence of *an internally referential system of knowledge and power"* (p.144, italics in the original). This system can be in conflict with external truths or morality – and many researchers have identified the fact that teachers' individual and collective views of the

purposes of education seem to be at odds with the new and changing external reference points of economy, efficiency and effectiveness – *economy of performance* (Stronach et al, 2002).

### *2.3b College Cultures, Teams and Ecological Models*

> Cultural patterns are essentially niches that may be explained through evolutionary, ecological and market theories. (Dillon, 2008, p.105).

Ecological metaphors are commonly used within the research literature to describe educational cultures (Stronach et al, 2002; Smith, 2003; Spours et al, 2007; Edward et al, 2007; Coffield et al, 2008; Dillon, 2008). Stronach et al (2002) produce one of the most valuable conceptions, when they distinguish between *economies of performance* (performativity and audit cultures) and *ecologies of practice*. The latter are defined as

> the accumulation of individual and collective experiences of teaching … through which people laid claim to being 'professional'. (p.122).

Stronach et al find that primary teachers are "often positive" (ibid) about economies of performance. However, Coffield et al (2007, 2008) find FE teachers less positive; it is "commitment to learners… [*that]* helps some staff keep in perspective and cope with the bureaucratic demands which might otherwise overwhelm them" (2008, p.102). Ecologies of practice particularly take the form of supportive *team cultures*, "the other major source of motivation for teaching staff", (Coffield et al, 2008, p.104). They conclude that:

> An ecological concept of the sector with its suggestion of holistic thinking and interdependent relations offers an alternative to the images of mechanical control that are part of the top-down performance management. (p.157).

I now consider the value of ecological models to an understanding of college cultures.

FE colleges provide complex working environments - one or more physical locations, within often purpose-built learning environments. Particular subjects occupy specific niches within the college: motor vehicle workshops, catering kitchens, beauty salons, designed to prepare students for the specialised work behaviours appropriate to their eventual vocational environment. Students acquire work habits both through overt instruction, and through covert acclimatisation to the jargons, attitudes, and behaviours of the particular vocation. The atmosphere or *learning environment* (James & Pollard, 2006; Coffield et al, 2008; Coffield, 2008) created within the college is deliberately different from that of the school, placing greater emphasis upon adult behaviours, both in learning and in terms of wider employability skills (Jephcote et al, 2008; UKCES,

2008). The models of learning adopted by teachers in colleges, encourage students to develop autonomy, taking responsibility for their own learning, and internalising learnt procedures and social behaviours as unthinking skills (Bloom 1956), to produce effective employees and responsible citizens (ECM, 2003). This *hidden curriculum* is an essential part of the subject orientation of teachers: their lifeworld. The imposition of external curricula, assessment regimes, accountability procedures and other bureaucracy, represent *colonisation* of that lifeworld (Habermas, 1987) by the forces of the state.

Staff and students experience the institution principally as the culture of the college, including both its formal rules and processes, and informal ways of behaving shaped by management style and by the group culture of the teacher's team (Robson, 1998b; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Davies & Owen, 2001; Day et al, 2006a; Avis & Bathmaker, 2006). If that culture also consists of a shared language of professionalism (Schön, 1983), then college teams can be viewed as a mini-lifeworlds or ecological niches (Dillon, 2008). In their research, Spours et al (2007) report that

> A strong theme in the interviews was the influence of professional identity, the role of course teams and the different ways these teams could be seen as operating as 'communities of practice'. (p.201).

Lave and Wenger (1991) conceive of communities of practice as "a set of relations among persons, activity and world" (p.98) - a strongly ecological definition. It implies active participation by community members, based upon shared understandings: "a community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge", (ibid). Foucault (1980) argues that knowledge is intimately related to power – hence there will be a potential for conflict between the shared knowledge of communities of teachers and the desire of those in power to impose a standard version of knowledge from outside. Extensive discussion of the "communities of practice" concept occurs in the literature (Avis et al, 2002a; Mutch, 2003; Bathmaker & Avis, 2005a; Yandell & Turvey, 2007) precisely because it highlights this dialectical tension between teachers' professional conceptions of their role and the externally set criteria of the managerialist culture. Colonisation of the professional lifeworld of teachers by the state has created a contested ground: teacher conceptions of their professionalism may conflict with the formal models being imposed by LLUK (2006), Ofsted (2003; 2009) and others (DfES, 2002; Holloway, 1999; Ranson, 2003).

Within colleges, communities of teachers may share similar life histories, resulting in similar dispositions. Robson (1998; 2006) emphasises the impact of vocational background and college structures in encouraging FE teachers' "dual professional

identities" (1998; p.603). Gleeson et al (2005) point out that, unlike most teachers in the schools sector, FE teachers usually come to the profession later in life, after successful careers as vocational practitioners. They bring with them a *vocational habitus* and "ideologies of practice" (Colley et al, 2003, p.177) reinforced through their previous work. Multi-site environments and college management structures often separate vocational groups, producing fragmented cultures. Individuals and groups of teachers will be adapted to specific niches, what Spours et al (2007) refer to as "local ecologies" (p.207): "teams were formed around 'strongly vocational' courses", (p.202). Some teams may adapt their behaviour to accommodate change, others may try to block attempts to modify their work environment.

Not all novice FE teachers adapt easily to their new work environment – not least because attempts to socialise them into the culture through teacher training are frequently belated. Those whose vocational habitus matches the dominant work culture in college will prosper, and may even become managers themselves. Other teachers may experience conflict between their role as public servants, increasingly subject to extensive auditing of their "economy, efficiency and effectiveness" (DES, 1987), and their role as custodians of their subject knowledge and skills - *cultural doxa* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984). Those who do not accept, or find difficulty accommodating to a culture of managerialism and performativity, may seek to bury themselves in an educational niche with their colleagues (avoidance and strategic compliance) or may even attempt to block external controls. Challenge to the hegemony is more likely to come from those teachers with the longest service (Shain & Gleeson, 1999; Hargreaves, 2005; Gu & Day, 2007; Sammons et al, 2007), whose identity developed in a past environment when professional autonomy and social respect for teachers were greater. Challenge may also come from more recent recruits, whose cultural models (habitus) still reflect their vocational background and who have not yet adapted to their new niche as education professionals (Robson, 1998b).

### 2.3c *Professionalism and Vocation*

> "…the habitat is the "address", so to speak, and the niche is the "profession." (Odum 1963, p.27)

There is an extensive literature about the changing nature of teacher professionalism (Ainley & Bailey, 1997; Carr 2000; Timperley & Robinson 2000; Hargreaves, 2000; Whitty 2000; Tichenor & Tichenor 2004; Gleeson et al 2005; Robson, 2006; Cunningham, 2008). Esland (1996) summarises government policies since the late

1980s as “significant degrees of deprofessionalisation” (p.33) of the teaching workforce. Gunter (1997) similarly comments that…

> teachers feel that their professional skills are redundant and that their judgement is not to be trusted. (1997, p.4).

Robson et al (2004) argue that there has been relatively little research into teacher professionalism in FE. Subsequently, research from TLRP projects (TLRP 2008) and others (Avis & Bathmaker, 2006; Bathmaker & Avis, 2005a, 2005b; Jameson & Hillier, 2008) has greatly expanded the literature available. I now explore some of these themes in detail.

The concept of profession is essentially religious in origin:

> a professional….is supposed to profess, to testify, to bear witness to some sort of faith or confidence or point of view. (Palmer 1973, p.2, cited in Argyris & Schön, 1974, p.146)

Consequently, any conception of professionalism encompasses two fundamental elements: the ethical underpinning of professional behaviour (Lunt, 2008), and the intellectual or knowledge basis of the activities in which professionals are engaged (Eraut, 1994; Goodson, 2003). As “bearers of a faith” (Palmer, 1973, ibid), a professional stance is frequently an ethical one. The religious-ethical origins of teaching in medieval universities and church schools have been noted by some researchers (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989; Crook, 2008). Such a view fits with Weber’s (2003) broader explanation of the origins of modern industrial society in the *protestant work ethic*. Weber explains the role of professionalism in capitalist society by reference to it as a ‘calling’:

> It is an obligation which the individual is supposed to feel and does feel towards the content of his professional activity. (Weber, 2003, p.54).

Weber regards the worker’s relationship to paid labour as more than a crude materialistic one. Values originally derived from a religious asceticism, have now become absorbed into the general work ethic through the socialisation of the workforce:

> Labour must….be performed as if it were an end in itself, a calling… It…can only be the product of a long and arduous process of education. (ibid, p.62).

Teachers can be regarded as custodians of cultural or social values, rather than mere exponents of a set of pedagogic skills, (see Friedmann & Phillips, 2004). The teacher is

> the representative or custodian of a specific set of civilised standards and values predicated on a traditionalist idea of education as the transmission of culture….from one generation to the next. (Carr, 2000, p.12).

Teachers are charged with transmitting cultural capital and doxa to subsequent generations – promoting *reproduction of the lifeworld* (Habermas, 1987). Such a custodial role provides one of the potential sources of role conflict for teachers (Byrne, 1999); tensions may arise between the public attitudes or behaviours of the teacher and the private – everything from dress codes to the freedom to strike. Friedmann and Phillips (2004) emphasise both the "learned nature" of professionals, and also that they are "self-regulating on an individual and corporate basis" (p. 372). Carr (2000) makes the distinction between *vocation* and *profession*, noting that "modern ideas of teaching reflect a certain vacillation between professional and vocational conceptions", (p.10). For Carr, vocation conveys the sense of an occupation where the incumbent gives themselves over totally to their role, almost to the exclusion of any private life. He suggests that some professions, including teaching, may be poorly paid specifically because they are regarded as vocations: people enter for love rather than for money. Teaching may also be deemed a vocation because of the 'caring' or pastoral element of the role; such a perception is reinforced by the fact that teaching attracts a strongly female workforce, possibly because it tends to be less well-paid, and hence less attractive to many male workers (Lortie 1975).

Teaching in Britain has only recently achieved one element of its formal status as a profession – a professional body. The General Teaching Council was established for schoolteachers in 1997 (DfEE, 1998b); the Institute for Learning, for FE lecturers, in 2002; and the Higher Education Academy (originally the Institute for Teaching and Learning), for University teachers in 1998. It has been argued that teachers "themselves are unconvinced of public recognition of their professional status" (Davies & Ferguson, 1998, p.71). Hoyle (1980) argues that this situation reflects the status of teachers as *restricted professionals*:

> By restricted professionality I mean a professionality which is intuitive, classroom-focussed and based on experience rather than theory. (1980, p.49).

Glazer (1974, cited in Schön 1983) categorised teaching as a *minor profession*, because it lacked technical rigour in its practice, having a theoretical base derived largely from other academic disciplines. Such 'educational' theory, expropriated from philosophy, psychology and sociology (Morrison & McIntyre, 1973), tends do be separated from any considerations of effective educational practice - the latter having become an "instrumental – a technical activity" (p.13). The period since 1983 has been

one of “unprecedented policy-making” (Bailey & Robson, 2002, p.336) with regard to the professional training of FE teachers. Previously partial and incoherently developed (Bristow, 1975; Cantor & Roberts, 1983), training became compulsory in 2001 (DfEE, 2000; FENTO, 2001; DIUS, 2007a). Government, rather than the teaching profession, now defines the values and competences expected of FE teachers, (Keep & Mayhew, 1999). Inspection regimes (Ofsted, 2009); statutory policies on equality and diversity; safeguarding and the *Every Child Matters* agenda (ECM - 2003); the introduction of a professional code of practice by the IfL (2008) and compulsory minimum continuing professional development (CPD) requirements, (DIUS, 2007b) all redefine teacher professionalism within new technical-rational criteria. Most writers on teacher professionalism are highly critical of such “technical-rational” approaches (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Schön, 1983) by successive governments towards the teaching profession (Randle & Brady 1997a, 1997b; Shain & Gleeson 1999). FE teaching standards represent “a technicisation of pedagogic processes” (Avis et al, 2002b, p.198). Nicholls (2000) points out that these rigid legislative frameworks create a *credentialist* approach linked to a “deficit model of professional development“ (p.373). Wallace (2002) argues that the 2001 FENTO standards were based upon a *deficit model* of the teacher. Explicit in their introduction was the Government view that “there is also too much poor or inadequate teaching” in the FE sector (Blunkett, in DfEE, 1998a, p.2), combined with an implicit belief in “the efficacy of instrumental, competence-based training for all levels of educational and training needs” (Wallace, 2002 p.2).

Eraut (1985) argues that much professional knowledge is “implicit” knowledge; he distinguishes this from Reactive Learning - Schön’s ‘knowing-in-action’ (1983 p.49) - and Deliberative Learning - planned professional updating, or CPD. Similarly, Jarvis (1999) insists that professionals are “learning incidentally and informally in practice all the time” (p.169). This corroborates Lortie’s (1975) earlier view that teachers tend to learn many of their practical skills on the job – an “apprenticeship model” (Crook, 2008, p.22); it also explains the appeal of the notion of reflective practice (Schön 1983, 1987; Boud, 1985; Brookfield, 1995) to a highly self-critical profession. Such *situated professionalism* (Schön, 1983) must be learnt through praxis and involves an element of intuition (Furlong, 2000), and cannot simply be taught. The expectations codified in formal standards, such as “reflection and evaluation of their own practice and their continuing professional development as teachers” (LLUK 2006, p.3), often sit at the heart of teachers’ self-definitions of professionalism. However, the Standards imply that such reflective skills can be taught, in a technical-rational manner, rather than developed through *praxis*. Conversely, teachers tend to base their values around the rights and needs of

the students, rather than around externally imposed audit systems (Edward et al, 2007; Coffield et al, 2008).

In one sense, the overwhelming rejection of technical rationality in the literature may simply reflect the inherent conservatism of teachers (Lortie 1975). However, it also emphasises the dialectic between an externally imposed model of the teacher as professional, and teachers' own views of their roles as autonomous, reflective, intuitive individuals, (Stronach et al, 2002; Gleeson & James, 2007). In a powerful summary of the theoretical field, Cooper & Burrell (1988) have described this dichotomy as one between *critical modernism* and *systematic modernism*,

> the one, automatic and autonomous in operation, defying logical closure; the other, calculative and utilitarian in intent. (p.93).

Numerous authors see the accelerating pace of educational change since the 1960s as representing a threat to professional status, (Hargreaves, 1994; Esland, 1996; Acker, 1999; Ranson, 2003). The impact of economic globalisation and the pace of technical change (Brown & Lauder, 1996) are seen to have created an increased expectation upon education to deliver economic innovation, through a better educated workforce, and reduced unit costs, through more efficient labour practices (Gleeson, 1996). Resulting Fordist, neo-Fordist or post-Fordist policies (Avis, 2009, p.5; see also Avis et al 1996; Hodkinson, 1997; Avis, 1998, 2007) have resulted in the rise of *managerialism* (Avis et al 1996) and *performativity* (Ball, 2008; after Lyotard, 1984). Wallace and Hoyle (2005) define managerialism as "excessive leadership and management" (p.9) which seeks to limit teachers' autonomy:

> Managerialism is underpinned by an ideology which assumes that all aspects of organisational life can and should be controlled. In other words, that ambiguity can and should be radically reduced or eliminated. (ibid).

Performativity "alludes to the work that performance management systems do on the subjectivities of individuals" (Ball, 2008, p.51). It can be defined as:

> a technology and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as measures of productivity or output or value of individuals and organisations. (ibid, p50).

This produces an increasingly bureaucratic *audit culture* (Stronach et al, 2002; Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002; Gleeson & James, 2007; Hamilton, 2007; TLRP 2008). Gleeson and James (2007) note how FE staff frequently complain about threats to their professional status through "pay, regimes of audit and inspection, declining resources, lack of recognition of expertise, reduced autonomy through performance

management" (p.456). Ranson (2003) notes a shift away from "professional accountability [*towards*] neo-liberal corporate responsibility", (p.459). The managerial approach results in the process of deprofessionalisation already noted (Gleeson, 1996; Shain & Gleeson, 1999; Stronach, 2002; Colley et al, 2007; Gleeson & James, 2007). The performative agenda is regarded as particularly damaging for the FE sector in the context of:

> high staff turnover; a scattered and in some ways balkanised workforce, including many temporary, part-time and agency staff; conditions of service which do not compare favourably with those of teachers in schools; the sheer numbers of changes to which staff have to adjust; and their lack of involvement in the formation and evaluation of changes. (Edward et al, 2007, p.169).

Unlike researchers into teacher identity, writers on teacher professionalism often only address issues of workload and stress in passing. The emphasis in the literature on FE appears to be upon *teacherhood,* not *personhood* (Jones, 2003). Nevertheless, research does suggest that educational change, especially where imposed from outside, can challenge teachers' ethical self-identities, creating role conflict. Faced with threats to their professional status, FE teachers are simultaneously being made "more responsible for 'managing their own compliance' to state requirements" (Elkins & Elliott, 2004, p.17) through the superstructure of accountability. Teacher professionalism, then, is poised at an interesting stage in "the struggle between bureaucratic control and professional empowerment" (Hargreaves 1994 p.251). I now turn, therefore, to look at the impact of management cultures upon teachers.

### 2.4 The Changing Locus of Control

Any research into the work culture of teachers must consider how teachers and managers view their relations within institutions, in order to understand the roles of power and authority-figures within those cultures. In Section 2.4a I consider in more detail the issues of performativity and managerialism already raised, and discuss how these shape work cultures in colleges. I then look at three specific mechanisms of performance management: surveillance (2.4b), control of teachers' time (2.4c), and bureaucracy (2.4d).

#### *2.4a Managerialism, Performativity, and Culture*

> The ability and willingness to measure efficiency and effectiveness is a mark of good management. (DES, 1987, p. V).

The impact of managerialism in schools and colleges is a constant theme in the literature, (Avis et al, 1996; Randle & Brady, 1997a; Shain & Gleeson 1999; Holloway,

1999; Alexiadou 2001; Wallace & Hoyle, 2005; Avis 2003, 2005; TLRP, 2008). Less research has taken place into the actual phenomenon of management in FE (Briggs, 2001). Where it has, it tends to concentrate on the impact of the first ten years after incorporation of colleges in 1993 (Shain & Gleeson, 1998; Harper, 2000; Briggs, 2003a; 2005; Lumby, 2003b; McTavish, 2003; Leader 2004). The work of Briggs, Shain and Gleeson, and Leader is particularly relevant to the current research, because of their focus on the role of middle managers, "who are located at the heart of the post-16 learning paradigm" (Leader 2004, p.67). Discussion of middle managers frequently focuses on potential "critical tensions" (Leader, 2004, p.68), role "ambiguity" (Gleeson & Shain, 1999, p.485) and "role conflict" (Briggs, 2001, p.13) inherent in their work. Departmental managers in colleges are charged both with responding upwards to the strategic demands of senior managers and downwards to the support needs of teachers and teams, (Ainley & Bailey, 1997; Briggs, 2003). Briggs identifies five, potentially conflicting, elements of the manager's role:

- corporate agent – transmitting and translating corporate purpose to staff;
- implementer of corporate strategy;
- staff manager – often of large teams;
- liaison with other managers and teams;
- leadership.

Briggs (2007) suggests that managers' professional identities are shaped by three factors:

- Professional values (What I profess)
- Professional location (The profession to which I belong)
- Professional role (My role within the institution), (p.471)

It is easy to see where role conflict can be generated between the first two influences and the last one, (see also Lumby, 1999). These roles are extensive, causing work overload: managers may "feel overwhelmed with what they see as mechanistic, bureaucratic demands" (Briggs, 2003, p.432). Having risen from the ranks of teachers, a manager's legitimacy in the eyes of their staff usually relies on their subject knowledge and teaching skills. Managers often receive limited training for management, such that their role is "largely intuitive" (ibid). Briggs usefully emphasises the dualities of middle management, between the *transactional* and *transformative* styles of *leadership* required for different functions – that is between the exercise of power to control performativity – the "mechanical dimension" (p.423) - and the negotiation of shared goals and decisions – the "organic dimension" (ibid).

Randle and Brady (1997a) identify “conflicting paradigms” (p.232 – see Table 2) facing FE staff: between professional and managerial perspectives, – a model of polarity (Alexiadou, 2001, Sachs, 2001). Managers, therefore, not only face the same tensions as their staff - between their professional self-identity and the demands of a marketised FE – they are charged with implementing the change which causes these tensions:

> questions of academic leadership, in which professionalism is the key to accommodating educative structures, appear to oppose diametrically the concept of managerial leadership where the strategic dimension and operational management is paramount, (Leader, 2004, p.75).

It must be added that Lumby and Tomlinson (2000) argue that advocates of the professional paradigm may be ignoring the rights of other stakeholders in change, principally students. Some teachers may respond that the locus of control has swung too strongly towards the student voice (Lumby, 2003a) – a challenge to their professionalism.

Unsurprisingly, the introduction of business management models, and structural change in colleges, are intimately connected with cultural change (Watson & Crossley, 2001; Lumby, 2003a; Leader, 2004). Possibly intentionally, devolution of financial and management responsibilities to colleges has altered staff attitudes and ways of working. Randle and Brady (1997a) produce reinforcing evidence from a case study of ‘Cityshire’ college: 85% of staff felt that managers did not share their educational values, and 95% felt that changes had not improved student learning – managers, notably disagreed with these conclusions. The Cityshire study suggests that the initial impact of managerialist methods was negative, a view echoed in much of the literature (Hill, 2000; Davies & Owen, 2001; Spours et al, 2007; Jephcote et al, 2008). Other studies emphasise what they see as *oppressive masculine* styles of management (Whitehead, 1998; Kerfoot & Whitehead, 2000). Avis (2005), however, suggests that more recently, managerial styles have softened; there has been some “feminization of senior management” (p.209; also Simmons, 2008). Teacher reactions to change are often driven by “mechanisms of discomfiture” (Lumby, 2003a, p.161) and feelings of insecurity (Gleeson & Shain, 1999); responses to managers frequently take the form of various mechanisms of “compliance: willing, unwilling and strategic” (p.474) – a partial adherence to the new cultures.

**Table 2. Conflicting Paradigms in FE** *(Table I. in Randle & Brady (1997a), p.232.)*

| **Professional Paradigm** | **Managerial Paradigm** |
|---|---|
| **(1) Goals and Values** | |
| Primacy of student learning and the teaching process | Primacy of student through-put and income generation |
| Loyalty to students and colleagues | Loyalty to the organization |
| Concern for academic standards | Concern to achieve an acceptable balance between efficiency and effectiveness |
| **(2) Key Assumptions** | |
| Lecturers as funds of expertise | Lecturers as flexible facilitators and Assessors |
| Resources deployed on the basis of educational need | Resources deployed on the basis of market-demand and value for taxpayer's money |
| Quality of provision assessed on the basis of input | Quality assessed on the basis of output outcomes |
| **(3) Management Ethos** | |
| Collegiality/community of practice | Control by managers and the market |
| Professional autonomy / the trust principle / accountability to peers / tacit knowledge | Management of performance indicators and surveillance |
| Pluralism | Unitarism |

Schein (1992) sees *organisational culture* as the 'basic assumption' of a group, which emerges through experience and has proven valid in promoting continued survival – a notion similar to ecologies of practice. Bush (1995) applies this notion to education:

> Cultural models assume that beliefs, values and ideology are at the heart of organisations. Individuals hold certain ideas and value-preferences which influence how they behave and how they view the behaviour of other members. These norms become shared traditions which are communicated within the group and are reinforced by symbols and ritual. (p.130).

Handy (1985) produces an influential typology of cultures:

- *Power* cultures – strong central, often authoritarian or charismatic leadership,
- *Role* cultures – are bureaucracies,
- *Task* cultures – are team cultures: either informal, or short-lived management tools with a specific, time-limited purpose,
- *Person* cultures – individually negotiated, lacking structure and coherence.

Within education, the notion of *collegiality* (Bush, 1995; Hargreaves, 2000) can be considered as an additional type of professional team culture, based around "discussion leading to consensus" (Hargreaves, 2000, p.52), which contrasts with the traditional picture of the isolated teacher (Lortie, 1975). Hargreaves (1994) suggests a range of cultural models:

- *Collaborative cultures* – collegial models,
- *Contrived collegiality* – managerial attempts to foster teamwork amongst isolated teachers, to improve control and encourage innovation,
- *Balkanisation* – accidental or deliberate encouragement of competing subcultures within organisations which reflect size and complexity, geographical dispersion, or a divide-and-rule mentality by managers,
- *The Moving Mosaic* – "flexible, dynamic…also uncertain, vulnerable, contested" (Hargreaves, 1994, p.238) task cultures – which some could describe, with post-modern irony, as not cultures at all, since they lack permanency and a sense of history.

College restructuring, referred to in Chapter 1, can be seen as a way of exercising greater governmental power, through its capacity to "displace" and "disorient" (Lyotard, 1984, p.16) staff, making them more amenable to control – the *moving mosaic*. Similarly, the concept of *emotional intelligence* (Goleman, 1996) has been seized upon by managers and management theorists, as one of the "technologies of power" (Hancock & Tyler, 2001, p.117) - a potential means of controlling workers' responses to change, intensification and performativity agendas. Emotional intelligence has become "commodified" (Fineman, 2000, p.102): marketed as a belief that managers and staff alike should 'buy into'. The implication is that good workers learn to use their emotional intelligence to manage their workloads and improve their productivity: they display "emotional competence" (Goleman, 1998, p.24). Thus, cultural change in colleges can regarded as a mechanism of *governmentality* (Foucault, 1980, 1991a). Cultural resistance (Coffield et al, 2008) becomes a means of promoting the survival of shared

traditions: teacher autonomy, professionalism and the primacy of the teacher-student relationship. It is hardly surprising, then, that "many teachers are demoralised, and believe that the inherent stresses and strains of their work are not given sufficient recognition", (Barber, 1996, p.207). Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford (1997) refer to "teachers as victims" (p.27), Edwards et al (2007) to "victims of change" (p.158), and both Kerfoot and Whitehead (2000), and Hannagan et al (2007), to "casualties".

Where the literature is less clear is in explaining why teachers appear to accept, even collude with, such abuse of their professional commitment. Foucault's (1980, 1991a) answer is that social behavioural strategies are linked to the exercise of power in Western society. In his view, power derives from social inter-relationships; it is not imposed upon them. For example, the way in which a group of teachers behaves, their informal culture, permits certain power relations to develop between the group and their managers. I now look at three of the mechanisms by which this *governmentality* operates: surveillance, time-control and bureaucracy.

### *2.4b The Architecture of Surveillance*

Governmentality in education tends to reflect the neo-liberal, accountability agenda of successive governments (Ranson, 2003, 2008). One of the effects of change in the FE sector since 1993 has been:

> Increased monitoring and surveillance of teachers through internal and external control mechanisms including FEFC inspections, self-assessment, teacher appraisal, observation, increasingly through student and employer evaluation forms - based primarily around the student and employer as both customer and consumer. (Shain & Gleeson, 1999, p. 452).

Physical and electronic *surveillance* of employees' work patterns is part of a wider culture of performativity in education, (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002; Avis, 1999, 2003; Avis & Fisher, 2006; Randle & Brady, 1997a, 1997b). By making colleges directly responsible for budgets, staff pay and contracts, and quality assurance (Hill, 2000; Holloway, 1999), government has shifted the focus of surveillance closer to the actual teacher. At the same time, the proliferation of targets, audits and inspection regimes (Holloway, 1999; Ranson, 2003) has necessitated increasingly sophisticated and complex electronic management information systems. These add to the burdens of bureaucracy and surveillance. Surveillance is now part of the culture: "lecturers currently experience far closer surveillance of their work and ….spaces for autonomy have become severely circumscribed" (Avis, 2003 p.324).

Information flows sustain the operation of college organisations in the same way as energy flows maintain ecosystems. The staff workroom provides a particularly interesting example of the construction of ecological niches within which FE teachers work. As a matter of accommodation policy (and often encouraged by government funding), colleges frequently locate teaching teams in large, open-plan staffrooms. Middle managers are located in separate individual offices, often looking out onto these larger workspaces. The argument is that managers need to be able to conduct confidential meetings; teachers and students are rarely permitted the same luxury, having to conduct discussions in staffrooms, classrooms or corridors. As Crossley (2005) points out, summarising Foucault (1991a), this is part of what can be termed the *architecture of surveillance*:

> Disciplinary power works by making those subject to it visible. It entails surveillance and is achieved by way of techniques, specifically forms of architecture and spatio-temporal organisation, which individuate the masses and render them observable. (p. 219).

Another aspect of control is the visibility of staff to colleagues – when the staffroom operates as a *panopticon* (Bentham, 1787), colleagues are aware who arrives first and who leaves last. The ubiquity of staff computers extends the potential for virtual surveillance (Avis & Fisher. 2006). For example:

- computer systems can monitor when staff log on or off
- computers linked to centralised printers enable managers to monitor and control printing by teachers,
- computerised pin-numbers for photocopiers achieve a similar effect,
- staff timetables are electronically stored, and can be accessed centrally by authorised staff,
- electronic registers enable managers and administrative staff to monitor staff efficiency at recording attendance, as well as their attendance and punctuality at classes,
- tea and coffee making facilities are available in staffrooms – colleagues can see when teachers take a break, and mentally approve when they consume the beverage at their desk,
- ubiquitous security cameras record when staff arrive and leave.

Such potential for unprecedented surveillance of teacher work habits is indicative of a mind-set of measurement, audit and control (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002). It seeks to shape the habitus, the “structured and structuring structure” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.171) of the modern teacher. Whether subliminally or consciously, teachers are likely

to conform to social behaviours and practices necessary for the performative culture, as a consequence both of the social structures of management and of the spatial structures of the staffroom habitat. The staffroom creates a cultural environment for staff compliance:

> insofar as they are aware of and internalize the surveillance mechanism, it encourages self-policing and self-regulation. (Crossley, 2005, p.219).

Groundwater-Smith and Sachs (2002) suggest that compliance is one option to external control; an alternative is active democratic participation of teachers in decision-making (see also Warren, 1998). The choice is between behaving as "an entrepreneurial professional or as an activist professional", (Groundwater-Smith and Sachs, 2002, p.341). Surveillance systems are manipulative, not consultative.

### *2.4c Autonomy and Time*

If the staffroom is a niche in the FE teacher's habitat, then *time* limits the productivity of teachers in the same way that energy limits growth in the natural world. In colleges, time is one of the constraining factors upon the functioning of the system; the others are resources (physical resources, or the money to purchase them) and communication (the flow of information which enables it to function). I now explore these themes.

Hargreaves (1994) regards time as the "fundamental dimension through which teachers' work is constructed and interpreted" (p.95), by themselves and others. As such, it is "the enemy of freedom" (p.95) because it constrains teachers' ability to achieve their professional goals. He suggests (p.15) that teachers "experience the teaching context,…. perceive time in teaching and change very differently" from administrators. This reflects the different ways in which the two groups "are located in relation to the structure of teachers' work" (ibid). Applying a post-modern perspective, he explains this partly in terms of the impact of technological change, "the compression of time and space", (p.81). Whilst this undoubtedly has cost benefits, Hargreaves sees several problems associated with *time compression*, which have workload implications for the teacher:

- expectations of swift responses to change can be lead to mistakes or inefficient use of resources,
- reduced implementation time, and less opportunity to reflect on change lead to "increased stress and loss of contact with one's basic goals and purposes", (p.82),

- feelings of uncertainty, guilt and inadequacy,
- and an emphasis upon style over substance.

The teaching timetable lies at the core of the "structuration of teachers' work" (p.95); the culture of the school or college is built around it. For most teachers, the timetable prescribes a fixed work pattern: classes to be taught, preparation before and marking afterwards, scheduled meetings, report and review dates, self-evaluation and preparation for external audit (Bartlett, 2002). This rigid time-framework can create ambivalent emotional responses amongst teachers: on the one hand, it provides a secure structure for working practices; on the other, it produces a rigidity in work patterns, part of Weber's "iron cage" (2001, p.123) of bureaucracy, which can constrain professional autonomy and create stress.

Several commentators on educational change have noted how accelerating change and time compression (Watson & Crossley, 2001; Hargreaves, 2004, 2005; Hodkinson, 2007; Hannagan et al, 2007) compound external pressures for increased economy, efficiency and effectiveness of teachers. As a response to rising expectations of the education system in a time of constrained budgets, teachers are under pressure to work harder, with larger classes, reduced teaching hours and increased assessment. This intensification of workload is particularly important in creating pressures on time for reflection and professional updating, which are so crucial to the teaching role. At the same time, the impact of declining public trust in the professional judgement of teachers (Troman, 2000; Hill, 2000; Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002; Avis, 2003, 2009), the demand for greater accountability, and more frequent inspection have generated increased bureaucratic pressures on teachers. This "colonisation of teachers' work" (Hargreaves, 1994, p.109) by administrators has caused the extension of the teacher's professional role beyond the classroom (Easthope & Easthope 2000), with further impacts upon workload and stress levels – *time crunch* (Beaujot & Anderson, 2007). *Time transfer* (Rogers, 2001) occurs, as parts of the teacher's work are devolved onto support staff, with consequential erosion of teacher autonomy and professionalism (Ainley & Bailey, 1997). The consequence can be that teachers are forced to achieve more work in the same amount of time, or to spend more time on work, reducing the time they have to spend on their non-work other lives. The result can be a culture of overwork – leading to *time poverty* (Brown, 2004, p.3) or a lack of leisure time.

