BECOMING
An Explanatory Grounded Theory of
Secondary School Teaching as a New Career

Submitted by
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School of Education

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Declaration

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted either in whole or in part for a degree at CQUniversity or any other tertiary institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the material presented in this thesis is original except where due reference is made in text.

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Date: 23/11/12

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ABSTRACT

Whether it is undertaken as a matter of choice, or has been imposed by external circumstances, career change is now commonplace. Career changers are a significant resource for educational authorities faced with a growing demand for teachers, especially specialist secondary school teachers. This qualitative investigation aimed to explain and understand the reasons and experiences of nineteen women and men who had embarked on new secondary school teaching careers. These career changers had previously pursued careers in occupations as diverse as accounting, scientific laboratory research, piloting international aircraft, and dance and drama studio teaching before choosing their new secondary school teaching careers. ‘Becoming’ as an explanatory grounded theory was constructed using the empirical data provided in their career change stories and experiences. This approach provided qualitative perspectives that have been largely absent in the larger body of quantitative studies of career change into teaching. Also under-represented in past research are investigations into career changers who undertake teacher training in a regional university with the specific aim of entering new careers as secondary school teachers, both aspects that further contextualised this investigation and its distinctive contributions to knowledge.

Located within an interpretive constructivist paradigm, this investigation drew on the central principles and approaches of a grounded theory methodology to obtain rich data for analysis. Having recently completed an accredited pre-service teacher education program and taken up their first teaching appointments, these teachers shared their career change reasons and experiences through semi-structured, informal interviews from which empirical data were coded and categorised. As the central core concept of the explanatory grounded theory, ‘Becoming’ emerged through iterative inductive reasoning. It is underpinned by four contributory categories: The Attractions and Past Experiences, that illuminated the participants’ reasons for their career change decisions, and their attractions to secondary school teaching as their new careers; and, The Journey to a New Career and Developing a New Professional Identity. These categories were constructed from their experiences as students in the pre-service teacher education program they had completed in the year prior to participating in this research. This program offered them flexibility in study load and study mode; opportunities for professional collaboration; interactions with influential mentors; and authentic learning experiences as trainee teachers.

‘Becoming’ is a situation specific explanatory grounded theory. Its contribution to knowledge exists in its qualitative approach, and its specific focus on secondary school teaching. The investigation has identified the need to understand the circumstances surrounding career change decisions; the decision-making influences arising from positive and negative past experiences and antecedents; and the need for a flexible teacher education program that facilitates ‘Becoming’ a new career secondary school teacher.
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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS


# LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABS - Australian Bureau of Statistics  
ACARA - Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority  
ACDE - Australian Council of Deans of Education  
ACE - Australian College of Educators  
AITSL - Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership  
BCA – Business Council of Australia  
BTR – Board of Teacher Registration (Queensland)  
COAG - Council of Australian Governments  
DEEWR - Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations  
  (Commonwealth)  
DEST – Department of Education, Science and Training (Commonwealth)  
DETE – Department of Education, Training and Employment (Queensland)  
EPL – Embedded Professional Learning  
HECS - Higher Education Contributions Scheme  
KLA – Key Learning Area  
LMS – Learning Management System  
MCEECDYA - Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs  
MCEETYA - Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs  
OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  
QCT - Queensland College of Teachers  
QSA – Queensland Studies Authority  
RCC - Recognition of Current Competence  
RPL – Recognition of Prior Learning
PART 1
RESEARCH BACKGROUND:
CONTEXT AND APPROACH
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCING THE THESIS

“Who are you?” said the Caterpillar. “I-I hardly know, Sir, just at present,” Alice replied rather shyly, “at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then.”

(From Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Carroll, 1865, reprinted 2000, p. 49)

1.1 Introduction

Throughout this thesis the words of Alice (Carroll, 1865, reprinted 2000, p. 49) resonate as a metaphor for the dynamics of change that most, if not all, people experience in their lifetimes. For some, these changes are minor; for others, major changes may be involved. For those who have been engaged in a previous career, to then embark on a new career in becoming a secondary school teacher is an instance of major change. This investigation focused on a group of nineteen such people. For some years they had all pursued other careers. They then decided to make a career change and become secondary school teachers. In the process of doing so they had completed a one-year postgraduate pre-service teacher education degree at an Australian university.

There have been a number of previous studies conducted into career change into teaching. The more prominent of those that were consulted in order to initially locate this investigation are summarised in Appendix A. Given that many previous studies originated from research undertaken overseas (see, for example, Boyd, et al. 2011; Wilson & Deaney, 2010), this investigation can be distinguished from those studies by its Australian focus. There is a predominance of quantitative studies among the existing literature (see, for example, Boyd et al. 2011; Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010), from which this investigation is further distinguished by its qualitative research methodology. Much previous research has been concerned with entry to the teaching profession regardless of whether this was as a primary or
secondary school teacher (see, for example, Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010; Richardson & Watt, 2010; Williams & Forgasz, 2009). This investigation’s sole and specific focus on secondary postgraduate teacher education as a means of entering the teaching profession as a new career provides it with a further point of difference.

In providing an overview of this investigation’s rationale, aims and research methods and approaches, this chapter also establishes the contributions made by its findings. The role of the researcher that is discussed in this chapter was integral in the construction of meanings as the basis for developing the explanatory grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ a secondary school teacher as a new career. As well as providing a roadmap of the thesis, this chapter explains the fusionist ontology that informed the research and the construction of ‘Becoming’ as the core category of that theory.

1.2 Aims and Research Questions

Locating the investigation within the general framework of a grounded theory approach meant that, at least initially, a necessarily selective review of the pertinent literature was undertaken to situate the research (Strauss and Corbin, 2005). The purpose of this initial literature review was to refine the two interrelated research aims and the research questions which were addressed.

The two aims of this investigation were:

1. To explain the reasons that had influenced people’s decisions to change careers and become secondary school teachers.

The related research question for this first aim was stated as:

\textbf{RQ1} What reasons do individuals who are planning to make a career change into secondary school teaching identify as influencing their decision to make such a change?
2. To develop an understanding of the experiences of a cohort of career change participants while students of a particular pre-service teacher education program, including aspects they had found more challenging, as well as aspects they considered had supported and enhanced their career change ambitions while developing their new professional identities as secondary school teachers.

The related research question for this second aim was stated as:

*RQ2 What aspects of a teacher education program do individuals who are planning to make a career change into secondary school teaching consider best support and enhance their successful change of career?*

These aims and their underlying research questions are closely interrelated insofar as aspects of the participants’ personal circumstances and prior experiences would be reflected in how they experienced characteristics of their pre-service teacher education program.

In order to realise these aims and research questions, a qualitative methodology was chosen because it was considered that replicating a quantitative approach would not provide full accounts of the reasons for, and experiences of, changing careers. More specifically, the investigation was located within an interpretive constructivist paradigm founded on a grounded theory approach through which a theory could be constructed from the accounts provided by the research participants who were in the best possible positions to provide authentic stories of career change. The research participants were nineteen adults who held other tertiary level qualifications; who had experienced other careers; who possessed a wealth of life and other experiences; and who had recently taken up appointments as secondary school teachers following their successful completion of a particular postgraduate
pre-service teacher education program. Inductive reasoning used in analysing their accounts enabled the construction of ‘Becoming’ as an explanatory grounded theory.

The investigation was ‘explanatory’. It aimed to explain why these people had decided to become secondary school teachers after time spent in a previous career. This involved identifying the reasons for this phenomenon from their perspectives as people who had actually experienced this type of career change, and to analyse their accounts to construct theory. Such a grounded theory is specific to those participants, the time and place of data collection and analysis, and the actions and decisions of a sole investigator. However, it has the potential to make a further contribution to existing knowledge concerning career change, and more specifically, the career change experiences of those seeking to establish new careers as secondary school teachers.

1.3 A rationale for the choice of topic and research methodology

This section provides the rationale for carrying out the investigation from two perspectives. Firstly, a rationale for the choice of topic as an area worthy of further investigation is presented on the basis of a preliminary examination of pertinent literature. Secondly, a rationale is provided to support the choice of an interpretive constructivist grounded theory approach that would produce data derived from individuals who had direct experience of the realities of career change into secondary school teaching. As will be shown in the following sections, the choice of research topic and research methodology is ultimately interrelated.

1.3.1 A rationale for the choice of research topic

I was mindful of the debate concerning the timing and inclusion of a literature review in grounded theory research that has continued since the time of the seminal works of Glaser and Strauss (1967). A preliminary examination of the
literature was undertaken. As with more contemporary approaches to grounded theory research (see, for example Charmaz, 2006), the preliminary literature search had the purpose of locating my study in the field of research in career change into teaching and particularly secondary school teaching. (See Appendix A.) Following a grounded theory approach, a more intensive engagement with the literature occurred following data collection. The preliminary literature search served to identify four interrelated aspects that constituted the rationale for the choice of research topic:

1. A specific focus on career change into secondary school teaching

Of the several studies that have been concerned with investigating recruitment into teaching there has been a limited distinction made between recruitment into primary pre-service teacher education as opposed to recruitment into secondary pre-service programs. For example, studies such as those of the Australian College of Educators (2003), Bruinsma and Jansen (2010), Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR, 2008), and Haggard, Slostad, and Winterton (2006) have considered recruitment into the teaching profession in general terms. The fact that the present investigation was focussed specifically on those entering new careers as secondary school teachers provides further support for the choice of research topic.

2. Career change into secondary school teaching within an Australian context

Only a limited number of previous studies have drawn the link between career change and entry into the secondary school teaching profession. As mentioned earlier, Wilson and Deaney (2010) in their British study give some attention to this, as do Boyd et al. (2011) although their research is set in New York.

As shown in Appendix A, only three Australian studies (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Miles et al., 2009; Richardson & Watt, 2005) have been concerned with
secondary school teaching as a new career. A good deal of existing research has a
more international focus. (See Appendix A.) A number of previous investigations
have been undertaken in the United States (Grier & Johnston, 2009), England
(Hobson, et al. 2009; Priyadharshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003), South Africa (Mtika
& Gates, 2011) and the Netherlands (Tigchelaar, Brouwer, & Korthagen, 2008).
However, not all of these studies have been concerned with recruitment of career
changers specifically into secondary school teaching.

3. A focus on the postgraduate pathway in pre-service teacher education

Few studies have been concerned with postgraduate pre-service teacher
education as a pathway into teaching by career changers, as was the case in this
investigation. Most previous studies have been concerned with undergraduate pre-
service teacher education programs. While exceptions can be found in such studies
as those of Watt and Richardson (2007) and Wilson and Deaney (2010), in the main,
research that has focussed on postgraduate pre-service teacher education has
considered this from the perspective of entrants who undertake such training directly
following completion of their undergraduate degrees.

4. Significance for the recruitment of secondary school teachers by employing
authorities

This investigation has the potential to afford insights into career change into
secondary school teaching that could prove useful in the recruitment campaigns of
government and non-government authorities that employ secondary school teachers
at a time when there are predicted to be shortages of suitably qualified staff at the
secondary school level in general and in some specialist teaching areas in particular.
(See, for example Miles et al., 2009.) The projected shortage of qualified secondary
school teachers is predicted to arise from the collusion of three causal factors and is
likely to become most pronounced in 2016 following two major policy changes that will impact on teaching:

1. The proposed policy changes to Australia’s national requirements for accreditation of pre-service teacher education (see Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2010; Queensland College of Teachers [QCT], 2011b) will see two-year postgraduate pre-service teacher training programs replace the current one-year programs. Strategies will be required to meet the staffing shortfalls in the transitional period as pre-service teachers complete the additional year of training.

2. Under the **Flying Start for Queensland Children** (Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment [DETE], 2011) it is proposed to move the current Year 7 classes into secondary school within Queensland. The Queensland Teachers Union (QTU, 2012) sees that “this reform has enormous resourcing implications for primary and secondary schools across Queensland” (p. 24) at a time when “in the secondary years, some schools have difficulties in filling senior maths, science, LOTE and Vocational Education positions” (p. 21).

3. The projected staffing shortfalls also reflect ageing and retirement trends (Arlington, 2012) and difficulties in retaining teachers in a highly stressful occupation (Milburn, 2011).

In addressing the shortage of qualified teachers, employing authorities have potential future staff resources among the growing pool of individuals who are intent on changing careers (University of Sydney, 2011). As this investigation demonstrates, at least some career changers are drawn to new careers as secondary school teachers. Knowing why people seek new careers as secondary school teachers
will inform campaigns aimed at recruiting new members to the profession. Furthermore, understanding the experiences and some of the issues that arise in attracting students to pre-service teacher education programs and ensuring their successful completions is also directly relevant to universities responsible for training the next generation of teaching professionals.

The apparent gaps in existing research will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. From this preliminary search of the literature I concluded this investigation was based on a viable research topic. This topic would focus on explaining the reasons for a career change specifically into secondary school teaching, and understanding the experiences of mature-age Australian career changers who had decided to become secondary school teachers by completing a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program. With a sufficient rationale in place for the choice of research topic, it was equally important to establish a rationale for the choice of an interpretive constructivist grounded theory methodology to address the dual aims of the investigation.

1.3.2 A rationale for a qualitative research design and methodology

The choice of research methods should be congruent with the aims of the investigation (Jennings, 2012). The investigation was purposefully qualitative in order to place the reasons for, and experiences of, career change into secondary school teaching in the foreground as the basis for further analysis, interpretation and theorising.

The majority of previous studies into recruitment and career change into teaching have adopted a quantitative methodology. (See Appendix A.) Other investigations such as those of Campbell (2010), Kember (2008), and Manuel and Hughes (2006) have adopted a mixed methods approach combining elements of
quantitative and qualitative research methods. While noting that studies such as those of Hof, Strupler, and Wolter (2011), Mtika and Gates (2011), and Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) were situated in qualitative paradigms; the preliminary review of past research demonstrated fewer qualitative investigations. As will be shown in Chapter 2, those qualitative studies that were identified were not concerned with the same aspects that formed the topic for this investigation.

This was a qualitative investigation located in an interpretive constructivist paradigm using a grounded theory approach. In addressing the research aims, the intention was to construct an explanatory grounded theory through which the reasons for, and experiences of, a career change the research participants discussed in their semi-structured informal interviews could be explained and understood. The principles and methods of a grounded theory approach will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3. As Bryman (2004) explains, a deductive approach would commence with “what is known” (p. 10) regarding the reasons for, and experiences of, career change into secondary school teaching. In contrast, in following a grounded theory approach, the explanatory theory would be constructed using inductive reasoning in interpreting data contained in the information provided by the research participants. The distinction that Bryman draws between deductive and inductive approaches and the place of theory when following either of these approaches is shown in Figure 1.1.
The rationale for choosing a grounded theory approach reflects the intention to establish authentic data from participant accounts. The explanatory theory that was constructed had its basis in their “multiple realities” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). This qualitative grounded theory approach focused on a particular group of individuals becoming secondary school teachers at a particular point in time within a particular context that defined the research setting distinguishes this investigation from prior research in this field. At the end of 2009, the year prior to that in which data were gathered, the participants had graduated from a pre-service teacher education program, and had only recently taken up their appointments as secondary school teachers when they were interviewed (May, 2010). Other pre-service teachers (or for that matter the same pre-service teachers), at another point in time may have shared different career change reasons and experiences.

As Junek and Killion (2012) suggest, choosing a grounded theory approach is useful when investigating areas of interest for which only limited or tentative *a priori* theory has been established. While a number of studies have been undertaken...
in Australia and elsewhere, the preliminary search of the literature indicated that at the time of carrying out this investigation there was a lack of theories that addressed career change into secondary school teaching.

The further rationale for utilising a grounded theory approach is found in the congruity that exists between this approach and the epistemological perspective of this investigation that knowledge is constructed on the basis of the multiple realities of people experiencing a given phenomenon that happens to be under investigation (Charmaz, 2003). While a grounded theory approach is not the only available methodology for doing so, in this case it afforded the methods for collecting, sharing and constructing knowledge concerning the reasons for, and experiences of, career change into secondary school teaching among those who participated in this investigation. In collaboration with the participants, I sought to understand their multiple realities of career change reasons and experiences that formed the basis for constructing the explanatory grounded theory of ‘Becoming’.

Such an approach positioned me as the key research instrument and in a research partnership with the participants. This offered me the advantage of being able to work closely with the empirical data as it emerged from the semi-structured interviews, throughout the transcription of those interviews, and the interpretation of the stories that participants shared and which were at the foundations of the constructed grounded theory.

Finally, while grounded theory approaches and methodologies have become widely used in a range of disciplines including health sciences, business and education, the preliminary search of the literature identified only two studies of relevance in career change that had also employed a grounded theory approach. (See Appendix A.) Haggard’s et al. (2006) American study adopted a grounded theory
approach in attempting to understand some of the challenges of second career
teachers. The key point of difference between that study and this investigation is that
their focus was on second career teachers who had been in their teaching positions
for longer than the participants in this investigation, and again they were not
specifically concerned with second career secondary school teachers as such.
Tigchelaar et al. (2008) also used a grounded theory approach in carrying out their
Dutch study of change in the context of second career teachers entering the teaching
profession. While that study shared some common features with this investigation in
terms of examining the reasons for career change into teaching, clearly it was not
connected to Australian career changers and their experiences.

In using an interpretive constructivist grounded theory approach I constructed
a theory that would provide some explanation of the reasons behind a person’s
decision to become a secondary school teacher as their new career, and some
understanding of their career change experiences. Despite its limited application to
the field of career change into secondary school teaching thus far, a grounded theory
approach has become one of the most widely accepted research strategies for
generating new theories in fields for which extant theories are either limited or yet to
exist.

1.4 Positioning the researcher: Some insights into axiology

As a researcher, I am also a teacher, and will always consider myself to be so,
even though I am no longer teaching in a school. However, I am not just a ‘teacher’.
I am a secondary school teacher—there is a difference.

My own journey in becoming a secondary school teacher was quite different
from the journeys of those who participated in this investigation. My journey started
while I was at school. I was inspired to become a teacher through the influences and
encouragement received from my Year 10 Drama teacher. In that I was not unlike some participants in this investigation who also spoke of the impetus provided by inspiring teachers in their pasts. However, unlike my participants, I was a ‘first career teacher’. That is, I took the uninterrupted school-to-university teacher training route. The journeys of those who participated in this investigation had seen them commence and experience other careers. Only later, and for a variety of reasons, had they been led ‘back’ to teaching. This was a place where some knew they were eventually going to be, but other experiences in their lives had initially dominated, causing them to delay their career journeys in becoming secondary school teachers.

Something I share with the research participants is that I too am a ‘career changer’. Indeed, this thesis is part of the change to my ‘new’ career as an academic. I changed careers from secondary school teaching to a career in which I am a teacher educator, now teaching others how to teach, or at least assisting and facilitating others who are becoming secondary school teachers. My time as a secondary school teacher and the enjoyment I received from mentoring pre-service teachers, as well as working as a casual tutor with pre-service teachers in their university coursework, sparked my interest in seeking to understand the journeys of those becoming secondary school teachers. All journeys are different. Wanting to become someone that currently you are not is important in making this change.

The participants I interviewed in this investigation were known to me. I was the Head of Program for the Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching (Secondary), the pre-service teacher education program they had completed in their quests to become secondary school teachers. In this role, I travelled the career change journey with them. I was not only their lecturer in individual courses (subjects). I played important roles from the time of their initial enquiry to the
university about becoming a secondary school teacher, through to their graduating
from the program of study. I provided individual assistance and advice on
employment opportunities so they could realise their goals of becoming secondary
school teachers. The ethical implications associated with my position as the
researcher will be addressed in Chapter 4 when detailing the research approach and
considering participant selection.

1.5 Perspectives on ‘Becoming’ as the core category

Appendix B lists and defines the key terms used throughout this thesis. However, as the term assigned to the core category underpinning the constructed
grounded theory, the concept ‘Becoming’ warrants a more detailed consideration
than allowed for in that Appendix. This section of the chapter, therefore, provides
some initial discussion of ‘Becoming’ and the fusionist ontology that is reflected in
its construction as the core category.

1.5.1 The nature of ‘Becoming’

Constructed as the core category of the explanatory grounded theory, use of
the term ‘Becoming’ to describe their career change reasons and experiences was
derived directly from the voices of the career changer participants that were
foregrounded throughout this investigation. Derived from the voices of fifteen of the
nineteen research participants when describing what they were doing in pursuing
their career changes, ‘Becoming’ can be regarded as an in vivo term. That is, a term
used by the participants rather than one constructed by the investigator. This can be
seen in the following excerpts taken from the transcribed interview transcripts:

*Becoming a teacher was so important to me.* (Winifred)

*For me becoming a teacher was a personal choice.* (Bo)
In using ‘Becoming’ to denote the core category of the constructed grounded theory, I followed Glaser (1978) and Charmaz (2006) both of whom advocate the use of gerunds (verbs used as nouns) to place emphasis on actions and processes within the phenomena under investigation. Becoming implies a pre-existing state, a state of having been, from which change proceeds. Hence, those who participated in this investigation were in the process of becoming secondary school teachers having previously been occupied in a previous career. They began the process of becoming secondary school teachers by deciding to change from whatever their prior career may have been and completing a pre-service teacher education program as the prelude to their appointment as secondary school teachers. In this sense, there was what I describe as a fusion between what they had been, and what they were becoming.

1.5.2 ‘Becoming’: A fusionist ontology

The fusionist view of becoming provides a fundamental ontology that served to inform this investigation and the interpretations placed on the accounts of the reasons and experiences provided by the career change participants. It also formed the basis for constructing the explanatory grounded theory. Such an ontology finds its origins in the works of Driesch (1914). Trained as a biologist and later becoming Professor of Philosophy at the University of Heidelberg (Webster & Goodwin, 1996), Driesch presented the concept of a fusion between having been and becoming in his History and Theory of Vitalism (1914). In this he argued that pre-existing states form systems that can be understood in accounting for further change or morphogenesis. As Webster and Goodwin (1996) point out, in Driesch’s view “particular forms can only be explained by means of historical narrative” (p. 36); that is, becoming could be explained by earlier phases of development. The fusionist
ontology also reflects Driesch’s background in embryology and the study of embryogenesis. The key to the fusionist ontology in such terms is to suggest that all that an embryo might become is found at the moment of conception. Hence, becoming rests on what may have previously been. As Morris (2008) points out, this reflects the ontological perspective that “there must be some least amount of being…that already contains…the determinacy that makes ‘living sensible’” (p. 69). Among the major critics of Driesch’s perspective was Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In his critique of the fusionist ontology, Merleau-Ponty (1995; 2003, trans Morris, 2008) argued the contrary view that what might become “is not explained by the pre-existence of possibilities”, is not regulated by what may have been, but rather situations that allow “other forces to come into play” (LN 296/233 as trans by Morris, 2008).

In this investigation, the fusionist ontology reflected the linkages between what may have been and what might become. For the career change participants, becoming secondary school teachers could be explained in terms related to whatever they had previously been; that is, their previous career engagements, experiences and prior states. The fusion between what may have been and what may become is dynamic. As Zaborskis (2011) explains, “becoming implies growth and change . . . we are always ‘becoming’, what the self was is lost, but that self is now something new that it was not before” (p. 1).