### 2.4d Bureaucracy and Institutionalised Stress

> Vocational education has been micro-managed from the centre for decades (Wolf, 2011, p.9)

FE colleges are very different institutions from schools, and even from smaller Sixth Form Colleges (Lumby 2003a; 2003b), due principally to the scale and complexity of what they do. To function effectively, complex college organisations require extensive formalised management structures. Organisational complexity has increased since 1993, with the transfer of substantial employment and budgetary powers from local authorities directly to college Boards and senior managers (Chapter 1). Of necessity, the power and authority exercised by managers within colleges has become more bureaucratic in nature. It is unsurprising, therefore, to find frequent references in the literature to Weber's (1964) concept of *bureaucracy*.

Weber distinguished bureaucracy, as a system of organisation and power relations, from earlier traditional (patrimonial or autocratic) and charismatic systems of authority. For Weber, bureaucracy is a rational legal structure of authority: amongst its key features are that it is typically hierarchical and based upon a "systematic division of labour" (p.330), in which power resides in the office, not the person, and is exercised through a set of "technical rules or norms" (p.331). The specialisation of roles according to office also necessitates "specialised training" (ibid) of incumbents. In a thorough and persuasive analysis of Weber's study of the rise of managerialism in higher education, Samier (2002) argues that Weber's work constitutes a strong critique of bureaucracy:

> central to his 'iron cage' thesis, the progressive disenchantment… of the world through rationalization is the problem of people finding an escape from what appears to be an inevitable permeation of all societal sectors by bureaucratised structures and practices. (p.29).

For Weber (2003), bureaucracy poses a threat to human freedom and to people's sense of community. It reflects capitalism's origins in a protestant work ethic: "a cool self-control and frugality which enormously increase performance". Hence, Samier (2002) argues, bureaucracy is a product of technical-rational orientations and performative expectations. In a direct analysis of the impact of governmentality on universities in the early 1900s, Weber (2010) identifies the origins of the bureaucratisation of education. Key features are a market orientation, necessitated by the costs of maintaining large institutions, competition for students (and for fees) and a loss of autonomy for the teacher– all features of FE colleges (Smith, 2007).

Bureaucracy necessitates surveillance, and time control facilitates it. As Lyotard (1984, citing Luhmann, 1969) puts it, “in post-industrial societies the normativity of laws is replaced by the performativity of procedures”, (p.46). Sennett (2006) also contrasts the bureaucratic model of mid-Twentieth century social capitalism with the New Capitalism of globalised, automated, instant mass communication. Essentially, three forces have driven this new model. The first is the shift of power from managers to shareholders – in FE, from control by the LEA to a market-driven model, responding to students, parents and employers. The second change has been towards short-termism – in FE’s case, the constant restructuring necessitated by continual policy change (Coffield et al, 2007; Edward et al, 2007, Hamilton, 2007). Finally, new technologies require not only accelerating changes to vocational curricula, they expand the scope for surveillance and performance management. Sennett points out that “predictable time,….rationalised time” lies at the centre of the bureaucratic system (2006 p.25). Teachers are not just constrained by the normal rigours of work-time, they particularly operate within a very rigidly structured day. This results in a paradoxical situation where the timetable tightly defines the day into blocks, whilst those blocks consist of activities within the classroom cell (Lortie, 1975) that potentially isolate teachers from bureaucratic oversight by their managers: hence necessitating the architecture of surveillance.

Bureaucracy provides a useful template for explaining the traditional model of teacher professionalism, operating within clearly defined and time-bound roles and responsibilities. However, teachers’ work contexts are becoming progressively dominated by the ever-changing structures, the moving cultural mosaic, of “fluid modernity” (Bauman, 2000). As Bunting describes it,

> We are in the process of abandoning the time disciplines which structured our working and private lives for much of the last two centuries. (2004, p.21).

Technical advances and economic pressures are combining to encourage the use of computer and internet technology to reduce class contact time, and to encourage the development of flexible, on-line teaching, learning and tutoring, (Avis & Fisher, 2006): Usher and Edwards, (1994) see this as another aspect of performativity. Simultaneously, teachers are able more easily to work from home, with internet access to colleagues and students via e-mail, and a vast range of on-line teaching and learning resources, institutional Portals and websites, and management information systems. This further reinforces the tendency of the committed teacher to blur the work-life divide (Kinman, 1998), whilst also permitting the bureaucratic superstructure of surveillance to intrude right into the teacher’s home.

It can be argued that *institutionalised stress* is one consequence of increased bureaucratic control, and performative pressures to achieve 'more for less'. Their very role creates tensions between what teachers want to achieve, to satisfy professional pride and to fulfil their traditionally-defined bureaucratic role, and what they need to achieve, in a flexible and responsive manner, to meet externally imposed standards of efficiency, effectiveness and quality (Naylor, 2001). Fitz-Gibbon (2003) neatly summarises the central tension for teachers as one between practice and policy:

> *practice* in schools and classrooms remains largely a product of plausible belief and convenient traditions, sometimes disturbed by politically-driven requirements. Teaching... relies on tacit knowledge… *Policies*, however, raise different issues from practice… Policies represent intrusions into the realm of the school and the classroom, intrusions requiring change. (2003, p.314).

As Sennett (2006) points out, the Weberian model of bureaucracy implies a social compact between employers and employees; in return for adherence to the restrictions imposed by the rigid structures of the institution, employers provide an emotionally secure environment within which to work, creating a psychological contract, (Argyris, 1960; Handy 1985). An employee's loyalty to the bureaucratic structure is ensured through the bond of informal trust created by the employer. Trust may suffer when job security is threatened (Hill, 2000), the balance between workload and remuneration is broken, and the knowledge that a job well done leads to automatic advancement up the promotional ladder is removed (Troman, 2000). Loss of trust can trigger stress and burnout in teachers (Leiter, 1999). In times of economic recession, cuts in public expenditure can severely threaten job security – one recent estimate (Mourant, 2010) has suggested that between 7,000 and 20,000 jobs in FE may be currently at risk, representing 4% to 11% of the professional workforce of 180,000 (IfL, 2009; LLUK, 2009b). Given that, as in other public services, education managers tend to seek the loyalty of teachers through the implicit appeal to their professionalism, commitment can be undermined by the erosion of teachers' pay, job prospects and working conditions. The culture of overwork can be regarded as a symptom of this institutional stress, caused by the tensions between teachers' commitment to their professional and bureaucratic roles, and the performatiivity agenda of government. It can also suggest that *managerialism* in education deliberately exploits this conflict of aims; government, and many managers, are aware that they can rely on the professional commitment of teachers when imposing an intensified and extended role.

**2.5 Models of Teacher Work Ethic, Stress and Burnout**

Cowling (2005) analysed European-wide data to evaluate four groups of theories to explain workers' responses to increasing workloads. These models were:

- The *labour-leisure trade-off* – as people work longer hours, they consume less leisure; but use the increased income to consume higher 'quality' leisure.
- *Social contagion* – during economic downturn, workers (especially men) take on more work, hoping to avoid redundancy; patterns persist during upswings, though more committed workers also work longer hours.
- *Work as an escape from family stress* – particularly women seeking to escape domestic pressures.
- The *rewards of work* – long-hours workers are more involved in their work and more satisfied with it.

These models reflect what may be termed sociological explanations for patterns of overwork. Research (Section 2.2c) shows that intrinsic rewards are the most typical motivating factor for teachers – although constant re-organisation in colleges may also breed a degree of social contagion. Research into part-time FE teachers provides some support for the *escape hypothesis* (Jameson & Hillier, 2008); the attraction of part-time work for women may largely reflect the attraction of flexible employment that dovetails with domestic responsibilities (Lewis & Campbell, 2007). Whilst Cowling (2005) confirms a correlation between long hours and job dissatisfaction, evidence for schoolteachers tends to dispute this (Butt & Lance, 2005). Research evidence consistently suggests that high satisfaction is associated with intrinsic motivators: interaction with and achievement by students (Dinham & Scott, 2000; Owen & Davies, 2002), classroom autonomy (Bogler, 2002), effective school leadership, participative decision-making styles (Warren, 1998), and opportunities for personal development (Dinham & Scott, 2000). In FE, caring management, and a sense of being valued as professionals, are also important for satisfaction levels (Davies & Owen, 2001). Rapid educational change, increased workload and role extension are major dissatisfiers (Dinham & Scott, 2000; Owen & Davies, 2002; Butt & Lance, 2005). Overall, satisfaction–dissatisfaction constitute a continuum; the relative importance of these factors determines a teacher's location on the continuum. This *situational occurrences* theory (Quarstein et al, 1992; Dinham & Scott, 2000) has been modified by Oshagbemi (1997), who argues that it is personal factors which determine individual responses.

As is shown in the preceding sections of this Chapter, personal factors include psychological aspects of *personality*, varying levels of emotional commitment, social background and life history. It is beyond the scope of my current research to

investigate the psychological literature regarding personality differences – nor does it appear to be especially relevant to my research question. Personality is only considered here in the Habermasian (1987) sense - of individual variations in the competence to act socially. As Troman and Woods (2001) point out:

> There is a tendency … to individualise the problem and pathologise teachers. Rarely is stress considered as a social construct and as a response to structural forces. (p.5)

My research explores teachers' own rationales for their responses to work cultures – since it is their perception (or self-image) which appears to lie at the core of their resilience to stress (Byrne, 1999 – see below). The literature shows that job satisfaction is "significantly associated with mental well-being" (Dinham & Scott, 2000, p.380; Day 2008). In a survey of all UK workers (CIPD 2003, p.13), 26% of respondents report physical illness due to overwork. Stress generates 50% of all working time lost due to mental illness – a total of 12.8 million working days are lost due to stress each year, costing the equivalent of 10% of GNP, (Mind, 2005). I refer to such stress-related physical and mental illnesses, as resulting from *pathological stress*, in order to distinguish this from stress as a heightened response to work pressure, (an adrenaline rush).

Our understanding of human emotional responses to stressful situations is perhaps first fully articulated by Cannon (1915). A pioneering physiologist, he summarises early research into the role of adrenalin in permitting organisms to respond to "emotional excitement" (p.215):

> The typical appearances of human beings, as well as lower animals, when in the grip of such deeply agitating emotions as fear and rage, are so well recognized as to constitute a primitive and common means of judging the nature of the experience through which the organism is passing. (ibid, p.218).

Although not using the phrase 'fight or flight' often attributed to him - he refers to "struggles of conflict or escape" (p.225) – Cannon emphasises that stressful situations, such as pain or intense emotion, generate physiological changes which release additional bodily energy, allowing people and animals to respond rapidly to threatening situations. Whilst such responses are more typical of extreme situations, our understanding of the adrenalin rush and similar physical reactions underpins modern explanations of the links between emotion and physiology. Pathological bodily responses to emotional stress are commonly noted in the literature: exhaustion (Byrne, 1999), emotional fatigue, sleeping disorders, depression and sickness (Rudow, 1999). There is considerable passing reference in educational literature to the intensification of

teachers workloads and extension of their roles, and to the consequent stresses created by organisational and curricular change (Nias, 1989; Acker, 1999; Shain & Gleeson, 1999; Hodkinson et al, 2004; Edward et al, 2007; Spours et al, 2007; Jephcote et al, 2008). Despite extensive research into teacher workload (Drago et al, 2000; Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Bartlett, 2002 & 2004; Bubb & Earley, 2004), there has been relatively little systematic study of stress and burnout in teachers, particularly in FE. Notable exceptions include: the excellent overview in Vandenberghe and Huberman (1999); Troman and Woods study of stress in Primary teachers; the research by Male and May (1997, 1998) on SEN teachers and Learning Support Assistants in FE colleges; and the VITAE work on teacher identity and resilience in schools (Gu & Day, 2007; Day et al, 2006; 2007; Day & Gu, 2007; Sammons et al, 2007). Smith (2000b, p.9) finds that 41.5% of those who work in education report a high level of stress. In a Dutch study, de Heus and Diekstra (1999) compared teachers with other workers in social professions, (those with a high professional contact with other people). They find that:

> teachers, especially male teachers, are seriously at risk for burnout, more than members of any other social profession. (p.275).

De Heus and Diekstra identify eight indicator variables of burnout:

- *job dissatisfaction*
- *work overload*
- *job ambiguity*
- *time control*
- *responsibility and task control*
- *participation in decision-making*
- *monetary satisfaction*
- *supervisor support*
- *colleague support*

These variables are grouped under three headings: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced personal accomplishment (see Fig. 1). De Heus and Diekstra conclude that male teachers show significantly higher levels of these eight variables than other professionals; women teachers also show high levels (though lower than men) except for depersonalisation and job dissatisfaction. Looking at the potential causes, de Heus and Diekstra identified three important factors:

> Teachers reported less time control, lower participation in decision-making, and less colleague support than other social professionals. (p.277).

Whilst caution is needed when applying these data to the UK, the survey does identify a set of stress indicators and causal factors; these are incorporated in the models of stress and burnout (Figs. 1 to 3). Teachers also scored very low risk for “task control” – a result which confirms the literature (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989), but which highlights the risk to *ontological security* from erosion of autonomy.

Byrne (1999) has reviewed the literature on stress and burnout, in an attempt to build a coherent theoretical model based around de Heus and Diekstra’s three core components (Fig. 1). Background variables - gender, age, length of experience, family status, and level and type of student taught – are also important. The risk of burnout is increased by organisational factors: role conflict and work overload (particularly for those teaching at higher levels), classroom climate and decision-making. The personal factor of self-esteem, and the organisation-specific factor of peer support are also significant, but the factors of role ambiguity and supervisor support are not major causes of burnout. Byrne acknowledges that the model may be incomplete, particularly in relation reciprocal links between self-esteem and burnout, “differential self-concept constructs”, and “constructs relating to coping strategies”, (p.36). She also identifies three additional factors from the literature: the professional orientation of the teacher, the organizational climate (culture) of the institution, and the economic climate prevailing at the time of the research. Rudow (1999) reviews the limited European research literature on stress and burnout, and concludes that stress and burnout are a consequence of the interplay between “personality and organizational activity variables” (p.41). Rick et al (2002) reviewing the scientific consensus for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), conclude that:

> high work intensity, high work pace, and low variety were the most prevalent stressors, followed by a lack of decision authority over specific aspects of work and problematic work schedules. (p. xv).

In summary, stress and burnout are stimulated by “load factors” (Rudow, 1999, p.50), that is workload and organisational cultures, as filtered by the cognitive and emotional responses of the teacher (Day et al, 2007). The process is summarised in Figure 2. Maslach and Leiter (1999) produce a more detailed model of burnout (Figure 3), which identifies the personal and contextual factors influencing the process in teachers,

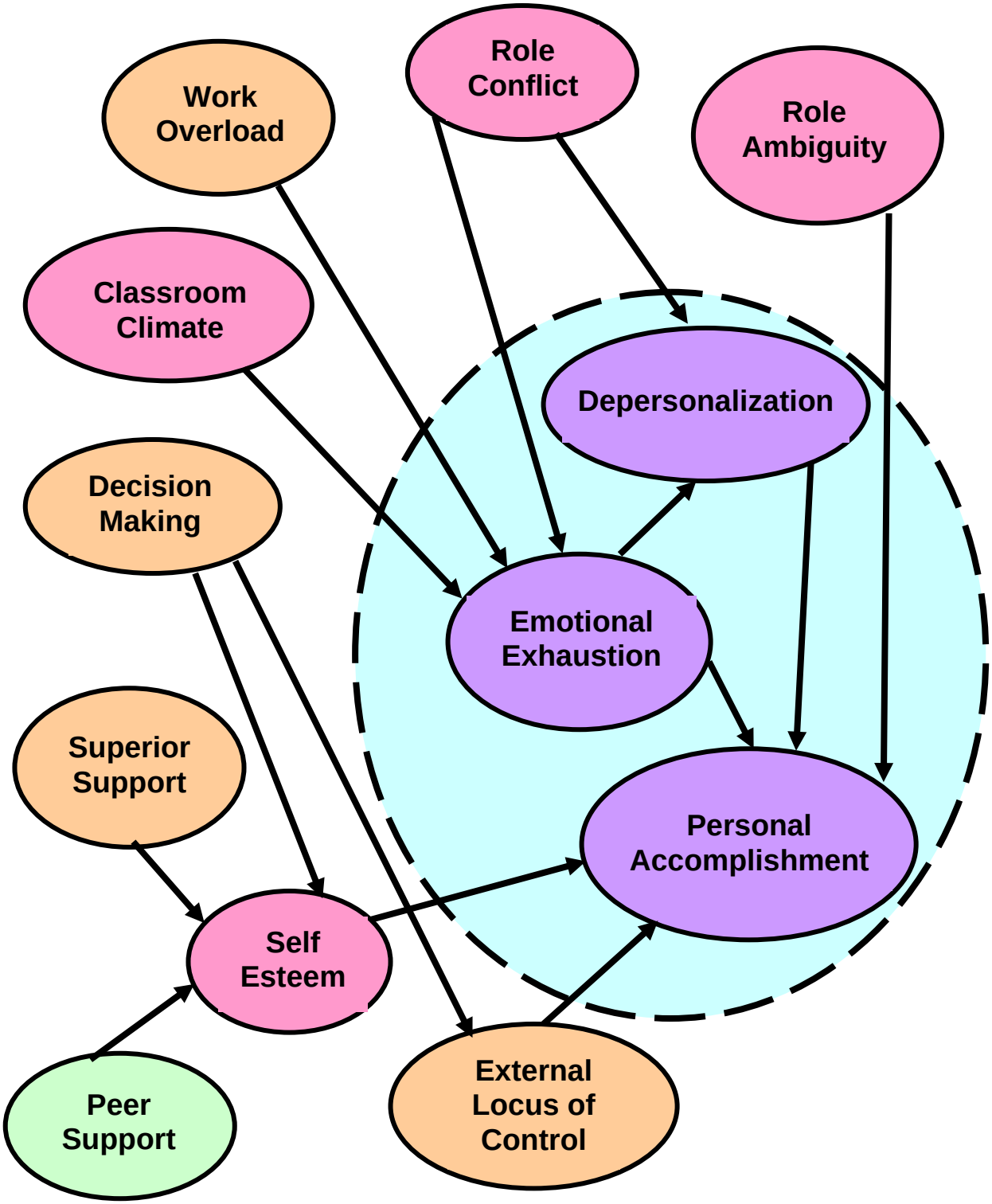


Fig. 1 Summary Model of teacher burnout derived from literature review. *(Fig. 1.1 in Byrne, 1999, p.27).*

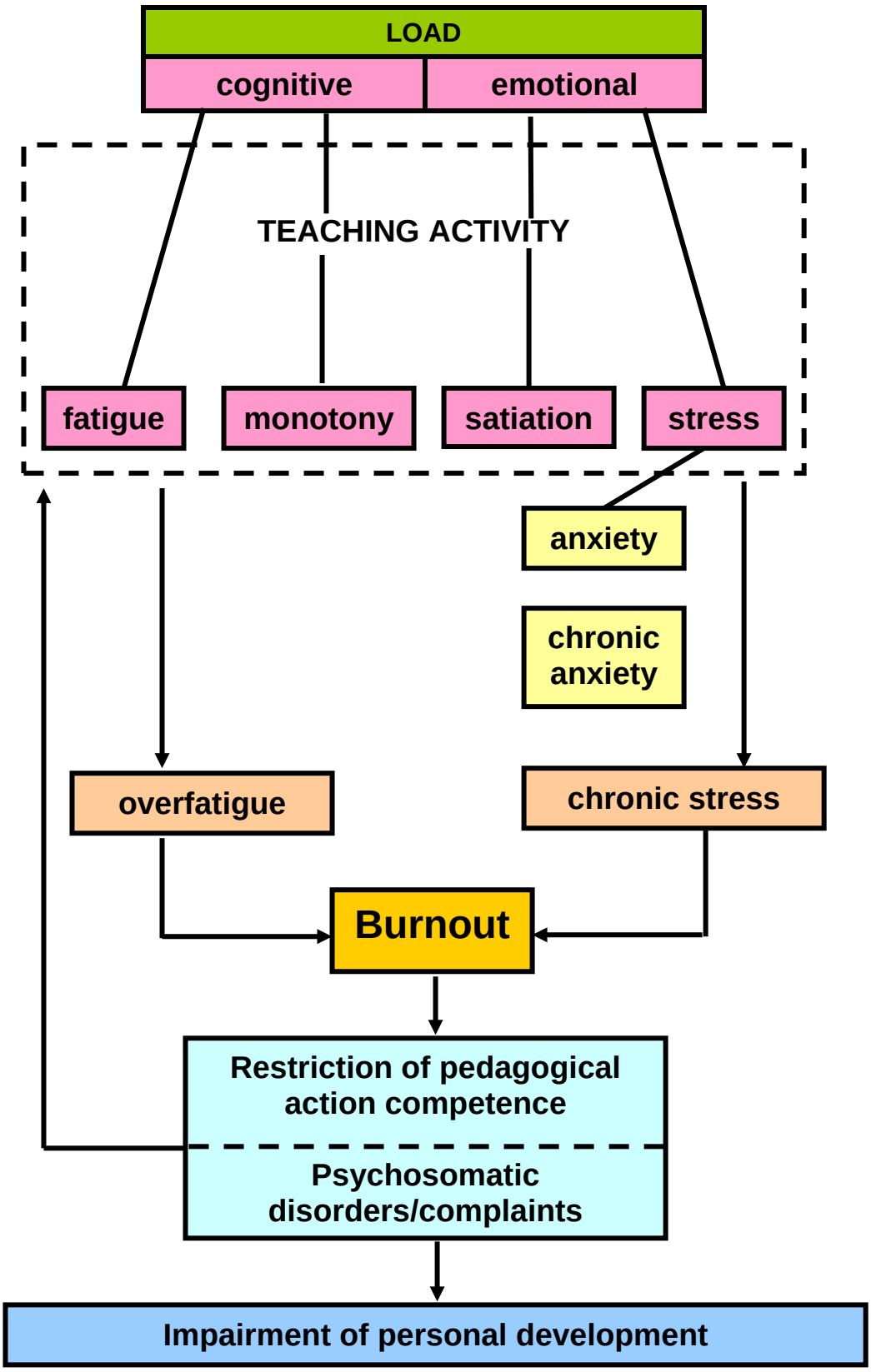


Fig. 2 The model of negative strain relations and consequences in teaching activity. (*Fig. 2.1 in Rudow, 1999, p.49).*

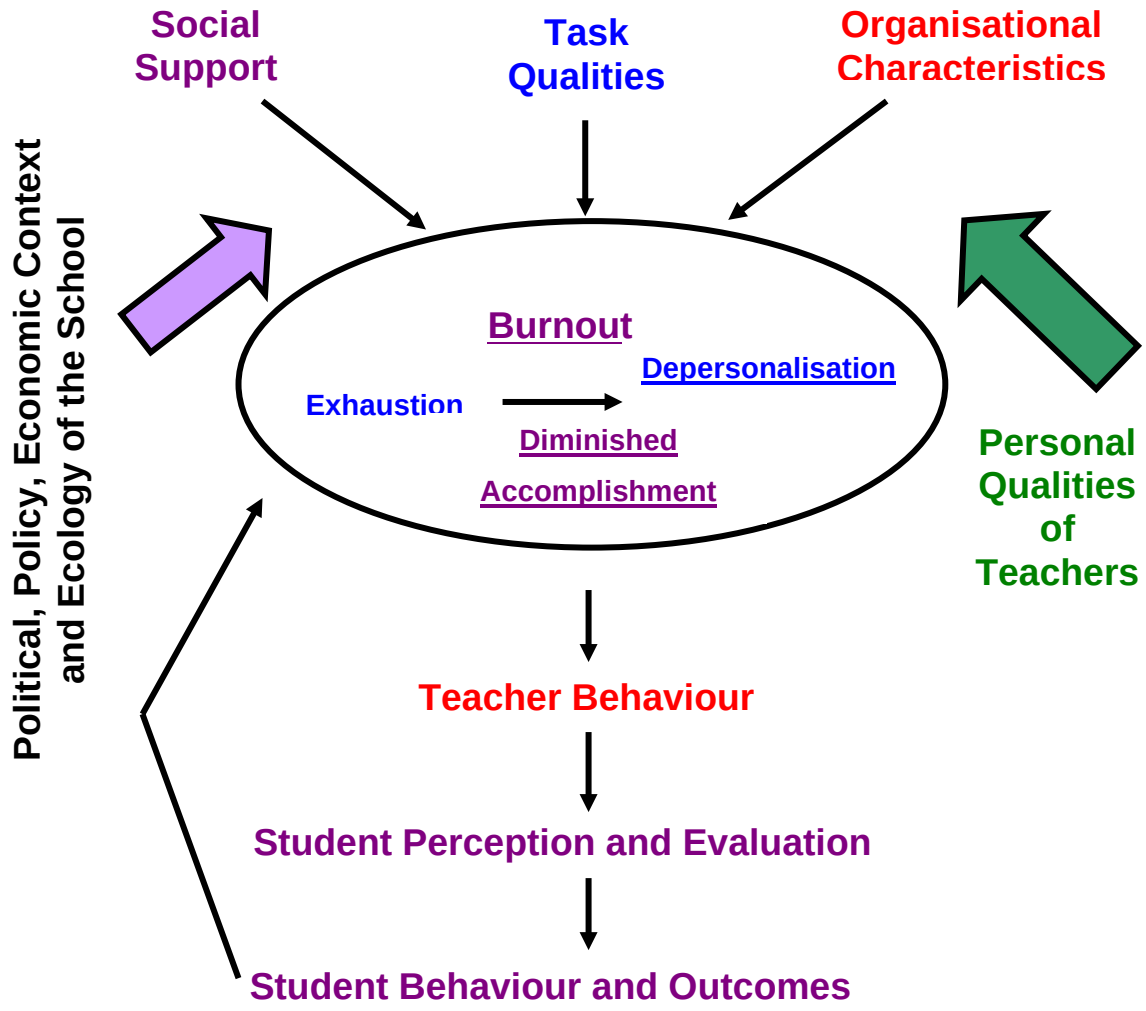


Fig. 3 Proposed Model of Teacher Burnout.
(Maslach and Leiter, in Vandenberghe and Huberman ,1999, p.4).

suggesting that the behavioural responses of students act as a further feedback loop in relation to stress.

The education literature cited above makes very little reference to psychological definitions of *personality* as a factor in teacher behaviour. This is particularly the case with research into FE teachers - hence my decision to include references to the more extensive school-based studies as a source of research evidence. Some sources (Rose, 2003; Jones, 2003) note that whilst personality clearly has an impact upon teacher responses, there is no substantial research data to provide a basis for analysing such influences. One unpublished study (McDonald, 1981, cited in Boreham et al, 2006) looked at the relationship between job satisfaction and personality type:

> It was estimated that 37% of the variance in teacher job satisfaction was explained by variance in their personality scores, although the small sample size makes this finding indicative rather than conclusive. (Boreham et al, 2006, p.4)

More evidence exists, however, to suggest ways in which personality characteristics may affect individual capacities to withstand stress – termed *moderators* (Conley & Woosley, 2000) or factors in teacher *resilience* (Gu & Day, 2007). Conley and Woosley cite a number of studies which highlight links between "personal characteristics such as Type A personality and personal needs" (2000, p. 182) and ability to cope with stress. Whilst these sources emphasise that the research evidence in teaching is limited, the implication is that those who are more emotionally highly-strung (Type A personality), or who have greater requirements for meeting their "higher-order needs" (cf. Maslow, 1960), will be more vulnerable to stress. Rick et al (2002) similarly found that "Type A behaviour, hostility, and the need for social approval were found to increase the negative impact of some stressors," (p.xiii). Sleegers (1999) argues that, alongside psychological factors such as self-esteem and locus of control (Fig. 1), attitudinal factors such as beliefs and values, are important in explaining responses to stress. Mind (2005) confirms this, suggesting that the ability to cope with stress may reflect the interface between personality type and the characteristics of the job; "for example, extrovert people may find a socially isolated job more stressful than introverts" (p. 13). Mind also emphasises the importance of "coping strategies" (ibid.) in providing resilience to stress. Gu and Day (2007) suggest that "we may all be born with a biological basis for resilient capacity" (p.1305), but that

> Resilience …is not a quality that is innate. Rather, it is a construct that is relative, developmental and dynamic, connoting the positive adaptation and development of individuals in the presence of challenging circumstances… The social dimension of teacher resilience recognises the interactive impact of personal, professional and situated factors on teachers' work and lives and contextualises teachers' endeavour to sustain their professional commitment. (ibid).

They conclude that resilience will vary between individuals, and within individuals over time and with changing circumstances. Pathological responses to stress are probably shaped as much, if not more, by social context as by individual psychological differences. For this reason I decided not to consider in detail psychological definitions of personality. Instead, my focus is mainly upon how interviewees perceive their work situations and how they rationalize their responses to work pressures within the work culture of the College. Whilst I hope to demonstrate that personal factors have a

strong influence upon *resilience*, I am interested in teachers' explanations of their responses, not in the impact of any underlying personality types.

The consequences of stress and burnout are less well researched. Conley and Woosley (2000) found that:

> role stress was found …. to affect outcomes valued by the organization, and particularly organizational commitment. (p.196).

Rudow (1999) postulates that stress will reduce teacher performance and commitment, and increase sickness, absence rates, and early retirement ("unbecoming" - Colley et al, 2007). Day et al (2006a) conclude that professional identity is a "key factor" (p.190) in teacher effectiveness. Stress threatens this effectiveness (Day et al 2006b), but good leadership fosters teacher "resilience" (ibid - also Gu & Day 2007, Sammons et al, 2007).

**2.6 Summary**

The research literature provides extensive evidence of increasing teacher workloads, generated by constant change within the education system: both an intensification of the teaching role (Hargreaves, 1994) and role extension incorporating new responsibilities (Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Bartlett, 2004). The introduction of locally-negotiated contracts of employment in FE Colleges since 1993, has created conditions where local managers need to impose upon teachers increased contractual hours, reductions in holiday entitlement, larger class sizes and increased bureaucracy (Jephcote et al, 2008). Long working hours and the intensity of workload are the two most frequent issues cited by UK employees for dissatisfaction at work (CIPD 2007b). Successive Governments have initiated change in an effort to promote continually rising educational standards (DfES, 2002, 2006), and increased, transparent accountability of teachers and institutions for their performance (Edward et al, 2007). The impacts of change are often conceptualised in the literature as audit cultures, bureaucratisation, managerialism and performativity. Research strongly and consistently shows that teachers' attitudes to work reflect their motivations for joining the profession in the first place (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989), their career stages (Ball & Goodson, 1985; Sikes et al, 1985; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996), and their personal definitions of their status as professionals (Timperley & Robinson, 2000; Robson, 2006). Teacher identities also reflect their work contexts. Particularly in FE, the working environment is shaped by the ethos and management culture (Shain & Gleeson, 1999; Owen & Davies, 2002), and by the resultant power relations, (Fuchs, 2003; Hamilton, 2007). Work cultures are also shaped by the scale and geography of colleges; for

example multiple sites often enhance the tendency for subcultures to develop around particular departments. It has been suggested (Robson, 1998b, 2006) that the subject area taught may also have an impact on teacher dispositions, since different vocational or academic backgrounds represent different work traditions, and different kinds of teacher will experience different workloads. Finally, it is suggested their work cultures make teachers particularly prone to pathological consequences such as stress and burnout (de Heus & Diekstra, 1999; Troman & Woods, 2001).

What much of the research fails to explain is why teachers respond to work pressures and organisational cultures as they do, and why some are more prone to pathological stress and burnout than others. This is what I set out to explore in this research.

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## Chapter 3. Research Perspective, Methodology and Methods

*Virtue has come to consist of doing something in less time than someone else.*
*– Nietzsche, The Gay Science, 1882*

In this Chapter I summarise my approach to educational research, and justify my choice of research methods. Biesta and Burbules (2003) summarise my personal perspective perfectly:

> educational research is not only about finding better, more sophisticated, more efficient, or effective means for achieving educational ends that are taken for granted, but that inquiry into these very aims, ends and purposes of education should be an *integral* part of educational research. (p.109).

In seeking to discover why teachers work as hard as they do, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the organisational cultures within which teaching and learning take place. Teachers are the principal resource for learning – their well-being has a direct impact on their effectiveness, and hence on the quality of learning. In Section 3.1, I discuss my approach to research. Having described my research perspective, I briefly explain my choice of methodology (3.2), before explaining in more detail my methods of data collection (3.3) and analysis (3.4).

### 3.1 Perspective and Research Question

Kvale (1996) typifies the research interview process using two contrasting metaphors: the “miner” (p.3), who delves for new knowledge, and the traveller, who journeys with the interviewee and returns with a story to tell. In the latter case, “the journey may not only lead to new knowledge; the traveller might change as well” (p.4). What follows is an account of my own research journey. Morrison (2002) has commented that research in education consists both of an *attitude*, “a distinctive way of thinking about educational phenomena” (p.3) and an *activity*. In all probability, the selection and execution of that activity will be shaped by those attitudes - a reality which permeates theoretical debates about methodology, (Pring, 2000). My choice of research topic reflects my personal experiences as a teacher, as outlined in Chapter 1. My academic background as a sociologist and environmentalist has also shaped my approach to research. My experiences as a teacher and teacher trainer in colleges have influenced my perspectives on work cultures in education, as have my political beliefs - my personal worldview or “paradigm” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.107). As a researching professional (as opposed to a professional researcher), my purposes are as much directed towards enhancing my personal understanding of my topic as they are to expanding knowledge in the field. Thus, even with my best efforts to achieve validity and reliability, I recognise that my results will contain an element of subjectivity. Whilst,

as I argue in Section 3.2, this is unavoidable, I acknowledge my "theoretical perspective" (Crotty, 1998, p.11), with its potential for bias, rather than attempt to *bracket it out* in a phenomenological sense (Laverty, 2003). Ultimately, it will be for the reader to judge the extent to which I have been honest in relation to my research data, and justified in the conclusions that I have attempted to draw from them, (Kvale, 1996).