Driesch’s fusionist ontology was directly relevant to the interpretation of the reasons and previous experiences that had influenced the participants’ decisions to become secondary school teachers when they contemplated their possible new careers. That is, having previously experienced, among other things, the completion of an undergraduate degree, an initial career, and the related experiences of their
former workplaces, the research participants could be considered as being on the threshold of their next life stage. As Driesch’s worldview would see them, they were emerging from a previous ‘embryonic’ stage to enter their subsequent stage in their lives and new careers as secondary school teachers. Those previous experiences formed the foundations of their next life stage and new career. The same fusionist ontological perspective also helped account for their further experiences of growth and change as students of the pre-service teacher education program that they had completed in a process of constantly becoming something new that they had not been before.

As I contemplated the fusionist ontology, again I was reminded of the metaphor contained in Alice’s conversation with the caterpillar used as the preface to this chapter, and repeated here:

“Who are you?” said the Caterpillar. “I-I hardly know, Sir, just at present,” Alice replied rather shyly, “at least I knew who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then.” (Carroll, 1865, reprinted 2000, p. 49)

Alice seemingly was experiencing both an ontological and epistemological shift. That is, she is clearly seeing the world (ontology) through different eyes. Equally, she is demonstrating a shift in what she believes she knows (epistemology). Like Alice, the career changers who participated in this research had clearly been someone else and ‘they knew who they were when they got up this morning’. Prior to their career change decisions they viewed the world through the perspectives afforded by their previous careers and experiences. They had previously attained relevant qualifications in order to pursue their previous careers, from which they had then decided to embark on new careers in becoming secondary school teachers. They

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1 Chapter 3 explores the ontological and epistemological perspectives further.
had also been involved in and had prior experiences of formal and informal training.

For some participants it was these that, at least in part, accounted for their decision to seek new careers as secondary school teachers. They had also more recently been students of a pre-service teacher education program that provided their point of entry to the teaching profession. In all of these, and the other aspects of their lives, whatever they had been was at the foundation of their career change stories and those aspects of their previous lives were inevitably fused to their reasons for, and experiences of, becoming secondary school teachers. Like Alice, in their ‘historical narratives’, they showed that they ‘. . . must have changed several times since then’.

1.6 A roadmap of the thesis

This thesis is organised in two parts. As shown in Figure 1.2, Part 1 comprises four chapters and Part 2 six chapters:
Chapter 1
Introducing the Thesis

Discusses the aims and research question of the study and the choice of a grounded theory methodology and explains the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2
Contextual Insights

Locates the research in the field of career change through pre-service teacher education.

Chapter 3
Elements of the Research Methodology

Frames the research design through exploring the interpretive constructivist research paradigm and outlines fully a grounded theory methodology.

Chapter 4
Applying Grounded Theory Methods

Presents the processes involved in identifying, selecting and recruiting the participants as well as the procedures adopted for data collection and analysis.

The Findings

The explanatory theory presented in Part 2 addresses the research aims outlined in Chapter 1 & 3.

Compare and integrate data collected in the field with literature theoretically surveyed and arrive at the theory of ‘Becoming’.

An explanatory grounded theory of Becoming

Identifies the explanatory grounded theory of ‘Becoming’.

Chapter 5
The Attractions

Chapter 6
Past Experiences

Chapter 7
The Journey to a New Career

Chapter 8
Developing a New Professional Identity

Chapter 9
Becoming

Chapter 10
Concluding observations and reflections

Concludes the thesis by evaluating the grounded theory of ‘Becoming’, the contributions of the study, as well as its limitations and opportunities for further research.

Figure 1.2 Roadmap to the thesis
Part 1: Research Background: Context and Approach

The four chapters in Part 1 provide both context and structure to the development of the thesis:

This chapter (Chapter 1) has provided a broad overview of the interpretive constructivist investigation. The chapter has detailed the dual aims of the investigation, the two research questions and the choice of a grounded theory methodology that formed the rationale for the investigation and pointed to its contribution in bridging an identified gap in existing knowledge. My positioning and axiology as researcher was presented. This was followed by an initial discussion of the investigation’s fusionist ontology that gave meaning to ‘Becoming’, an in vivo term derived from the research participants that I used to describe the core category in constructing the explanatory grounded theory.

Chapter 2 presents the initial review of the literature conducted prior to data collection and analysis. The purpose of this review was to locate the investigation within the two fields of study relevant to this investigation, namely, career change in general, and career change into secondary school teaching in particular. The preliminary review of the literature made me aware of potentially useful sources relevant to my research interests in career change. This investigation was based on a grounded theory approach, and for this reason, the initial literature review was purposefully constrained so as to allow for the construction of the explanatory theory on its own terms from the collected data.

Chapter 3 positions the investigation within an interpretive constructivist paradigm and presents the research design framework. The general exploration of grounded theory methodology and, in particular, the use of a constructivist grounded theory approach provide the background to the more detailed account of the specific
research methods that were developed and applied. Within Chapter 3 I have also discussed my involvement and my positioning as researcher while interacting with participants in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the empirical data.

Chapter 4 outlines the approach I took in selecting and recruiting the participants. It includes a summary profile of the nineteen participating career changers. A discussion of methods and approaches that were used to collect and analyse the data then follows, noting the use of semi-structured interviews as the data collection method and the transcription into written format of the data contained in the digital recordings of the interviews. The chapter also provides an account of the procedures followed in coding, constructing and analysing the data as the basis for identifying the concepts and themes that were constructed from the stories of the career changer participants. Chapter 4 concludes with an outline of the ethical concerns that needed to be considered throughout the investigation.


Six chapters comprise Part 2 of the thesis. The first four chapters in this Part outline the four contributory categories. These are the findings chapters which underpin the core category, ‘Becoming’, that is then presented in Chapter 9.

Chapter 5 discusses the first of the contributory categories, The Attractions of a new career as a secondary school teacher as voiced by the participants. This chapter, along with Chapter 6, is important in addressing the first of the investigation’s dual aims to explain the reasons for making a career change into secondary school teaching. Chapter 5 focuses on a range of personal situations, circumstances and influences that ‘pulled’ some participants toward their new careers, as well as other factors that some participants considered had ‘pushed’ them
away from their previous career paths, and, for that matter, potential new careers in other occupations.

Chapter 6 then focuses on the Past Experiences that participants considered had prompted their interest in becoming secondary school teachers. There is much in Chapter 6 to indicate that when it comes to changing careers, the decision-making processes of individuals reflect a plethora of past experiences and the knowledge and skills that such experiences provide.

Chapter 7 explores the Journey to a New Career as a secondary school teacher, the third of the four contributory categories within the grounded theory of ‘Becoming’. The experiences of participants as students of the pre-service teacher education program they had completed provide the central focus of this chapter. The chapter explores those features of the program participants considered important to their becoming secondary school teachers. These program features included the time required for completion, study workload, and the flexibility of the program offering.

Chapter 8 considers some of the dynamics of the ways in which participants came to learn and take on new roles and functions in becoming secondary school teachers. Through study, practice, and experience, pre-service teachers acquire knowledge and skills in Developing a New Professional Identity. The career change participants experienced the beginnings of their new professional identities through attendance at ‘the res’ (residential schools); through ‘the prac’ (in-school practice teaching/practicum) working with a suitable Mentor Teacher; and through an internship as a point of culmination of their pre-service teacher education program. Developing a New Professional Identity emerges through engagement in the supportive structures and approaches within pre-service teacher education designed
to encourage and facilitate the career changers’ on-going professional development in their newly chosen careers.

Chapter 9 integrates the four contributory categories that underpin ‘Becoming’, the core category of the explanatory grounded theory. Chapter 9 also identifies the main contributions to knowledge made by this qualitative investigation. That is, its focus on the reasons for, and experiences of, a group of mature-aged career changers who specifically, were seeking new careers as secondary school teachers and who, to that end, had completed a pre-service teacher education program. Knowledge of their experiences as students provides an informed basis for future program developments at a time when pre-service teacher education at the postgraduate level is itself undergoing significant change.

Chapter 10, the concluding chapter of the thesis, focuses on three aspects. Firstly, an evaluation of ‘Becoming’ is presented using Charmaz’s (2006) suggested criteria for evaluating a constructivist grounded theory. Secondly, the chapter acknowledges the limitations and delimitations of the research. Finally, opportunities for the further study of those who engage in fundamental career-changing decisions and their experiences in becoming secondary school teachers are identified.
CHAPTER 2 CHANGING CAREER AND BECOMING A TEACHER:

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

In a completely rational society, teachers would be at the tip of the pyramid, not near the bottom. In that society, the best of us would aspire to be teachers, and the rest of us would have to settle for something less. The job of passing civilization along from one generation to the next ought to be the highest honor anyone could have.  

(Iacocca\(^2\), 2007, p. 217)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews a range of literature in order to locate the investigation within the field of career change, and, more specifically, in the field of career change into secondary school teaching. Given that the investigation was founded on a grounded theory approach, the review of the literature was purposefully constrained. Presented in this chapter is the review that was undertaken prior to data collection to develop some initial insights into career change while avoiding the formation of any pre-conceived ideas prior to the development of the explanatory grounded theory.

The chapter clarifies the various terms used in previous studies to describe those who make the change from a previous career to a career as a teacher. Pathways into pre-service teacher education programs designed as an initial teacher education qualification for those who want to teach in a Queensland school are discussed. Consideration is given to the recruitment of students into such pre-service teacher education programs by higher education institutions and employing bodies, along with the creation of career change pathways. The nature of a career change into teaching is examined to provide a brief summary of some of the reasons people have for choosing a career change and becoming a teacher. All of this serves the purpose of providing a background to the investigation. The preliminary review of the

\(^2\) Lee Iacocca is considered one of America’s most known and admired businessmen and named one of America’s greatest CEOs of all time by Portfolio.com (2009).
literature also serves the further, and equally important, purpose of identifying aspects of, and recommendations contained within, previous studies that have presented some of the research opportunities taken up in this investigation. For example, and as is noted in the following discussion, there is a frequent call throughout the existing literature for more comprehensive qualitative investigations into the experiences of career changers who embark on new careers in teaching. This investigation has responded to that, and other identified “gaps” revealed through the initial literature review.

2.2 Defining the term “Career Changer”

A number of different terms have been used to describe a person who makes a career change into teaching. Based on findings from the Norwich Change for the Better project, Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) use the term “career changer” (p. 95) to describe those who are not fresh graduates starting with teaching as their first job in life. I adopted this term for the purposes of this investigation to refer to a person who has embarked on a career change to become a secondary school teacher.

In adopting the term “career changer”, it is acknowledged that other terms have been used to describe and define the phenomenon of career change into teaching. Several of these introduce the word “student” in the wider sense. For example, in the findings from an on-line study of the motivations of career change students in Victoria, Williams, and Forgasz (2009) use the term “career change student” (p. 97) to define those who have worked for at least three years in a career other than teaching, including full or part time, paid or unpaid work, and/or parenting, prior to enrolling in their teacher education program. Similarly, Williams (2010) uses the term “career change student teacher” (p. 639). I avoided the
inclusion of the word “student”. Although the research participants had previously been students, at the time of their interviews all had successfully graduated from their pre-service teacher education program and so were no longer students. Haggard et al. (2006) use the term “second career teachers” (p. 317) to describe pre-service teachers who are moving from a previous career (perhaps their first career) into another workplace, “the workplace called school” (p. 320). This term was contemplated for this investigation, but rejected since while they were certainly teachers at the time of being interviewed, the participants had only just entered the profession. Johnson and Kardos (2005) offered the potentially useful term “career switchers” (p. 11) to describe people who come into teaching from a previous line of work or initial career other than teaching rather than entering teacher training directly following the completion of a university degree. Richardson and Watt (2006) also use the term “career switcher” (p. 29) to define those who use the postgraduate mode of teacher education to change careers. Only a semantic preference for changer over switcher caused the former to be adopted in this investigation. The literature also refers to those postgraduate students who had not selected teaching as their first occupation and who subsequently enter the teaching profession through a one-year postgraduate program as “career change beginning teachers” (Kember, 2008, p. 1). Importantly, and as Skilbeck and Connell (2004) contend, “as professionals, they are by no means beginners” (p. 4) given they possess a range of skills and experiences from life, work (previous careers) and previous university undergraduate studies. I shared the reservations concerning the word “beginners” and so decided not to use this term in developing a working definition of the research participants as career changers.
This initial literature review also revealed a number of characteristics that describe someone who embarks on a career change into teaching. Some of these were adopted in developing a working definition of a ‘career changer’ for the purposes of this investigation. Operationally, a ‘career changer’ was defined as someone who:

- is over the age of 25
- had completed a non-education Bachelor degree
- had completed a postgraduate pre-service teacher education degree for the purposes of making a career change and becoming a secondary school teacher
- may or may not have had previous teaching-related employment in a workplace other than a school.

2.3 Pathways to becoming a teacher: Pre-service teacher education

The information contained in this section provides a context for understanding the nature of the pre-service program offered by an approved higher education institution and which participants had been required to complete to achieve their aspirations to become registered teachers in Queensland. Currently within Queensland, pre-service teacher education is based on “not less than four years of higher education” (Department of Education, Science and Training [DEST], 2003, p. xxii). This could be completed either through a four-year undergraduate pre-service education degree (Bachelor level degree), or following its reintroduction in 2006, through a one-year postgraduate pre-service Graduate or Postgraduate Diploma following the completion of the minimum entry requirement of a three-year non-education Bachelor level degree, for example a Bachelor of Arts

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or a Bachelor of Science. The one-year pathway option in Queensland resulted directly from the review of the powers and functions of the Queensland Board of Teacher Registration (BTR)\(^4\) (McMeniman, 2004), which mandated consistency of program length and time across universities. Other entry options can also be found. Most of these take the form of a Bachelor degree as a double degree option, a graduate-entry Bachelor program which affords the student advanced credit into a pre-service Bachelor program in education, or provisions for advanced standing or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) from a trade qualification into a Bachelor of Education (or equivalent). Figure 2.1 shows the multiple pathways and pre-service teacher education degree programs leading to teacher registration in Queensland.

\(^4\) This review also resulted in the development of the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) which replaced the Queensland Board of Teacher Registration (BTR) from 2006.
Pre-service teacher education programs are designed to prepare graduates as “pre-school, primary school, middle school or secondary school teachers, as well as in areas like special, adult and vocational education” (DEST, 2003, p. 17). Most higher education institutions in Queensland offer pre-service programs in the areas...
of primary and secondary schooling. Primary pre-service teacher education programs are designed to produce graduates able to teach and integrate the Key Learning Areas (KLAs) of English; Mathematics; Science; Study of Society and Environment; The Arts; Technology; Health and Physical Education; and Languages. Secondary pre-service teacher education programs allow students to specialise in particular teaching areas. These programs usually require graduates to have two teaching areas (QCT, 2011a) to allow flexibility and more options for employment upon graduation.

In Australia, pre-service teacher education degrees are designed to meet the accreditation or registration requirements of a particular state or territory. Through their respective teacher registration bodies these requirements are matters of state government policy. Currently in Queensland, teacher registration is the responsibility of the QCT, which approves pre-service teacher education programs and registers graduates from such programs to teach within the State. There are strict guidelines to which higher education institutions must adhere in order to ensure graduates of such programs are eligible for registration to teach. Among other statutory requirements, pre-service degree programs in Queensland must include “professional studies in education, discipline studies, and include embedded professional experiences” (QCT, 2011a, p. 21). The discipline studies courses within an undergraduate secondary teacher education program consist of discipline specific knowledge deemed relevant to the intended teaching area. Satisfying this requirement requires

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5 The Key Learning Areas (KLAs) were initiated as part of the 1999 Adelaide Declaration of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA, 1999) and updated through the 2008 Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) with the intent of improving Australian Schooling within a framework of national collaboration. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2011) The Shape of the Australian Curriculum report presents the background for the implementation the Australian Curriculum with a national role out of the new F–10 curriculum across Australia through three phases. See http://www.acara.edu.au/

6 Each state or territory registration body adheres to the national agenda for teacher registration and accreditation through the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to ensure national consistency for initial teacher preparation. See http://www.aitsl.edu.au/
the completion of a number of courses chosen by the Education Faculty for a pre-service teacher to complete as a plan or major in their education degree (for example, courses completed from a Science Faculty for a student whose teaching area is science). The secondary discipline courses typically constitute significant proportions of a degree across both teaching areas. Within primary teacher education programs, the discipline courses are linked directly to the KLAs and priority areas such as literacy and numeracy.

As was the case with the research participants, a pre-service teacher enrolled in a one-year Graduate Diploma program would usually have completed all discipline specific course requirements through their previous studies and successful completion of their Bachelor level degrees. As required by the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT, 2011a), in Queensland at least half the completed undergraduate degree must consist of discipline specific courses. This requirement is similar to the requirement in undergraduate Education degree programs of a mix of education courses together with discipline specific courses as described earlier. Depending upon the nature of the prior program/s they may have studied, the number of programs students may have completed, or their work related experiences, the ratio of discipline specific courses may be higher for some entrants to the Graduate Diploma programs.

The requirements for those who have previously pursued a non-teaching career following completion of an undergraduate degree and then seeking to become secondary school teachers in Queensland are comparable to those found in other Australian states and overseas countries. In most instances, the combinations of having completed a relevant undergraduate degree together with subsequent work-related experiences are seen as offering certain advantages to those seeking to make
a career change into teaching. For example, in their United States study of second career teachers, Haggard et al. (2006) observe that having career experience and knowledge gained from previous undergraduate study enables the postgraduate entrant to pre-service teacher education to “demonstrate for the students the relationship between in-school knowledge and its utility outside of the school setting” (p. 319). In a New Zealand study of change-of-career secondary school teachers, Anthony and Ord (2008) noted that “given the increasing demand to attract teachers into the secondary sector, it is important to consider how expectations and prior experiences and skills are integrated and valued” (p. 361). In a secondary pre-service teacher education degree, teaching areas comprising content knowledge play an important role, not only in creating the pathway into teaching. As was found in a University of Sydney study of students enrolled in a secondary pre-service teacher education degree, they also provide “the opportunity to continue a meaningful engagement with the subject of their choice” (Manuel & Hughes, 2006, p. 20).

Postgraduate pre-service teacher education degrees that prepare secondary school teachers are designed to allow graduates to become specialist teachers of their chosen subject area/s based on their undergraduate degree. Quite significantly, the DEST (2007) report Research on career pathways into teaching showed that those who make the decision to become a teacher through a postgraduate pathway are less likely to ‘drop out’ of their course once they have begun as they “have made such a conscious decision to make the change” (p. 29). This further highlights the important relationship between subject area knowledge and then engaging with this knowledge in becoming a teacher of a particular teaching area or subject. In their report, Attracting and retaining specialist teachers and non-teaching professionals in Queensland state schools, Miles et al., (2009) found that graduates with non
education degrees such as science, mathematics and technology, at least initially do not view teaching as a favorable option. They tend to see “the extra year of study that must be completed in order to gain teacher certification, and the higher HECS debt incurred” (p. 13) as barriers to pursuing teaching as a post-degree option. These barriers may outweigh the desire to become a teacher. Presumably those who seek to become secondary school teachers after pursuing another career following graduation re-assess this situation in order to realise their teaching career ambitions.

2.4 Fast-track incentives to teach

From time to time, perceived shortfalls in the teaching labour force, especially in priority teaching areas, have prompted governments to put incentives in place to attract suitably qualified graduates into the teaching profession. In late 2008, for example, the then Deputy Prime Minister and Federal Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, announced a national program to recruit and train high-achieving graduates in such areas as science and mathematics into teaching through a fast-tracked intensive program: Teach for Australia7. This agenda was designed to “recruit committed graduates, provide them with an intensive training and mentoring package and place them in some of the challenging school environments where we are all determined to make a difference” (Gillard, 2008, n.p.).

Part of this new package saw the Commonwealth Government funding elements of a graduate pathway program based at the University of Melbourne that included intensive training of graduate recruits and mentoring by experienced teachers. After a preliminary intensive six-week teacher training period on campus, graduates then complete a two-year teaching placement in schools supported by an

7 The ‘Teach for Australia’ program is based on a model found in 10 other countries including ‘Teach First’ in the UK and ‘Teach for America’ in the US. See http://www.teachforaustralia.org
in-school mentor. Upon completion of the successful placement (which had its first intake in 2010), graduates are awarded a teaching qualification equivalent to a Postgraduate Diploma of Teaching from the University of Melbourne. This program, was designed to support reforms to teacher quality that were parts of the “Education Revolution” (Australian Labor Party, 2007) agenda of the Federal Labor Government in providing a national partnership between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories through the ‘Teach for Australia’ initiative, developed to “attract the best and brightest university graduates into the nation’s classrooms” (Gillard, 2009, n.p.).

The ‘Teach for Australia’ program evolved into the ‘Teach Next’ Plan. ‘Teach Next’ supports the DEEWR ‘Smarter Schools National Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality’ agenda which “aims to improve teacher quality, and will receive Australian Government funding of $15.9 million to help up to 395 career-change professionals to move into the teaching profession” (Teach Next, 2012, n.p.). ‘Teach Next’ has been implemented in New South Wales, Victoria, Australian Capital Territory and South Australia. However, it has not been implemented in Queensland where the State Government has indicated that graduates from such a program would not be eligible for employment within Queensland where, “to satisfy teaching requirements in Queensland, graduates complete an accredited four-year undergraduate qualification, or a one-year post-graduate qualification” (Chilcott, 2012, n.p.). As an alternative, Chilcott (2012) believes that the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment

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“is exploring innovative strategies to attract high-calibre teachers for Queensland state schools through scholarships and incentive programs” (n.p.).

Fast-tracked intensive programs into teaching have been criticised. Macdonald (2009), for instance, suggested that they are “a quick fix for the nation’s teaching shortage as well as an insult to the teaching profession” (p. 5). Similarly, Jacobs (2010, n.p.), sees the ‘Teach Next’ program as “a slap in the face to those who spent four years developing their teaching skills through a traditional pathway”. The Melbourne Age (Perkins, 2009) quoted the Australian Education Union Victorian Branch President, Mary Bluett, as stating “To think you can take people and put them through six weeks of training and they’re ready to be in a tough classroom is a mistake … regardless of the support they will get” (Perkins, 2009, p. 5). Jacobs (2010) argues that an on-the-job teacher training model does not work, citing the ‘Teach for America’ model in which 70 per cent of participants leave teaching once the two-year mentorship is up. Of the remainder, Jacobs’ (2010) further concern is this teacher training model “will have new teachers replicating the practices of their mentors with little or no view to what other possibilities might be achievable in education” (n.p.). Historically, fast-track graduate-entry programs in Queensland have presented tensions within the teaching profession. This issue was highlighted earlier by Manuel and Hughes (2006) who maintained “[t]here is the danger of de-professionalisation through the recruitment of ‘fast-tracked’, accelerated or under-qualified entrants” (p. 6).

Even before secondary undergraduate pre-service programs were initiated, for many years the option of a one-year postgraduate pre-service program has been available for secondary school teaching. Due to the nature of primary teaching encompassing all KLAs and the perception that preparation requires more than one
year of study, primary one-year programs are not as readily accepted by the profession as the secondary option. One-year teacher education programs, especially the primary one-year pre-service pathway, are currently being reviewed by the QCT and AITSL. In late 2011, Queensland universities received advice from the Director of the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT, 2011b) indicating the last intake into one-year graduate primary programs in Queensland will occur at the start of 2013, and for secondary graduate-entry programs in 2015. This is due to the move to national requirements of two year graduate entry programs as well as the need to embed the recommendations of the Caldwell Sutton Review (2010) which proposed the completion of a Master of Teaching (or equivalent) qualification following the completion of a three year bachelor degree. This is consistent with the requirements released by AITSL (2010) in recommending that all graduate-entry pathways across Australia be at least two years full-time structured learning delivered over a minimum of 18 calendar months⁹.