In addressing my research question – ***How do teachers in a Further Education College perceive and respond to their work culture?*** – I employ key concepts identified in the research literature reviewed in Chapter 2. In particular, in investigating the perceptions of teachers at the College, I have sought to gauge their views about their workloads and stress levels, and their perceptions of the wider culture of the organisation. I have focussed on the three groups of factors identified from the research: teachers' personal backgrounds and sense of identity; their relations with immediate work colleagues; and their feelings towards external pressures for change, as these impact upon their working lives.

### 3.2 Methodology – Choosing A Research Paradigm

Brown and Dowling (1998) define research as "an enquiry which seeks to make known something about a field of practice or activity which is currently unknown to the researcher" (p.7) – in my case, how teachers perceive and respond to their work situations. In order to gain some understanding of the *truths* (Cohen et al, 2000) of teachers' work cultures, as I observe them, I need to clarify the methodology employed. In this Section I provide a philosophical and practical rationale for my choice of the methods used to collect and analyse data, and show how I have sought to make sense of my data in order to generate or substantiate my understandings. My topic is concerned with teachers' attitudes towards, and emotional responses to, work cultures and "work-life balance" (Bunting, 2004 p.212) in an FE College. In order to do this, I have chosen to employ a constructivist-interpretivist methodology (Schwandt, 1994) to interview a group of 13 teachers in a single FE college. Such an approach seeks to understand "lived experience from the point of view of those who live it" (ibid, p.118). This requires a methodology which enables me to construct a personal understanding of the work culture of the College through the interpretation of the stated observations of my interviewees. Such an approach, what Rabinow and Sullivan (1987, cited in Schwandt 1994) term the "interpretive turn", can be seen as:

> a challenge to the very idea that inquiry into the social world and the value of the understanding that results is to be determined by methodology. (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1987, p.20 in the original).

I prefer to define my approach as being to select a *mode of interrogation* (Brown and Dowling, 1998) which enables me to achieve my purposes: namely to make sense of what teachers tell be about their work experiences. Methodology is a navigation tool for my journey, not a proscriptive map. I begin by explaining my reasons for choosing a constructivist-interpretivist approach above alternative methodologies.

Essentially, there are four ways I could have investigated the work culture of the College:

1. observe and record what happens
2. analyse the observations and records of others
3. work in such a culture myself and record what happens
4. ask those who work in the culture what happens

As shown in Chapter 2, the impact of workload on teachers is strongly influenced by their sense of self, their personal history, their personal skills and experiences, and their individual context (class size, subject, level, time of day and classroom conditions, as well as personal factors in their non-work life), and by their emotional responses based upon this personal identity. Such data – the subjective rationalisations of teachers themselves - are best collected by interview (Brown and Dowling, 1998) and analysed using interpretivist methods. Chapter 1 summarises a range of quantitative data about work cultures which have informed my analysis; my purpose is not to replicate these data through observation of teachers or by using teacher logs and diaries. Instead, I seek to explore how teachers experience and give meaning to their work experiences, as recounted in their own words. My aim is not to prove the existence of overwork, but to focus upon how teachers' perceive their workload and cultural environment, and how this shapes their emotional and cognitive responses, and their actual behaviours (see Day et al, 2007). Similarly, I chose not to use strictly *ethnographic* research methods in the participant observation tradition (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Humphreys et al, 2003). I wanted to achieve a wider perspective than that achievable through writing my own *personal narrative*, a life history of my observations and experiences of the College. Nevertheless, I recognise that my own familiarity with the College provides me with ethnographic insights into its culture. I could have used teachers' logs or diaries ethnographically, to generate a narrative description of the life of the College and the experiences of its staff in their own words. Such approaches, as with questionnaires, have the disadvantage of limiting my opportunity to question respondents about their meanings. In order to answer my research question, I need to be able to interpret these narratives, using the theoretical perspectives emerging from the literature. Consequently, I felt that interviews would

enable me to interrogate teachers' attitudes and feelings more effectively, since the resulting dialogue would permit me to check my understandings (in a hermeneutic sense), and achieve greater confidence in the validity of my interpretations, whilst still retaining elements of the personal narratives of the respondents.

My research is not intended to arouse in teachers an awareness of their work situations, such that they become empowered to seek to change them or their own responses. Therefore, I have not chosen to adopt a *critical theory* approach, aimed at achieving "the organisation of processes of enlightenment" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p.146). Whilst recognising that the topic selected may reflect my personal feelings about the current goals and structure of FE, I am sufficiently experienced as a manager, college governor, political campaigner and union activist to understand that a single, small-scale piece of research will not change things through its process, even if I might hope that it could contribute to change through its outcomes. Nevertheless, I am acutely aware of the political nature of my research, and of how cultures of overwork fit within "wider structures of inequality and diverse social movements," (Avis, 1997). My research is clearly taking what Howe (1998, p.13) terms "the interpretive turn"; and, as he argues "social arrangements are irremediably interest-, power-, and value-laden", and hence "subjectivities count" (p. 20). I regard the product of research, not the process, to be the potentially transformative tool.

It is clear from what I have said, that my chosen interpretivist paradigm is not without methodological risks. My own attitudes and opinions have been important factors in my choice of topic, research location, and interviewees, as well as of the research methods employed (see 3.3 below). My research involves my subjective interpretations of the subjective views of my interviewees. As Gadamer (1989) puts it, understanding a text (in this case, the responses and statements of teachers),

> involves neither "neutrality" with respect to content nor the extinction of one's self, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. (p.271).

Returning to Kvale's metaphor, as a traveler I have in mind a destination and carry a rough map of the terrain. I come to my research with preconceptions about the work culture of the College that I am studying:

> All interpretation….operates in the fore-structure… Any interpretation which is to contribute understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted. (Heidegger, 1962, p.194).

This recognition lies at the heart of *phenomenological* approaches to research (Husserl, 1980; Moustakis, 1994). However, my analysis of the research literature, and my personal experiences, suggest that work cultures are in part a consequence of deliberate Government policies; teachers' responses to work cultures reflect where they perceive the *locus of control* (Byrne, 1999) to lie. Hence it is not possible to adopt a phenomenological approach to my research, to "bracket out the outer world as well as individual biases" (Laverty 2003, p.6). What I seek to achieve – extending my initial metaphor – is a travelogue, an account of my research journey; one which reflects, as honestly as I can, the experiences of my fellow travelers, my interviewees. If my account is to ring true with my audience, I must convince them of the trustworthiness of my conclusions (Robson, 1993). I attempt to do this by clarifying my preconceptions and justifying my choice of methods. Essentially, then, research is a

> process of self-reflection … the biases and assumptions of the researcher are not bracketed or set aside, but rather are embedded and essential to the interpretive process. (Laverty, 2003, p.17).

Turning to the first of my considerations, I wish to clarify my personal ontology – the "what is" (Crotty, 1998, p.10) of my research question. From what I have said in Chapter 1, it is clear that I come to my research topic with strong opinions, based upon nearly forty years of personal experience as an FE teacher. I suspect that the considerable and increasing work pressures imposed upon FE teachers constitute a culture of overwork (Bartlett, 2004). I suspect that teachers are, in fact, *willing slaves* (Bunting, 2004). Teachers are predominantly committed to their own educational goals: the well-being and development of their students and the promulgation of their subject. To achieve this, they are often willing to sacrifice their time and efforts in ways that can be detrimental to their own well-being and work-life balance. This makes some teachers vulnerable to exploitation by those who want to get more out of them for less. As my research progressed, I became aware that both the research literature, especially in schools contexts and the responses of my interviewees suggest possible reasons for such variations in vulnerability – or resilience – to work pressures.

Secondly, therefore, I accept that as Crotty concludes:

> research outcomes are neither totally objective nor unquestionably certain… the absoluteness has gone….claims to validity are tentative and qualified. (p.40)

In order to discover something about what it is like to work in an FE college, I have had to ask teachers who work there, in an attempt to identify the personal social constructs (Kelly, 1955) which determine the meanings they attach to their work. Thus, it is difficult, both conceptually and practically, to separate ontology from epistemology in a

research process such as this. While the phenomena being researched can 'be', independently of the observer, the very process of studying them to construct 'knowledge' involves both the participant and the researcher in imposing upon them meanings, or individual, subjective interpretations, (Crotty, 2003):

> The existence of a world without a mind is conceivable. Meaning without a mind is not. Realism in ontology and constructivism in epistemology turn out to be quite compatible. (ibid, pp.10-11).

In order to justify my research outcomes to my audience, I have sought to represent, as accurately and as explicitly as possible, both the stated views of my interviewees, through extensive quotations (see Chapters 4 and 5), and the processes by which I have collected, restated and interpreted those views (Sections 3.3 and 3.4). Fine (1994) suggests that the distinction between informant and researcher is, in any case, illusory; self - other are linked by the *hyphen*, and the social researcher should be attempting to "work the hyphen" (p.72):

> By *working the hyphen* I mean to suggest that researchers probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations. (ibid)

In adopting a *constructivist-interpretivist methodology*, I recognise that the "particular meanings" of "constructivist" and "interpretivist" "are shaped by the intent of their users", (Schwandt, 1994, p.118), and are thus themselves subjective or suggestive, rather than precise terms:

> The inquirer must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors. (ibid)

I explain my process of meaning construction within my data collection and analysis in Sections 3.3 and 3.4. Firstly, I put this within a methodological context:

Central to effective research is the recognition that the knowledge generated should be what von Glasersfeld (1989) terms viable:

> the conceptual constructs we call knowledge *[should]* be viable in the experiential world of the knowing subject. (p.1).

His notion of constructivism, then, "is a form of pragmatism" (p.3). What is valid is what fits the observed or experienced reality: it is "functional" (after Piaget, 1970), rather than structural. Knowledge is what works, what is consistent with shared meanings and actual behaviours. The way to gauge what works will be through some kind of

"symbolic interactionist" method, which "requires that the inquirer actively enter the worlds of people being studied" (Schwandt, 1994, p.124) in order to observe and interpret the actions (words and deeds) of the participants. In my case, I already share the world of the College with my interviewees. This raises the problems of familiarity (Hockey, 1993), discussed below, but does also offer the hope of *groundedness* (Glaser & Strauss, 2008) in my interpretations.

Crotty (2003) argues that constructivist approaches require methods of inquiry that are phenomenological or *hermeneutic*: "individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction *between and among* investigator and respondent" (p.111). Within the literature cited in Chapter 2, Nias (1989) adopts a broadly interpretivist approach. Acker (1999) adopts an explicitly symbolic-interactionist approach, which she defines as trying to "find out how people understand and interpret their own, and others', actions and reactions in everyday life" (p.18). Sikes et al (1985) and Troman (2008) use similar approaches. In the FE sector, Jephcote et al (2008) produce research, highly relevant to my current concerns, which employs a largely autobiographical, life-history approach. McNally and Gray (2006) employ an ethnographic approach, and the "Transforming Learning Cultures" Project of the TLRP uses a mix of observation (ethnography), questionnaires (survey research) and interviews (heuristic and phenomenological). From my perspective, in relation to the current research project, each of these approaches contains elements which can advance my understanding - but none is a complete methodological solution.

Heidegger (1962) argues that we can meet the requirements of scientific method by acknowledging our preconceptions and "working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves" (p.195) provided that we do not allow "fancies and popular conceptions" (ibid) to determine our pre-conceptions. This is a process analogous to the phenomenological concept of bracketing, which I have already rejected. Conversely, I do not see knowledge as being external to experience (an external ontology): for me, it is defined and understood as shared social language (a group epistemology). Methodologically, research truths can only be established by *intersubjectivity*. Given that not all groups share the same epistemology – knowledge becomes political, and the dominant epistemology a form of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1980) – intersubjectivity must be sought through a kind of dialectical process, a critical approach (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Whilst rejecting the critical approach, I recognise that dialectical power/knowledge relationships may have a strong impact upon work cultures. Finally, intersubjective truths can be sought through

some form of “social, dialogic … inquiry” (Schwandt, 1994, p.128), such as hermeneutic research methods.

Initially, I planned my research to follow a *hermeneutic cycle* (Laverty, 2003; Kvale, 1996), or “hermeneutical dialectical process” (Pring 2000, p.55). My intention was to interview teachers, and then to review the resultant interview texts with them in a second interview. The resulting dialogue would seek to achieve a shared view or consensus about their conceptions - the “co-construction of the data with the participant” (Laverty 2003, p.21). Laverty argues persuasively that, when dealing with the subjective meanings of respondents, this approach ensures validity of data through the operation of the hermeneutic cycle. In such a model, summary and interpretation of the interview data by the researcher is part of an iterative process; tentative results are shared with the interviewee, usually forming the basis of a re-interview. The processes of generalising and theorising from the co-constructed data are part of the interview process, not a result of post data-collection analysis. The processes of “meaning condensation” and “meaning categorisation” lead on to a process of “meaning interpretation” (Kvale, 1996, pp. 192-193), which is constantly retested through follow-up interviews until completion and *saturation* are achieved. This hermeneutic stance validates the resulting data with each individual respondent; but produces no single, consistent generalisation by the researcher. It constructs several realities - a separate one for each participant. Additionally, it should be recognised that a skilful interviewer may be capable of directing the hermeneutic dialogue towards their own subjective view: subtly suggesting words and phrases to the respondent which lead the conversation, rather than negotiating a shared conception. In such a method, the reliability and validity of the conclusions depend upon the integrity of the interviewer, and on their self-awareness of the potential for projecting their biases onto the interviewee.

However, following my first tranche of six interviews (and before re-interviewing), I abandoned my plan to construct hermeneutically-shared understandings with my respondents. I considered some of the emerging insights from the interviews to be highly significant. Some respondents indicated that they themselves were confronting important issues for the first time; others appeared to be constructing meaning and coherence out of previously unarticulated experiences and emotions. I did not want to alter these freshly constructed, immediate and often very emotional responses, by re-working them into cold, cognitive, considered views at re-interview. For me, this risked diluting or deliberately re-framing the emotionally ‘raw data’. I consequently decided to limit myself to one interview with each respondent, in order to capture their responses

as freshly as I could, at the point of construction of their feelings. I was concerned that, as a researcher with an intimate knowledge of the College, and with strong preconceptions on the topic derived from my own experiences in FE, any attempt by me subsequently to negotiate a 'shared meaning' inadvertently would risk imposing my views upon participants. I decided to let the teachers initial responses stand, and to base my interpretation upon their unrehearsed constructions of meaning around the topic. As far as I could judge, from my own knowledge of the College, what were emerging from the interviews appeared to be honest and deep expositions of teachers' personal experiences. I wished to interpret these, not refine them. In von Glasersfeld's (1989) terms, what I was hearing appeared to be viable knowledge, consistent with my own experiences, (and with the overwhelming body of research literature). Whilst re-interview offered the opportunity to test my emerging knowledge against my respondents, it carried the risks that I would impose my constructions upon them. I could see no benefits to validity from use of the hermeneutic cycle since, ultimately, the constructions and the interpretations had to be justified by me. At the same time, my methods of data collection and analysis (sections 3.3 and 3.4 below) seek to ensure that I keep my interpretations "within the interviewee's context of understanding" (Kvale, 1996, p.217) as seen by myself, as the researcher. I also felt I could not proceed to a coherent understanding of the culture of the College from a series of isolated dialogues. Any understanding of teachers' responses to the social context of the College would have to rely upon my interpretation of the data from the whole group of respondents: one researcher's attempt to summarise a diverse range of social constructions of the work culture of a complex College environment.

Schwandt (1994) sees "epistemological and methodological commitments" (p.119) as shaping purpose. I have argued that, to a large extent, my purpose has determined my choice of methodology. Inevitably, my reasons for choosing my topic reflect my own attitudes, background and personal experiences of the College. This makes it difficult to claim complete objectivity for my interpretations. However diligently I plan to avoid pejorative or leading questions, the framing of my interview schedules and my actual conduct of the resulting dialogue are highly likely to reflect (if only subconsciously) my own biases, and to limit the generalisability of any results. In order to minimise any effect of bias within my data collection, my research methods seek to ensure that my respondents are afforded the maximum flexibility, independently to frame their own perceptions, views and explanations of their behaviours through the use of open-ended questions and a loosely structured and flexible interview process. I discuss my attempts to minimise bias within data analysis in Section 3.4. The "conceptual settings" (Brown & Dowling, 1998, p.10) that enable me to investigate my hypothesis within a

constructivist paradigm include: phenomenology, (the concepts of lifeworld and habitus), social constructivism, hermeneutics, and Weberian sociology (the concept of Verstehen). In the following sections, I explain my data collection and analysis methods based upon this constructivist-interpretivist methodology.

### 3.3 Research Methods

> We have to use research, fed by that potentially rich mix of data, insights from literature, researcher standpoint and prior knowledge to tell better stories. (Hodkinson, 2004, p. 24).

In conducting my constructivist interpretive study of work cultures in FE, I considered two determinants of my choice of research methods: scale and location, and appropriateness of data collection methods to my purpose. Given the timescale of the research – data collection commenced in April 2009 and was completed in March 2010 (term-time only, during which I was also working full-time) - together with the fact that my approach involved in depth interviews with teachers about their experiences and feelings about their work context, I decided that it was impractical to consider a comparative study of a range of colleges. I selected a *single case-study college* on the basis of my familiarity with it, and ease of access. Within the College, I decided to pursue my research question by means of *semi-structured interviews*, details of which are given in Section 3.3 below. In order to understand the attitudes and motives of teachers in responding to the pressures of their work culture, I focused upon collecting qualitative data about staff perceptions of those cultures, their attitudes towards their workload, and their self-definitions of their professional identities, which may influence these attitudes and perceptions. My decision to adopt this method represents a conscious rejection of other data collection methods, and it is first necessary to justify this decision. Basically, the alternatives to interviews fall into three groups: surveys and questionnaires, focus groups, and case studies; I shall deal with each of these in turn.

I argue in Section 3.2 that observed behaviour is open to wide interpretation; the same limitation applies to surveys and questionnaires as a means of collecting data for interpretation. My view of a teacher's work pattern, whether I observe them working or ask questions through a questionnaire, may not be their own view. Questionnaires tended to dominate sociological research in the 1950s and 1960s, (Fontana & Frey, 1994), as the medium of choice for collecting quantitative and qualitative data. Sturman and Taggart (2007) note that comparisons of questionnaire and telephone interviews show that the latter provide markedly more certain answers. This implies that the results of face-to-face interviews similarly will be more reliable, and perhaps have greater validity, than those of questionnaires: verbal meaning making is more

immediate in interviews, and hence is more likely to capture the respondent's constructed reality as it forms. Questionnaires and surveys often ask standard questions and seek to obtain an opinion through open question format: they are monologues. They do not permit the process of probing and sharing meaning with the interviewee, which can enhance the emotional honesty of any response. Avis et al (2001) have recorded the difficulties of trying to "gather 'hard' statistical data" in the form of a work log completed by teachers. They found a "tension generated between over-specification of categories within the log and the different interpretations of participants", (p. 5), and were forced to supplement their survey data with cameos, - essentially interpretive constructions from the data. Interviews provide greater opportunity for the researcher to check their understanding of informants' responses. While large sample questionnaires have an obvious advantage over small-sample interviews for validity of quantitative data, this posed less of a problem for my research, since extensive questionnaire-based surveys of FE teachers already exist (UCU, 2007; Villeneuve-Smith et al, 2008; Wilson et al, 2005), which provide a quantitative foundation for my research. My purposes were better met by concentrating on a smaller sample of in-depth interviews, seeking to provide qualitative meaning to the quantitative data, and enabling comparison with the existing, research literature on teachers' attitudes about professional identity, workload and work culture.

Robson (1993) suggests case study methodology as an alternative method, which "can provide a rigorous approach to all aspects of the enquiry where you can 'tell it as it is' " (p.63). However, whilst I have chosen to locate my research within a single case study College, I decided not to use in-depth case studies of individual teachers. The concept of validity is central to any research process - ie. "trustworthiness" and "authenticity" (Guba & Lincoln, p.114). The "search for truth" (Cohen et al, 2000, p.3) implies that research seeks to create, and more importantly to convince others that the results of an investigation represent, however imperfectly, a useful projection of reality. There is considerable risk that the case study method will lead to a value-laden, uncritical approach to respondents' views and experiences, since situations are largely described in the words of the researcher, rather than the respondents'. Research by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) provides an example of the pitfalls of case studies. They examine the culture of one school, through case studies of two contrasting teachers. The teachers appear to have been selected to provide such contrast, with the result that the study arrives at a dialectical model, which essentially reflects the initial basis of selection. This case study tends to prove what it intends to prove. With interviews, although there is still scope for intentional selection by the researcher, at least the

respondents can be heard in their own words, and the larger sample size allows for a more openly accountable selection.

A third option for research, which can provide larger sample sizes than interviews, would be to use focus groups (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Wilson, 1997), but these have their own problems. Wilson (1997) points to the risks that focus group interviews may distort the voices of individual respondents through "the challenges and ambiguity of group processes" (p.221). Focus groups are particularly useful for observing "*how* respondents develop concepts, how their concepts withstand the challenges from other people and how these may be *modified* in the light of discussion with peers" (ibid, italics in original). For the purposes of my research, however, I required a direct personal dialogue with the interviewee. I was interested in exploring with them their sense of identity, not in observing the processes by which they interact with others. My research is concerned with how teachers make individual sense of their behaviours (subjective reality) albeit within a collective culture (objective reality). My intention was to separate respondents, as far as possible, from the controlling pressures of their peers, in order to permit them to reflect upon their individual behaviour and motivation. Hence, use of focus groups was not considered an appropriate method. This left interviews as the most suitable data collection method, as I now explain.

### *3.3a Choice of Data Collection Method*

> Human science strives for precision and exactness by aiming for interpretive descriptions that exact fullness and completeness of detail, and that explore to a degree of perfection the fundamental nature of the notion being addressed in the text. (van Manen, 1997, pp. 16-17).

I chose to base my data collection upon in-depth, semi-structured interviews within a single case study FE college. Taking my constructivist interpretivist methodology (Schwandt, 1994), I adopted a method which includes elements of symbolic interactionism (Nias, 1989; Acker, 1999; Crotty, 2003), hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1997; Kvale, 1996) and radical constructivism (Von Glasersfeld, 1989). I shall now detail my methods and provide a justified rationale for their use.

The FE Sector is varied and complex (Gleeson & James, 2007; Spours et al, 2007). Colleges differ enormously in size, the nature of their student catchments, the range of courses offered, and their relationships with other educational sectors. In these circumstances, it would have been impossible to research a representative sample of college work-environments in a small project. I decided, therefore, to base my research on a case study of a single college with which I am familiar. It is a large college, serving

a wide and diverse catchment area in southwest England, offering a broad range of academic and vocational courses to both 16-19 year-olds and adults. It employs over 600 teaching and almost 450 non-teaching staff across a split main site, two large satellite sites at a greater distance, and some smaller annexes. It is the main 16-19 provider in the area, but faces competition from several other colleges within a 30 mile radius, as well as from schools, local authority Adult and Community Learning, private training providers, and a strong voluntary sector provision. Extensive quantitative data are available through the College's information systems, and this secondary data was used to supplement the qualitative interview data that I collected. The decision to study a college with which I am familiar, and to interview some staff that are known to me, is evidently fraught with problems. Hockey (1993) summarised the benefits and pitfalls of researching peers in familiar settings. The advantages include:

> the relative lack of culture shock or disorientation, the possibility of enhanced rapport and communication, the ability to gauge the honesty and accuracy of responses, and the likelihood that respondents will reveal more intimate details of their lives to someone considered empathetic. (p.199).

Against this must be considered the disadvantages, including "over-familiarity and taken for granted assumptions" (ibid), and the fact that even insiders only have partial knowledge of large, often culturally diverse organisations.

Interviews tend to fall into one of three broad categories (Frey & Fontana, 1994): group interviews (focus groups), structured individual interviews, and semi-structured/ unstructured individual interviews. I explain in Section 3.3 why I did not consider focus groups to be an appropriate method for my needs. Individual interview methods exist on a continuum, "a dimension of difference" (Robson, 1993, p.230) with highly structured 'survey' techniques at one end, and unstructured, respondent-centred ones at the other, with hybrid's called "semi-structured" interviewing located at intermediate points. Highly structured interviews face similar limitations to questionnaires: they elicit rational responses, but frequently overlook or inadequately assess the emotional dimension, (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p.364). Such interviews seek to achieve reliability and validity by asking identical questions of all respondents. Whilst this may minimise any distorting effect from the interviewer's own bias, it also tends to constrain the interviewee's voice within a structure pre-determined by the researcher. Bias is not eliminated; it is located within the choice of questions, rather than in the behaviour of the interviewer. Indeed, it can be argued that highly structured questions risk eliciting "socially desirable" responses (Fontana & Frey, 1994); those that the respondent thinks the interviewer expects, rather than ones that they might give freely in a more relaxed discussion.

Semi-structured interviews offered a more appropriate method for achieving the fullness and depth of understanding I required. In-depth interviews provide the best method for exploring teachers self-conceptions, and notions of professionalism, as narratives (Bryman, 2006, Nias, 1989; Acker, 1999). As Dyer and Keller-Cohen (2000) point out, such "narratives are a means of textually constructing not only personal but also professional identities" (p.283). By enabling me to probe reactively into interviewees' responses, this method supported a "flexible, iterative and continuous design" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.43) – a hermeneutic conversation. By definition, interviewing is "a kind of conversation" (Robson, 1993, p.228), "an interchange of views" (Cohen et al, 2000, p.267), "an encounter" (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p.361); interviewees are "treated as partners rather than objects of research" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.10). Kvale (1996, p.2) deconstructs the term, emphasising it as a dialogue: "an *inter view*, an inter change of views between two persons conversing on a theme of mutual interest". As he points out, the Latin derivation of 'conversation' implies a shared journey - the researcher "wandering together with" (p4) the interviewee. Semi-structured interviews permitted me to achieve aspects of all three possible outcomes of qualitative research: interpretation, critical analysis and theory building (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, pp. 56-57). Such interviews met my requirement for a process that clearly focused respondents' comments on those aspects of their life history, work context and beliefs which may explain their behaviour, whilst encouraging them to reflect upon their own emotional responses. Such an approach is reflexive, in that it explores "the dialectical interaction of the *context* and the *individual*" (Garrick, 1999, p.154). Kvale (1996, p.6) neatly summarises my research intentions, advocating a "semi-structured lifeworld interview… *whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the lifeworld of the individual with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena "* (author's italics).

### *3.3b Data Collection - Interview Method*

My research purposes required that I sought deeper understanding of the feelings and motives underlying typical responses from my interviewees about their work experiences. Using the themes of personal identity (habitus), social context (lifeworld) and the impact of externally-imposed change, identified in Chapter 2, and the elements of *job motivation, task perception* and *future perspective* proposed by Kelchtermans (1993), I developed a series of more detailed questions, to explore four key elements of my research question. Firstly, I needed to identify the working patterns of teachers, and whether these are changing, to record how teachers respond emotionally to their work (their levels of satisfaction), and whether they experience stress in themselves or

colleagues. Secondly, I sought to find out respondents' reasons for becoming teachers, the nature of their career to date, and their future aspirations. Thirdly, I wanted to explore interviewees' conceptions of professionalism, and whether these have influenced their attitudes to their roles. Finally, I needed to investigate teachers' work contexts – both their physical working environment, and the perceived impacts of colleagues, managers and the external policy environment on their work. Hence, the research question was disaggregated into a series of more specific questions, which underpin the interview process:

1. Is there a specific work culture in the College?
2. Do staff consider that they are overworking or under stress; and how do they respond to work pressures?
3. What has influenced teachers' attitudes towards their work, and their working patterns?
    a. What are their motives for teaching?
    b. What has been their background and career history?
    c. What is the nature of their relations with team colleagues?
    d. What is the nature of their relations with managers?
    e. How do they define their own professional identity; and what influences (if any) do they feel have shaped that identity?
    *f.* How do teachers perceive the culture of their college and how far do they identify with it?

Abandoning my original plan to use questionnaires based upon these eight questions, I adapted the questionnaire structure to frame a series of broader questions for use in a semi-structured interview format. Subsequent pilot interviews were used to trial and adapt this format (results of which are included in my analysis). My interview schedule (Appendix 1) shows how my research was loosely structured around a short list of *six open questions* (1 to 6 on the schedule). Further elucidation was obtained by selecting, as appropriate, from a range of more *probing supplementary questions* (bullet-points), to clarify in greater detail aspects of interviewees' responses. Depending upon the progress of the interview, the order of both the main questions and the supplementary *probes* (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) was adjusted, to maintain the respondent's natural flow of thought, and to enable me to follow up on what appeared to be particularly revealing comments. This can be regarded as a hermeneutic interview style, as defined by Kvale (1996):

> objectifications of human cultural activity as texts with a view to interpreting them to find out the intended or expressed meaning. (p.47).

I conducted each interview as a dialogue, a constant two-and-fro of discourse between interviewer and subject, aimed at clarifying meanings and confirming interpretations. Interviews were conducted through a hermeneutic cycle (see also Laverty 2003), whereby my interpretations were constantly checked and revisited for confirmation with the interviewee, (see extract in Appendix 4). The aim was to achieve a mutual agreement on a shared understanding of the interpretation: " a 'good Gestalt', an inner unity of the text, free of logical contradictions" (Kvale, 1996, p.48). This agreement was vital, since I did not approach the text without presuppositions; my own prior assumptions about professionalism and work cultures sit at the core of my research. In a College with which we are both familiar, I could not interview a colleague about their working practices and professional attitudes from a detached, objective angle. I attempted, therefore, to avoid the use of leading and closed questions; hence, the most vital element of the interview process was sensitivity to the perceptions of the interviewee, (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). It was essential to be aware of the subject's emotional and intellectual responses if I was to probe their understanding of the text being researched. Establishing a rapport between us became paramount, (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Probe questions enabled me both to avoid misconceptions later on, and to establish a "shared language of discourse" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.110), while seeking to explore, in greater depth and precision, respondents' attitudes towards and rationalisations for their behaviour. Some spontaneous, interviewee-specific questions were added, to enable the interviewee and myself to extend and clarify shared-meaning of topics that appeared to be particularly important to them. The interview was an iterative process: the form and structure adjusting to meet the needs of the developing conversation between participants.

There is an intimate relationship between research topic, methodology and choice of the research sample. Kvale (1996) points to the inevitable tension between selecting a sufficiently large sample from which to generalise and the need to keep the volume of interviewing, transcription and analysis within manageable proportions. In my research, the need to conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews imposed limitations on the size and diversity of sample that it was feasible to interview. Rubin and Rubin (1995) argue strongly that systematic, structured sampling is not appropriate for qualitative interviewing. They advocate a form of *purposive sampling*, based on two core principles of sample selection: "*completeness*" and "*saturation"* (pp. 72-73). Completeness means interviewing sufficient people who are knowledgeable about the topic to obtain a complete picture of the issues being researched. Saturation is not dependent upon the number of interviewees: it is achieved when nothing new is added

to understanding of the topic by adding new respondents to the sample. Ruben and Ruben also advocate sampling for "*similarity* and *dissimilarity*" (p.74); choosing respondents who are similar helps to confirm the reliability and validity of responses, while dissimilarity enables the impact of factors of difference to be assessed. However, it is necessary to be aware that this risks sampling on the basis of systematic prejudice, - as appears to have happened in the Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) example cited earlier. Given that a fundamental aim of research is to provide a basis for generalisation (Kvale. 1996), and theory building (Rubin & Rubin, 1995), it follows that there must be some basis for purposive sampling. To maximise the reliability and validity of the interview process, it is essential critically to identify "the parameters of the population we are studying and choose our sample carefully on this basis", (Silverman, 2005, p.129). Therefore, I sought to make these parameters explicit prior to the commencement of research, and to justify these within the context of a constructivist interpretive epistemology and methodology. In order to achieve this, and to reflect the range and diversity of teaching contexts within a typical FE college, I attempted to incorporate the three principles of diversity, completeness and saturation within the following sampling procedure:

1. To keep the sample manageable, the research is confined to a single FE College
2. A sufficiently large sample of respondents (10- 16) is selected to enable a range of career backgrounds and contexts to be investigated.
3. Both new entrants to the profession (under 3 years service) and established teachers are included within the sample.
4. Respondents are chosen from across a range of academic and vocational subjects.
5. The sample includes both full-post, fractional-post and part-time staff.
6. The sample includes lecturers and managers.
7. The interview process continued with sufficient respondents until saturation was achieved, in terms of the core questions and emerging themes.

Ultimately, 13 teachers were interviewed (details in Table 3), in two tranches: in the summer term of 2009, and in the spring term of 2010.

### *3.3c Ethical considerations*

By exploring issues of staff workloads and how these are managed, my research topic could be seen potentially to pose a threat to the institution and to those managing it. Teachers were asked to discuss in depth their feelings about their work, their colleagues, their managers, and the culture of the College. They were encouraged to

reveal personal feelings and to disclose their deepest emotional responses to their work environment. Interviewees needed to be reassured that these disclosures were made within a safe environment, and one where their rights to confidentiality and anonymity were being respected and safeguarded. At the same time, the College had to be assured that its interests were being protected. In order to meet such ethical considerations, which apply all to educational research (BERA 2004), and particularly to the potentially intrusive process of probing the meanings and feelings of respondents, interviews only proceeded on the basis of "voluntary informed consent", (ibid p.6). All interviewees were provided with a statement of their rights (Appendix 2) and asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 3), which contains clearly stated safeguards. These included the participant's right to withdraw at any stage, and agreed limits on confidentiality and disclosure, (especially since discussion includes managerial attitudes and contractual arrangements). Other ethical safeguards included taking all possible steps to protect respondents from intrusive or distressing questioning, or from other behaviour likely to be emotionally upsetting; behaving honestly and openly at all stages; and minimising the disruptive effects of the interview process itself upon the working life of the respondents, by negotiating a mutually acceptable time and location.

Requirements to safeguard personal and emotional well-being, and to maintain confidentiality included:

- Interviewees were given the right to withdraw from the interview at any point.
- Participants were encouraged to chose a time and place for the interview which was most convenient and comfortable to them.
- Audio recordings were only made after the nature and purposes of the interview had been discussed, and the ways in which transcripts were to be used explained.
- All respondents were asked to choose a reference name (not their own), by which they are referred to in the research, to promote anonymity.
- Interviewees were assured that only they and I have access to the recordings and written transcripts. Although offered, none have actually accepted the opportunity to receive copies of these.
- The wording selected and extracts used from the interviews seek, as far as possible, to protect the identity of the individuals concerned, their Departments or their managers. Details are only given in this thesis where they are deemed essential to the explanation and understanding of the

points being made by the interviewees, and of my subsequent interpretation of these.

- The real name and location of the College are not used, and attempts are made to maintain the anonymity of the College and its staff within this thesis.
- Permission to carry our research was obtained from the Principal of the College, and assurances received that there would be no attempts subsequently to breach the confidentiality of the interviewees.

### 3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

Choosing methods of data analysis for qualitative interviews is just as problematic as planning effective data collection. Robson (1993), points out that there is no right method; however, it is possible to identify several broad principles. The first is to strive to organise and codify data as soon as possible after an interview (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This permits interview results to be categorised and grouped while the interview experience is still fresh in the researcher's mind. It enables generalisations to be highlighted and themes elicited. Secondly, Silverman (2005) underlines the importance of rigour, arguing that validity of interpretation can only be achieved by "comprehensive data treatment" (p.214):

> … in qualitative research, working with smaller data sets open to repeated inspection, you should not be satisfied until your generalization is able to apply to every single gobbet of relevant data you have collected. (ibid, p.215).

Such a comprehensive approach seeks to analyse all the data collected, including deviant cases which do not fit the general pattern, and which form the qualitative equivalents of residuals in a quantitative regression graph. Attention to systematic coding, and rigorous, comprehensive analysis, are particularly appropriate when the research is seeking to prove some thesis or model. The current research, aims to explore individual teachers' conceptions of their professional identity, and, as such, deals with a range of subjectivities. Conceptions vary between individuals, reflecting their personal habitus. Teachers' self-conceptions are complex, will change over time, and may not even have been consciously articulated until respondents were prompted through the interview process. In such circumstances, my data will not be comprehensive or easily generalisable. In terms of the analytical options presented by Kvale (1996, p.192), the most suitable appeared to be either narrative structuring, (essentially telling the interviewees' stories) or meaning interpretation, (which involves a significant input from the researcher in making sense of the data). My data analysis seeks to involve elements of both processes.

Thirdly, issues of reliability and validity are always problematic in interpretivist research. This is because of both the nature of interviews as a data source, and of the uses interviewers seek to make of the data. As Wengraf (2001) says:

> anything that is said, done or apparently expressed in an interview is … *fallible evidence of extra-interview realities.* (p.59 – author's italics).

As Kvale (1996) points out, in one sense anything an interviewee says has to be regarded as valid, because it is not possible for the researcher to explore every single interpretation of a respondent's statement for confirmation. As a researcher, the best that can be hoped for is to keep "interpretations within the interviewee's context of understanding as seen by the researcher" (p.217). For Kvale, validity is socially constructed; this seems an appropriate view for my research, given my own methodological stance. He argues that, of the three possible tests of interpretation – generalisability, reliability and validity – only validity can be achieved with any substantial confidence. In the current study, generalisability is limited, due to the use of a small interview cohort within a single college. However, I would assert that it is possible to produce generalisations about work cultures within the College, and to then compare key themes from my analysis both with the generalities contained within quantitative research data on work patterns and attitudes, and with the findings of other qualitative research into teachers' responses to their working environments. Having deliberately chosen not to apply a hermeneutic-cycle method, and having adopted an iterative approach to the use of my interview schedule, I can make only limited claims in terms of reliability. However, in this thesis I attempt to meet the tests of "external reliability" proposed by Seale (1999, p.141), by

- clarifying my own "status position" as a participant in the College;
- providing details of the respondents, and of their work contexts;
- giving "a full account… of the theories and ideas that informed the research" (ibid);
- providing a detailed account of my methodological approach and methods.

In terms of validity, Kvale (1996) argues forcefully that this is achieved by attention to the seven stages of the research process:

- basing the research on themes soundly constituted within theory;
- considering validity in research design;

- using careful questioning to ensure the "trustworthiness" (p.237) of interviewees accounts, and to limit the intrusion of the interviewer through sensitivity of questioning (eg. avoiding rhetorical or leading questions);
- striving for accuracy in transcribing interviews;
- achieving validity in analysis, through retesting the validity of the questions, and taking care in establishing the logic of any interpretations;
- reflexively validating interpretations;
- seeking validity in reporting.

In Section 5.7, I seek to evaluate the results of my research and to demonstrate the trustworthiness of my interpretations against these criteria. At this point, it is sufficient to emphasise that the tests of validity that Kvale proposes – those of "craftsmanship", "communication" and "pragmatic proof" (p.240) depend inherently upon the reflexivity and openness of the researcher. As van Manen (1997) suggests, these tests can be met where the research results in "texts…. [*which are*] oriented, strong, rich, and deep", (p.151). I have sought to interpret my interviews reflexively with an awareness of my orientation, and its implications for how I understand the texts. In Chapters 4 and 5, I attempt to present a "rich and thick description" of my data which is "concrete, exploring a phenomenon in all its experiential ramifications", (ibid, p.152), and in a manner which is deep, providing "a reading … of a text that shows what it teaches" (ibid). Ultimately, the validity of my interpretations of my data will depend upon my ability to justify my interpretations in terms of those theoretical concepts which underpin my research (Wengraf, 2001).

My data analysis occurred in two phases:

***Phase 1 - Initial responses to Interview Data:***

> Data analysis should not only happen after all your data has been safely gathered. (Silverman, 2005, p.152).

For purely practical reasons related to my own workload, interviews took place in two tranches - in Summer Term of 2009 and in Spring Term of 2010. This offered the opportunity, during the intervening Autumn Term, to review the initial six interviews, and to carry out an initial "theme analysis" (see Phase 2 below). I was able to reflect on the research methods being used and on the underlying methodology. It became obvious that re-interviewing the respondents would be difficult, (two interviewees had already left the college). Also, I became uncertain of the value to my purpose of a strict hermeneutic cycle method (Laverty, 2003). I realised that my interview technique was generating deep and rich data (van Manen, 1997); I did not wish either to diminish this

through attempts to reduce themes to discussion points, for re-interview with respondents, nor did I wish the process of reaching a shared discourse to dilute the emotional strength and originality of the responses from the first interview. I realised that the benefits of a dialogic research process are probably outweighed by the risks to the validity of the text from not completing a hermeneutic cycle (see Kvale, p.190) and from imposing elements of my own interpretations on the texts. As van Manen (1997) comments, from a phenomenological perspective the researcher's problem is often "that we know too much" (p.46) about both the setting and the interviewees. Given the danger that my interpretations would have dominated any re-interview and actually reduced, rather than enhanced, the validity of data, I decided to trust to the initial responses of my interviewees – a constructivist approach. I see my task as capturing and structuring the resulting narrative, and then interpreting it both within the context of the College and of the wider research literature.

The initial six interview transcripts reassured me that interviewees were able to express their personal narratives - indeed, the emotional content of several responses indicated that I was able to engage with their deep and genuine feelings about the issues being discussed. Furthermore, as one respondent with an above-average awareness of the nature of the research process commented:

> It's not until you say it … and you hear the words coming out of your mouth that you think: 'Oh, right! That's what I feel.' …. You kind of … find out what you feel as a result of being … asked questions, and being asked to explain those things. (Mike)

In the circumstances, I decided to base my interpretations upon a single interview with each subject, using a constructivist, interpretive approach, and to extend the number of interviews beyond the originally planned ten –up to a perceived level of saturation (ultimately a total of 13 interviewees).

***Phase 2 - Systematic analysis of themes:***

Despite differences in methodological approaches and research purposes, there is a degree of unanimity between authors about how to analyse qualitative interview data. Seale (1999), for example, espouses a grounded theory approach, (Glaser & Strauss, 2008), the aim of which is to achieve saturation of data. Hence, he identifies four stages:

1. coding data into categories
2. integration of categories and their properties
3. achieving "theoretical saturation (1999, p.97) – ie. when new data do not generate new theoretical perspectives on the research

4. writing the theory.

Together, these stages constitute what Glaser and Strauss (2008) term the "constant comparative method" (p.105). More hermeneutic phenomenological approaches (Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Van Manen, 1997; Wengraf, 2001) emphasise the interpretation of the subject's narrative – the "discourse of the informant", (Wengraf, p.25). Kvale identifies a number of different approaches to the analysis of qualitative data:

1. Meaning condensation – "the main sense of what is said is rephrased in a few words" (p.192)
2. Meaning categorization – ie. grouping these meanings
3. Narrative structuring – creating the interviewee's story out of the interview text
4. Meaning interpretation – "deeper and more or less speculative interpretations of the text (p.193)
5. Ad hoc methods.

It can be noted that for several writers, (Seale, 1999; Glaser & Strauss, 2008), these approaches often fall into a sequence. I have adopted such an approach here, with slight variations.

The initial procedure was to create a framework for the "text" (Kvale, op. cit). This I achieved by *theme analysis* (van Manen, 1997), "a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure… A free act of seeing meaning", (p.79). The interview transcripts were re-read at least three times: key statements were highlighted where they appeared to be central to the interviewee's personal constructs, and a comments column used to record my own interpretations of meanings within the text and intuitively to code emerging themes (example in Appendix 4).

The second procedure was *meaning condensation*: creating the text (Section 4.2) by analysing responses to the interview questions using the themes embedded in the Interview Schedule (Appendix 1). In this sense, my pre-determined structure of topics provided the framework for analysis. The themes were:

- Reasons for entering a career in teaching
- Length of career – career phase – career goals
- Nature of current workload
- Strategies for handling work-life balance
- Attitude towards teaching as a job / vocation
- Subject or pedagogic orientation

- Emotional attitude to current teaching role
- Relations with immediate team
- Relations with immediate managers
- Relations with senior managers
- Attitude to College – buying in to the vision?
- Degree of stress/burnout – and any identified factors

The next stage was to carry out *open coding* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, cited in Seale, 1999, pp. 99 - 100)

> Coding is the process of grouping interviewees' responses into categories that bring together the similar ideas, concepts or themes you have discovered, or steps or stages in a process. (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.238).

Responses were tabulated by theme for each interviewee, to permit comparisons and to develop common or contrasting themes (example in Appendix 5). This involved an element of *axial coding* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to identify connections between themes, and permit integration, or *meaning categorisation*. This process of refining and reconceptualising the themes is analogous to van Manen's (1997) phenomenological approach, creating "structures of experience", (p.79). From this, a structured narrative was created using five broad categories:

1. A description of the experience of working in the College, as perceived by the interviewees. (Section 5.1).

A broad description of the factors which appear to shape these perceptions, under 3 headings:

2. the individual characteristics of the teacher (habitus), (Section 5.2).
3. their immediate work situation (lifeworld), (Section 5.3).
4. the power relations within their work context (locus of control) (Section 5.4).

Finally, a potentially overarching set of factors is considered:

5. issues of professional identity – whether inherent in the teacher's own self-conception, or promoted by the dominant managerial culture. (Section 5.5).

This narrative and the detailed themes discussed are explored in Chapter 5, in an interpretive construction of the work culture of the College and of the responses of teachers to it. This interpretation links to themes identified in the literature review, but

follows a discursive and loosely structured format. My format reflects the approach to qualitative research advocated by Ely et al (1997), who argue against any rigid linear relationship between data collection and analysis. As they perceive it,

> The interweaving of data collection and analysis is highly transactional, each activity shedding new light on and enriching the other. The choice of foci for close observation in the field is very much part of the analytic process. So also are the choices of forms through which we communicate what we have understood. It is our experience that the writing process shapes and sharpens the analysis. (p.165).

This model of "researcher as bricoleur" (ibid p.164) seems wholly appropriate to a study of professional teachers – the notion of the "*creative* professional" (Barnett, 2008) - and to the sociological view of the professional as a craftsman, (Sennett, 2008).

The subsequent stage of discussion and evaluation in Chapter 5.6 involves a further analysis of the research data in the light of theoretical models of teacher identity, professionalism, educational management, and teacher stress and burnout identified within the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

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## Chapter 4. Data Analysis

*As if a man's soul were not too small to begin with, they have dwarfed and narrowed theirs by a life of all work and no play. - R.L. Stevenson (1881)*

In Section 5.1 I summarise the characteristics of my interview sample, indicating how I have selected them on bases of length of experience, job-role, status and similarity/dissimilarity of subject area. In Section 5.2 I then analyse each of the twelve research themes identified above, to achieve meaning condensation. In Chapter 5, these narrative themes are categorised into five thematic groups for meaning interpretation.

### 5.1 Data Analysis – setting the scene

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a group of 13 respondents in two tranches, between April 2009 and March 2010. Brief profiles of the participants are given in Table 3 below:

**Table 3. Details of Interviewees**

| Name | Subject | Age-group | Status | Experience | Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alesha | Social Care | 16 – 19 | Part-time | New teacher | 03/10 |
| Alex | Business / IT | 16 - 19 | First-line manager Full-time | < 10 years | 04/09 |
| Becky | Performing Arts | Adult/ HE | Full-time | Experienced | 03/10 |
| Bob | Business | - | Senior manager | Experienced | 03/10 |
| Clive | Engineering | 16 - 19 | Full-time | New teacher | 05/09 |
| Fred | Construction | 16 - 19 | Part-time, retired former full-time | Experienced | 06/09 |
| Jocelyn | Arts | 16 - 19 | Part-time | Experienced | 07/09 |
| Marilyn | English | Adult | Part-time - previously first line manager | < 10 years | 06/09 |
| Mike | Sociology / ITT | Adult | Fractional post | Experienced | 07/09 |
| Peta | Science | Adult | Fractional post | Experienced | 03/10 |
| Peter | Construction | 16 - 19 | Full-time | < 10 years | 02/10 |
| Sally | Functional Skills | 16 - 19 | Full-time | Experienced | 02/10 |
| Tom | Social Care | All | Full-time | < 10 years | 02/10 |

## 4.2 Systematic analysis of themes

Using the annotated interview transcripts produced in phase 1 of the coding (meaning condensation, Appendix 4), the 12 thematic headings identified in Section 3.4 were generated (meaning categorisation, Appendix 5) and analysed to achieve a series of integrated narratives of the College.

### *4.2a Reasons for entering a career in teaching*

Firstly, I consider one of Kelchtermans' (1993) 5 determinants of teachers' personal identities – *job motivation*. Of the thirteen respondents, only three can be regarded as 'career teachers' who entered the profession straight from higher education: these all teach academic subjects. Even here, there was not always a strong feeling of *vocation* (Nias, 1989; Carr, 2000). Becky described it as a "pragmatic decision" – having started a PhD, she needed the money from part-time teaching to survive. Teaching was a family tradition, so the choice was fairly natural. Additionally, with aspirations to be an artist or writer, Becky felt that teaching would combine well with her creative work. Mike "thought it would be kind of quite an entertaining thing to do". His motivation was strongly influenced by finding work that was personally satisfying:

> I'm not sure why I went into it, but I know why, once I started doing it, I continued doing it, because I enjoyed [*it*]…. What is there to dislike about it? I mean, you're talking about things you're … interested in, to people that have to listen to you – then that's a great job, isn't it? It's like a continuation of the pub on Friday night! It's just a bit more structured and a bit more formal. (Mike)

Peta felt she slid into it – "I didn't have any great yearnings to teach, I must admit". Both Peta and Mike identified their initial working conditions, including long holidays, and not pay, as attractions. A fourth interviewee, Marilyn, had a lengthy career as a teacher of English as a Foreign Language (EFL); this was chosen mainly because it afforded extensive opportunities for travel. She did not enter the FE environment until she returned to the UK a few years ago, for personal reasons.

For the nine respondents who came from a vocational background, teaching represents a positive career choice – a decision to shift from doing to teaching. Most moved to teaching for a combination of reasons; but principal among these was the encouragement of a colleague who had seen them training in a work situation and suggested teaching. This applied in varying degrees to six of the nine; a spouse, already a teacher in FE, encouraged a seventh. Two were approached by ex-tutors who worked in colleges and offered them work. Jocelyn is an extreme example:

> My old tutor … rang me up and said, did I want to come and teach photography; and I said 'Yes, OK!'. And I said 'When?'. He said, "in an hour and a half". … I then got in the car and … drove in and … said 'Oh, my god! What have I got to do?'. (Jocelyn)

For others, the decision to change career, was stimulated by upheavals in their lives: Clive "fell out of love with industry" – and indicated that this was partly related to stressful experiences as a manager. For Sally, it was a pragmatic decision following divorce, and with a young family to support; for Alex, it was partly the need for a job, when a previous contract came to an end. Bob followed his wife into FE, from business – and admits that part of the attraction was the "anticipated … or perceived, security of the post". Fred and Peter, both craftsmen, became teachers out of a desire to pass on their skills; Peter, in particular, was unhappy with what he saw as poor standards in industry, and wanted to raise them through a training role.

The interviewees entered FE through one of two routes: a pre-service PGCE (six of them) or by gaining part-time work, and accumulating extra hours, (the remaining seven). Almost all indicated that it was their initial experiences of teaching practice (whether on the PGCE or part-time hours), which confirmed their decision:

> I really enjoyed doing my teaching practice (Mike)
> I got into teaching – really enjoyed it (Tom)
> … really enjoyed it, and decided to change my career (Bob)

The family tradition of teaching also appears to have affected their choice of career – four of the interviewees come from families of teachers, though Marilyn and Becky both indicate that this was initially something they sought to avoid, rather than emulate. Other factors influencing the choice of a teaching career tended to reinforce these key influences:

- the love of learning (Tom, Alex)
- a love of the subject (Alesha: "I … wanted to spread the word, really"; Fred: "… felt that I'd got a lot to offer to …students")
- the interpersonal contact with students (Marilyn, Mike)
- an inspirational teacher (Alesha, Becky), or colleague (Peta's shift to her current role, when an admired colleague died).

Overall, the reasons given by the interviewees strongly mirrored those identified in other research, particularly the desire to work with young people (Edmunds et al, 2002). Several themes identified by Lortie (1975) still hold true, especially the *continuation theme* of handing on knowledge to subsequent generations. For some *time compatibility* had been a factor – but one no longer borne out by the realities of work in FE. Perhaps strongest of all, *life contingency* factors, such as a family tradition

in teaching, and the impact of *significant others* such as their own teachers or work colleagues, (Nias, 1989; Sugrue, 1996; Younger et al, 2004; Bathmaker & Avis, 2005b) had been key factors in the decisions to become teachers.

### *4.2b Length of career – career phase – career goals*

The interviewees were selected to reflect a range of career stages (Table 3) and fall into four groups. Two (Clive, Alesha) were in their first year of teaching when interviewed; though both came with extensive vocational experience (30 and 24 years respectively). At the other extreme, Peta has been teaching for 34 years in a range of contexts, (15 of them in college) and Mike for 35 years – I interviewed him the day before he retired. Fred had already retired after 30 years in teaching, (and 18 in industry), but is still working part-time: partly for enjoyment, but also to supplement his pension. Becky, with 20 years, and Bob, with 19 years experience, are also career teachers, (though Bob had 10 years business background, prior to teaching – and now has a purely management role). Sally has over 20 years teaching experience (after six in business). Jocelyn and Marilyn form another group: the former has held a fractional post, for the past 15 years; the latter only moved to FE after 14 years teaching EFL, and now combines the two roles. Finally, Tom, Peter and Alex have taught for 7, 6 and 5 years respectively – Alex was interviewed the day before leaving teaching to return to industry, having resigned his post.

Therefore, the interviewees provide insights into all stages of the FE teacher's career, enabling comparison with the evidence from other studies (notably Nias, 1989; Sikes et al., 1985; Ball & Goodson, 1985; Hargreaves, 2005; Day & Gu, 2007)

### *4.2c Nature of current workload*

Six interviewees do not work full or permanent contracts. Peta has chosen to reduce from a full-time to a 0.6 post, and Mike reduced to 0.75 in the year before his retirement. Fred has a workload equivalent to 0.5, but does additional cover work if it's offered. Jocelyn is happy to stay at 0.5, "with additional hours" making it closer to 0.8. Marilyn combines teaching hours in private language schools with up to four evenings in College. Alesha combines a 0.25 post with temporary hours – and finds herself torn, in her first year of teaching, between the pressures of preparation and marking as a new teacher, and the desire to maximise teaching hours, (having taken two years out of paid employment to complete her degree and PGCE). The remaining seven are full-time, full post teachers. This profile approximately reflects the College pattern – approximately 50% Full-Time: 50% Part-Time, but slightly over represents males as opposed to females in the teaching staff (source – MIS 2010).

Table 4. shows that staff work long hours – even those with part-time contracts. For the College as a whole, actual hours taught exceed those contracted by 12.5% FT and 13.5% PT (source: MIS, 2010).

**Table 4. Quantitative data on Interviewees**

| Name | Years of teaching experience | Years of vocational experience | Teaching Post | Hours contracted per week | Hours worked per week |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alesha | < 1 | 24 | 0.25 + AL | 21 | 45 |
| Alex | 5 | 20 | FT | 37 | 70 - 80 |
| Becky | 20 | - | FT | 37 | 50+ |
| Bob | 19 | 10 | FT | 37+ | 60+ |
| Clive | 2 | 30 | FT | 37 | 52+ |
| Fred | 30 | 10 | 0.5 AL | 12 | 18 |
| Jocelyn | 15 | - | 0.5 + AL | 18 | 30 - 37 |
| Marilyn | 4 (18) | - | AL | 24 ** | 50+ |
| Mike | 35 | - | 0.75 | 28 | 35 - 40 |
| Peta | 34 | - | 0.6 | 22 | 30+ |
| Peter | 6 | 20+ | FT | 37 | 50 |
| Sally | 20 | 6 | FT | 37 | 60+ |
| Tom | 7 | 12+ | FT | 37 | 45 - 50 |

Notes: AL – Associate Lecturers teach flexible contracts with a base of zero hours. Fractional posts (eg. 0.5) guarantee a minimum number of hours during term time.

** - Not all of these hours are worked in the College

The longest hours tend to be worked by those with managerial posts. Bob, a senior manager, estimates that he works well over 60 hours per week – plus, from choice, a long journey to work (2 to 3 hours a day). He regularly works 12 to 14 hours a day on the premises, works at least 2 evenings, and an average of at least an hour per day at home - “through the week, it tends to be sort of: work-eat-sleep, work-eat-sleep”. The situation is similarly demanding for first level managers: both Alex and Marilyn gave up their promoted posts due to overwork. Alex estimated that he worked a 13- or 14-hour day during the week, and two days (8 to 10 hours) at the weekend. Nor is the situation much easier for the main grade teachers, who are contracted to teach 24 hours per week, on a nominal 37-hour total contract. Sally, whose journey to work is similar to

Bob's, puts in a 9-hour day at college, and averages an hour each evening, and "most of Sunday" – a total of 60 hours per week. Tom, Clive and Becky – all on full posts – also tend to work over 50 hours per week. Those on part-time posts tend to work proportionately as hard: Mike (0.75) works 35 to 40 hours (equivalent to 47 to 53 hours per week). For Jocelyn (0.5 plus), the comparable figures are 30 – 37 hours (equivalent to 50 plus hours); Peta (0.6) works 30+ hours (equivalent to 50 plus hours). Even Alesha (0.25 but actually working closer to 0.9) puts in about 45 hours a week, including work at home. Given the nature of Fred's and Marilyn's contracts, comparisons are less useful – though Fred estimated he worked at least 45 hours a week before he retired. Marilyn worked at least 60 hours per week as a junior manager; she now works a total of 35 to 40 hours per week with her portfolio of teaching. Though her working day typically runs from 11am to 9pm, "it feels a lot better than it used to when I came in earlier for a full time role."

The way in which these workloads are constituted sometimes leads to feelings of dissatisfaction and demotivation (Nias, 1989; Dinham & Scott, 2000). Mike has had a cross-college role for several years. From his broad experience of the College, he comments that:

> It depends to a certain extent upon what's happening in the area that you're working in … The workloads around the college are … quite inequitable, in the sense that some people have one group, which will pretty well fill a 0.75 timetable … other people have lots of groups, also at different levels and that is much more demanding. (Mike)

Alesha, for example, the least experienced teacher with the least secure contract, teaches a total of 135 students in 7 classes. These are large classes (average size 19) and generate considerable amounts of Level 3 marking (A level equivalent): "it just never goes away, does it?". On the other hand, for some of the interviewees, assessment is strongly practical and is largely done in class. Jocelyn teaches less motivated students – the "job nobody else wants to do" – where the pressures are more about class management than marking load. Both Peter's and Tom's concerns have been the wide range of groups they teach. Peter teaches 5 groups across 3 levels – though these tend to be whole-day, practical sessions. The previous year, Tom was teaching across 4 different levels, including a course tutor role for a Foundation Degree; he "put his foot down" this year, insisting that he teach a narrower range of courses. Another aspect of workload is the practice of 'front-loading': instead of having 828 contracted hours evenly spread across the year, teaching is concentrated into the first two terms. Both Sally and Clive experience this:

> I was front-loaded … 28, 29 hours … at the beginning … now that's dropped back slightly. … Without the goodwill of lots of lecturers … [the Department] would probably be in a much more dire strait than what it is now. (Clive).
>
> I've been front-loaded… about 27 hours a week. My contract time is actually 1040, not the normal 848. (Sally)

In some areas where recruitment is difficult, teachers systematically work overtime to cover staff shortages. Peter worked 250 and 150 contact hours of overtime in the previous two years - Tom and Clive both refer to staff shortages. Part of the reason for Alex giving up his management post was the pressure of co-ordinating absence cover, which often meant teaching the additional classes himself.

> Last year I did an extra 180 to 200 contact hours, on four different courses, at two levels, and marking, and lesson preparation, and resource preparation: hundreds and hundreds of hours. (Alex)

Travel between sites can be another source of pressure:

> So, my typical day is: go to my lessons at 9.00, then I probably will finish there, and it may well be in another building. Do that session, then walk back, … in my lunchtime; … I don't really get a lunchtime. (Sally)

Due to accommodation shortages, Becky also works largely off-site: "I spend my time … walking between these three sites, carrying any resources I need with me". As a result, she feels a degree of isolation from colleagues. Tom has to travel offsite for specialist facilities – "my dinner break is actually taken up walking … I don't have time for a break"; but determines that, if off-site at the end of the day, he does not return to college, and goes home earlier. In addition to Bob and Sally, Marilyn, Tom and Becky have at least 30-minute commutes to and from work, which adds to their working day, (they often work in transit).

Another factor in varied teacher workloads is the distribution of course responsibilities. Like Tom, Becky is a Higher Education course tutor, for which she receives a generous time allowance – she was unsure how much, but I was able to check it on the college information system. Sally, on the other hand, receives only a small allowance for her cross-college role, against a much higher base of class-contact hours:

> They stitched me up… [*My job's*] grown and it's grown and it's grown….and I'm not given any more time…. [*MP: How do you feel about that?*]. Aggrieved…. [*Person X*] in the same role as me … actually doesn't do any teaching whatsoever … and is probably on about £4000 more than me. (Sally)

Clive has also had several responsibilities passed onto him – "two and a half terms into my career!" – for most of which he receives no time allowance. Most interviewees

identified that work pressures were increasing, and that time allowances were being cut back:

> They used to allow time for you to do marking and … everything else … they don't do that … so much now. (Sally)
>
> We … get something called Performance Allowance [*to cover evening performances in creative arts*] … its been whittled away…. and, to be honest, I'm not positive whether I'm even getting it now. (Becky)
>
> The workload is great; the demands put on us are very high, and it's always increasing… (Peter)

Significant determinants of workload and motivation in the College appear to include the following factors, therefore: the range and ability of the groups taught, amount of contact time per group, consequent preparation and assessment loads, increasing bureaucracy, travel between sites and insufficient time allocated for additional responsibilities. These are clearly hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1968) – the kinds of things that are within the capacity of management to determine. While these reflect some of Nias's (1989) *dissatisfiers* (poor working conditions; lack of resources – ie. time), this complex of factors causing high workloads are best encapsulated as the negative impacts of *economies of performance* (Stronach et al, 2002).

### *4.2d Strategies for handling work-life balance*

Given this picture of teachers' work patterns in the College, I now analyse how my interviewees cope with their workloads. Basically, they fall into three groups: those who have difficulty coping, those who have clear coping strategies, and a middle group who appear to accept the workloads, however reluctantly, as an inevitable part of the professional role of the teacher. I explore each group in turn.

In various ways, Alex, Marilyn, Mike, Peta, Alesha and Sally have experienced workload pressures that have caused them to leave, or consider leaving the College. At the most extreme end is Alex, who resigned and left the day following our interview, clearly depressed, angry with the college, and blaming himself for his perceived failure:

> I feel that I have …. Failed. Failed to develop as a teacher. I've failed to deliver good courses. I haven't failed to be a good teacher; I have been a good teacher. I know I've been a good teacher and have had huge amounts of response from students who … tell me I'm a good teacher. But that hasn't converted into … things that are interesting or things that need to be there in order to be deemed as successful... The fact that … 50% of my own class failed; it wasn't a case of "Alex … you were just stretched way beyond where you should have been - the system failed". It was a case of "You failed". (Alex)

Like Alex, Marilyn is an excellent teacher, who was rapidly promoted to a junior management role after only three years teaching in FE. She gave up that role after 8 months, to return to a portfolio of part-time work. She feels this gives her more time for her interests in outdoor sports. As a manager she got up a 5.00am to exercise her horses, caught the first train in to work for 8.30 and …

> Frequently... I would be catching the last train home at ten-to-nine. …. I'd often be dealing with phone calls on the way into College, and on my way home. My line-manager would ring me at home at about half-past-ten…. and I would often be asked to do some e-mailing. (Marilyn)

Sally has only been able to cope with her growing workload by giving up her social life:

> This last year, I have given up … everything that I used to be involved with … because I get in too late to go out now, … and I'm up too early. (Sally)

Peta chose to reduce from a full post to a 0.6 post because of…

> Quality of life! … I've got a very, very full life. I'm actively involved in my church, my sport, and in scouts; and so I've got to have some time to do all of those things. So that was my decision. (Peta)

Mike reduced to a 0.75 post for similar reasons, to have more time with his family, and for his leisure interests.

> It used to be that I'd … allow things to take over the weekend too much. I don't do that any more! … I don't do any work at weekends, so that kind of provides a balance really… the week is full on – and too intense. (Mike)

After a further year, he took early retirement. For Alesha, a new teacher, with a young family and a husband who frequently works away, the pressures are also difficult to cope with.

> Family life is non-existent… The children and my husband complain that they don't get time with me. But we keep saying … it will get better. … Everyone says the first year of teaching is the hardest. (Alesha)

At the time of interview, she was considering leaving College to work elsewhere - though she wants to keep teaching.

Other interviewees seem to cope better; this is particularly the case with those who have recently moved into teaching from work in business and industry, (although this had not helped Alex). Clive worked as a manager and Tom ran his own business. Both draw clear boundaries around their work, sticking, as far as possible, to an intensive 8 to 5 regime – 7 to 5 in Tom's case. Clive indicated that his move from industry, at the

behest of his wife (also a teacher), had partly been to escape the stresses of work in the private sector. He also noted the advantage of sharing 'school holidays'. While he frequently works through lunch breaks, Clive was the only interviewee who, when asked to describe his typical day stated: "a typical day … always starts with a cup of tea". He also uses skills gained in industry:

> One thing I am pretty damned good at is time management, and without that I would probably be stuffed… I do have a couple of rules…. I go home 10 minutes after the end of my last session. …. The other rule I do have is, on holidays, when I finish on the Friday, I do not touch anything until the Monday when I come back. (Clive).

Tom is similarly disciplined – he comes in early, to work at his desk a couple of hours before classes:

> I like that time, because, at the moment, I'm studying; so when I go home, I don't want to take work home with me. (Tom)

Both Tom and Clive visit the gym daily. However, Tom accepts that, while studying for a higher degree, he has had to negotiate with his wife for his own time at home "for a few years". He sums his approach thus: "it's a balancing act – being pragmatic and playing the game". Peter, also from a vocational background, has a similar 8 to 5 approach – though (like Clive) he usually works at home in the evenings. Peter also blocks in time for his interests: rugby coaching on Sunday mornings, walking the dog every day, his motorbike, and Friday night at the pub with his mates. Comparing his workload with his previous vocational career, he says:

> I've now got less time … than I did before. And I thought, coming into this would give me more. … It does give me more pleasure. (Peter)

Jocelyn copes by not aspiring to work full-time, although she still has insufficient free time to pursue her original passion for art; instead she devotes herself to her garden – "I … grow lots of colours and grow lots of shapes". She also works at home as much as possible, "in the comfort of my own sitting room", feeling it is easier to work from her own computer, because the college machines are slow, desk space is shared, and there is no colour printer. However, she acknowledges that home working can cause friction with the family.