Given the potential financial hardship in forfeiting income from employment and the possible personal issues in adjusting to the change, increasing pre-service training time requirements will present a number of challenges in attracting career changers to teaching. Employers have shown that one-year postgraduate programs play an important role in attracting highly skilled teachers to specialist areas in secondary schools. The potential extension from one-year to two-year postgraduate pre-service teacher training is paradoxical and further heightens apprehension concerning the introduction of intensive fast track preparation programs such as the ‘Teach Next’ initiative. Furthermore, this may well have further impacts on the

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⁹ No firm decision has been made regarding this change with negotiations occurring between the Queensland State Government and Higher Education Institutions through the Queensland Deans of Education Forum.
extent to which career changers find becoming a teacher an attractive option, particularly if they are aiming to undergo a relatively fast career change into teaching in the minimum possible time.

A fast-tracked one year pathway has remained an important consideration for some career changers aspiring to new careers in teaching. Both the national study by the Australian College of Educators (ACE, 2003) *Career Change Entrants to Teaching*, and the DEST (2007) findings noted the need to provide alternate, shorter (in length/time) pathways in order to attract more people into teaching. While career changers find the one-year pathway into teaching attractive, shorter six-week fast-tracked intensive programs being introduced may see an increase in the number of career changers deciding to prepare for new teaching careers.

To summarise this section, preparing career changers to teach within a compressed, shorter period of time presents some tensions. On the one hand, those who make the career change and become teachers following a previous career are seen as assets to schools, bringing with them a wealth of life experience and knowledge from their former careers. On the other hand, as Milton, Rohl, and House (2007) signify, some educationalists advocate longer pre-service teacher education programs believing it is difficult to include all necessary knowledge and experience to become a teacher in such a short period of time.

### 2.5 Recruitment into pre-service teacher education

Recruiting teachers to the profession is important both to higher education institutions and employing authorities. This section will explore some of the challenges faced by higher education institutions in recruiting students into pre-service teacher education programs. The recruitment practices of authorities that employ teachers are also investigated with particular reference to those strategies
used to recruit entrants into secondary pre-service teacher education degrees to fill shortages in specialist teaching areas.

Directly relevant to the first of the two aims of this investigation is the fact that government authorities responsible for higher education institutions and teacher training are keen to know what attracts a person to choose teaching as a career. The DEST (2003) report, *Australia’s teachers: Australia’s future*, that focussed on determining why people may consider a career in teaching, indicated “more students might be attracted to these [Education] faculties and to careers in teaching if different approaches were adopted” (p. 102). That report (DEST, 2003) further stated that

for people who may be interested in a career in teaching, or who have potential as teachers but have not considered the possibility of becoming a teacher, very good information is needed, especially on the positive challenges and opportunities teaching in the future is likely to present (p. 102).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2005) report, *Teachers matter: Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers*, a study conducted over 2002–04 in collaboration with 25 countries, concluded that the “teaching profession needs to be competitive with other occupations in attracting talented and motivated people” (p. 39). The need to recruit the most highly suitable, qualified, motivated and intelligent adults into pre-service teacher education programs is paramount to the development of a quality profession. In their study of shortages in mathematics and science teachers in Australian schools, Webster, Wooden, and Marks (2006) argue “in order to devise policies to enhance the attraction of graduates skilled in the discipline areas with shortages and those with
superior teaching skills, we need to understand the career motivations of potential and existing teachers” (p. 9). At least in part, the research underpinning this thesis makes a further contribution to understanding such motivations and reasons as they were articulated by a particular group of career changers who had completed a pre-service teacher education program to become a secondary school teacher.

There are shortages of teachers in some secondary school teaching areas. As identified by Miles et al., (2009), “most education jurisdictions in Australia are reporting recruiting difficulties in a number of secondary teaching areas” (p. 9).

Teacher shortages in the areas of mathematics, science and technology have been acknowledged for some time. For that reason, Australian State and Territory Departments of Education have long advocated recruiting professionals out of other careers into teaching to reduce temporarily the acknowledged teacher shortages and to attract those who “appear confident they will bring the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies to the teaching-learning setting” (Haggard et al. 2006, p. 318). In 2009, the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE), in pursuing the recruitment of secondary school teachers into specific “specialist teaching areas or hard to staff locations” (Miles et al., 2009, p. 20), launched the ‘Make a Difference – Teach’ initiative. The teaching areas targeted included mathematics, physics, chemistry and industrial technology and design (manual arts). This scheme, for the first time, included information on the Department’s recruitment website for career changers as well as for school leavers seeking to become teachers.\footnote{See \url{http://education.qld.gov.au/hr/recruitment/teaching/becoming-teacher.html}}

The Queensland Government also introduced a series of lucrative scholarships for postgraduate pre-service teacher education study in an effort to recruit those from other professions seeking to make a career change into
This is not a new initiative in Australia, as other States have introduced similar programs in previous years. In attempting to explain the shortage of individuals entering the teaching profession and the difficulties in recruiting students into pre-service teacher education, it is also worth noting the reasons why a person may not choose to become a teacher, even after completing a pre-service teacher education degree. Chevalier, Dolton, and McIntosh (2007) in a study of UK entrants to teaching, indicated that the salary levels compared with and relative to other professions do not attract many to teaching. Within Australia, the DEST (2006) report *Attitudes to teaching as a career: A synthesis of attitudinal research* concluded status and remuneration were among the top reasons many graduates of teacher education programs did not subsequently choose to go into teaching within schools. Instead they tended to move into training or other vocational professions that utilised the skills of their teaching qualification. The Business Council of Australia (BCA, 2008) report *Teaching Talent: The best teachers for Australian classrooms* in advocating for higher salaries to attract the best qualified and academically capable graduates, claimed “teacher salary may not be a strong reason why current teachers have chosen to teach, but it is a strong reason why abler graduates choose not to teach” (p. 18). Webster et al. (2006) emphasise that “non-monetary factors inevitably influence a person’s career decision and teachers are no different from other occupations in this respect” (p. 9). In addition, as noted by Miles et al., (2009), there is a general decline in the number of specialist secondary teachers joining teaching due to “the added cost to become a teacher, competitive salaries and curriculum changes” (pp. 13–16).

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12 See for example DEST (2007); House of Representatives (2007); and Skilbeck and Connell (2004) for a listing of these initiatives.
The interrelated research on the difficulties of attracting and, more fundamentally, actually recruiting prospective teachers into pre-service teacher education programs has highlighted changing patterns in the teaching workforce. Furthermore, as Mayer (2003)\textsuperscript{13} observed, there is much interest in the supply and demand for teachers within Australia, arising particularly from the “looming generational change in the teaching workforce and projected teacher shortages” (p. 19). In that context, and given the challenges of recruiting and retaining members of the profession, there is an important need to develop a more detailed understanding of what Skilbeck and Connell (2004) describe as “qualitative concerns and issues” (p. 29). The development of such further understanding is a major intention of this investigation, positioned as it is within a qualitative research paradigm. As a first step in furthering understanding of career changers who decide to become secondary school teachers the following section engages in a discussion of some of features that characterise such a career change.

2.6 Features that characterise a career change to teaching

The initial review of the literature proved useful in identifying a number of key characteristics and attributes of career changers who choose to become teachers. The findings from the previous investigations discussed in this section will contribute to the later chapters of the thesis in which the reasons and experiences of the career change participants will be interpreted as the basis for constructing the explanatory grounded theory.

Career changers are characterised by their age. Like the participants in this investigation, career changers are generally somewhat older than those who

complete their pre-service teacher education directly after completing secondary school, or even directly after completing their first tertiary education degree. As indicated in the DEEWWR (2008) report entitled Staff in Australia’s schools 2007, 27% of secondary school teachers began teaching when they were over 25 years of age, while 42% of current primary school teachers were in the same age bracket when they started teaching (p. xv). These are people who entered the profession after having started or completed other careers. The DEST (2007) report also described career changers as those aged 25 years or older, who have recognised academic or trade based qualifications, and work experience in fields that reflect their qualifications. Tigchelaar et al. (2008) characterised the Dutch career changers who enter secondary school teaching who participated in their study as “persons well over 25, possessing substantial life experience resulting from previous careers and raising children, which enables them to bring important assets, such as maturity and expertise to teaching” (p. 1531). Not unexpectedly, a career changer who undertakes a pre-service teacher education program is most likely to be a mature-age student who has completed a first undergraduate degree and who has established a career in a field other than teaching. Skilbeck and Connell’s (2004) report for the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA)¹⁴, Teachers for the future: The changing nature of society and related issues for the teaching workforce indicates a growing number of older entrants entering the teaching workforce within Australia. That is, they are older than those who have followed the uninterrupted school-university-teaching route and can generally be found within a wide age span typically from early twenties to the late forties and

older. This information will provide a useful basis when it comes to profiling the participants in this investigation later in this thesis (see Chapter 4 and Appendix I).

As a further characteristic, career changers typically come from and possess a broad range of occupational and life experiences. The Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE, 2005) report *Teaching tomorrow’s teachers* noted that “mature-age entrants constitute around fifty percent of entrants into education courses [degrees/programs]” (p. 22). That report goes further to suggest entrants to pre-service teacher education programs are typically offered places in such programs based on their rich prior life experiences and perceived capabilities as well as the applicable academic pre-requisites. DEST (2003) also highlights a large number of adults choosing teaching as a career after other experiences in a non-teaching occupation, and reports that schools value the importance of mature age career changers who bring other professional and life experiences into teaching. Again these are general attributes that will inform the subsequent interpretations of the stories provided by the research participants.

Career changers typically pursue the postgraduate teacher education pathway in order to join the teaching profession. They usually possess a completed undergraduate degree making them eligible to enter the profession via this pathway. DEST (2007) indicates up to 19% of the 21,823 who entered pre-service teacher education programs in Australia in 2004 commenced postgraduate courses. At this time, the postgraduate pathway was principally a one year Graduate Diploma program. When the age of career changers was considered together with pre-service education course type as was the case in the DEST (2007) report, of the total number of students commencing initial teacher education degrees, 40% were over the age of
25, with 26% aged 30 years and older as shown in Figure 2.2 below from the DEST (2007, p. 7).

*Figure 2.2* Percentage of students commencing initial teacher education courses by age group and course type, 2004 (n=21,823).


As indicated in Figure 2.2, among both undergraduate and postgraduate entrants to pre-service teacher education programs, a significant number are aged 25 years or older, a pattern that is somewhat more pronounced in the case of entrants to postgraduate programs. Of many of these DEST (2007) suggests “... it could be assumed [they] would have had some work experience” (p. 7).

Career changers may or may not remain working in their previous employment while completing their pre-service teacher education program. DEST (2007) notes research that reveals a consistent pattern of involvement of students in postgraduate pre-service teacher education programs who are working concurrently in their previous occupations while undertaking their pre-service teacher education
study. As examples, applicants to programs identified in the DEST (2007) report included qualified and practicing solicitors, veterinarians, medical doctors, petroleum engineers and designers. DEST (2007) suggested that the fact that most continue to work and study concurrently made for a seamless change from one career to another. However, it should also be noted that some career changers may not have had any choice other than to be unemployed while completing their pre-service programs because they were made redundant, or had resigned from an unsatisfactory career choice.