Becky's work-life pattern may be more typical of teachers of academic subjects, or who have not worked extensively in the private sector. For her, the boundaries are blurred: work "never stops".

> I feel like I never have enough time for outside interests … Fortunately, a lot of my outside interests feed into my teaching. (Becky)

She explains this apparent contradiction in a couple of ways. Firstly, she recognises that, (for her at least), "the generic teacherly moan is actually a healthy part of the job" – a kind of safety valve. Secondly, she keeps a diary – which she sees as part of her "constant reflective practice":

> There must be something good about this job, that I am able to accommodate so much of my own imagination, and needs, into what I do…. There's actually a lot of freedom in teaching … a huge amount of freedom that I think teachers take for granted. (Becky)

As a senior manager, Bob feels he has a degree of work-life balance - he tries to keep some time for his family at the weekends – "but it's not … ideally the one I would go for". He sums up FE:

> in terms of work-life balance … working in this sector limits actually the number of friends that you develop. … I don't think that … teachers get … the chance to … in the working week, socialise as much as a lot of other people do, and to forget about their job. They go home, and I think a lot of the time … we still think about the next day. (Bob)

This suggests that in FE the isolation of teachers (Lortie, 1975), their *fragmented individualism* (Hargreaves, 1994), extends beyond the classroom cell into social aspects of their lifeworld. This contrasts with Troman's (2008) observation, that primary teachers may no longer be constructing their personal and occupational identities around their profession. What is evident is that cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1983) and vocational habitus (Colley et al, 2003) enable some teachers to cope with pressures better than others. However, it remains difficult to separate this effect from other aspects of personal identity.

### *4.2e Attitude towards teaching as a job / vocation*

Most of the interviewees are clear that they see teaching as a vocation, but again, there is a spectrum of opinions, reflecting a range of emotional responses:

> It's something you have to believe in (Clive)

> We're all there … not just … to earn a living, but, I think,… to encourage... and to… help the students. (Fred)

> I think I do see it as a vocation, yes. …. People used to say, "teaching and nursing – vocational jobs". Again, I'm not sure that's actually true any more. (Becky)

> It's a vocation … I wouldn't be putting myself through this … trauma … and strife … and everything else, if…. (Sally)

> I think it should be [*a vocation*] … but it's a hard slog…. Despite the hardships, it is worth it. (Alesha)

> It's a job. I can't say it would be a vocation for me…. I mean someone has to do it. (Jocelyn)

Financial reward was not what kept the interviewees in teaching (Lortie, 1975): "It's more than a job … I don't do it just for the sake of the money", (Tom) – "it is exciting being … busy and buzzy". The "buzz was mentioned by several respondents: "I love teaching – I get a real buzz out of it", (Sally). Bob, no longer a classroom teacher, finds excuses to go back into the classroom to "get the buzz". Digging deeper, this buzz seems to be a combination of emotional factors that go to the core of teacher identities:

> The job itself is great! I very much enjoy the job. …I recommend it to anybody. (Mike)

> I actually find both the teaching and the pastoral side very, very fulfilling. … Student success … is the high for me. (Peta)

> I do enjoy it … I enjoy the challenge. … I don't want thanks – I get paid to do this job. (Fred)

> I absolutely have to care about it, because I think if I didn't care, I couldn't do it. I believe in education … it's part of who I am. (Becky)

> I think, fundamentally, I love being able to inspire, influence, show people what an enjoyable, fascinating mixture of science and art my subject is. (Alex)

Amongst these personal motivations, we can see evidence that personal satisfaction, a sense of achievement, is paramount (Owen & Davies, 2002). Marilyn, having given up a better-paid management role for a precarious portfolio of part-time work, provides some particularly interesting insights.

> I find that it's fantastic to share in students' achievements … being part of their own progression is fantastic. … I love the interaction in the classroom. Seeing people … improving in their communication skills … and then achieving outside the classroom. That, for me, is really the … sense of satisfaction I gain from it. (Marilyn).

Mike agrees that "it's about personal development and about personal growth": a view he describes as "a liberal perspective on education". This view is strong for both academic and vocational teachers – "watching them develop and take in that information, and doing something with it", (Clive). Becky feels that…

> Education is … an incredibly important … powerful force. You know, it's meaningful, it matters, and it achieves great things. (Becky)

She gives an example of the impact of College on a physically disabled student who, "for the last few years she's been so depressed that she barely left … her bedroom". The student sees her course as life changing. She's now happy, "she's having a great time and also achieving really well … because she's very clever." Alesha also feels that it is the student response that "makes me feel that it's all worth it". Social interaction with students is a major motivating factor for teaching:

> the core of the job itself, you know, being with people, talking about stuff, having a laugh every now and then, and all of that kind of social contact. (Mike)

Peter, Alesha and Alex echo this view. "It's the human interest, really", (Becky); "I love being in the classroom and I love the interaction with the... students", (Marilyn). Another factor which enhances this sense of vocation is the teacher's own love of learning:

> I like, from my side of it... always keeping up to date; always learning. (Tom)

> I really, really, just thoroughly enjoyed becoming a decent learner. It's the only success really… it's only those things that keep people teaching. (Alex)

These comments are strong evidence of the importance of *cathexis* (Lortie, 1975) as a central component of teacher identities. They reinforce the findings of previous research (Morrison and McIntyre, 1973; Nias, 1989; Edward et al, 2007; Coffield et al, 2008; Jephcote et al, 2008), which emphasise the primacy of teachers' people-centred values, and their *commitment* to meeting their students' needs above all else. Hence, teachers' values and emotional responses are strongly linked. *Job-motivation* is directly connected to *self-image* and *self-esteem* (Kelchtermans, 1993).

### *4.2f Subject or pedagogic orientation*

The teacher's love of learning is often central to their personal goals (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989). Unsurprisingly, from what is said above, the broader social aims of education are major motivators for my interviewees; but so is commitment to their subject – their missionary zeal. Most respondents identify with a combination of both elements, though the balance of importance varies between individuals.

At one extreme are the missionaries, best exemplified by Alesha and her already quoted determination to "spread the word":

> I spent quite a lot of time in care, and things like that, as a child … I've seen a lot of things that have gone on that shouldn't be happening; and I've wanted to … do something… so that…. I could change that, and … encourage best practice. If I went into teaching, I could kind of take that further. (Alesha).

Alex shares this desire to proselytise; after all, “it’s thoroughly enjoyable guiding someone through a subject … seeing people sort of have little lightbulbs … an adrenalin rush”. Peter displays a similar passion to pass on his trade:

> I didn’t like the standards of craftsmanship out there. … I’ve had apprentices under me, and … I’ve never been happy with what’s been coming out … and the old story is, if you’re not happy, do something about it. (Peter)

Despite this strong subject orientation, however, all the interviewees primarily identify themselves as teachers – Alesha, only 18 months on from starting her PGCE, is adamant that “No, I am a teacher really”; so is Clive, at the end of his first full teaching year, and Peter – “I came into this for the students. I didn’t come in for anything else”. Peta feels that her original motivation was her subject: “I don’t think it was a love of children … and young people”. Yet, even for her, the peaks of her professional experience are when students respond and achieve, “and you’re not taking any work home”. Becky agrees that “I love the subject” – but feels guilty that this may be “rather from a selfish point of view, rather than being altruistic”:

> I love my subject…. I enjoy it. I find it stimulating. I am passionate about it. From a kind of… what I’m doing and what my role in the community is: my purpose as part of a tribe… I believe in education. (Becky)

For Tom, it is a combination of “the learning” (his subject and his further studies) and the response of the students: their engagement, their gratitude, a sense of worth in someone else”. In the end, he concludes that his “specialism is teaching”. Marilyn enjoyed the academic stimulus of learning and intellectual engagement of her PGCE (completed just before my interview) – but did not enjoy teaching academic subjects in her short-lived management post:

> I’m very curious. I…. enjoy learning… and experiencing other cultures, and encouraging people to communicate…. I enjoy their interaction, their learning … and I find I’m constantly learning from them”. (Marilyn)

Even Bob, now a non-teaching manager, describes his role thus:

> I see myself now… as a manager… I’m a terrible one for inadvertently coaching/ stroke/teaching… my line-reports… and those around me.

The only real dissenter to this pattern is Jocelyn, who sees teaching as a job, and defines herself as “I’m an artist … but who also teaches”, despite the fact that she admits to having no time now for her art – “I do it here” (in college) and through her garden. However, she readily admits that she enjoys “teaching, I suppose … I like to show people how to do things. I like to know how to do things”.

Teacher motivation in the College appears to be no different from that of teachers in other studies: they identify overwhelmingly intrinsic (Owen and Davies, 2002), highly personal motives for choosing this career. My interviewees' commitment to their students and their subject is intensely emotional and cathectic (Bogler, 2002; Butt & Lance, 2005; Day et al 2006b).

### *4.2g Emotional attitude to current teaching role*

Against this picture of enthusiasm, commitment and sheer joy at the learning/teaching process, I explored interviewees' attitudes towards their current teaching work. Given the circumstances already sketched out, it is not surprising to discover a range of responses, but also a number of common themes.

In one sense, the questions I asked about what the teachers do or don't enjoy about their work produced replies which reflect many of the ideas already quoted:

> I actually love my teaching. I think I'm an enthusiastic… teacher... I always place their needs before my own… I don't like… being able to give less than 100%", (Marilyn).
>
> "particularly when it gets to four, five years down the line… I feel great thinking I've been part of their training, helping them to get there, (Fred).

However, these feelings are tempered with anxieties, frustrations and, particularly in the cases of those teachers who have experienced the most challenging circumstances, anger and depression. What we see is evidence of the *ambiguities* and *role conflicts* (Edward et al, 2007) referred to in the literature. Peta describes her feelings about teaching as –

> Very spiky! … I launch from deep troughs of being completely fed up, to big highs of being quite excited", (Peta)

Having moved from mainstream 16-19 academic teaching to a fractional post co-ordinating an Adult programme, she relishes the "flexibility of being able to … make your own direction". However, she sees this autonomy disappearing, as her course becomes more prescribed and standardised. She also blames her negative feelings on her career stage: "it's partly because I'm old and tired. I haven't got the energy needed". She illustrates both the emotional importance of teacher autonomy (Nias, 1989; Goodson, 2003), and reaffirms some observations on the impact of career stage upon teacher identity (Hargreaves 2005; Day & Gu, 2007).

Becky exhibits a rather more intellectual, but none the less emotional, response:

> There's no doubt whatsoever … that who I was is not the teacher I am. I invented my teaching persona … So that I … am aware that, in order to teach, I had to invent somebody who was a teacher. …. Teaching has to be about agape, doesn't it? About … having positive good will towards everybody in the room, regardless of what you might think about them. (Becky)

This suggests a deliberate attempt to create a *self-image* (Kelchtermans, 1993) and supports the idea of *identity as narrative* (Giddens, 1991). Against this, Becky recognises that, in the face of growing pressures on teachers, she is only able to continue to do the job because of her emotional commitment (*cathexis*):

> I absolutely have to care about it, because I think, if I didn't care, I couldn't do it. … I'm a hopeless idealist. I don't know how the hell I survive! (Becky)

The teachers were remarkably consistent about the factors that put pressure on them. Principally these were: inadequate accommodation and resources; increased teaching and assessment loads; understaffing; and the imposition of what were often seen as unnecessary procedures and associated paperwork (*dissatisfiers* - Nias, 1989). Issues of team and managerial support are considered in subsequent sections.

After a year of full-time teaching, Clive's motto is "prepare to be frustrated!" For him, principal amongst the frustrations is the lack of resources, and (in a vocational department) insufficient contact with employers. He wants to provide students with realistic experiences to prepare them for the world of work. The current emphasis upon full-time study, rather than training through apprenticeship, has strengthened this need: "They need to touch the real world, and not be so detached from it". This requires students to go out to meet employers, and employers to come into college. Peter shares a similar view – both engineering and construction are materials-expensive, and there never seems to be enough money for consumables. For him, criticisms from the College management that his Department is not cost-effective is symptomatic of a lack of recognition for the quality of the work being done in his area – quality which employers do seem to recognise. Lack of resources is also a major irritant for Mike, and "the whole kind of thing about the environment you work in – it's just so amateurish". For him the big problem is having no permanent teaching base, only a tiny whiteboard, nowhere to store resources – "I mean, I teach on the hoof, without handouts … and that just kind of is very stressful; it's very difficult".

> Even the basic heating is [*ironic laugh*]… not even that is right… and the organisation of the staffroom is… more like one of the factories I worked at in the 1970s than a professional environment! (Mike)

Both Peta and Jocelyn agree:

> A lot of the problem is due to the environment, … the building… the time spent in College is often spent looking for somewhere to go, to be with a class comfortably … not being able to leave your pile [*of resources*] anywhere safely. … That causes … tiredness, and … bad temper. (Peta)

> Better facilities would make it easier…. I mean, in an ideal world, I'd like my own room to myself…. I could have my own studio space…. so … you can arrange your own environment. (Jocelyn)

As already indicated, multi-site working creates the need to spend time travelling between sites, which exacerbates the resource issue (Tom, Mike, Becky and Sally). For some staff, working on satellite sites, several miles from the main campus, adds to a sense of isolation, (Peter).

Bureaucracy is another irritant: one which actually encompasses a range of change impacts. Increased e-mail communication takes up time, (Mike); computerised management systems cause you to become "bogged down with our paperwork", (Fred); frequent syllabus changes require increased preparation time – a problem compounded by the typically late delivery of changed specifications from the Awarding Bodies, (Fred, Peter and Sally). The increased emphasis on teacher responsiveness to student expectations, while implicitly acknowledged in teachers' commitment to learners, is not without its frustrations. The assumption that, if a student leaves a course, there is a fault with the teaching, is challenged. Teachers point to the need to be able to get rid of the student who is "under-performing" – and not to have to go through some long woolly process first, (Jocelyn). As Tom says: "we spend more time writing about someone than actually with them!" Teachers recognise that there needs to be "more time for nurturing" (Tom) – but, ultimately, the student has to bear the main responsibility for their achievement. Above all, interviewees identify the increasing burden of assessment:

> The amount of assessment that's required of students, and the way that we're obsessed by assessment, is worse. (Mike)

Alesha, as a new teacher, feels she is not coping with her marking load. However, what particularly aggrieves teachers is the importance attached to achievement statistics. Alex, in particular, feels that he has been judged solely on pass rates – which fail to take account of the circumstances in which he is working, and the prior experiences of his students: "the majority [*of students*] … had a dreadful experience of learning in secondary schools". Jocelyn and Sally agree:

> … the thing that really annoys me… when kids come in [*to College*] these days is that I don't think they've had a really good education. (Jocelyn)

> I think the culture of the schools now … they're given handouts, and they have handouts…and handouts…and handouts … and they're not actually learning anything for themselves very much now. (Sally)

While it is easy for the teacher to blame themselves for their pattern of overwork – "I tend to take on too much … I tend to take on too many commitments", (Mike) - the ultimate complaint is that the Government is not backing their rhetoric with money, (Tom). "I know I could do a better job, but I can't", (Alex). The *performativity* culture (Lyotard, 1984; Peters, 2004a, 2004b; Gleeson & James, 2007), *economies of performance* (Stronach et al, 2002) and *architecture of surveillance* (Shain & Gleeson, 1999; Avis, 2003) are generating increased *bureaucracy* (Weber, 1964) which interviewees see as directly in conflict with their professional goals (Day & Gu, 2007) and *self-image* (Kelchtermans, 1993).

### *4.2h Relations with immediate team*

In order better to understand the varied responses of the interviewees to their work pressures, it is necessary to look at the formal and informal support mechanisms available within the College, starting with their work teams. What emerges is a very mixed picture.

Fred and Peter, work in the same Department, have highly supportive colleagues, and talk of a staffroom culture which involves much professional dialogue about students. But, as Peter points out, due to short staffing "we've got to be [*a supportive team*]… otherwise it's the students that lose out". Peta agrees; but others, whilst noting a strong team ethos, point out that structural issues in the College tend to weaken this:

> On the whole, people are very supportive of each other… [*But*] we have so many [*part-time*] lecturers,… it's more difficult… for the whole group to have that… team culture. (Marilyn)

> They're nice – but I don't see a lot of them at the moment … [*because she works off site*] …it's structurally fragmenting us. (Becky)

Sally's team is also split across several sites; and, because of intensified workloads, they don't have enough time to meet, but only communicate by e-mail: "in reality, I don't think that there is a support network there". Mike acknowledges that his own team is highly supportive, but that team culture varies considerably across the college. This is borne out by others. Clive feels that there is no team culture in his Department – indeed he is highly critical of some of the older teachers in his team:

> That's my biggest issue – it's the staff… they've become detached from what the real world is about … and the number one reason why students leave is because … of the quality of the teaching. (Clive)

He does concede that "there is a different ethos coming" but regards this as part of a cyclical trend, where the Department has been good, but then declined into a poor team, poorly led: "there isn't very much teamwork; there isn't very much direction". Jocelyn works in a team of three – one of whom the other two do not get on with. While she clearly gets on well with other staff, "they seem to have been here for a long time" – the physical conditions of the staffroom mean that she tends to leave college when she has finished teaching, and to work at home.

Tom and Alesha work in the same Department, but have very different perspectives. Whilst Tom feels there is a really supportive culture – "you have to be collaborative" to cope, Alesha feels isolated. When asked why she felt under such pressure, she replied that:

> Staff that I work with, I think,… I would like them to be a bit more open, and a little bit more sharing with their resources… They've not really been wanting to … involve me … in their planning of things… A lot of it is, they don't like change. I don't know if they see me as a threat… I don't get listened to. (Alesha).

While this feeling could represent no more than teething problems of a new team member, Alesha compares the College unfavourably to her other teaching experience in a local prison. Alex, another teacher under pressure, is also critical of the attitude of some staff in his Department:

> I took an instant dislike to a couple of them…. I felt that somebody ought to take them out and fire them! Not only because of the way they spoke to their colleagues, but in the way they spoke to and treated young people. (Alex)

He bemoans the lack of a sharing culture within his Department, but accepts that some of this is due to a lack of training – and also to poor leadership. As he said, there are some "great people here", but

> because of the amount of work that's been thrown at them continuously, they've ended up in this survival mode. So, you either become very passive…. or you become aggressive… or you go off sick… you know, each person will find their own way of coping with that… stress point… that ticking point. (Alex)

What emerges is a picture of a diverse College, within which team development is uneven, a theme to which I return in Section 4.2k. Several factors appear to be key to this pattern. Principal amongst these are the physical fragmentation of the college – its

multiplicity of working habitats; the intellectual fragmentation of the staff – diversity of *vocational habitus* and academic background (*local ecologies* - Spours et al, 2007); the age-profile and career stage of teams, (Day & Gu, 2007); and the variable nature of management, to which I now turn.

### *4.2i Relations with immediate managers*

As may be expected, interviewees' attitudes to their superiors varied, though generally managers were seen as supportive; this contrasts with results from research cited in Chapter 2 (Randle and Brady, 1997a; Hill, 2000; Davies & Owen, 2001; Spours et al, 2007; Jephcote et al, 2008). The position of middle managers was generally viewed sympathetically, since they tend to face similar pressures to teaching staff: "we're all under the same pressures, and it's pulling us in different ways" (Tom). Becky agrees: "any support has to come from the level above you on the pyramid". Managers are as supportive as they can be, "given the workload" (Becky). However, the capacity of line-managers to support is variable – as Mike put it, "well managers are managers, aren't they?". Clive feels he receives little direction – and that significant developmental roles are being delegated onto him, in his first teaching year. Alesha, even more of a novice, faces not only an unsupportive team, but also a temporary Head of Department:

> There's not been particularly … good leadership and support … I think it's going to get better, though, because … I have now … spoken to someone, (Alesha).

Indeed, shortly after her interview with me, a new head was appointed in Alesha's Department, and when I talked to her briefly a couple of months later, she was much happier.

Middle managers are clearly under pressure themselves – as much subjects of the managerialist, performative culture as agents of it (Briggs, 2003; Leader 2004). This is reflected in the way some of them respond. Alex feels that the audit culture has a big effect on managers, and "so they all hide problems".

> They don't feel supported – they just feel it's going to be: "your fault – blindfold – would you like a cigarette – and here's the bullet". Then they're just going to do the very best they can to … tick the boxes and go to the meeting and say "yes, sir, I have done it!". (Alex)

Sally, who is very bitter about her circumstances, nevertheless understands the predicament her manager is in:

> I feel that the person above me understands my situation, understands what's going on, but I don't feel they have the courage to go out and fight it for me. (Sally)

Sally's assessment was perhaps overly pessimistic – six months after the interview, she informed me that she had successfully been appointed to a new post which replaced her old one, and which significantly improved her conditions. However, she had to compete openly for her post, and risked possible redundancy had she failed to gain it. Her manager has effectively just been demoted in a restructuring.

Perhaps the most extreme response of the pressurised manager was that faced by Marilyn, in her deputy role. Her manager's response was to pass on the pressure:

> I often got the feeling that my immediate line-manager was unhappy if I left before she did. (Marilyn)

The resulting stress situation became extreme, and by her own account, pathological. What should be noted here is the manager's response to Marilyn's stress:

> I was told quite clearly, but not specifically, not to put down that this was stress, when I had to say what my absence was for… It was hinted at … that it wouldn't be a good thing to put … on the reason for your absence. (Marilyn)

Marilyn is able to contrast this with the approach of her subsequent manager, "who puts in incredibly long hours herself":

> There definitely are different styles of management … and certain Heads expect … almost a mirror of what they're doing. Others seem to be much happier for individuals … to manage in their own way. … I think the different styles reflect the different personalities of the people. …. I … felt much more supported in one environment than in the other. (Marilyn)

She suggests that the confidence of middle managers may, in turn reflect "how relaxed …. those Heads of Department feel within their own role".

These comments highlight a number of themes raised in the research literature. Firstly, there is a link between teacher satisfaction, the extent to which teachers feel valued by their managers, and management style (Davies and Owen, 2001). Interviewees are very aware of the work pressures, *ambiguities* and *role conflicts* faced by first-line managers (Leader, 2004; Gleeson & Shain, 1999; Briggs, 2001). They recognise with some sympathy the *conflicting paradigms* (Randle and Brady, 1997a) facing managers, and the fact that managers may adopt different strategies for coping with these – the choice of transactional or transformative styles of leadership (Briggs, 2003). One new theme which emerges, however, is the matter of managers' confidence, which appears to be a function of their own personal identity, and inadequate level of training (Briggs, 2003). I now consider how the senior management of the College is perceived.

### *4.2j Relations with senior managers*

Teachers' feelings about senior College management seem to reflect the degree to which they have any contact with managers. New teachers such as Alesha and Clive have very little contact with senior staff, nor do part-time staff such as Jocelyn and Peta. Even some long-term staff have relatively limited contact; Sally has "only ever had two meetings" with the new senior manager in her area in the 18 months since they joined the College. The feeling works both ways, however. Managers are "not one of [*Peta's*] priorities". Jocelyn's comment that "I don't really have anything to do with them" can be taken two ways. Other teachers tend to judge the management of the College by their results – Fred judges them in terms of facilities and resources, which have improved in the past 30 years, but been outpaced by growth in student numbers. Peter agrees that management will respond to requests that "don't involve money … and don't involve more staff".

> I think they want to be supportive, and I think they have become more supportive … [*but*] there are some instances … contemporarily insurmountable problems, really: and a lot of them, I think, come back to … economics. (Becky)

Bob, from his position within the senior management structure, agrees that he has gained "a better appreciation of … the pressures that our teaching colleagues are under" than some senior colleagues.

Conversely, classroom teachers tend to regard College as "too big" for them to be involved effectively (Becky) and too remote (Peter) and "detached" (Mike). The system is seen as too bureaucratic (Fred) – and teachers have insufficient delegated responsibility: "budgets don't appear to reach the coalface" (Alex). Indeed, it is interesting that the most critical views of the management come from those who have the most detailed perspective on them: Alex and Marilyn (previously junior managers), Mike (a former manager), and Tom (who is studying for a doctorate, focussing on processes in the College):

> Managers … have particularly set things they think are important, and they don't necessarily match in with what the rest of the staff feel are important… They have their own agendas… I think … they would be good at running something like Sainsbury's, … because that's the kind of approach they have to management…. Reaching objectives which are not to do with … learning. (Mike)

> [*There's*] a tendency for staff to be regarded more as a resource … rather than as individuals. (Marilyn)

> I've never worked anywhere, in any organisation that is as dysfunctional as this one, (Alex)

> They haven't got the knowledge of business and how to make business decisions. (Tom).

One of the key criticisms is that managers spend insufficient time 'on the shop floor', in contact with what is actually going on in classrooms, as Bob admits. "They're working just too many hours; and that's why they are not visible" (Alex). As Tom says, "they're probably caught up with their stuff, so now they can't come" to meetings with the staff.

Becky feels that there has been a conscious decision to develop a pyramidal management structure; such structures tend to breed more formal relationships between the staffing levels. Interviewees were asked specific questions about how effective communication was within the College. Alex feels communication is essentially top-down: "there's nothing horizontal – everything's vertical". Peter feels isolated on his satellite site, while Clive feels that the kind of communication he would find useful – feedback on his own performance - is lacking. In other areas, "we've got information overload" (Mike). Some, like Fred and Jocelyn, only take notice "when it affects me"; others (Peta, Becky) feel that there is insufficient time to keep abreast of all the information – "I just don't have time to read it", (Peta).

Such responses have implications for senior managers' capacity to foster an inclusive and supportive culture. Senior managers are often seen as remote, a situation not helped by poor communications, the scale and fragmentation of the College, and the consequent hierarchical structure of management. Hence, interviewees lay some blame on managers for bureaucracy, excessive e-mails, detachment and lack of visibility, and for adopting a different agenda – these are *situational occurrences* (Quarstein et al, 1992) leading to dissatisfaction. A manager's role seems to determine their behaviour more than their values and professional identity (Briggs, 2007). The implication is that decision-making is detached and not inclusive – *mechanical* not *organic* (Briggs, 2003).

### *4.2k Attitudes to College – buying in to the vision*

> Expectations are high, and we must all strive to make this an outstanding College. … One of the ways we can do that is by being present … for extensive periods of time; …perhaps because the perception is … if you're here working longer, you're working harder and being more productive. I personally don't believe that! (Marilyn)

If Marilyn is right, then the culture of the College is dominated by overwork. Lacking a unified culture, the College risks creating a deep-rooted schism between the formal performative vision of the senior management, and the student- and subject-focus of the staff teams, as well as a split between academic and vocational (16-19)

Departments, and those involved with adult learners. These differences are reflected in the interviewees varied perspectives on College culture.

From the top of the management pyramid, Bob feels that his values reflect those of the Principal, “and that permeates through, I think”. It is “probably the best college I’ve worked at”, and he feels communication within the College is still improving. However, he acknowledges that size and diversity can create problems, which he feels can best be dealt with by devolving decision-making downwards, to allow people to “solve … little local difficulties … within the parameters of … what’s allowed”. He recognises that some control has been taken away from teachers and delegated to support departments, perhaps to the detriment of what is “best for the learner”. However, he accepts that devolved power has its price:

> I suspect that the staff feel that there’s too many admin. jobs put on them; in fact, I know that would be the case. (Bob)

Peta is proud to say that she works at the College. Having said that, she recognises “the little niche I’ve made for myself” within her Department – and is aware that, even on main campus, her colleagues are somewhat isolated: “the wider areas of the College don’t really impact on us”. She blames “external pressures” for data collection and constant curriculum change for the burgeoning paperwork. Becky states that “it must be OK because I stay”. Both she and Tom, however, are not without criticisms. Becky feels that there are structural problems, which cannot be solved without “throwing money at them”. She feels part of the “tribe” of the College, but does not identify with the formal focus upon “retention and achievement; it’s not about statistics … it’s about spreading … my … subject”. Tom is critical of the lack of a personal touch from the senior management; however, with aspirations to move into management, he sees himself as having a pragmatic view: “you need to be prepared to change”. He appears to suggest that some of his colleagues with non-vocational backgrounds are less realistic.

> The College is a potentially grade one college. There’s a lot going for the College… Some educationalists have never actually had a vocational job in their life, and when it comes to having to do the practical stuff, they’re lost…. Sometimes you can’t give an absolute 100% decision. Sometimes you have to give a 75% decision that’ll get you out of a situation… and it will work. (Tom)

Jocelyn is also more relaxed – she recognises that “what the staff want isn’t actually what the Government or the College say you should have”, but accepts that “you just take that as part of the job, and get on with it…. You can’t do anything about it!”. She sums it up:

> It's a bit of an odd place, really … Sometimes you're left to do your own thing – which is really good … [*and then some intrusions*] come along and throw a spanner in the works. (Jocelyn)

Over time she feels that increasing management focus upon statistics, such as retention and achievement data, has rendered the College more "Big Brotherish". Marilyn is happier, having given up her junior management role in favour of classroom teaching, because "I have the freedom to do what I want: the autonomy within the classroom". Others are less sanguine: Sally is very bitter about her personal status and workload, and feels marginalized within the College. Alesha, as a new teacher on a temporary part-time contract, feels vulnerable and detached from the wider college. What she experiences is a "top-down" college with an unhealthy culture of "a lot of competition amongst staff". Peter is more critical – feeling physically isolated, and also that the direction of the College, towards more full-time, pre-employment courses, is at odds with his own initial motivation, to improve the quality of apprenticeships. Consequently, he argues that the College is losing out to its competitors, despite what he regards as its superior quality of teaching. Peter perceives a lack of support from the non-teaching departments, and a lack of recognition for what teachers achieve. Fred feels that "the atmosphere in the College is great!"; but tends to stick to his own Department and has limited contact with the wider College.

Clive, with his experience in industrial management, considers that there is a gap between the College's vision and the actuality – there is not enough auditing of what is going on – and too much reliance on the goodwill of staff. The College needs to be more businesslike: education is "a medium for making money". Like Tom, he regards some colleagues who have been out of industry for some time to be unrealistic – "they want to own their own destiny". He regards some colleagues as inadequate teachers – a situation which he blames managers for not addressing. Mike and Alex are much more critical, perhaps unsurprisingly, as both were interviewed the day before they left College (and FE teaching). Mike, with his long-term perspective and broad cross-college knowledge, readily admits that there is no uniform picture of the college culture:

> So you get … more of a feeling of intensity from some areas than you do from others, in terms of the kind of workloads that people experience, and the amount of pressure that they feel that they are under. …Also, people's attitudes towards it, in terms of … how seriously people take the job … and the amount of change that we have gone through is different. (Mike)

Mike feels a personal loss of autonomy in the classroom, particularly related to more intensive assessment regimes. He regards the formal observation of teachers by

managers to be unsupportive – it's about judging staff, not developing them. He summarises his view as:

> the culture of Macdonaldisation: everybody has to do exactly the same thing, at exactly the same time, and with exactly the same intensity. (Mike)

Alex is even more disillusioned. When asked what would improve the College for him, he replied:

> I think the business model of the College – if it realised that it's about quality … of preparation, as well as delivery in the classroom …It's about processes and systems. The college here is very personalised … in terms of the ownership. If something goes wrong, it's never the processes and systems that are looked at. It's always the person that got it wrong. (Alex)

He makes this criticism of the processes and structures of the College repeatedly, and clearly feels the element of a blame culture very personally. He holds the "audit culture" responsible; blame is passed down further by some teachers, onto the students. Effort is not adequately recognised or rewarded. He also blames many problems on …

> The size of the College … What we have here is … a very stiff management structure; and you need very dynamic people – not in the sense of … thought processes, in visibility… unless you go out and get the taste and feel of what's going on, it's meaningless. (Alex)

He feels that there is a lack of support for middle managers – who then tend to hide the problems; "it's to do with how the systems support that person", and there's often a lack of transparency about how decisions are reached. Among the teachers, this leads to a sub-culture of *strategic compliance* (Shain & Gleeson, 1999) – "it's about surviving – keeping your head down":

> You've employed a creative person, and you've done your damnedest to make it …difficult or impossible for them to be productive for the organisation. (Alex)

For Alex, the management thought processes are "not geared up to the core business – teaching and learning". "Culture develops from processes and systems".

Both teachers and senior College managers are aware of the problems facing the current management structure, and of the possible solutions: inclusive decision-making (Groundwater-Smith and Sachs, 2002), reduced bureaucracy, effective communication (Nias, 1989; Wilson et al, 2005; UCU, 2007) and application of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996). Interviewees also exhibit *ambiguity* (Byrne, 1999) – on the one hand they value autonomy (Nias, 1989; Goodson, 2003) and a degree of isolation within their

classroom (Lortie, 1975) or team (Coffield et al, 2008); on the other hand, they criticise the lack of communication and consultation from managers.