In contrast to the school leaver who decides to become a teacher, for some career changers the change may require them to forfeit a full-time salary and/or stable employment during the period of change. DEST (2007) suggests there may be “a significant level of personal and financial risk associated with giving up one career in order to study for another with no guarantees of success” (p. 29). While some university programs may be tailored toward flexible delivery, and may purport to provide for ‘study any time anywhere’ as a catch-cry aimed at targeting mature-aged entrants, the realities are quite different in pre-service teacher education programs. As part of their accreditation, these programs require students to complete professional experiences that include practicums and in-school placements. Consequently, as DEST (2007) points out, students may experience “. . . significant financial hardship, especially during a practicum where they are unable to undertake part time work” (p. 29). This in itself may be a deterrent to prospective career changers who cannot afford to sacrifice financial security especially if they have a dependent family. Study also incurs costs in the form of textbooks and resources for classroom teaching activities. Miles et al., (2009) have urged “when designing career change programs, educational authorities should consider both what motivates
professionals to become teachers as well as the personal and financial risk of giving up one career to pursue teaching” (p. 20).

Previous investigations have considered the provision of flexible study options and alternative pathways into pre-service teacher education that career changers seek when deciding to make their career change. The ACE (2003) study, for example, noted the need to consider alternative pathways for those seeking to make the career change into teaching with their prior knowledge, skills and experience. As suggested in that study (ACE, 2003), such alternatives usually took the form of shorter pathways including a one-year postgraduate pre-service teacher education program. In addition, the DEST (2007) report suggested that the mode of study, duration of the program, and course content were significant considerations in the success or otherwise of career change programs with career changers preferring shorter courses with part-time or distance education options, and programs that, through their application processes, acknowledged and catered for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Current Competence (RCC).

What it is that attracts them to the profession is a key defining feature of a career changer embarking on a new career into teaching. Among the several attributes that they share is the fact identified in the DEST (2007) report that emphasised career changers do not ‘drift’ into teaching. Rather, they are people who have an interest in, and an obvious attraction toward, teaching. DEST (2007) goes further to suggest that some career changers choose to make their later move into teaching, possibly because they did not previously have the opportunity to take up teaching because of personal or financial reasons. In a real sense they are now “returning to their true vocation” (DEST, 2007, p. 28). Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) support this notion, affirming that career changers choose teaching in
preference to the career in which they were already established, because they see “teaching as a career that still holds attractions” (p. 95). In their findings, these attractions were identified as major ‘pull and push’ factors, for example:

- dissatisfaction with the nature of their previous career: feeling bored, alienated or isolated;
- the need for greater stability and security; changing perspectives on life;
- memories/experiences of school; and,

wanting to use specialist subject knowledge. (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Plant, 2003, pp. 101-106). Richardson and Watt’s (2005) study of 74 pre-service teachers attending a Melbourne university revealed that teaching may well be a “career of choice for those who pursue it” (p. 480), while for other individuals the social status of teaching may also influence their decisions to enter the profession. This latter point supported Ramsey’s (2000) earlier findings in a review of teacher education in New South Wales, which found the status of the teaching profession, as well as “career fit”, including understanding the role of the teacher and career satisfaction, influenced people’s decisions to join the profession.

Teaching for some, however, may be considered only as a ‘back-up’ career. In their study of Taiwanese teacher education reform, Wang and Fwu (2002), for instance, observed that some of those choosing the graduate-entry option to initial teacher education might have done so only as a ‘back-up’ choice to other career options or opportunities that had not yet arisen. Their assessment (Wang & Fwu, 2002) was that graduates of such graduate-entry programs seemingly had multiple choices other than a teaching career alone since they had obtained an academic degree and a pre-service teacher education degree. Unlike those who graduate with a single purpose qualification (undergraduate teacher education degree), those with
two degrees have several career choices, with teaching being but one of those options. In contrast to Wang and Fwu’s (2002) findings, in their report on graduate-entry pre-service teachers prepared for the Düsseldorf Skills Forum, Birrell, and Rapson (2006) argue that generation X (born 1960s and 70s) and generation Y (born 1980s and 90s), have very different options to the generation before (baby boomers, born 1943–1960). They argue Generation X and Y are more likely to ‘fall back’ on teaching as an option only when they perceive a lack of other career options that they feel suit their talents and skills.

This section has outlined a number of key features of those who embark on a career change into teaching. Characterised by their age, career changers are usually over the age of 25 and possess a range of occupational and life experiences. Having already completed an undergraduate degree, career changers utilise the postgraduate pathway into teacher education, a pathway usually characterised by flexibility that they find convenient. They may or may not continue to work while making their career change. Finally, career changers share the common characteristic of feeling an attraction to the teaching profession, as opposed to those who may choose teaching as a back-up career choice. These characteristics comprise a series of attributes that, as noted earlier, were incorporated into the operational definition of career changer developed for this investigation.

2.7 The attraction to teaching: Reasons to change careers to teaching

The preliminary review of the literature also provided some initial insights into a wide range of reasons people have for making a career change to teaching. It was considered such initial insights derived from previous research findings offered at least a tentative basis for the subsequent interpretations placed on the career change stories of participants in this investigation. Hence, while some previous
Chapter 2 Changing Career and Becoming a Teacher

Studies into the aspects that attract a person to become a teacher are briefly considered in this section, it is emphasised this has been done only to provide an initial context and point of entry for this investigation. Several of the previous studies that were considered however relate to entry into teaching in general, and at both primary and secondary levels, rather than entry into the profession resulting specifically from a career change, and entry to the profession as a secondary school teacher specifically.

A key attraction to a change in career and becoming a teacher is the desire to work with children and adolescents. Watt and Richardson (2008) found this desire to be highly influential in attracting people to teaching. The earlier DEST (2007) report suggested that previous rewarding experiences working with children in training or non-school teaching contexts influenced some people to decide that becoming a teacher was their career of choice. In reporting on the supply and demand of teachers in Australia, MCEETYA (2005) showed a number of factors considered to motivate people’s choice of teaching as a career over all other possibilities. That report included a survey of some 2,500 teachers from government and non-government schools across Australia. It is the most recent government survey focusing on the wider purpose of determining what factors are important in attracting and retaining teachers in light of trends in supply and demand. As shown in Table 2.1, “enjoy working with children” (30.7 per cent) and “desire to teach” (22.0 per cent) were the two leading motivations that respondents in the MCEETYA (2005) study indicated were influential when choosing teaching as a career.
Table 2.1 Motivations to become a teacher - female, male and all teachers (percent)

\[(n=2,500)\]

Note. From *Demand and supply of primary and secondary school teachers* (p. 29), by MCEETYA, 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy working with children</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to teach</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment campaign or positive impacts of role model</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment conditions</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make a difference</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy subject</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fallback option</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remuneration</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some of the motivations recorded above have been grouped for ease of analysis:
- “Desire to teach” is a combination of “desire to teach” and “share skills/knowledge with students”
- “Employment conditions” is a combination of “job security”, “working hours/holiday provisions”, and “mobility of position to allow for travel” and
- “Fallback option” is a combination of “only option available”, “dislike previous career”, “injury sustained from previous career” and “need a job/fell into teaching”

Within the overall pattern of responses, the MCEETYA (2005) survey revealed some interesting differences between primary and secondary teaching recruits in terms of their reasons for embarking on a teaching career. As shown in Table 2.2, “enjoy working with children” and “to make a difference” as reasons for becoming a teacher were less influential for those entering the profession as secondary school teachers than for those becoming primary school teachers. Those becoming secondary school teachers were more likely to be influenced by factors such as “employment conditions” and “enjoy subject”, with the latter perhaps reflecting their wanting to become a teacher in a specialist subject area.
CHAPTER 2 CHANGING CAREER AND BECOMING A TEACHER

Table 2.2 Motivations for becoming a teacher - schooling level (percent) (n=2,500)

Note. From Demand and supply of primary and secondary school teachers (p. 30), by MCEETYA, 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy working with children</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to teach</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment campaign or positive impacts of role model</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment conditions</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make a difference</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy subject</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fallback option</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remuneration</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The DEEWR (2008) report, Staff in Australia’s schools 2007, indicates similar reasons why a person decides to become a teacher. That report summarised responses to some 14,000 surveys among primary and secondary school teachers and leaders (Principals and Deputy Principals). In the summary of the DEEWR (2008) findings presented in Table 2.3 it can be seen that “personal fulfillment” (87%) and the “desire to work with young people” (85%) rated most highly for primary school teachers, while 92% of secondary school teachers indicated “I enjoyed my subject areas” as the most significant factor.
Table 2.3 *Factors in the decision to become a teacher (ranked highest to lowest)*

(*n*=14,000)

Note. Adapted from *Staff in Australia’s schools 2007* (pp. 34 - 35), by DEEWR, 2008, Canberra, ACT: Author.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary Teachers</th>
<th>Primary Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy my subject area/s</td>
<td>Personal fulfillment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal fulfillment</td>
<td>Desire to work with young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching makes a worthwhile social contribution</td>
<td>Teaching makes a worthwhile social contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to work with young people</td>
<td>I enjoy my subject area/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to pass on knowledge</td>
<td>I am passionate about education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching is suited to my abilities</td>
<td>Teaching is suited to my abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am passionate about education</td>
<td>Desire to pass on knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security of employment</td>
<td>Security of employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of past teacher/s</td>
<td>I enjoyed school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High likelihood of gaining employment</td>
<td>High likelihood of gaining employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed school</td>
<td>Influence of past teacher/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working conditions (e.g., flexibility, leave)</td>
<td>Working conditions (e.g., flexibility, leave)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family role model/s</td>
<td>Family role model/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was awarded a bursary or scholarship</td>
<td>I was awarded a bursary or scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future opportunities for career advancement</td>
<td>Future opportunities for career advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary for experienced teachers</td>
<td>Status of teaching profession in the community</td>
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<td>Status of teaching profession in the community</td>
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<td>Opportunity to work overseas</td>
<td>Opportunity to work overseas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting salary</td>
<td>Starting salary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A national study conducted by ACE (2003) found career changers were mainly attracted to teaching by altruistic feelings of “wanting to make a difference” or “to give back to the community”. The ACE study investigated the entry of talented individuals from other professions into pre-service teacher education.
programs, as well as considering creative recruitment strategies designed to attract other professionals to teaching. Respondents in that study indicated that the long-term security of employment and income were important motivating factors, along with the attractiveness of school holidays for those either with children or considering having a family.

This section has provided a brief summary of selected findings from previous studies into the reasons people may have for changing career and becoming a teacher. This preliminary review of the literature has revealed a number of factors that account for career changers being attracted to teaching. Significantly, findings from the previous research of Richardson and Watt (2005), MCEETYA (2005) and DEEWR (2008) all showed enjoying working with children/young people rated most highly as the major attraction to teaching. Interestingly, and supporting the findings of the BCA (2008) report, in the research of MCEETYA (2005) and DEEWR (2008), salary/remuneration ranked as the least influential factor in the decision to become a teacher. However, the earlier ACE (2003) findings reported a contrary view indicating teacher income was a high-ranking motivating factor. It may very well be that these differences between findings reflect changing salary and working conditions for teachers within the time period between these various investigations.

2.8 Identified gaps in the literature on career change into teaching

This preliminary literature review has identified a number of research opportunities that make this investigation significant. In their research on career change into teaching, Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) recognise there are relatively few studies available to critique that have a specific focus on career changers. Moreover, a limited number of studies were found that focus on the reasons of those who aspired to change their careers to teach. Furthermore,
Tigchelaar et al. (2008) emphasised the need to know more about career changers’ backgrounds and relatedly how postgraduate pre-service teacher education programs in particular equip career changers to become teachers. Richardson and Watt (2006) claim research to date in Australia regarding career change into teaching has focussed on small and opportune groups and, for the most part, this research has been mainly in the area of undergraduate study. Wang and Fwu (2002) arrived at a similar conclusion and found that previous studies of pre-service teacher education students focussed mostly on undergraduate, rather than postgraduate, students. Further, Manuel and Hughes (2006) concluded that certainly in the context of postgraduate pre-service teacher education, the links between motivations to teach, expectations of teaching, and satisfaction and success as a teacher have not been thoroughly explored within an Australian context.

It is evident there are several gaps this investigation fills. In particular, this investigation has a direct focus on career change into secondary school teaching through the completion of a one-year postgraduate pre-service teacher education program. The potential contributions to knowledge in the field of pre-service teacher education are apparent, together with the choice of grounded theory as the research methodology to enhance the depth of understanding of the reasons and experiences of the career change participants. Specifically, this investigation focuses on the reasons that attracted a group of individuals to undertake a change into a secondary school teaching career, and their experiences as students of a pre-service teacher education program. Interpreting and understanding their reasons and experiences formed the basis on which an explanatory grounded theory was constructed. Findings related to both of these aspects may be considered as significant specifically to employing authorities in particular, to higher education providers of
pre-service teacher education programs, and to research into teacher education in general.

### 2.9 Summary of Chapter

In order not to pre-empt the outcomes of this investigation by engaging with the literature too early and/or too extensively, this review of the literature has been deliberately constrained. It has, however, had a twofold purpose. Firstly, the preliminary literature review has provided a context within which this investigation could be located in the fields of knowledge relevant to career change and, more specifically, career change into teaching. Secondly, it has served to indicate the investigation’s further contribution to knowledge concerning those who, after completing an undergraduate qualification and spending some time pursuing a prior career, decide to make the change to a teaching career. This chapter has also served to distinguish the present investigation from previous research conducted into career change into teaching. The preliminary review of the literature has indicated that the present investigation can be differentiated from other investigations by virtue of two specific points of focus. Firstly, it is specifically concerned with those aspiring to new careers as secondary school teachers; and secondly, the investigation focussed on completing a one-year, postgraduate pre-service teacher education program at an Australian university in order to fulfill their career change ambitions.

The following chapter presents some of the elements and parameters of the interpretive constructivist paradigm within which the investigation was undertaken and the nature of a grounded theory approach that was adopted in order to achieve its aims to consider the reasons for and experiences of a career change for a group of individuals from a qualitative research perspective.
CHAPTER 3 ELEMENTS OF AN INTERPRETIVE CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED THEORY METHODOLOGY

We shall not cease from exploration – and the end of exploration will be when we arrive where we started and know that place for the first time.

(Eliot, 1968, p. 47)

3.1 Introduction

To accomplish the dual aims of the investigation, rich data were sought. Through its qualitative approach within an interpretive constructivist paradigm and using a grounded theory methodology, this investigation contrasts with much of the knowledge derived from previous research in career change into teaching. That research has largely followed quantitative approaches.

This chapter provides an overview of the perspectives of the qualitative paradigm that provided the framework for this investigation. The interpretive constructivist paradigm is explained in relation to its ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology. This discussion of methodology forms the basis for Chapter 4 which details the specific aspects of the grounded theory methods that were designed and implemented to gather and construct the data for further interpretation and analysis. In justifying the choice of these methods, the present chapter provides a discussion of the past traditions and contemporary viewpoints of grounded theory methods and approaches.

Grounded theory methods and, more specifically, an interpretive constructivist approach, were selected as appropriate in order to understand the reasons and experiences of those who participated in the investigation. Their reasons for, and lived experiences of, the career change that they had made formed the basis

15 From T.S. Eliot’s (1968) poem “Little Gidding” the fourth and final poem in the collection, Four Quartets, a series of poems that discuss time, perspective, humanity, and salvation.
for constructing an explanatory grounded theory, that is, a theory grounded in the empirical data they provided in telling their career change stories.

This chapter presents the main elements of the paradigm in which this investigation was located. As such, this chapter accounts for the ‘skeleton’. ‘Putting the ‘flesh on the bones’ will then be done in Chapter 4 that details the specific methods related to the recruitment of suitable participants, data collection and the analytical processes that were applied in this study. An understanding of these specifics rests on understanding the paradigm and its main perspectives that are considered in the following sections.

3.2 The Research Paradigm

A paradigm is a “conceptual model of a person’s worldview, complete with the assumptions that are associated with that view” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2002, p. 139). As Mertens (2005), among others, states, a paradigm “influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted” (p. 194) and serves as a framework for observation and understanding, shaping what should be studied, what is seen, and how what is seen is interpreted or understood. In the more specific context of an interpretive constructivist paradigm “knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process, and . . . researchers should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Mertens, 2005, p. 12). Creswell (2003) suggests investigators adopt an interpretive constructivist paradigm when “the issue is complex and its complexity needs to be better understood” (p. 62). This investigation was located within such a paradigm because it was considered understanding the concept of becoming a secondary school teacher among a group of participants who had made a career change through the completion of a pre-service teacher education program was potentially complex.
It was also considered that any attempt to explain this phenomenon would require detailed exploration and interpretation focussed on understanding what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as the “multiple realities” (p. 37) of the participants.

In detailing the elements of a grounded theory approach, Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) explain that constructivists do not generally begin with a theory, but generate theory based on patterns or meanings. Grounded theory methods were adopted for this research because I believed they would enable me to formulate a theory grounded in the empirical data that were collected rather than responding to any pre-conceived research hypotheses. In adhering to an interpretive constructivist grounded theory approach, the theory was constructed as I gathered information from participants and analysed and interpreted what they were saying about their career change experiences, that is, how they had constructed these social realities (Charmaz, 2006). Within such a paradigm the investigator becomes an integral research instrument. The researcher’s role is to become immersed in the research setting in order to interpret and construct the social realities of the participants. In doing so, inductive reasoning applied to the data provides the basis of the grounded theory. As the data were gathered, and increasingly as the information was interpreted, such a paradigm also enabled me to concurrently appraise and critique existing literature on career change into secondary school teaching.

3.3 Perspectives of a qualitative research paradigm

The various theoretical paradigms outline different perspectives and approaches investigators adopt. The choice of paradigm determines how knowledge is acquired and interpreted and therefore the chosen paradigm needs to be congruent with the underlying aims of the research. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Guba and Lincoln (2005) note, any research paradigm can be examined from four key
perspectives, namely ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stress that a researcher must “understand the basic ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological assumptions of the paradigm to be able to engage them in dialogue” (p. 191). The four paradigm perspectives present a belief system that aligns with the researcher’s particular worldview in the context of being (ontology), knowing (epistemology), values (axiology) and doing (methodology). I will now examine each of the four perspectives and point out some of their implications for my research design.

3.3.1 Ontology

The ontological perspective asks questions about the nature of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In an interpretive constructivist paradigm multiple realities are considered to be constructed by individuals or groups, acknowledging that “realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent on the persons who hold them” (Hollinshead, 2004, p. 76). As Sale, Lohfeld and Brazil (2002) note, “ontologically speaking, there are multiple realities or multiple truths based on one’s construction of reality” (p. 45). While such a perspective underpins the interpretive constructivist paradigm, it is a perspective that, since the 1970s has come to be shared with critical realism, an ontology first postulated by Bhaskar (1978). The critical realist ontology as developed in the later works of Bhaskar (for example, 1979, 1986) and also by Sayer (for example 1992, 2000) and Maxwell (2004a, 2004b). As noted by Klein (2004) “the REAL are the causal mechanisms and structures that produce actual events, a subset of which then is empirically observed” (p. 131).

This critical realist ontology shares much in common with the fusionist ontology underpinning the present investigation that was briefly outlined in Chapter
1. This ontology originated in the works of Aristotle who perceived a fusion between ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ (Blasch & Plano, 2003). The Aristotelian view sought to reconcile being and becoming with individuals experiencing the dynamics of a change process from the realm of mere theory (that is, of becoming) to what becomes the reality (that is, of being). The fusion between being and becoming that Aristotle sought to establish as an alternate ontology was, as noted in Chapter 1, subsequently adopted and elaborated by Driesch (1914). In his *History and Theory of Vitalism*, Driesch (1914) argued that in nature we may successfully search for something that endures, and in nature we may regard becoming as if any phase of it were the ‘reason’ of a later phase and the ‘consequence’ of an earlier one. As was noted in Chapter 1 the fusionist ontology has been critiqued by Merleau-Ponty (1995; 2003, trans Morris, 2008) who presents the contrary argument that rather than being shaped by a series of prior experiences and situations, what might become is shaped by “other forces [that] come into play” (p. 76).

Within this fusionist ontology (Blasch & Plano, 2003), the state of ‘being’ for any individual contains and includes the precursors and antecedents to a reality that is yet to exist in the state of ‘becoming’. In other words the causal mechanisms and structures identified in critical realism. Wenger (1998) developed this ontological perspective further in suggesting that the self and self-identity are characterised as “a ‘constant becoming’ that defines who we are” (p. 149). These dynamics of ‘becoming’ form the basis of the post-modernist views of Michel Foucault (1982) in stating that, “the main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning” (p. 1). Judith Butler (1987) in her book chapter *Desire, Rhetoric, and Recognition in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, notes that some two centuries beforehand, Hegel had theorised about ‘becoming’ in very similar terms.
Hegel depicted reality (that is, ‘being’) as relatively stable at any point in time. However, this stability, as Butler (1987) interprets Hegel’s philosophy, disguises an “inherent movement in ‘being’ – rather than being, we are always ‘becoming’ . . .” (p. 49).

Congruent with all of this, and acknowledging that I was not a neutral observer, my ontological stance was one founded on appreciating that there are multiple social realities and that the outcomes of the investigation would be inextricably tied to those realities of the participants, me as researcher, and the nature of the interactions between us during data collection and analysis.

3.3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology as an element of a research paradigm is “concerned with the nature, sources and limits of knowledge” (Klein, 2005, p. 1). In simple terms, epistemology refers to the fundamental question: how can I know reality? and the relationship of the knower with the known. Epistemologically, an interpretive constructivist paradigm assumes knowledge exists in a variety of forms and emanates from a variety of sources. New knowledge and understandings are thus co-created through the relationships and interactions between the researcher and the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Within this, contextual and linguistic processes generate knowledge, and identity is created and modified through situated interactions between people. While the researcher “approaches the world [to be researched] with a set of ideas, a framework” based on his/her “personal biography” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 21), the participants too have their own biographies that will impact the research process and the generation of knowledge. Those who have directly experienced the phenomenon under investigation are in the best position to enhance an understanding of its realities and, in critical realist terms, its actualities.
In this study, the participants for the first time engaged in a critical reflection on their experiences of career change and the impact this had on constructing new knowledge and new ways of understanding of becoming a secondary school teacher.

The instrumental role of the researcher is to seek to understand the participants’ construction of knowledge related to the area of enquiry, in this case the reasons for and experiences of career changers becoming secondary school teachers. On this basis the task is then to determine a level of consensus within the data and, through reconstruction as new information comes to hand, to attain a broader understanding that provides the foundations of an explanatory theory grounded in the data (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Clearly, throughout this process, the relationships and interactions between researcher and participants impact the understandings, interpretations and explanations of the knowledge (Charmaz, 2003). As will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, reflexive practices offered some means of resolving such potential conflicts of interest throughout the investigation.