***4.2l Degree of stress/burnout and teacher responses***

Respondents were specifically asked whether they felt that there was stress "among your colleagues" – ie. not whether they personally felt stressed. However, several interviewees provided very personal responses, indicating their own stress levels, frequently in quite emotive terms. Alesha was emotional, almost tearful when she admits: "I've certainly been stressed … I think a lot of the staff … do seem very stressed". While tracing much of her personal stress to the pressures of preparation and marking as a new teacher, she also mentions "target setting", and her unsupportive colleagues. She is surprised, coming into teaching, expecting to face discipline problems in class but a supportive team culture, to find that it is the other way around:

> None of it's the students! I don't have any problems with the students. It's the staff!… It shouldn't be like that. That's it really! (Alesha)

Tom, who works in the same Department as Alesha, confirms her description of the malaise, but has a different diagnosis:

> I think a lot of people here do burst into tears because … they're not … assertive enough. (Tom)

Tom recognises that in part this may be due to a lack of staff training to cope with the administrative elements of their role: to know "when to cut corners". He then admits that he thinks teaching is more stressful than being in the forces:

> You are managing yourself. Teaching is one of the high stress professions, isn't it? … I have… times when… I've felt angry, frustrated, defensive. (Tom)

Others concur: "to a degree, every person within this Department is stressed", says Peter; "we're always very stressed", agrees Sally. "You see teaching's a stressful job, because it's working with people", Becky concludes. Indeed, all of the teachers recognise at least periodic stress as an accepted part of teaching; what varies is the reasons they give.

Alex pinpoints issues of workload – cover for absent colleagues, and the sheer pressure of preparation and the need to keep up to date with his subject. Becky similarly highlights the intensification of workload over the past 15 years: "the higher contact hours, the larger classes". Mike agrees that "a lot of people have workloads

that are unmanageable", and Jocelyn feels that "over the last five years, the pressure has got more and more". Sally notes that she now has to teach a previously 30-week programme in 20 weeks, and has to put in additional unpaid teaching sessions (underground working) to enable students to complete. Fred cites "changes in systems" for the pressure: constant, and frequently last minute, changes in curricula. Peter blames pressure upon the changed nature of the students, who now require greater amounts of pastoral care: "I feel more of a social worker". Several teachers find that the physical environment and resource shortages add to stress – Jocelyn works at home rather than share a desk and computer in a large staffroom. Lack of space to store resources, and lack of access to a specialist base room was a major irritant for Mike, and also a factor for Becky. For Peta, "audits … visits by external moderators … that is when stress is caused. … I don't… sleep well!" and the physical environment causes "tiredness, and… bad temper". And, as Bob predicts, bureaucracy and administration are frequently stressful. Teachers find computers do not necessarily help – they make administration quicker, "but there's more of it", (Becky).

Responses to stress also vary considerably. As a manager, Bob himself is under "pressure", but feels that the pressures on teachers are "broadly similar to those when I stopped teaching in 2002 … the pace of change is faster". When directly asked whether he feels staff are coping, he replies:

> Some are, some aren't … but that's part of why teaching has to become more and more effective. (Bob)

Clive likes stress; it is manageable because he is a good time-manager. Tom shares a similar feeling, and appears to cope through a mixture of assertiveness and corner-cutting. Other staff do not cope so well: Alesha, has considered getting a job elsewhere. Peta blames her own conscientiousness: "I think I'm a bit … bit obsessive… but it just gets worse and worse". The two worst cases of pathological stress appear to be Alex and Marilyn, causing both to gave up junior management roles. Their responses can best be illustrated by lengthy quotes. When asked why he was leaving, Alex explains:

> I don't think I've had enough time… to develop the course... I don't think we've ever had a discussion… in the staffroom I don't think we've ever discussed how to make teaching better. … It could have been so much better. I think that's what upsets me most of all… I would have developed here if it had the right culture... and I think the fact that people are working flat out, in every area of the College… that people don't have time… The courses that I know have failed, have not failed because of the lack of resources, and lack of time and effort … [but] because you haven't had time to plan it… I feel that I have… failed. Failed to develop as a teacher. I've failed to develop good courses. I haven't failed to be a good teacher; I have been a good teacher. (Alex)

Marilyn describes her crisis point as follows:

> I mean physically I felt absolutely shattered … and mentally I felt that I really wasn't looking forward to getting up and going to work every day … to the point that I actually did go to my GP and say, 'I really don't think I can carry on doing this'…. Some mornings I'd get in the car and just want to keep going, and want to drive... [*away*] and not come back… I was worried that if I kept going that way, I was actually heading for a breakdown… I enjoyed the teaching, and I felt that I was getting further and further away from what I enjoyed doing - the interaction with the students, and… feeling that I could actually make a difference. (Marilyn)

Marilyn exemplifies Evans (2001) point of teacher dissatisfaction growing as actual teaching conditions diverge from proximity with the *ideal job* – in this case causing pathological stress and a *flight* response. Alex sums up the options open to the stressed teacher: *flight, fight* or passivity.

> So, you either become very passive … or you become aggressive … or you go sick… Each person will find their own way of coping with that stress point. (Alex)

Teachers in the College recognise stress in themselves and others, and tend to accept it as part of the job. Stress is principally attributed to workload (Oswald, 2002; Day et al, 2006b), insufficient time *(time crunch* - Beaujot & Anderson, 2007), lack of resources and the physical environment of the College. However, some respondents indicate that stress need not be negative (Lens & Neves de Jesus, 1999; Smylie, 1999); the key factor in coping with it, and avoiding stress becoming pathological, is how teachers handle it. Partly this depends upon personal characteristics – emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996) and ontological security (Giddins, 1991) – and partly on training and a supportive context.

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## Chapter 5. Discussion of emerging themes.

*The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock,*
*but of wisdom: no clock can measure - William Blake*

The analysis in Chapter 4 provides a form of collective narrative of my interviewees' working experiences in the College. Their meanings have been interpreted and condensed into a deep and rich description of their work culture. I now analyse the themes which emerge from this interpretation (*meaning categorisation*) in the light of the concepts derived from my literature review. Analysis of the 12 themes summarised in Chapter 4 suggests that these can be *categorised* into 5 broad thematic areas or *segments* (Ely et al, 1997), having regard to the fact that:

> by definition, qualitative research is holistic, and no analysis of data is meaningful except in cultural context. (ibid, p.164).

Firstly, I consider the nature of working life for teachers in the College in the light of the broader trends identified in Chapter 1. The next three Sections consider the three broad themes of personal identity, collective identity and management culture considered in Chapter 2. Finally, I discuss the notion of professionalism, which is central to much of the research literature specific to teachers in FE. In Section 5.6 I review my data in relation to theoretical models of workload, stress and burnout, before proposing a model of teacher response derived from my own research. Finally, (Section 5.7) I evaluate my research methods and consider the validity of my results.

### 5.1 Workload and stress

The initial purpose of this research was to investigate FE teachers' responses to their workloads and work cultures within a single large College. The interview data analysed in Chapter 4 uncovered several examples of pathological stress and burnout. As a result, these aspects of teacher response and resilience have come to assume greater importance within this thesis. The interview responses in this study provide strong support for the research findings concerning workload, stress and burnout in schools and colleges (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999; Troman & Woods, 2001; Bubb & Earley, 2004; Gleeson & James, 2007; Jephcote et al, 2008), and appear to replicate the wider quantitative data about UK working patterns, and specifically those in FE, (Green, 2001; Taylor, 2002a; Bunting, 2004; CIPD, 2004, 2007a; LSDA, 2005; UCU, 2007, 2010; Waddington, 2007; Villeneuve-Smith et al, 2008; TUC, 2010).

Although I have not attempted a systematic quantitative analysis of work patterns in the College, it is evident that all of the teachers interviewed work significantly longer hours

than they are contracted for – typically equivalent to 45 to 50 hours per week for a full-time post. This is consistent with whole College data – for 2009-2010 staff are calculated to have worked 14.5% more hours than they have been contracted for (source: MIS, 2010). This figure represents taught hours only, and does not include preparation time, marking, administration and informal pastoral support. It does include overtime worked by full-time staff (Peter) and additional, non-contracted hours picked up by part-timers (Alesha, Jocelyn, Fred). Overall, this indicates a level of workload across the College which is greater than that planned for. Workload pressures are particularly acute in some areas: Arts, Sport, Motor Vehicle, Health Care, and Foundation Studies all generated 20% or more above planned levels. In Departments identified by respondents as being subject to work pressures (Construction, Business) – the College data do not reflect high workloads (source MIS 2010).

While the actual scale of workloads is important, what really matters is how teachers perceive their work levels. Chapter 1 indicates that workload, job dissatisfaction, and stress factors all appear to be increasing in FE. The literature points principally to two key causes of this pattern: intensification of workload (Hargreaves, 1994; Woods, 1999; Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Green, 2001; Bartlett, 2004), and extended teacher roles, beyond traditional boundaries, (Easthope & Easthope, 2000; Bartlett, 2004; Jenkins & Conley, 2007). Teachers in the College experience workloads at least as great as those recorded for primary and secondary teachers: mean working weeks of 52.2 hours and 49.9 hours respectively (STRB, 2008). Whilst my interviewees were not selected to provide a statistically representative sample, all of them work the equivalent of at least 50 hours per week, with the possible exception of Fred, (figures adjusted for staff on part-time or fractional contracts). As in schools, managers tend to work even longer hours. This suggests that the minimum levels of workload in the College may be at or above the national average for teachers.

Long established teachers in the College (Mike, Peta, Becky, Sally) take the view that work pressures have increased, and lay much of the blame on the additional paperwork associated with an audit culture:

> People have to take on more and more… in terms of teaching, and in terms of tutoring, and in terms of … general responsibilities. (Mike)
>
> … not anything that the College is doing, but because of external pressures … Paperwork, curriculum … they're demanding more, and more and more. (Peta)
>
> Society is changing … Well teaching is having to adapt to cope with that, isn't it? Big time! (Becky)

> It's just … getting silly the amount they're expecting and … you do start wondering whether … you know, the stress of it is not good for you. (Sally)

Managers are aware of the impact of increasing workloads, in a situation where there is also a "downward pressure on resources", (Bob):

> the pace of change is faster… and, …there is always a temptation to be seeking out… opportunities to… get more for the same amount from the teacher. (Bob)

Bubb and Earley (2004) identify five sets of causal factors generating increased workloads:

- proliferation of administrative tasks, linked to a "culture of high expectations"
- increased amount and complexity of assessment – "the negative aspects of increased accountability",
- overfull timetables – exacerbated by having to cover for absent colleagues
- constant curriculum change – "there were too many initiatives and these were too time-consuming and created overload",
- lack of planning time, but also an imbalance between teaching and administration – "the problems of prioritising multiple and competing demands", (p.9)

All of these demotivating, hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1968) are identified by the interviewees. Workload pressures manifest themselves in the form of larger class sizes (Alesha, Becky), reduced contact time (Sally, Mike, Becky), and the increased support needs of students (Peter, Fred, Clive, Jocelyn). Proliferating paperwork derives from the performative agenda of Government, which requires teachers to prove that they are performing effectively; these include retention and achievement data (Peter, Becky, Jocelyn), increased assessment (Mike, Alesha, Bob), constant curriculum change (Fred, Peta, Sally), and the impact of mechanisms intended to reduce teachers' workloads, such as increased utilisation of non-teaching staff and of computer-based information systems. Some teachers see support staff as unconnected, even unsympathetic, and as having their own agendas. There has been a proliferation of non-teaching jobs since 1993; Bob, a senior manager, is quite aware of this, and his comments expose a degree of ambiguity at the heart of management:

> There's a feeling that quite a lot of the… mechanistic… processes are… able to be done by… support staff of one kind or another… and that's not always a view which I feel is best for the learner... I suspect that the teaching staff feel that there's too many admin. jobs put on them; in fact I know that would be the case. (Bob)

This confirms the growth of the 'extended role' for teachers in the College, and also suggests a possible contributory factor to workload intensification: as part of the performative bureaucracy, increased numbers of support staff are establishing procedures which require additional paperwork or electronic responses from teachers. Rather than reducing the administrative burden on teachers, specialist support staff may actually add to it. Jocelyn finds the computerised management information systems unhelpful, and, in any case, as a part-timer has only limited access via old, slow, shared computers.

> I don't think that everything is always easier on-line; I just think it is easier for other people to check what you're doing. (Jocelyn)

Rather than reducing teacher workloads, support functions become part of the architecture of surveillance, (Foucault, 1991a). There is also a suspicion amongst teachers that much administration merely represents "ticking boxes" (Alex, Fred) and that much of the paperwork is never even read: it's just there as 'proof' to Ofsted or external verifiers that quality systems are being complied with.

> It's about… conveyor-belt part stuff. It's checklists… and I think the fact that people are working flat out, in every area of the college, …that people don't have time. What you've done… [*is require*]… ticking boxes here and there… and bits of paper and going to meetings, and shuffling this and that, and putting stuff in filing… But actually, none of those things get read! (Alex)

Information overload from such apparent bureaucratic window-dressing, merely hinders the teachers in their role:

> they set up systems, which offer you loads and loads of information about the kind of things that are happening, in general; but, …actually, that's not necessarily the case when... the crunch comes in your particular work area, because then... you won't ever know at all what's going on. [*laughs*]… Ten million e-mails… doesn't necessarily give you any information which is most important to you, (Mike).

My research confirms that increasing workloads are having a detrimental impact on a significant proportion of staff. Generally, workloads are regarded as high, especially at certain periods; but some interviewees clearly cope better than others. Work patterns also vary between respondents, due to factors such as class sizes, the levels (and range of levels) taught, marking load, level of preparation required (new teachers and those in HE), the amount of inter-site travel, and the availability of allowances for course responsibilities. When asked, most interviewees recognise that stress exists among their colleagues; more importantly, a high proportion volunteer evidence of their own stress. Five interviewees identify quite extreme examples of personal stress,

responding emotionally during the interview when describing their experiences. Three have given up their job because of it, and two more are contemplating it, (though subsequent discussion with both indicates that their issues may now be resolved). This suggests that, for them, the consequences of stress are – or are perceived to be, pathological. Others clearly have adopted strategies for managing stress - including reducing their contracted hours, strict time management, and assertive responses to managers - which underpin their resilience. All respondents are aware of the impact that their work levels have on their home life, and some identify a restricted social life as part of the price paid for being a teacher.

Six out of 13 interviewees indicated episodes of severe (ie. pathological) stress, both through what they said, and in their behaviour during interviews. At least three of these have suffered burnout – Alex and Mike were quitting FE (unbecoming), and Marilyn has given up her full-time management role to return to part-time work. Additionally, Peta has reduced to a fractional contract to reduce stress. Both Alesha and Sally admit stress and have actively considered whether they should continue to work at the College. Even where the impacts of stress are manageable, workloads are not without consequences for the non-working lives of teachers. Bubb and Earley (2004) point out that a typical schoolteacher carries out a quarter of their work at home, mainly in the form of preparation and marking; the College interviewees regularly work in the evenings and at weekends, and the most pathologically stressed (Alex, Alesha, Sally) indicate the highest levels of home working. Even the more relaxed Jocelyn, who finds working at home more convenient, admits that this causes domestic tensions. Several respondents acknowledge that teaching inevitably limits their social lives, (Bob, Becky, Sally, Tom).

The picture that emerges from this research is consistent with the overwhelming evidence from the literature: that overwork is endemic in FE, as in teaching generally, frequently leading to stress, emotional exhaustion and burnout. Such a picture can only be explained as the consequence of a culture of overwork, which I analyse in the following Sections.

**5.2 Personal identity and work**

All of the respondents identify clearly with the role of a teacher, rather than a subject expert – even those who have only recently entered teaching, following a long vocational career. Overwhelmingly, they see teaching as a vocation, despite the fact that, when asked why they became teachers, there was little evidence of any initially deep sense of mission. College staff became teachers for motives similar to teachers in

schools. Several (Mike, Peta, Jocelyn) find it difficult to explain their choice. Some deliberately intended to avoid the family tradition, but became teachers anyhow, (Marilyn, Becky). Although teaching is almost always seen as a positive choice, for several, encouragement from a *significant other* (Sugrue, 1996; Younger et al, 2004; Bathmaker & Avis, 2005b) was the original stimulus for applying to teach (Bob, Alex, Peter, Fred, Jocelyn, Sally). What keeps them in teaching is universally explained in terms of the personal satisfaction they gain from direct engagement with students – "the buzz". People enter teaching for reasons other than pay or status (Lortie, 1975); several identify the people-centred nature of their work, and their need for strong interpersonal relations with learners, to explain why they prioritise their role as classroom teachers above administration, preparation and marking responsibilities. They frequently disregard the tangible rewards of the job (pay, security of employment, status) and indicate that their main payback comes from the achievements of their students, and the gratitude they receive in return (Edmunds et al, 2002; Morrison and McIntyre, 1973). For some, their love of their subject, the thrill of being engaged themselves in continual learning, and their pride in helping to create the next generation of skilled craftsmen, adds to the sense of personal satisfaction. These motivating factors are all key *satisfiers* (Nias, 1989; Troman, 2008), which explain the emphasis teachers place upon the classroom element of their work, and upon the centrality of their relationships with students (Nias, 1989). It is hardly surprising, then, that educational changes which take teachers away from the classroom are viewed so negatively by them, and become potential sources of stress (Bogler, 2002; Jephcote et al, 2008).

A typical teacher spends less than 40% of their work-time in the classroom (Bubb & Earley, p.7), and this rankles with my interviewees. Mike reminisces about

> …. the kind of area that I came into when I first started teaching… where there's a lot of… teacher autonomy, and a lot… of freedom about what you do, and a very good working relationship with the students… and not… a kind of intense pressure on assessment. (Mike)

> when I get the students' work back, and I see them developing and … progressing, ….then it makes me feel that it's all worth it… The best bit of the job for me is when I am in the classroom with the students; the door shut; and we have nothing to do with the rest of the College, …or the staff! (Alesha)

> Passing information. Watching other people learn… I guess it's really the students. (Clive)

> … it's the students that keep you going. You know… and I believe in what I'm doing... it's good. (Sally)

> I feel as though I'm, to a degree, letting the students down; because I came into this for students. I didn't come in for anything else. (Peter)

These quotations illustrate the positive value teachers attach to personal autonomy and flexibility in the teaching role arising from the isolated nature of classroom work (Lortie, 1975). Several interviewees identify these as major emotional attractions of the work – particularly the freedom afforded to teachers within the classroom. The scope for autonomy and the opportunities to relate to the students unhindered, are directly threatened by managerial attempts to monitor the performance of teachers - *colonisation* of their lifeworld. Both performance monitoring, and any weakening of their bonds with students, can pose direct threats to teachers' personal motivations and sense of self-worth – two direct stress factors (Smylie, 1999; Conley & Woosley, 2000). While it is notoriously difficult to judge the effectiveness of teachers (Lortie, 1975), the growing pressure to measure performance has been a major cause of the burgeoning levels of bureaucracy, which is another contributor to stress. Areas of the College regarded as under-performing (Departments in which Alex, Clive, Sally, Fred and Peter work) are particularly under pressure. So it is hardly surprising that Alex and Peter both blame themselves, in part, for their perceived failures – a consequence of *cathexis*. Peter talks about being short-staffed, and under pressure to cover for absent colleagues, but argues that "somebody … has got to cover … otherwise it's the students that lose out". It is the strength of the bond with students that sustains stressed teachers like Sally and Marilyn, (Coffield et al, 2008).

Teachers value autonomy highly and regard it as key to their ability to manage workload.

> I think that what I'm doing in the classroom is … very much down to myself, … and my own … strength really, … and my own passion for what I want to do with the students. (Alesha)

Long serving teachers perceive change as a cause of diminishing levels of autonomy (Mike, Peta), and some argue that new teachers are socialised into the current ethos and ways of doing things (Furlong, 2005; Hargreaves, 2005; Troman, 2008), and accept a more passive professional role for themselves:

> … teaching now …is probably becoming too... 'performative' …and technicised, … It's like a conveyor belt system… and I think learning is losing that touch …you can't get everyone to learn the same way. And you do need time to engage properly, and that is... slipping… I do see the quality of learning has been devalued… and this is probably informed from a lot of reading that I do, …I'm just wondering now whether new teachers, because of the training they have, don't have that view, because it's like …I wouldn't say brainwashed, but because the training … doesn't approach that …too well – the Government are

> probably trying to say "This is how teaching is", they don't actually realise that … there's a conflict. They see it as normal… if I can use the word deprofessionalising. (Tom)

Especially among long serving teachers, a feeling exists that autonomy is gradually being eroded by managers, awarding bodies, and bureaucratic systems. The amount of bureaucracy is frequently cited as a major cause of frustration – interviewees tend to respond by working early, late or through meal breaks, or by taking work home, even after a long teaching day (Coffield et al, 2008). Issues relating to the physical environment of the College are also sources of irritation, especially where this has an impact upon teachers' capacity to respond in the classroom. Such factors include unsuitable accommodation, insufficient storage capacity for resources, travel between sites and the quality of staffroom accommodation and access to IT (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005a). In vocational Departments, the weakness of links with employers also causes frustrations. Overall, even new teachers sense that constant change is reducing the time available to carry out increasing amounts of paperwork, whilst growing student numbers are putting pressure on both resources and time in the classroom. Emotionally, some indicate that it is only their commitment to their teaching role (as they define it) which keeps them in the job (Edward et al, 2007; Coffield et al, 2008; Jephcote et al, 2008). As Nias (1989) points out, the key to professionalism is commitment:

> You have to have a certain amount of dedication to it. It's not just a job! … you need to be committed in order to get a true amount of satisfaction. (Mike)

This means that teachers set high standards for themselves (Acker, 1999). Teachers' investment of *emotional labour* (*cathexis*) leaves them open to "self-doubt, strain, fatigue and ill-health" (Nias, 1989, p.37). The role-conflict generated between a teacher's caring relationship with learners and their performative responsibilities towards colleagues, institutions and the State, is a significant source of stress to several of my interviewees:

> I think I'd probably have to change things about myself, as well… I tend to take on too many commitments… But then, that's also… one of the satisfactions of it … in the…. sense that you are helping people, and that's, …one of the key things about it. (Mike)

Teachers' individual characteristics may well compound work pressures through this cathectic response to role ambiguity. Mike illustrates particularly well this reflexive, existentialist element (Giddens, 1991) of the teacher identity; ultimately, his propensity to over-commit has caused him to burnout and leave teaching. From a different perspective – and at much earlier points in their teaching careers - Tom and Clive

illustrate a different type of personal response or "emotional intelligence" (Goleman, 1996), with deliberate coping strategies. Both come from disciplined vocational backgrounds (the forces and fitness training on the one hand; engineering on the other) and have skills needed to cope with their work pressures. As Troman (2008) points out:

> Teachers… who had… experienced a career in another occupation prior to teaching, seemed much more adept and realistic in both recognising and managing their range of parallel commitments and identities. (p.619)

Both have some management experience, and adopt a very organised approach to their working day, which enables them to be more resilient to stress. Clive is proud of his time-management skills. He has deliberately decided not to seek promotion, having moved into teaching to escape high stress levels as a manager in engineering. Tom is prepared to "cut corners", demonstrating his own "ontological security" (Giddens, 1991, p.36).

> If you try to operate in a way… that you think you're going to get 100% all the time, you're going to put yourself under so much pressure it won't be fair. (Tom)

My research reaffirms Byrne's contention (1999) that the ability to cope with the work culture depends on the teacher's personal identity – perhaps best summed up through Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1977, 1984, 1990). Not only do teachers' self-identities and background experiences explain their reasons for entering the profession, these "structured structures" (1990, p.53) also shape their responses to their changing environment – the construction of their professional identities (Kelchtermans, 1993). As Bourdieu expresses it: "lifestyles are thus the systematic products of habitus" (1984, p.172). For teachers, work is usually the core of their life, expanding into the home, dominating or even excluding all other elements. Where they are not prepared to permit work to colonise the whole of their life, and are unable to draw boundaries around it (as Tom, Clive and Jocelyn have), teachers appear to have less resilience to stress, and tend to withdraw partly or wholly from work (Mike, Alex, Marilyn and Peta). These are the territories of pathological stress and burnout.

### 5.3 Teamwork and Collegiality

The interviewees experience widely varying patterns of teamworking - only Becky refers to *communities of practice*. Some (Fred, Peter, Mike, Peta) experience a strong team identity in their areas of work. Others feel isolated, for reasons of multi-site working (Becky, Sally), their job role (Alex) or their work pattern (Marilyn). Teams can be seen as somewhat irrelevant (Tom, Jocelyn) or even very negative (Alesha, Alex, and to some extent Clive). What emerges from all the responses, however, is that a strong, supportive team ethos is regarded as highly desirable for effective working and

to support teacher resilience; where team support is lacking, or team members are seen as antagonistic, this can be a source of tension or stress (Parker & Williams, 2001).

Teachers in FE tend to differ from those in schools in two important respects – they usually come into teaching much later in life (Gleeson et al, 2005), and they enter with a specific mission to impart knowledge and skills derived from their 'vocational habitus' (Colley et al, 2003; Robson, 1998b). As such, my interviewees do not easily fit the models identified in career path studies (Sikes et al, 1985; Ball & Goodson, 1985; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Day & Gu, 2007). Furthermore, few FE teachers train prior to appointment – although, since 2007, new teachers have had to undergo some training in their first year. The view that teacher training constitutes a poor preparation for the profession (Lortie, 1975), still applies to many FE staff today (Orr & Simmons, 2010). At the time of interview, four of my respondents had not completed their professional training: Peter has been teaching for 6 years, Jocelyn for 15, Marilyn for 18 and Sally for 20. Consequently, we can expect vocational habitus to constitute a strong influence on teacher attitudes and behaviours, and for new teachers still to be largely *self-socialising* (Lortie, 1975). Within the College, this situation is perceived to be exacerbated by inadequate mentoring for newly qualified teachers. Alesha, clearly struggling in her first year of teaching, has only seen her mentor "for 10 minutes… since I started in September". Alex also had limited mentor support when he started. "The mentoring system is absolute rubbish!", says Clive. He feels mature enough to find his own way, but wonders how new staff manage to cope with the complexities of working in a large, diverse College. What compounds Clive's irritation is that his mentor seems happy to accept the time-remission that comes with the role, (admittedly only 7 hours per year - easily swallowed up by pressure from other aspects of the workload).

Collegiality appears to be less important within the College than it is assumed to be in schools. Most of my interviewees relate only weakly to the College as an entity, although many admit that they share its broad aims, and are proud to say they work there. This weak central culture may well be the result of the scale, diversity and fragmented physical layout of the College. Teachers tend to identify more closely with their immediate team, their in-college reference group (Nias, 1989), or their subject Department (Sikes et al, 1985; Robson 1998a, 2004), especially where they are physically separated in some way from other parts of the College. As a result, a whole-college culture is not achievable - nor is it necessarily a management objective:

> it's not for me, as a senior manager to try to impose a culture; …it's my job to help the Head of Department to shape the culture… the way they see fit. (Bob)

In a sense, Bob is arguing that the College seeks to define a broad “workplace culture” (Acker, 1999, p.23), based around its mission and ethos -

> … the question … should be more about values, rather than culture. That there needs to be this core culture, but around that is whizzing all these satellite cultures, sub-cultures, (Bob)

Heads of Department are left to shape the “occupational culture” (Acker, op.cit., p.22) of the teaching teams. Where Heads are too busy, or lack the skills to foster a group ethos, uncertain management can lead to dysfunctional teams, (Alesha’s, Clive’s and, to a degree, Jocelyn’s). As Marilyn commented, part-time staff find it more difficult to integrate with teams, (Jameson & Hillier, 2008); and split-site working can weaken team coherence, (Sally and Becky). More fortunate staff (Peter, Fred, Becky, Sally) work within supportive, collegiate team cultures; those that don’t (Alesha, Jocelyn) tend to retreat into a more balkanised existence focussed on their classrooms (Hargreaves, 1994) - or (Alex, Marilyn, Mike) they quit (Colley et al, 2007). Team culture / collegiality appears to be vital to supporting new teachers (Alesha) and staff more vulnerable to stress (Sally); actual team effectiveness varies according to subject, location, the characteristics of team members, and the leadership qualities of managers:

> Poor workplace conditions, lack of resources, perceived lack of management support all affect communities of practice within further education and lead to communities which can be characterised as having low morale, being burnt out, and having lost their commitment to students. (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005a, p. 61)

Lifeworld (Husserl, 1970) is clearly a key factor in supporting teachers within the challenging work environment of the College. Habermas’ (1987) analysis is supported by responses from teachers in the College: the relative importance of their personal attitudes and background, the culture (of their team), and society (the impact of external, College and line-manager pressures) clearly varies between individuals and Departments. Where they exist, *ecologies of practice* (Stronach et al, 2002; Gleeson et al 2005; Coffield et al 2007, 2008) enable new teachers to integrate with their teams: especially (Peter, Fred, Peta) where there is a strongly shared vocational or subject culture, (Robson, 1998b). Only a few Departments seemed to experience anything approaching communities of practice (Peter, Fred, Peta); elsewhere, the pace of change, and split site working may actually be weakening existing ones, (Sally, Becky). Although lack of team coherence tends to weaken the agency of individual teachers (Gleeson et al, 2005), the structural impact of the College is lessened because of ineffective communication and cultural pluralism. Weak support mechanisms and

ineffective communication of the corporate cultural message may explain two apparent consequences: stress and burnout.

> [*There is*] some inconsistency … in the … messages given … or the style of the way messages are given. …. That, for me undermines the values thing, and the culture thing. (Bob)

Since this inconsistency derives from the diverse management and leadership styles of the Heads of Department, it suggests that these are major *situational occurrences* (Quarstein et al, 1992) in the College shaping the lifeworld of teachers, and hence their capacity to cope with work pressures. Other factors include team coherence, the extent of teacher training and staff development teachers have undertaken, and mentor support for new teachers – the "field" factors (James & Bloomer, 2001, after Bourdieu, 1984).

**5.4 Management culture and leadership**

The interview questions make a clear distinction between teachers' views towards their line-managers and towards senior managers. Opinions about immediate managers tend to be more equivocal than those towards managers with whom teachers have less contact. Generally, interviewees appreciate the pressures facing their managers, and feel that managers are supportive. Where managers are not regarded as sympathetic, this is often explained in terms of their management skills and, more significantly, their confidence within their management role. Senior managers are seen as remote – partly due to the hierarchical structure of the College management, and partly because their own roles were so wide-ranging and demanding. Some interviewees imply that this remoteness manifests itself in a greater commitment by senior staff to bureaucratic process than to the requirements of the students (and hence of their teachers), symbolised by 'information overload', which means that communication by frequent e-mail is simply ignored.

The College appears as a rather fragmented organisation, without a strong, unified culture. From what Bob says, this may be the result of deliberate policies by senior management to devolve a degree of autonomy down to Heads of Department. If that is so, then it re-emphasises the importance of Heads' management skills in determining the quality of the teacher's working environment (Hannagan et al, 2007). The size and physical structure of the College seem to foster a feeling of separation in some Departments, and teachers generally tend to identify mostly with their own teams or Departments (Coffield et al, 2007). Whilst interviewees voice a range of criticisms about management style and the culture of the College, most staff are generally supportive of its values and ethos. Responses take one of two forms: either a general

detachment from the whole College, a parochialism which places priority on the student cohort in the Department or section; or, general support for the College's aspirations to achieve 'excellence' in terms of its educational quality, combined with a feeling that the management either lacks the resources or the skills to make major headway towards this goal.

Within the complex environment of a large educational institution such as the College, the formal culture tends to prioritise *economies of performance* (Stronach et al, 2002). Indeed, those teachers with a greater sympathy for managerial priorities (Tom, Clive, and in some ways Alex) strongly endorse corporate goals. Clive sees education as a business and feels that there is insufficient auditing of teachers' performance. He perceives several of his more established colleagues as coasting, with detrimental effects on student retention and achievement. Alex describes the College as dysfunctional: its "systems and processes" inadequate. Interestingly, his Head of Department resigned within 6 months of Alex leaving, and (with Bob's support) the new Head has been able to begin changing the culture of the Department. Alex complains about a stiff, top-down structure: a conscious attempt is now being made to change the College's management culture (Edwards et al, 2007). Bob explains that the College has recently engaged a consultant to help senior managers reinforce the College culture, by developing a "common language" amongst managers. A new openness is being fostered among managers; Heads are encouraged to discuss strengths and weaknesses, and to share problem-solving. Problems are now less likely to be internalised by managers (symptoms of a blame culture) – Heads cooperate on solutions, within a more supportive, collegial culture. Bob talks about giving middle managers…

> the rope to … succeed, …and the support that's needed... People looking to solve… little local difficulties, ...all I've got to do is make sure that we're within the parameters of… what's allowed. (Bob)

The College retains a largely bureaucratic culture, with an element of power culture (Handy, 1985) provided by the authority figure of the Principal, who sets the core College values (Bob). Cultural change is being pursued as a deliberate strategy – whether as a mechanism of governmentality (Foucault, 1991b), or as contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994), is unclear. Research strongly suggests that greater devolution of decision-making is an essential means of both improving staff satisfaction (Davies & Owen, 2001; Owen & Davies, 2002; Bogler, 2002), work-life balance for staff (Lowe, 2000, Rick et al, 2002) and, consequently, the quality of teaching, (Coldron & Smith, 1999; Avis, 2000; Duckett, 2002).

The responses from my interviewees suggest that cultural change is currently a work-in-progress in the College. As Bob admits, the College is:

> a frustratingly… lumbering giant. Not as agile and as responsive as people believe we need to be. (Bob)

The impacts of a softer, more people-centred culture may not yet have permeated to the level of classroom teachers. What is more, attempts at cultural change within the College occur within a wider national context of a growing audit culture, increasing performativity, and declining resources (Gleeson & James, 2007). Government priorities and funding processes are changing yet again following the 2010 General Election. The scope for flexibility by College managers is restricted and uncertain – management is still about making the system work, not changing it. Nevertheless, there is generally a strong level of sympathy amongst College teachers for their managers. Teachers recognise that Heads and other managers work extremely hard, and that their position is ambiguous given the inherent conflicts between the manager's roles in implementing policies from above and in supporting teachers in their teams. Evidently, some managers handle this better than others – Sally, Alex and Marilyn have each experienced pathological stress or burnout partly attributable to their manager's style. Alesha's situation only started to improve when a new, permanent manager was appointed. Research overwhelmingly shows that the quality of management and leadership is vital to effectiveness, (Bogler, 2000; Gunter, 2001; Hannigan et al, 2007):

> There is a positive association between overall management quality and work-life balance… (Bloom et al, 2006, p. 2)

While there is "no systematic relationship between productivity and work-life balance" (ibid), other research suggests more complex, indirect links. The DTI (2005) recognises that change management must take account of staff's emotional response and seek to tackle the long-hours culture. This involves:

> a need for demonstrable leadership… a clear business rationale for the changes… the need to involve employees in every step of the process… effective communication… trust between employer, union and employees. (p.9)

Nationally, such trust is lacking (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002; Avis, 2003) and the psychological contract strained (Hill, 2000). If teaching is *emotional labour*, and emotion is central to the formation of teacher identities (Avis & Bathmaker, 2004b; Day et al, 2006b, 2007; TLRP, 2008), "emotional management" (Jenkins & Conley, 2007, p.998; also Hargreaves, 1998, 2004, 2005) is required to foster "emotional engagement by staff (CIPD, 2006, p.3). The economies of performance: ecologies of practice dialectic (Stronach et al, 2002) should actually be seen as a symbiosis: effective

performance requires management styles which foster emotionally secure working environments (Steer et al, 2007).

It is apparent that both teacher identities (habitus) and their working situation (lifeworld) reinforce the *teacherly ethos*. The very reasons that brought people into teaching – *commitment* to their subject and to their students – are potentially in conflict with the aims of Government and the College's mission, (Colley et al, 2007; Day & Gu, 2007; Jephcote et al, 2008). Certainly the conflict is perceived to be there – and is seen to challenge the very "authenticity" (Malm, 2008, p.373) of some teachers. Mike contrasts his

> liberal perspective on education, in the sense that it's about personal development, and about personal growth … [*with*] the culture of Macdonaldisation (Mike)

Peter is uncomfortable with teaching full-time, pre-employment students:

> I prefer apprentices because they're more disciplined, and they're there to learn… we are now turning more into sixth form… which means I am becoming a teacher. (Peter)

By (school) teacher, or "social worker", Peter is referring to a predominant pastoral role for which he feels he has not been adequately trained. Several staff are acutely aware of inequalities within the College; rather than being resolved, these may actually be made worse by the audit culture. Sally complains bitterly about the inequalities of workload between herself and a colleague doing (she believes) identical jobs, on different salary scales and with different teaching loads. From his cross-college perspective, Mike is very aware of the variations in workload, especially marking and preparation, resulting from variations in class sizes, and the number of groups and levels taught, and the demands of particular subjects. Sally, Mike, Clive and Fred all refer to spending additional, non-accredited time providing extra support to needy students – *underground working* (Coffield et al, 2007); commitment and conscientiousness (*cathexis*) add to the already considerable burdens of teachers' formal workloads.

Even Jocelyn, who appears relaxed and a little detached from the pressures of the performative culture, talks about the "Big Brotherish" climate – a reference to the surveillance culture (Shain & Gleeson, 1999). As she says, computerised information systems enable constant checking on a teacher's performance; any manager or administrator in the College can review the timetable, attendance record or teaching results of any teacher at any time, even from their home computer (Avis & Fisher,

2006). Whilst this may represent openness to scrutiny for decision-makers, it also invades the teacher's "cell" (Lortie, 1975). Their classroom is no longer their safety zone, and this undermines teacher autonomy massively. Computerised registers check teachers' time-keeping and administrative effectiveness; the student website and Departmental web-space allow colleagues to scrutinise teachers' planning, resources, marking and course evaluation; managers can drop in unannounced to observe and grade the teacher's performance. Even the staffroom layout permits managers and colleagues to monitor staff behaviour, and to judge those who arrive late or leave early (Marilyn). This real, and virtual, panoptic surveillance may be deemed only right and proper in a performative culture (Foucault, 1991a), as a mechanism for ensuring maximum productivity and optimum economy. However, it also challenges the notion of professional autonomy, which stands at the core of teacher identity – freedom to prioritise the needs of their students. And, as several studies have shown, the best performing colleges are those with the best-motivated staff, (Martinez, 2000; Davies & Owen, 2001; Ofsted 2004b):

- Staff motivation is a key element in strategies to improve achievement.
- The main strategies to motivate staff seem to be: team development; information and awareness raising; continuing professional development; efforts to reduce bureaucracy; a shared approach to the management of change (Martinez, 2000, p.84)

Perhaps the best illustration of the managerial problems facing the College is its attitude towards teachers who are failing to cope with, or are less resilient to, the pressures of intensifying workloads and expanding roles. Bob is quite clear that the College management increasingly expects teachers "to do more in the same number of hours". Therefore, they will have to work smarter, not harder – "do less teaching and more processing" (Bob). This, in turn, requires considerable investment in staff development – both initial training of new teachers, and supporting qualified staff to cope with change. Bob echoes Tom's view that long-serving teachers may find it more difficult to adapt to cultural change than new teachers who are directly socialised into the current culture:

> … if you come into a situation where that's the norm, you accept it as the norm … and you're probably younger, and you kind of take the… pace of change and the pace of the work itself… more into your stride… more… readily. I think it's less easy… for somebody who is… more mature as a teacher. (Bob)

Research in schools (Sikes et al, 1985; Nias, 1989; Acker, 1999; Day & Gu, 2007) has shown that teachers pass through career phases, and as Lortie (1975) claims, that

teaching may not always constitute a permanent career (Colley et al, 2007; Gu & Day, 2007). When asked whether staff are coping with change, Bob admits “some are, some aren’t”, with the implication that, ultimately, if they cannot cope they should leave. Clive and Alex agree that there are some long serving staff who do the minimum and keep their heads down (Avis & Bathmaker, 2009). They claim that the result is poor teaching, which Heads are reluctant to confront by sacking them. However, my study shows that staff who are clearly competent, to the extent that they were promoted to posts of responsibility (Alex, Marilyn and Sally), are not being adequately mentored and supported – a situation traceable to the management style of their Heads. A managerial policy of natural wastage clearly discriminates against teachers with lower resilience. I conclude that the bureaucratic model of the College is flawed - teachers no longer have the security of clear-cut roles, yet they are being expected to adapt to a fluid modern environment (Bauman, 2000) with insufficient training and uneven support. The picture of the College that emerges reflects the paradigm conflict proposed by Randle and Brady (1997a) – between the managerial approach of those in responsibility, and the professional paradigm of the teachers - to which I now turn.

### 5.5 Professional identity

I deliberately chose not to include the words *professional* or *professionalism* in my interview questions, except when referring to professional development (CPD). This was because I felt that, while these concepts are central the research literature, in my experience they do not feature strongly in the discourses of teachers. My assumptions were largely justified. A word search of the interview transcripts shows that of the 13 respondents, 7 do not mention the word ‘professional’ at all. Four mentioned it once: Jocelyn thinks colour handouts are “more professional”, so she prints them at home, at her own expense; Peter talks about how professionalism prevents teachers from telling managers exactly what they think of them; Becky emphasises the importance of learning and constantly developing as a professional; and Peta delights in the achievements of her students who go on to gain professional jobs. Only Mike and Tom use the term frequently (5 and 6 times respectively) – this can be explained by the fact that Mike is heavily involved in staff development, and Tom is studying professionalism as part of his higher degree. These two are familiar with the research literature on professionalism, and could be expected to use the language of the discourse. Responses to a number of questions indicate that interviewees clearly regard themselves as professionals. Their identities as teachers are bound up in their commitment to teaching their subjects, and to supporting their learners to the very best of their abilities (Edward et al, 2007; Coffield et al, 2008; Jephcote et al, 2008). Their frustrations are stated in terms of factors which divert them from focusing upon these

priorities (Nias, 1989): time spent on paperwork, or on travelling between sites, lack of resources, lack of recognition for their achievements, managers whose priorities do not match their own, and above all, too many things to do and too little time in which to do them (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005a). Teacher commitment is bound up with *cathexis*; amongst teachers in the College, the discourse of *professionalism* is less evident than one based upon interviewees' emotional identification with their *vocation. Situational occurrences* are *dissatisfiers*, sapping the motivation and emotional resilience of those teachers who lack adequate coping strategies and team support. This personal identity factor has been more fully explored in schools-based research (especially the VITAE project work on resilience) than in FE-based research; it provides a powerful additional perspective upon the work cultures of colleges.

With the single exception of Jocelyn, all the interviewees identified teaching as a vocation (Nias, 1989; Carr, 2000). They defined their role from a strongly ethical stance, focussing upon enabling students to learn, to overcome previous bad experiences from secondary education, and inducting them into the mysteries of their chosen subject. For some, the missionary zeal is especially strong. Alesha strongly relates the personal and family problems faced by her students with her own troubled background in care. Her subject allows her both to seek to help her students with their problems, and to turn them into caring professionals who will carry her mission out into the community. Peter is committed to improving the quality of the craftspeople he trains. Sally, Marilyn, Fred and Becky all provide examples of how they can effect positive change in their learners. For all teachers, the emphasis is upon what happens in the classroom – and their need to be able to act freely, autonomously, on their own judgement, in order to meet their student's needs (Nias, 1989; Acker, 1999). Where managerial and performative imperatives impinge upon that autonomy, they tend to be resented (Ainley & Bailey, 1997). Reduced autonomy, and pressures that take time away from teachers' activity in the classroom can be major contributors to stress (Kinman, 1998; Bogler, 2002; Rick et al, 2002). My interviewees identified such pressures as including: overly complex and bureaucratic assessment and record keeping (Mike, Alex, Bob), the tick-box mentality of the audit culture (Alex, Fred), one-size-fits-all solutions (ILP's – Jocelyn), the deluge of e-mails (Mike), and the surveillance culture. This colonisation of their lifeworld is not just resented – it is derided as an irrelevant, time-wasting diversion from their professional responsibilities. Yet again, in the eyes of teachers, we see the economies of performance actively threatening to reduce their professional effectiveness, throwing the ecology of their practice into disequilibrium. The resulting loss of autonomy breeds an ever more *restricted professionalism* (Hoyle, 1974), or even, as Tom argues, de-

professionalisation, (Hargreaves, 2000, Olssen, 2003; Stronach et al, 2002; Gleeson & James, 2007).

Although formal teacher training is cited as a positive element in their professional development, College teachers continue principally to develop their craft informally. Much of their skill has been developed through praxis – it is *situated professionalism* (Schön, 1983). College CPD is not universally considered helpful or appropriate (Orr, 2009). When teachers do identify appropriate development opportunities, their freedom to access it may be restricted, due to limited budgets and to the competing training priorities of senior managers. Key amongst the latter are the skills required to teach more students with less contact time - the continued drive to encourage students to learn independently, backed by on-line resources. Teachers argue that, firstly, the students need to develop the motivation and skills to learn at all; this requires time, patience and dedication from the teacher. In the absence of formal time to do this, teachers provide support informally as unpaid overtime (TUC, 2010) – *underground working* (James & Diment, 2003). Ultimately, it is the teacher who decides just how much effort they put into their role – irrespective of the demands on them to operate within the formal culture of performativity (Kinman, 1998). We see them continuing to teach – even at severe risk to their home life, health and sanity – under the glare of the *lamp of sacrifice* (Ruskin, 2005). It is the commitment to education in its broadest sense, to the specialist knowledge of the teacher and the needs of the learner that lies at the heart of the model of professionalism espoused by the teachers I have interviewed. In direct contrast to the values and aims promoted by College managers, the teachers I interviewed felt that:

> It is not even a question of how *much* we are to do, but of how it is to be done; it is not a question of doing more, but of doing better, (Ruskin, 2005, p 38).

### 5.6 Discussion of emerging theory

A range of theoretical and descriptive models was identified from the research literature in Chapter 2. Here, I attempt to pull together some of these strands to suggest a synthesis, and to propose a model for analysing the responses of teachers to their work contexts – the specific focus of my research question.

The first answer to my research question is that the teachers I interviewed in the College perceive their work as both overwhelmingly rewarding, and frustrating. As is typical for all teachers (Bubb & Earley, 2004), my interviewees work very long hours within a particularly demanding profession (de Heus & Diekstra, 1999). They obtain

their rewards principally from “the buzz” of teaching: their interactions with students and the opportunities to shape their development (Sammons et al, 2007; Jephcote et al, 2008). The *buzz* appears to represent a reward for *emotional labour*. Teacher frustrations derive from the pressures of a bureaucratic, managerial, performative culture which prevent them from prioritising classroom activity, and which generate additional workload which they do not value, (Butt & Lance, 2005; Coffield et al, 2007). Constant change, workload intensification, and the extension of teachers’ job roles into areas for which they feel ill-prepared, are key stress factors. Teachers believe that resource constraints imposed by Government policies reduce the quality of the learning they are able to deliver. For a significant proportion – particularly those with the longest service, or with additional responsibilities – this readily leads to pathological stress, and even burnout (Byrne, 1999; de Heus & Diekstra, 1999). A teacher’s capacity to cope with stress appears to be determined by their emotional resilience, which in turn reflects their self-image, personal background (teacher identity or habitus); the levels of support from their colleagues and managers (social context or lifeworld); and their ability to cope with decisions beyond their control (external locus). These three determinants of the FE teacher’s responses to their work culture appear to be intimately inter-connected (Robson 1998, 2006) within a strongly developed sense of professional identity, although one which is rarely articulated by teachers in terms of the academic discourse of teacher ‘professionalism’.

This conceptualisation of teacher responses to FE work cultures bears strong similarities to Woods’ (1999) sociological distinction between micro-, meso- and macro-levels at which workload stress is generated:

> The micro refers to social factors within the teacher’s biography and person; the meso is related to institutional and other middle-range factors; the macro deals with wider forces deriving from global trends and government policy. (p.115)

Similarly, Lens and Neves de Jesus (1999), adopting a psychological perspective derived from Lewin (1935), categorise personal stress factors as: “the teachers themselves” (p.196); and “situational variables” at “the class level, …the school level, …and the national level” (ibid). Day et al (2006b) extend the typology of factors shaping teacher identity, referring to:

- macro structures: broad social/cultural features usually referred to in discussions of social diversity and/or government policy… ;
- meso structures: the social/cultural/organisational formations of schools and teacher education;
- micro structures: talked of in terms of colleagues, pupils and parents;

- personal biographies: values, beliefs, and ideologies.
- emotional factors. (p.611)

From the same VITAE research, Day and Saunders (2006) argue that personal backgrounds and emotion determine a teacher's capacity to manage the tensions between the "professional" (macro), "situated" (meso and micro) and personal "mediating influences", (p.268; see also Day et al, 2007).

The models reviewed by Cowling (2005) seem to bear limited relevance to the teachers I interviewed. The value of long holidays as a "leisure trade-off" seems to have disappeared, (except for Clive). "Social contagion" may operate as a subtle element of team culture, but does not appear to be linked to widespread fears for job security. There was little evidence that work formed an escape from home life. Also, whilst motivation was largely derived from the emotional rewards of teaching, for some teachers these were insufficient compensation for work overload and stress. The causes of high stress levels amongst teachers identified by de Heus and Diekstra (1999) – lack of time control, lack of devolved decision-making, and reduced team support – all featured strongly with my interviewees. Additional factors in the College include: rapid and continual change, inequitable workloads, and variable quality of management and leadership. Above all, the personal qualities of teachers (Maslach & Leiter, 1999 – Fig. 3) - personal identity, emotional resilience, and coping skills derived from vocational habitus - appear to be major determinants of teachers' responses to stressful work cultures. In this sense, my research re-affirms the model of stress and burnout in Fig. 1 (Byrne1999). Key stress factors operate at all three levels: at the micro-level of habitus (role conflict and ambiguity, and low self-esteem), the meso-level of lifeworld (peer support, superior support), and the macro-level (decision-making, external locus of control). Evidence from my interviews confirms that pathological stress and burnout result from the interplay between "personality and organizational activity variables" (Rudow, 1999, p.41). Agency will be influenced by issues of emotional resilience and personal identity – psychological factors in teacher responses will interact with social ones. Whilst stress is a social construct (Troman & Woods, 2001), individual reactions will vary with their capacity of to respond – *personality*, as defined by Habermas, (1987).

Historical materialist perspectives (Marx, 1942; also Bottomore & Rubel, 1963; Weber, 2003) centre upon the exploitation of wage labourers. Exploitation requires workers to accept emotionally the dominant philosophy: that there is value in work beyond its mere pecuniary reward. The literature suggests that such *commitment* to the values of

education is a strong motivator for teachers; certainly it is for the majority of my interviewees. In Marx's terms (1930), labour under capitalism is reduced to the status of a commodity; the relationship between worker and employer is one of exploitation of the former by the latter. Emotionally, there is evidence that some of the teachers I interviewed felt exploited, to the extent that they were deeply stressed and even burnt-out. Weber (1964) sees the modern economy as based upon rationalism and legal authority, with bureaucracy as the most rational solution to social organisation, "superior both in intensive efficiency and in the scope of its operations" (p.337). Workers comply with the laws of the state, or regulations of their employers, because of their acceptance of "straightforward duty" (p.340), and because of the "formalistic impersonality" (ibid) of their managers' authority: that is, managers are also bound by the rules, and separate their personal attitudes and feelings from their formal functions. The teachers I interviewed indicate that the *psychological contract* within bureaucracy is in danger of breaking down. They are expected to operate bureaucratic systems within a *moving mosaic* (Hargreaves, 1994) of change and increasing workload. For Weber, the only modern alternative to democracy is "collegiality" (p.392), but this is uneven within the College.

In an attempt to summarise the responses of my interviewees to their work culture, I have produced a model of teacher agency (Fig. 4) developed from the fight-or-flight concept (Cannon, 1915 – see also Coffield et al, 2008). Fight and flight are instinctive or emotional responses to pathological stress factors; they define a continuum of emotional responses along the base of my diagram. However, in a socially-constructed reality, teachers respond emotionally to their environment and to their options for agency in different ways, and also rationalise their responses. Teachers' responses will reflect their socialised behaviours, values and beliefs (personhood or habitus) as well as the circumstances within which they live and work – the structures (Troman & Woods, 2001). Agency can be seen to result from the interaction between professional, situated and personal mediating factors (Day & Saunders, 2006). Most teachers in the College do not leave because of stress; most do not choose flight, even where they talk of it (Sally, Alesha). Nor do any of my interviewees advocate revolution, sabotage or militant industrial action as practical options. They do not choose to fight. Indeed, there is no evidence amongst the interviewees of a strong will to resist change, and no mention of trades unions as a mechanism of support. *Acceptance,* therefore provides a third pole of response. At its most complete, acceptance is analogous to Gleeson and Shain's (1999) concept of *willing compliance*: "the expression of a deep commitment to the FE institution and its corporate image" (p. 474). Unlike the managers in Shain and Gleeson's study, few teachers in the College embrace change and accept the new

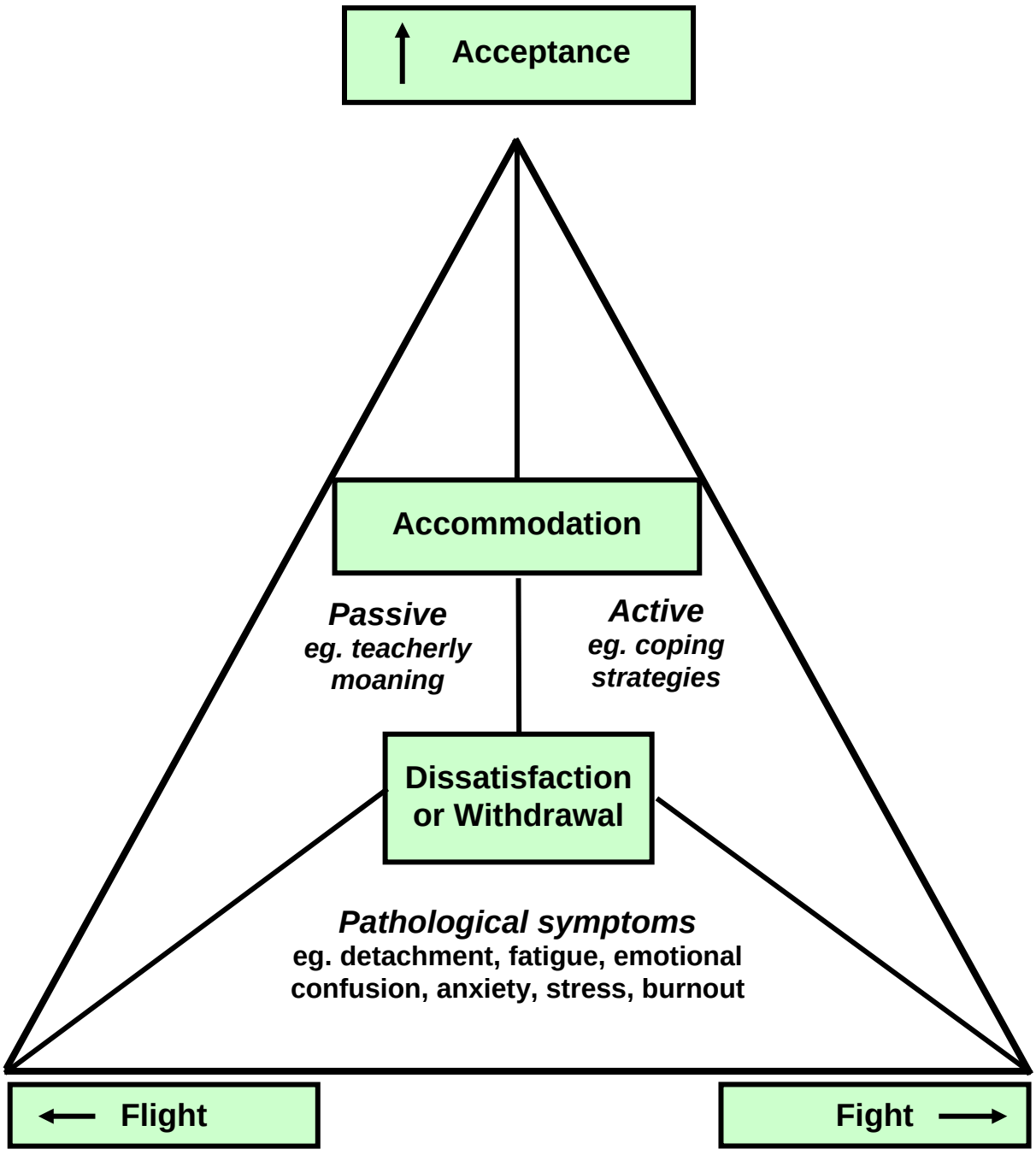


**Fig.4. A Proposed Model of Teacher Responses to a Culture of Overwork**

***(Types of Agency)***

** The arrows at the apices signify that this conceived as a force-field model.*

orthodoxy unequivocally: even those like Tom and Clive, who sympathise with a managerialist approach, actively set limits to acceptance through assertive management of their own workload. Like most of the teachers interviewed, they have adopted a middle way to survive, which I have termed "*accommodation"* (Ainley & Bailey, 1997, p.73).

Within the limits of possible action – fight, flight or acceptance, teachers will respond to work cultures in different ways, depending upon their personal characteristics (background, values, self-image) and individual circumstances (domestic circumstances, career stage, subject, peer and manager support). Some teachers may respond passively, accepting that they are powerless to affect the pace and direction of change because of its external locus. They may adopt the survival mechanism of *teacherly moaning* (Becky). Others (such as Tom and Clive) are more proactive, adopting a form of *strategic compliance* (Robson, 1998b; Shain & Gleeson, 1999) to the dominant culture and ethos. For some this takes the form of the "tick box" approach (Peter, Fred, Jocelyn) – where formal performative procedures are complied with mechanically and with a degree of cynical resignation. Some teachers may show symptoms of withdrawal; Marilyn has not ceased to teach, but she has given up both her management role and her permanent post, to adopt a more marginal, but emotionally secure and satisfying role as a part-time teacher. Peta has carved a niche for herself in a small, self-contained course, and has reduced her contract to suit her desired work-life balance. Accommodation, therefore, consists of a range of individual coping strategies, chosen to suit the personal self-image and experiences of the teacher. The trade-off appears to be that accommodation is adopted so long as the discomforts of compliance are balanced by the positive rewards of the classroom experience. When those rewards cease to compensate for the stresses of accommodation, teachers start to display pathological symptom, and to move towards *flight.*

Teacher response to workload and stress is strongly emotional; emotional commitment and cathexis are central to the sense of vocation. As Troman (2008) points out in his study of the impact of performative cultures on primary teachers:

> The psychic rewards of teaching provided the main basis of commitment and professional work satisfaction… [*However*] teacher mediation of policy and their investment in a more creative professional identity… demanded increased effort and commitment from the teachers. (p. 619)

The key factor here, as identified in the VITAE research in schools, would appear to be teacher *resilience*, Day et al, 2006a; Gu & Day, 2007; Day & Gu, 2007; Sammons et al,

2007). Due to *situational occurrences* (Quarstein et al, 1992), some teachers (Sally, Alesha) find it difficult to survive, even when they are emotionally disposed to comply with and accommodate the work culture of the College. Once the stress factors outweigh the "buzz" (and it appears to get harder as one moves into the later stages of one's teaching career), teachers look for an exit strategy, turning to flight. This may be planned (Peta, Mike) or it may be a crisis response (Alex, Marilyn). Hence, whilst stress factors are structural, (or *situational*), teacher responses to them appear to "arise from [*their*] private life, family and personal background" (Sikes et al, 1985, p.92). As Sleegers (1999) points out, two factors in the model of stress and burnout (Fig. 1) can be seen as psychological characteristics: *locus of control* and *self-esteem*. Indeed, he suggests that teachers with low self-efficacy – responding passively to stress, in my model (Fig. 4) - may be more prone to burnout. However, Sleegers concludes that "the orientations, value systems, beliefs and knowledge of teachers" (1999, p.250) are important factors influencing responses to stress. These are not merely psychological characteristics; they reflect an individual's social and cultural capital, the effectiveness of their socialisation into their institution, and the local ecology of their specific niche or lifeworld within the College, including their peers and their managers.

**5.7 Evaluation of Research Methods**

My research findings are consistent both with the research literature concerning teacher identity in schools and colleges, and with the theoretical models which have emerged from that literature. Given that much of the literature is also mutually consistent, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, I feel confident that my data collection and analysis paint a consistent and valid picture of the work culture of the College. Where my findings differ, the responses of the interviewees suggest this is due to *situational* factors inherent in the nature of an FE College: the diversity of roles and contexts that they occupy. As a participant in the College, I recognise the truth of the picture painted by my interviewees. I shall now, briefly identify areas for potential improvement in my methods of data collection and analysis. My analysis represents my individual attempt to construct a meaningful narrative from the statements of my interviewees. My decision not to re-interview respondents, as part of a hermeneutic cycle, does not appear to weaken the validity of my analysis. Whilst I have not sought to validate my constructions through sharing them with my interviewees, I would argue that I have also not risked imposing my interpretations upon them, in an attempt to obtain corroboration. My interpretation of the work culture of the College must stand on basis that it paints a viable picture (von Glasersfeld, 1989) – one which is coherent, logical, and consistent with a wide range of research literature and with the theoretical base derived from it.

Within a constructivist-interpretivist methodology the researcher seeks to create a description of the phenomena being researched which represents a true version of the interview data and which is both internally consistent and theoretically consistent – what Kvale (1996, p.219) refers to as "veridical" and "symptomatical" readings respectively. Use of a standard interview schedule permitted me to ask consistent questions of a factual nature: eg. about hours worked, career length, reasons for entering teaching, etc. Flexible use of probe questions permitted me to explore statements of opinion, and to develop a dialogue with the interviewee, to clarify statements and check the accuracy of my understanding of what was being said. The systematic nature of my data analysis, using *theme analysis* and *meaning condensation* (van Manen, 1997) provided a structure for interpretation which sought to maximise reliability and validity of interpretation. Ultimately, however, the validity of my results must be judged in terms of whether they present a coherent, viable picture, consistent with the theoretical framework derived form previous research:

> whether the theory is valid for the area studied, and whether the specific interpretations follow logically from the theory, (Kvale, 1997, p.217)

It is evidently difficult to generalise from my limited research base. For reasons explained in Chapter 4, I restricted my study to a single case-study college, and to a small number of teachers. My interview group is smaller (though not substantially so) than samples in studies with which I particularly seek to compare (Nias, 1989; Acker, 1999; Troman & Woods, 2001; Jephcote et al, 2008). These typically looked at between 20 and 40 respondents, usually in more than one institution. Nevertheless, my results are broadly consistent with the themes identified in these studies, and with the broad patterns described by quantitative surveys (Chapter 1).

In terms of validity and reliability, my research methods could have been improved. Owing to pressures of my own workload during the bulk of the research period, I limited myself to a small, convenience sample. A larger cohort, using a more representative interview sample would improve confidence in my conclusions. In retrospect, I should have included more part-time teachers in my sample, and a larger sample would have enabled me to explore the impact of teaching context (subject, age-group taught) upon stress, and responses to it. Also, there is always a risk that, subconsciously, I chose respondents whom I knew would demonstrate specific characteristics that I expected to find; only 3 respondents were unknown to me at the start of the research. However, I was surprised by the unexpected nature of some responses – I was unaware, before the interviews, of the stress levels being faced by Alex, Alesha, and Sally, nor of the

personal issues underlying Marilyn's change of direction. Furthermore, the richness and depth of the interviews, from which I quote extensively, suggests that I was able to obtain genuine and reliable responses on the issues I was exploring. Given the emotional nerve I touched with several respondents, and the very positive ways in which they all responded to my questioning, I am very confident that what I heard reflects very closely what they felt and thought. If I have learnt one surprising thing from the research process, it is that I am a much better interviewer than I ever hoped I could be. Having said this, I feel confident that similar results would be achieved, if repeated in this College, or in other colleges, by me or by other researchers - the internal consistency of the data suggests its "trustworthiness" (Kvale, 1996). I feel content that I have demonstrated adherence to the seven tests of validity proposed by Kvale and the conditions for external reliability suggested by Seale (1999), which I set out in Section 3.4c.

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# Chapter 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

*We occupy ourselves so that we may have leisure*
*– Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics)*

My research set out to investigate how teachers in the College perceive and respond to their work culture. In the course of the interviews it became evident that stress and burnout were not uncommon consequences of high workloads and the work culture of the College. Consequently, the emphasis of my analysis shifted somewhat from a broader investigation of teacher responses to workload and culture, to a more specific focus upon how personal and situational factors helped to shape teacher responses to stress, their coping strategies and their levels of resilience. In the process I have developed a descriptive model (Fig. 4) to summarise my resulting explanation. It is now possible to outline some answers to my research question, and to make some recommendations of how the results of my research can be taken forward, both by the College and by further research.

## 6.1 Conclusions

Teacher identities amongst the College interview sample develop from an interaction between self-image and personal background (habitus or personhood); from inter-relational factors shaping teacher identity (lifeworld); and from change factors deemed to be beyond the control of teachers (external locus). Lifeworld and external locus together constitute the *situational occurrences* (Quarstein et al, 1992) which affect motivation. My results confirm the findings of extensive school-based research, which also identifies these factors (Woods, 1999; Lens and Neves de Jesus, 1999; Day et al, 2006; Day and Saunders, 2006). My research suggests that these personal and situational factors are significant in colleges, and that they provide a useful framework within which to analyse teacher responses to stress, (an area less well covered in the research literature on FE). That having been said, colleges differ in significant ways from schools, and this has consequences for the work environments of teachers. It raises some sector-specific issues relating to college work cultures, and how susceptible FE teachers may be to pathological stress and burnout. Seven key differences can be highlighted which appear to influence the work culture experienced by my interviewees in the College.

1. The *greater scale and diversity* of the College (Gleeson & James, 2007; Spours et al, 2007) creates a more complex, bureaucratic management structure (Harper, 2000), and raises increased difficulties for internal communication (Wilson et al, 2005; UCU, 2007). Hence, a major concern of senior managers in the College is to

promote a shared vision and values within a context of sub-cultural diversity (Coffield et al, 2008) or *local ecologies of practice* (Spours et al, 2007). Certainly, most of my interviewees related less strongly to the College as a whole than they did to immediate colleagues, teams and managers.

2. *Departmental structures* in the College and *multi-site working* enhance the tendency towards a *balkanised* structure (Hargreaves, 1994), making it difficult to foster a single-College culture. Consequently, Heads of Department assume prime significance in determining the character and effectiveness of the working environment of my interviewees. Heads' management styles can be major influences on stress levels, depending upon whether they seek to protect staff (the *organic* dimension – Briggs, 2003) or to pass on the pressure (*mechanistic* dimension). The ability of interviewees to cope with work pressures also seems to depend upon the extent of *collegiality* and teamwork, (Parker & Williams, 2001) within the Department.
3. *Workload varies* considerably amongst my interviewees, (although it is perceived as high and increasing by all). Unequal workloads can be perceived as unfair - reinforcing balkanised attitudes and creating internal jealousies. The range of workload and working conditions results from the diversity of subjects, assessment styles, class sizes, and student characteristics, and is typical of colleges (Edward & Coffield, 2007). The expectation that subject teams will achieve *minimum levels of performance* (LSC, 2007), in terms of student retention and achievement, places considerable additional pressure on some College teams.
4. *Extensive use of non-teaching administrative staff* adds to the bureaucratic nature and complexity of the teacher role (Ainley & Bailey, 1997; Hill, 2000; Hannagan et al, 2007). This causes feelings of frustration and of reduced autonomy amongst some interviewees.
5. *Teachers tend to be older* than in schools; many enter teaching from vocational backgrounds, as a second career, in later life. Interviewees may, therefore, bring skills from their previous *vocational habitus* (Colley et al, 2003) which enable them to cope better with work pressures (Troman, 2008). Conversely, interviewees also bring professional perspectives (Robson, 1998b) that may cause them to compare working conditions unfavourably with those in their former careers.
6. Interviewees appear initially to have been less motivated by a *desire to teach* (Wilson et al, 2005) than is typical in studies from schools. Nevertheless, love of their subject, and a desire to pass on their skills and knowledge to students, remain major motivating factors (Lortie, 1975; Nias, 1989). Differences between interviewees from academic and vocational subjects, and between those who teach '16-19' students and adult learners, add to the *diversity and multiplicity of individual*

*perspectives* and *team* cultures in the College (Edward & Coffield, 2007), though my interview sample is too small to draw any specific implications regarding this factor.

7. The *high proportion of part-time staff* (Robson, 1998b) creates particular problems for the College. As several interviewees describe, the extensive use of part-timers can reduce cultural coherence in the College, and the ability of managers and teams to function supportively. Part-timers are less well paid, have lower job security, and are frequently allocated to the most demanding groups to teach (Hillier & Jameson, 2004). This can make them more vulnerable to stress, yet less able to access support. Again, my sample included insufficient part-time teachers to enable me to draw any firm conclusions regarding this.

My data provide further confirmation of seven central themes identified within the literature (both schools-based and FE), which, taken together, give a consistent account of the responses of FE teachers to their particular work environments. Firstly, teachers in the College perceive the existence of *conflicting paradigms* of professional and managerial orientation (Randle & Brady, 1997a). In particular, this is manifested in feelings that teacher *autonomy* is being eroded by bureaucratic, managerial, audit and surveillance cultures: a *colonisation of their lifeworld* (Habermas, 1987).

Secondly, *balkanisation* (Hargreaves, 1994) can be seen to be a feature of the College, exacerbated by its size, multi-site layout and complex organisational *structure*. These characteristics of the College make teachers less amenable to the benefits of a unified culture. Whole-school approaches to the management of stress and burnout (Bubb & Earley, 2004) are less applicable to large institutions such as the College. This situation may be exacerbated by the devolution of stress management responsibilities to specialist HR personnel within colleges. Such non-teachers lack the professional understanding and direct contact of line managers; the latter's skills appear crucial in tackling stress and burnout.

Thirdly, a related point is that the size and diversity of the College means that teams assume a bigger importance in shaping and supporting the professional identity of teachers. Whilst the relative *isolation* of the classroom teacher (Lortie, 1975) renders them more susceptible to pathological stress and burnout (de Heus & Diekstra, 1999); *collegiality* and communities of practice, where they exist, provide an essential source of support. Lack of such team support may render teachers more vulnerable to pathological stress. This may particularly be the case for new teachers and newly-promoted managers, for part-time staff (who make up 50% of the College staff), for

those working in more isolated locations, or for those at the end of a long teaching career. The leadership role of Departmental managers in fostering and supporting teams is, therefore, vital.

Fourthly, many staff perceive the sources of stress as having an *external locus* - outside the College. Teachers are generally sympathetic to the plight of College managers, who themselves face almost unmanageable workloads, and who occupy an ambiguous role between staff and senior managers. However, teachers tend to be critical of managers where they fail to prioritise the needs of students and teachers in the face of external pressures (Ainley & Bailey, 1997). Such criticism frequently takes the form described by one interviewee as *teacherly moaning,* and this may provide an important passive safety valve for stressed teachers*.* Teachers are particularly critical of *situational* factors such as poor communications, inadequate training, insufficient resources, bureaucratic systems and perceived internal inequalities of treatment, (Davies & Owen, 2001), factors which reflect again the size and diversity of the College.

Fifthly, the concept of *professional identity*, which is central to much of the literature, does not seem to feature in teacherly discourse. Government attempts to foster professional identity through compulsory professional formation (DIUS, 2007a) and logging of CPD, have not yet affected teacher identities (Orr, 2009). Teachers in the College still tend to identify with their subject area (vocational habitus), their immediate team of colleagues, and with their students as the basis of their *teacherhood*. While useful as an academic discourse, it seems that professional identity is less of a focus of *agency* for teachers in the College than *personal identity*, or self-image (*personhood*).

Most importantly, my research indicates that individual differences and factors of personal background (*habitus)* are crucial in explaining variations in teacher responses to workload and to stressful situations. Teacher identity has a strong emotional element, which may account for variations between individual teachers' resilience to stress. For example, the teacher's sense of *personal identity or self-image* can explain the differences between those who time-manage effectively and those who fail to achieve a *work-life balance*; or between those who see work as an extension of their private interests and those for whom it is a job. Therefore, teacher *resilience* – coping ability, confidence – needs to be recognised as a key determinant of performance by all managers, who then need to provide appropriate support. Successful managers are those who display skills in *transactional leadership* and *emotional intelligence*. Whilst it is not clear from this research how teachers' individual orientations link with their views

on teaching as *a vocation*, all of my interviewees identify with teaching as a vocation – the definition of this varies, as does the level of actual commitment, and ability to cope with stress. As noted in the literature review, there may be a tendency for the most committed teachers to be more vulnerable to stress. Those with better coping strategies appear to be better able to draw clear boundaries around their teaching role: while no less committed, they appear to be more resilient.

A final conclusion relates to the link in the College between resilience to *stress, career stage* and *age* – there is a need to explore further this possible factor of *progressive burnout*. Long-serving teachers show some tendency to be worn down by a long career of continual change – having established their *ideal job* (Evans, 2001), they become more vulnerable to burnout as the teacher role progressively diverges from this. There may be links between interviewees' original motives for becoming teachers and their responses to stress. Also, stress may be related to role and status; there is a strong suggestion that new teachers and first-time managers are particularly vulnerable, due to particularly heavy workloads and insufficient *mentor support*.

Ontologically, it is possible to define overwork as a situation where the amount of work required of any person exceeds their physical capacity to achieve it in a given period of time. These are "logical limits" (Wallace & Hoyle, 2005, p. 7). Epistemologically, what matters is how teachers perceive the amount (and quality) of work expected of them, in terms of subjective perceptions of what is manageable: teachers' *emotional capacity* constitutes "phenomenological limits" (ibid). The power to define expected workload is located externally to the teachers – with the State and with senior managers. Research strongly suggests that control over workload and involvement in decision-making are vital to successful stress management strategies, (Warren, 1998; Lowe, 2000; Rick et al, 2002; DTI, 2005) and to teacher effectiveness (Bogler, 2002; Day et al, 2006a, 2006b). My research confirms that individual teachers' emotional, intellectual and organisational capacity to achieve a defined workload will vary according to their personal identity (habitus), their self-image (personhood), and their beliefs about what constitutes a proper role as teachers (teacherhood). This individual *teacher identity* operates within and may be shaped by a framework of cultural expectations created by others (their lifeworld). Research (Lortie, 1975; Ball & Goodson, 1985; Sikes et al, 1985; Nias, 1989) indicates that these individual responses represent learnt behaviours; individuals are *socialised* into professional ways of responding, through the experiences and habitual responses to events which constitute their autobiography. Resilience is a learnt response which probably builds upon innate human characteristics (Gu & Day, 2007). However, as in much of the teaching profession, FE teachers tend to be *self-socialising* (Lortie, 1975).

Values and behaviours developed before they became teachers may not be modified by subsequent training or by institutional cultures; *personal identity* may be stronger than *professional identity*. Furthermore, one teacher's priorities will differ from another's (and from those of their managers). As Tom notes, some teachers lack the specific skills (administration, time-management) that could enable to handle stress better. Also, new teachers may be better adapted to current work cultures, as they are more directly socialised into them, (Ainley & Bailey, 1997). Thus, individual teachers' responses to the work culture are not identical (Shain & Gleeson, 1999; Gleeson & James, 2007), and resilience to stress will vary for personal reasons. These responses will reflect a teacher's personal identity (Lortie, 1975; Giddins, 1991; Rudow, 1999), and will change through their career (Hargreaves, 2005). Evidence from my interviewees suggests that teachers experience varying degrees of difficulty in coping with their workloads. In part, this reflects the effectiveness of their personal coping strategies (Troman, 2008); in part the uneven workloads within the College. When pathological stress occurs, some blame themselves (Alex, Mike), some blame their immediate colleagues (Alesha), some blame the management (Peter, Clive, Sally) and others see the source of their frustrations as lying outside the College, (Becky, Tom).

The results of my research strongly reinforce the model of teacher burnout proposed by Byrne (Fig. 1). Those staff who have quit (Alex, Mike and Marilyn) all demonstrate symptoms of *emotional exhaustion*, reduced *personal accomplishment* and *depersonalisation*. Depersonalisation happens when teachers are expected to fill a role which is not what they came into teaching to do. Alex says he has "failed to develop as a teacher" – the ultimate consequence of burnout, (Rudow, 1999 - see Fig. 2). Marilyn reports emotional and health symptoms, and Mike talks of disrupted sleep patterns. Alesha and Sally are close to burnout – displaying strong emotions during interview. All five teachers exhibit other signs of pathological stress; in particular describing some degree of reduced *self-esteem*, and reporting undesirable impacts on their home-life. For Alesha stress is primarily due to a lack of *peer support* and *superior support*. Limited managerial support also figures strongly in Sally's distress, along with hesitant and perceived unfair *decision-making.* Workload, *role ambiguity* and poor managerial support appear to have caused both Alex and Marilyn to resign their junior management posts. Interestingly, none of my interviewees found the *classroom climate* challenging (Maslach & Leiter, 1999 - see Fig. 3). This may be due to the values of FE teachers: many of them strongly empathise with their students, having come from similar social backgrounds (Alesha, Jocelyn, Peter). Many teachers see College as a potential second chance for students who were 'failed' by a secondary school system in which the teachers themselves did not necessarily flourish. Therefore, their approach in the classroom is

strongly supportive and nurturing – causing teachers to invest even more effort and *commitment* (*emotional labour*) in the teaching role, reinforcing the potential for pathological reactions to stress: a vicious cycle. Hence, where social support, organisational characteristics and the changing qualities of the task combine with a less resilient personal identity, the scope for pathological stress and burnout is high. Teachers with a capacity to manage their workload, by actively setting limits (Tom, Clive), or to accept it more passively and philosophically with elements of *strategic compliance* (Jocelyn, Becky, Fred), cope better than those who invest too much *emotional capital* in their teaching, (Mike, Alex, Marilyn, Sally and Alesha). The ambiguous nature of the management role at all levels in the College is acknowledged by teachers – most recognise that managers are not fully in charge, and that the true *locus of control* is external to the College. What matters for teacher resilience is how skilled their manager's are at balancing their teacher support role with their role in promoting the College's vision and culture. Where managers lack these skills, they are more likely to contribute to teacher stress and burnout.

The implications of my analysis are clear, and my model (Fig. 4) can be used to summarise these. Most of the teachers interviewed in the College do not succumb to pathological stress and burnout; nevertheless, most perceive that their motivation and work effectiveness are constricted by the work culture, to the extent that they are working sub-optimally, and a significant minority report varying symptoms of pathological stress and burnout. Some accept the premise that the nature and direction of change is inevitable (*accommodation*), and that the job of managers and staff alike is to make the system work – though none accept change unequivocally. Most respondents wish to alter the direction of change, but there appears to be no willingness to "fight" for this – they respond passively. It is unclear whether this sense of reduced agency is because of a feeling of powerlessness in the context of external loci of control (see for example Gleeson & James, 2007; Coffield et al, 2008), or whether it reflects a passive self-image in the teacher – an inbuilt tendency to accommodate to change. Whatever the cause, this appears to be more than just a triumph of *structure* over *agency* – indeed, this may represent a false *dualism* (Gleeson et al, 2005). As Gleeson et al suggest:

> [*structure*] denotes …. how the professional is framed by external processes of policy and funding, and [agency] focuses on … the way professionals construct identity and meaning in the contested contexts of their work. (2005, p.446)

Consistent with the findings of the VITAE research in schools (Day & Saunders, 2006; Day et al 2006b, 2007), which looks specifically at the impact on teachers of the workload reforms in the schools sector, *agency* in the College appears to be shaped by

both personal factors, contextual factors (the lifeworld) and structural elements imposed from outside. My interviewees had clear conceptions of their *teacherhood* – but these *professional identities* were not located within the academic discourse of professionalism as articulated in the literature. They were emotional responses based on their *personhood*.

The research literature (TLRP, 2008; the VITAE project) argues strongly that there are other directions that change can take, which offer greater benefits for both teachers and learners. There is a widespread rejection of bureaucratic audit cultures and performative management, on the basis that teachers are responsible and committed professionals, and that they should be trusted to get on without interference, (Troman, 2000; Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002; Avis, 2003). In particular, the considerable literature about professionalism, professional identity and the deprofessionalisation of FE, documents the causes of burgeoning workloads, growing dissatisfaction and disillusion amongst teachers, (for summaries, see Ainley and Bailey, 1997; Robson, 2006). Compelling though these analyses are, they rarely offer any practical route forward, beyond a faith in the efficacy of devolved decision-making (Warren, 1998; Bogler, 2002; Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002), communities of practice (Spours et al, 2007) or learning organisations (Seely Brown & Duguid, 1991; Ralph, 1995; Duckett, 2002). At the level of management, there has long been a recognition – in academic research and management training – that effective managers are those who display leadership qualities, foster teamwork and devolved responsibility, and help staff to work smarter not faster. There is similarly extensive advice on how institutions may cope with stress (Parker & Williams, 2001; Rick et al, 2002; NIACE, 2009; Clark, 2010).

I argue that both the proponents of improved leadership and the advocates of stress management miss the point. Research provides us with a coherent (if still evolving) understanding of the causes of stress and burnout, and of the vital roles of a resilient *teacher identity* and supportive colleagues in managing it. To paraphrase Marx (1845), the point is not to understand the causes and consequences of overwork, but to reduce workloads by changing the *ecologies of practice* in colleges. Returning to my proposed model of teacher responses (Fig. 4), it is possible to see how we could proceed. Those closest to the apex accept the current orthodoxy, and tend to subscribe to an adapt-or-die mentality (Tom, Clive, Bob), by assuming that teachers heading for burnout must be failing teachers, and should be encouraged to leave. Those who subscribe to such Darwinian solutions tend to be teachers who feel capable of managing their stress, and have a positive emotional commitment to change. Yet even Clive and Bob admit that they use techniques of *strategic compliance – accommodating* to change rather than

adopting outright *acceptance*. However, Rudow's (1999) evidence is compelling, that teachers prone to burnout tend to be the most committed and conscientious. By its nature, educational change is a conflicted process. Teachers are pulled between, on the one hand, their emotional commitment to the needs of students, defined by their own *personhood*, and by their definition of the purposes and nature of teaching, and on the other hand, by an externally located definition of effective teaching. These extremes are represented in Fig. 4 by the vertical axis. Pathologically stressed teachers tend to be those experiencing deepest conflict between their *teacher identity* and the direction of cultural change in the College, (ie. they are located in the bottom third of Fig. 4). They tend to be those closest to flight, or those towards the end of their careers, worn down by years of *passive acceptance* (Fig. 4). Sacking such pathologically stressed teachers is wasteful, socially and ethically unacceptable, and can be educationally counter-productive. It also represents a failure of the College culture to support vulnerable teachers. Developing and supporting the *resilience* of teachers will be cheaper and produce better education in the long-term – it is also more ethical.

My model (Fig. 4) suggests a framework for teachers and managers to analyse their responses to the changing culture of FE. It is important to realise that the extent to which a teacher accepts, or at least accommodates to, change (vertical axis) is influenced by their sense of personal identity – how they define both themselves (*personhood*) and their role (*teacherhood*). Teacher responses can be either active or passive (base axis) – and this may reflect both psychological and social factors. Such a model can provide a basis for more effective management of potential stress situations, based on a recognition that there is no necessary correlation between resilience and ability to teach. It also constitutes a framework for further research.

Understanding how work cultures can generate stress is not the same thing as taking action to change those cultures and avoid pathological consequences. Returning to my ontological stance, ultimately there will be an absolute limit to workload; a sustainable education system cannot be built upon a presumption of ever-increasing amounts of teaching and administration, borne by ever-smarter operatives. Wallace and Hoyle (2005) suggest that similar "limits to rationality" exist for "organizational life and policy implementation" (p.7), and that these are a major source of ambiguity. Furthermore, economics suggests that there is always a point at which the marginal returns from inputs – in this case *work intensification* and *role extension* – diminish and then become negative (after Von Thünen, 1863) – the limits to performativity. Spours et al (2007) note the tendency for managers and educational institutions to attempt "the top-

down creation of professional identity", p.203). Such deliberate attempts to shape the individual and group identities of teachers from outside represent *colonisation* of their *lifeworld* by managerialist and *performative* principles. This can destabilise and destroy professional cultures and *ecologies of practice* (Coffield et al, 2007, 2008), just as human interference in natural ecosystems can lead to degradation or even catastrophic collapse, (Meadows et al, 1972; Lovelock, 1979; Diamond, 2006). While it was not part of my research question to consider the sustainable limits of teacher workload, my emotional response to the experiences of my interviewees leads me to suggest that we may have passed already the point at which managerialism and performativity are cost-effective mechanisms for improving educational quality – for a significant proportion of my interviewees the negative effects are already being experienced (Alex, Mike, Marilyn, Peta, Sally, Alesha).

### 6.2 Recommendations

*Situational occurrences* (Quarstein et al, 1992) contribute significantly to the dissatisfaction and stress levels of the teachers interviewed for this research. Interviewees identify several ways in which the work culture of the College could be improved to moderate these effects. The effectiveness of managers in supporting staff is of major importance. Effective mentoring of new managers, and training of all managers in leadership skills, especially emotional management, is vital. Greater awareness of the possible responses to workload stress, as summarised in Fig. 4, may provide a useful model for managers. Internal communications should be improved. Senior managers need to be more visible – and to develop mechanisms for improved upward communication (listening skills). Managers face high workloads, large spreads of line-management, and insufficient time allocation for staff support. College processes need to be reviewed to see whether the balance between routine, bureaucratic activity and management of staff can be altered. Much bureaucracy appears unnecessary to staff, who doubt whether much of it is actually ever used. Support Departments may be contributing to bureaucracy, by implementing systems which impact upon teacher workloads, but about which teachers are not consulted. Devolved decision-making and decentralised budgets could improve teacher commitment to change. Finally, the mentoring of all new staff and newly promoted managers could be improved, to encourage stronger development of a professional identity attuned to the College culture.

### 6.3 Directions for Further Research

My analysis suggests several areas for further development of this research:

1. To test my model of types of teacher agency in response to workload. My research points to the importance of personal factors (age, career stage, self-image, teacher identity) in influencing resilience to stress, and to the importance of support factors (colleagues and managers) in preventing stress from becoming pathological. Further research should specifically focus on the relationships between age/career stage, sense of vocation, personal resilience, team identity and pathological stress. There is a need to develop effective measures of resilience. This may include the need to explore the emotional or psychological components of resilience, and their impact upon teacher responses (fight, flight, accommodation or acceptance).
2. To investigate the responses to workload and stress of specific groups of teachers identified in this study: part-time teachers (especially those on short-term or "zero-hours" contracts), new teachers in their first year of practice, and newly promoted managers.
3. To research the relationships between managers' workloads and stress levels, their management style and coping strategies, and the satisfaction levels and stress levels of the teachers they manage.
4. To explore *the law of diminishing returns* and the limits to performativity as they apply to workload intensification and role extension amongst FE teachers, in an attempt to clarify the sustainable limits to work.

A third option remains – which is the one I have chosen. Having indicated, in Section 6.2, ways in which the work culture of the College could be improved, it has to be recognised that the pace and direction of change facing FE has an *external locus of control.* There is only so much room for management strategies to mediate the causes of high workload, stress and burnout. If we are to tackle the causes of these problems, we need to address the Governmental *policy levers* (Steer et al, 2007) which drive change in colleges. I feel that we understand enough about the work culture of teachers; the time has come to change it. This means that the process must move beyond the academic arena, and into the political. I have come to realise that I selected this topic because of my own emotional response to my work culture. In the process of writing this thesis, I have accepted my own situation of burnout, and have left teaching; I now intend to continue my personal journey of individual liberation (Aspin & Chapman, 2000), and turn my flight into fight.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Interview Schedule [adapted from pilot interview]

1. **Please can you tell me about yourself and how you came to be a teacher?**

   - When did you actually start teaching or training? Where was that?

2. **Please would you describe for me either what you've done today. Has this been a typical teaching day?**

   - What proportion of your time is direct classroom teaching /other roles?
   - Do you regular teach during the evening, or at weekends?
   - Do you do work at home? What about weekends?
   - What are your interests outside of work?

3. **How would you sum up your attitude to your work as a teacher?**

   - What are the aspects of your work that you most enjoy?
   - What changes, if any, would make your work more enjoyable?

4. **What kind of place is your college to work in?**

   - In what ways, if any, does your current work pattern differ from your experiences before you came into teaching?
   - What are your work colleagues like? Is there a team culture?
   - What are your managers like? How supportive are they?
   - How would you sum up the culture of the college; do you think that it has a distinct culture?
   - Do you feel the system is supportive of classroom teachers?
   - How good is staff training or CPD
   - How effective are college communication systems?
   - How well do you feel that the college recognises your work?
   - Do you feel that there is stress amongst your colleagues? Due to?

5. **Do you see yourself primarily as a teacher or as a specialist in your subject?**

   - How satisfied are you with what you've achieved as a teacher? Why is that?
   - Where do you see yourself in 3 years time? Why is that?
   - Do you think teaching is a vocation?

6. **What do you think has most influenced you in becoming the type of teacher that you are? What have been the key influences?**

   - Where has that come from? What's stimulated that?
   - Has the culture of the College had an effect?

7. **Have you got anything other comments you would like to add?**

## Appendix 2. Your rights as an Interviewee:

Professional Identity and Work Culture amongst Teachers in Further Education

I am seeking your agreement to participate in my research towards a Doctorate in Education award from the University of Exeter.

My investigation is seeking to understand issues of professionalism and workload facing staff in Further Education colleges. As part of this research I shall be interviewing a small sample of teachers such as you, using a hermeneutic research technique. That is, I want any interview to be a dialogue with you, in which you have as much influence upon the direction of discussion as I do. Following the interview, I shall produce written notes, which I shall share with you. Ideally, I should like to then re-interview you at least once, to explore in more detail any particular issues which may emerge; in this way, I hope to ensure that what I record accurately reflects what you think and feel.

Your agreement to participate in these interviews is being sought on the following conditions:

1. *You are participating voluntarily, and are free to withdraw at any stage.*
2. *Your anonymity will be retained; you will be referred to only by a code name, and any personal details will be minimised, to avoid possible identification. This will include ensuring that any references to your colleagues of institution will not enable you or them to be identified.**
3. *Interviews will be digitally recorded, and written notes also taken. Copies of interviews and notes will be provided to you, should you so wish.*
4. *Transcripts of interviews, and drafts of relevant sections of my thesis or any linked publications, will be given to you to check for accuracy and for final approval. Any sensitive or confidential material will be deleted, at you request.*
5. *Interviews can be suspended or terminated at any stage, if you feel that the topics discussed are either intrusive or distressing.*
6. *Interviews will be conducted at a location of your choice, so that we are not interrupted, and so that you can feel comfortable with the process.*
7. *All records will be stored securely under lock and key, and will be destroyed, once any requirements of the University have been met.*
8. *All interviewees are asked to sign a University consent form prior to participation.*

* Data Protection Notice - The information you provide will be used for research purposes and your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University's notification lodged at the Information Commissioner's Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research,

Martin Price - email: *mprice49@aol.com* tel: *1363 84664*

## Appendix 3

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

**CONSENT FORM**

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.
I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

**I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me**

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information which I give may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....……. ……..
(Signature of participant ) (Date)

……
(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher(s): Martin Price 01363 84664

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Dr. R. Lawy , Graduate School of Education, R.Lawy@exeter.ac.uk……

OR

……..

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

## Appendix 4 Sample Transcript Analysis

**Interview transcript 1. Fred 25/06/09** (*Pages 1 – 4, of 11)*

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**Please can you tell me a little bit about yourself and how you came to be a teacher?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Well, I was employed …in the industry and …felt that I'd got a lot to offer to … students and …. I'd done some ….some part-time teaching and …was given the opportunity to apply for a full-time post , and took it from there. And enjoyed the challenge. | **Again – seems to have been asked to teach** |

**So, when was that?**

| | |
|---|---|
| That was ….in fact, I gave up my job in January 1979, and went into part-time teaching then, ….teaching two, three days a week , which on part-time pay was more than I was earning at that time. Unfortunately, I had to work through the holidays .. because I didn't get holiday pay. | **Typically started as part-timer** |

**And before that you had been working in ….?**

| | |
|---|---|
| in my trade ……. **Which was … carpentry and joinery?** Carpentry and joinery. | |

**So how long had you been doing that?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Since I left school ….that'd be ….. 17, 18 years, I suppose. I felt I'd got a lot of experience and ….hoped I'd got a lot to offer | **Mature – mid 30's** |

**And you've been in the College for 30 years?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes … well, yes, mostly. The ….. I did start by teaching at [North Devon College] and then moved here. There was a time I was doing part-time in both colleges, and then a post came up here, which I successfully applied for, and I've been here ever since. | |

**What would you say was a typical working day for you, in the College? How would it run?**

| | |
|---|---|
| …A typical day …..Prior to my retirement, (I'm doing part-time now), that would be half-past eight until at least five o'clock….normally. And I would say that … I don't know why, I would say habit … but I would be … I have always been one that I have my lunch working, and my coffee-breaks working – I'm never one to sit around and go out …you know, if I had to go out for something, that's fine, you know …I'd always be doing something. And ….. answering e-mails or answering the phone or whatever, and, I try then to get as much as I could done during the daytime, so that I didn't necessarily have to ….didn't necessarily have to do so much in the evening or weekend. | **Ordered day – with attempt to make it a working day** |

**So, when you were working full time, you wouldn't normally have done much evening or weekend work ?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Obviously, there was always paperwork to do … always paperwork ….but I'd like to think I covered the majority of it …during my working day. Obviously, not …teaching from half-past eight to five you get free sessions which enable you to mark, prepare and organise ….and then, particularly at this time of year there's more to do and catch up, and …paperwork to mark, stats to prepare, everything. | |

**So, ….and currently your now working on a part-time basis. How many hours a week?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes. I'm doing …I'm contracted to do 12 hours a week, and occasionally do a few extra. It depends on what groups are in. And ….and these last couple of weeks ….three days a week, so that's 18 hours. | **Now part-time….** |

**And how long have you been retired?**

| | |
|---|---|
| This is my ….just coming up to the end of my second year. | |

**So, what makes you keep going, since you have retired?**

| | |
|---|---|
| I suppose, it's really …twofold: I do enjoy it, and … despite what people say, or might not believe it, I think the atmosphere in the College is great. The camaraderie is great ….but also one has got to live and ….the length of time, I suppose, that I've done, my pension wouldn't pay me to …survive 100% ….I always maintained, when I retire, I want to continue my lifestyle as it is now, not turn around and say I can't afford to do this, or whatever. So obviously part-time teaching ….does boost that income. But I do enjoy …I still do enjoy …enjoy the challenge. I still do enjoy, you know, teaching trainees. Despite, as I say, some of them are a pain in the arse. But …it's something which I've ….again always said, that when you get students out ….out of college, they're … they're different. And particularly when it gets to four, five years down the line, when they've actually left college, and you see them in the street and …they're totally different then, and … they're running their own business, and I always feel then, ... I feel great thinking I've been part their training, helping them get there. | **NB – both enjoyment**<br><br>**Work colleagues / culture?**<br><br>**… and financial/ lifestyle reasons**<br><br>**Sense of personal satisfaction and achievement** |

**That's really the part of the job then that you enjoy ?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes…. That's right, yes it is. | **Confirms my analysis** |

**Are there any bits of the job you are not so enamoured with?**

| | |
|---|---|
| ….I suppose we all get bogged down with our paperwork, and….and changes of schemes, and getting on top of that. Things like that. It's … it's a nightmare to keep up with it …..and, perhaps, …you know, we should be given more ..time to be able to organise it all, things like that. I don't know what it is about this industry, but it's .. it's often the case that we get .. and I'm working this year …on one of the new qualifications that has been brought in; documentation comes in …"draft subject to approval" and you get the approval given in December, January, something like that….Albeit, you know, some of it is the same …fine, but, why don't organisations get their act together and say here's a draft, subject to approval, it'll start next year! The number of times we've … we've started teaching on courses in September, of stuff that came in during the summer ….you know, one can turn around and say, well your doing the same thing all the time – but, yes you are – but …there's obviously work you can go on with, but… It doesn't make life any easier. | **Two issues – bureaucracy and change….**<br>**Linked but deal with as separate**<br><br>**Not just the constant change but the pace…..**<br><br>**… always last minute** |

**So, partly it is about having more time to do what you do effectively, and partly a bit more lead time, before you have to implement it?**

| | |
|---|---|
| That's right! Yes – it is really. | **My summary above** |

**Anything else that would improve the job for you, do you think?**

| | |
|---|---|
| … One can always complain about perhaps ….support from management ..and perhaps ….more … more space to be …. in my area where it's not just …classroom-based. It's more space, more materials. … more equipment and things like that … And whilst things are …better than they used to be, there's still a lot of room for improvement… You know, I feel that … we've got better facilities, and things like that, but …it's ..outgrown them: it's just not the materials and equipment that's just not there. Requests for materials … it's not a case of ringing up and getting it the next day. You've got to put an order in, it's got to be approved, and it 's delayed, …there's no money … never the case, no money …. | **This is defined as…**<br><br>**… resources again!** |

**Would you say …I mean you've obviously been in the College and teaching for quite a while, would you say that it has changed a lot, in 30 years?**

| | |
|---|---|
| … changed? Yes, it probably has changed a lot . I mean, the main thing as regards what I'm concerned with is the facilities have changed … they're far better than what they used to be … and I would think, perhaps really, to a certain extent, we're worse off as regards equipment and materials than what we used to be. They were easily available many years ago, when I was here first. | **Detail** |

## Appendix 5 Sample Page of Open Coding Analysis

| Reasons for entering a career in teaching | |
|---|---|
| Alesha | Impact of degree late in life – wanted to "spread the word" – love of subject. At end of degree suddenly decided it was something she wanted to do. Also own personal background (in care) – wants to change practice **(missionary zeal)** and identifies with students who have similar backgrounds. Also role model of university tutor: "she inspired me a lot" |
| Alex | Needed work - thoroughly enjoyed training – found it interesting – I was quite good at it – identified lack of other qualifications – encouraged by a colleague |
| Becky | Third generation teacher – a "pragmatic decision" – wanted to be artist/writer, and aware that it offered opportunity to combine roles. Did school PGCE – then MA – then started PhD. FE work to subsidise latter. "in the end, teaching won".<br>Influenced by teachers who taught her – and "I was taught by the students" |
| Bob | Through his wife, who taught in FE. Did some PT work and liked it, "and decided to change my career". Positive decision, but also "anticipated … or perceived, security of the post". Obviously had some difficult experiences in work. |
| Clive | Fell out of love with industry – interested in training – someone suggested a PGCE |
| Fred | Gradually moved across – part-time at first. "…felt that I'd got a lot to offer to … students". Then, PT teaching paid more that FT construction. |
| Jocelyn | Not what she planned – intended to do art, or work with animals / farming. Voluntary support work whilst looking for work after degree. College phone up and asked her (ex-student) – at 1.5 hours notice. Though had applied for PGCE (though glad when rejected!). Hints that didn't enjoy school herself. Sees herself in her students: "I think they're all naughty…" |
| Marilyn | Mother was a teacher – adamant she wouldn't follow her! Degree in Law but trained in ESOL – to travel. (Actually identified with teaching fairly quickly – wanted to do PGCE, but not Nat. Curric. subject).<br>Very much personality – curious about other cultures, communicating / interacting with people, enthusiasm for others – learning from them. Goes to coffee bar and chats with students, rather than staffroom. |
| Mike | It seemed interesting (tried schools first – didn't like) – good working conditions – enjoyed teaching practice. "What's there to dislike about it"? |
| Peta | "Sliding into it" "I didn't have any great yearnings to teach, I must admit…" - went straight on from degree to PGCE – family are mostly teachers. Attracted by holidays / school year - and convenience for personal life (to be near husband). Late influence was a colleague – whose 'niche' she inherited. |
| Peter | Dissatisfaction with quality of workmanship in industry – asked by College manager – thought change appropriate at age of about 40. |
| Sally | Retraining after divorce – College tutor suggested she considerteaching – found she was good at it – doesn't mention any pleasure in it (just a job?) . No school role models – other comments suggest a reaction to this. |
| Tom | Not sure when young – forces (4 years) – competitive weightlifting – training – study for qualifications to train 8 – 10 years) – teaching "really enjoyed it" (liked to "the learning process" – did a Masters first) |

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