Ensuring that the participants’ social realities and experiences are captured and that their voices resonate throughout the research means asking questions, but in a manner founded on a conversational style rather than a pre-contrived questionnaire. This approach to data collection is congruent with the opened ended nature of the “grand tour questions” (Leech, 2002, p. 667) to which a qualitative investigation seeks answers and explanations. Grand tour questions “ask respondents to give a verbal tour of something they know well” (Leech, 2002, p. 665). As will be considered later in discussing the methodological perspective of paradigm, this approach allows the conversation to develop and flow relatively easily and “naturally” thereby enhancing the “naturalistic” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 8) basis of the interpretive constructivist paradigm.
The interpretive constructivist approach to grounded theory “recognises that the viewer creates the empirical data and the ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131). As Charmaz (2000) indicates, “data do not provide a window of reality … rather the ‘discovered’ [her term] reality arises from the interactive process” (p. 524). Rather than being separate from it, the viewer is then part of what is viewed. As an active participant in the research process, gathering, analysing and collating “constructivist data” (Glaser, 2002, n.p.), the investigator’s own worldviews, experiences of social realities, and personal biases, and interpretations inevitably impact the research process. This will be considered further in the later discussion of axiology. For now, it can be said that the multiple voices of the viewed and viewer needed to be “interpreted conceptually by the researcher” (Strauss & Corbin, 2005, p. 172). In particular, the coding procedures of grounded theory (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 4) help to ensure that the investigator’s voice remains provisional, while the voices of the participants are fore-grounded and resonate throughout the construction of the grounded theory.

As Charmaz (2006) suggests, grounded theorists must “learn what occurs in the research settings we join and what our research participants’ lives are like” (p. 2) and the researcher must “test their assumptions about the worlds we study and not unwittingly reproduce these assumptions” (p. 19). Rather, as Charmaz (2003) emphasises, through recognition of multiple realities, understanding is co-created by the researcher and the participants through the interpretation of the participants’ views. For the investigator, the co-creation of knowledge requires a level of immersion in the research setting and the establishment of productive relationships and interactions between the investigator and participants. The literature on qualitative research methods contains a lengthy debate regarding the differences
between insider and outsider knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation, and the differences between ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ perspectives (Headland, Pike and Harris, 1990). In seeking to develop an understanding of, and explanation for, the phenomenon under examination the qualitative researcher attempts to become as close to being an insider as possible for any individual who, in the final analysis is an outsider. As will be discussed in greater details in Chapter 4, the development of productive relationships between the investigator and the participants, and achieving a level of immersion in the situation under study were, in the case of this investigation, relatively straightforward. Nonetheless, in considering axiology as an element within the interpretive constructivist paradigm, it is necessary for the researcher to acknowledge what they bring to the scene, what they see, and how they see it.

### 3.3.3 Axiology

Axiology considers the role of values in the inquiry process. In contrast to the supposedly value-free positivist, objectivist paradigm in which “values and biases are prevented from influencing outcomes” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 204), in the interpretive constructivist paradigm, values are an intrinsic part of the research process and its outcomes. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest, “the methods for making sense of experience are always personal” (p. 315). In the co-construction of knowledge and how this is interpreted as the basis for formulating a grounded theory, researchers and participants interact and collaborate in such ways that it is neither possible, nor necessarily desirable, for the research process to be value-free.

The values inherent in the pre-existing relationship between the participants and the researcher in any investigation may very well impact the responses that participants provide. As Heron and Reason (2006) indicate, in order to improve the
CHAPTER 3 ELEMENTS OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

quality of their claims of knowing, researchers need to engage with ‘critical subjectivity.’ In doing so,

we don’t have to throw away our personal, living knowledge in the search for objectivity, but are able to build on it and develop it. We can calculate a high-quality and valid individual perspective on what there is, in collaboration with others (Heron & Reason, 2006, p. 149).

3.3.3.1 Questions of situatedness and positionality

Undertaking any form of investigation, but especially one founded upon a qualitative research paradigm, the situatedness of the researcher is paramount. As Punch (2005) describes it, the researcher becomes the research instrument within the research context, or the channel through which the voices of participants can be heard. From the researcher’s perspective, deciding how to position and present oneself within the relationships and research setting is critical to the success of the study (Fontana & Frey, 2005) and the generation of appropriate knowledge since “after one’s presentational self is ‘cast’ it leaves a profound impression on the respondents and has great influence on the success (or failure) of the study” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 59). In this sense, while it is ultimately true that it is the interpretations of the researcher that influence the text (Dart & Davies, 2003), the research act becomes a two way process. Hence, as suggested by Neil (2006), the potential impact of the researcher on both data collection and analysis needs to be acknowledged and essentially needs to become part of the research record. For the outcomes of this investigation to be trustworthy and reliable, my awareness of self and how I was situated were disclosed. Furthermore, reflexive practices at all stages of the investigation served to heighten questions of axiology and remind me of how I had situated myself in the research setting.
3.3.3.2 The role of reflexivity

Reflexivity is an important consideration. Defined as “the researcher’s critique of their influence on the research process and is recognition of, and accounting for, power and trust relationships between researcher and participants” (Hall & Callery, 2001, p. 258), being reflexive can help resolve the dilemma any researcher may experience as the result of playing multiple roles (Angrosino, 2005; Bryman, 2004; Byrne, 2004). Throughout any qualitative investigation, reflexivity requires deliberate efforts to be made to acknowledge and record the potential consequences that the multiple roles of the investigator may exert on participants and the information that they are prepared to provide as the basis for jointly creating the knowledge required to understand the phenomenon under investigation. As will be explored further in Chapter 4, in the context of this investigation, a reflexive journal was maintained throughout the “continuous interplay between analysis and data collection” (Strauss & Corbin, 2005, p. 158) to document and record each of the information gathering interchanges, as well as the role(s) that I played, and how this could be seen as impacting the situation and the interpretation of the generated knowledge.

In this way reflexivity allows for the analysis of personal, inter-subjective and social processes that may have influenced the investigation and rests on the awareness of self (Cutcliffe, 2003). Stated simply, reflexivity is “an awareness of the ways in which the researcher as an individual with a particular social identity and background has an impact on the research process” (Robson, 2002, p. 22).

While inevitably complex, reflexivity is a significant component of the research process within a qualitative paradigm (Angrosino, 2005; Bryman, 2004; Byrne, 2004). It is important to distinguish between being reflective and being
reflexive. Being reflective about an investigation is a component of reflexivity involving “thinking about something after the event” (Marshall, Fraser, & Baker, 2010, p. 21). Reflexivity, however, is more complex and requires the researcher to “bend back upon oneself” (Marshall et al. 2010, p. 21). While reflexivity involves the researcher in reflecting on self, as well as the processes and representation of self, it moves beyond this to examine critically the power relationships in the research process, the researcher’s accountability in data collection, and, more importantly, the interpretation of these data. Being reflexive allows the researcher to acknowledge, recognise and accept understandings of issues and ultimately the production and creation of knowledge. As defined by Hall and Callery (2001), reflexivity thus provides “the researcher’s critique of their influence on the research process and is recognition of, and accounting for, power and trust relationships between researcher and participants” (p. 258).

In the course of conducting any investigation inevitably there are dynamics at play in the relationships between the researcher and the participants. Bryant and Charmaz (2011) point to the importance of acknowledging and understanding who will give, who will take, and what will be given and taken as an interactional subtext between the researcher and the researched. As will be illustrated in Chapter 4, as part of the reflexive stance taken in this investigation, Lempert’s (2007) conceptual framework of ‘give-and-take’ was utilised throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Bryant and Charmaz (2011) and Lempert (2007) suggest that rather than being planned or formally adopted, give-and-take should be allowed to emerge from opportunities present in the research interactions. In this investigation, as I interacted with participants who had previously been students, I needed to ‘plan’ my approach to the interviews, in effect by surrendering my former academic role
and relinquishing the hierarchical relationships that had previously existed between lecturer and student. This was important in order to develop a shared sense of reciprocity.

The interactions with the research participants constituted the representation of self in a different context from that which both the participants and I had previously experienced. We had by now developed a shared understanding of ‘being’ a teacher. That is, we were known to each other in particular ways to the extent that the situation reflected the point made by Richardson and St Pierre (2005) that “knowing the self and knowing ‘about’ the subject are intertwined, partial, historical, local knowledges” (p. 962). As will be explained further in Chapter 4, as well as being captured in the reflexive journal, much of the content of my reflexive moments regarding interactions with participants were also captured through my memo-writing.

I remained mindful that by definition of the paradigm within which this investigation was located, the theory necessarily had to be constructed, from the data. I was aware of Glaser’s (2001) warnings against the possibility of “reflexivity paralysis” (p. 47). While he does not reject the need for the researcher to be reflexive in the sense of being self-aware, Glaser (2001) does reject the “self-destructive introspective compulsion to locate their findings within a particular theoretical context” (p. 47) that overtakes some researchers and the consequential risk that a descriptive analysis may be all that emerges. The potential risk that Glaser (1992) emphasises can arise from the tension between the emergence of the grounded theory and forcing the data on the basis of reflexive thoughts. As Glaser (1992) argues, creativity has a place within the inductive derivation of the grounded theory. The researcher should “go with the data” (Glaser, 2001, p. 47) by interpreting the
data and “creat[ing]” rather than “force[ing]” (p. 47) the categories on the basis of some preconceptions derived from past experiences or the review of previous literature. This is precisely the reason why it is necessary for any qualitative investigator to acknowledge their biases, thoughts, situatedness and predispositions throughout the process of constructing the explanatory theory. It is for the same reason that the reflexive journal forms a major element in such investigations to regularly acknowledge and record the potential influences that investigator roles, values and approaches may exert on participants, interactions between participants and investigator and the information participants are prepared to provide.

Additionally, a reflexive journal also provides the means for recording any predilections, preconceptions and value orientations that an investigator might consider to have inadvertently influenced the interpretations placed upon the data, and any extent of possibly ‘forcing’ the data in constructing the grounded theory.

As will be discussed further in Chapter 4, in considering how I positioned myself within the investigation, and through my reflexive practices, I remained alert to the ethical ramifications that past relationships with participants, my values, and professional interests had for the investigation.

3.3.4 Methodology

The ontological, epistemological and axiological perspectives of a research paradigm together with the aims of the investigation have direct implications for the choice of methodology and research methods. A multifaceted rationale accounts for the decision to select a qualitative grounded theory methodology in this investigation. First, and following the advice of Creswell (2003), the underpinning research aims of “what” reasons account for a person to become a secondary school teacher; and “how” did career changers experience a pre-service teacher education
program in realising their ambitions to become secondary school teachers, both lent themselves to a qualitative methodology. Secondly, the research was both explanatory and exploratory in nature; that is, to explain what had attracted people to consider secondary school teaching when they decided to make the change to a new career; and to explore aspects of their career change experiences. In using a grounded theory approach, the methodology at the heart of this research positioned me as a researcher who was an active learner (Creswell, 2003) and who interpreted the information participants provided from their perspectives, rather than as an expert passing judgment on their experiences.

Grounded theory investigations begin with an interest in the intended area of study in an approach that allows the theory to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 2005). Grounded theory approaches also promote discovery and explanation of social realities and subsequent theory development rather than the verification of already existing theories. The use of grounded theory methods in this investigation formed the basis for constructing an explanatory theory “through building inductive analysis from the data … hence the analytic categories are directly ‘grounded’ in the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187). The specific methods of the grounded theory approach developed in this investigation are outlined briefly in the following section and will be discussed in more specific detail in Chapter 4.

3.4 A Background to Grounded Theory and Grounded Theory Methods

While the specific methods designed as the basis for gathering and analysing the data in this investigation will be outlined in the following chapter, some of the general principles of grounded theory and grounded theory methods will be outlined in this section.
CHAPTER 3 ELEMENTS OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Grounded theory consists of a set of “principles and heuristic devices” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2) that can be presented as the building blocks for doing qualitative research and constructing theories grounded in the data itself, rather than prescriptions, packages or “formulaic rules” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2) found in quantitative approaches characterised by the testing of hypotheses deduced from prior knowledge. More specifically, in following the central principles of this approach, interpretive constructivist research methods are useful to generate research-based knowledge about behavioural patterns. Such methods involve “generating theory and doing social research as two parts of the same process” (Glaser, 1978, p. 2). In its simplest form, grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed (Strauss & Corbin, 2005). The result of the continuous interplay between data collection and analysis culminates “an abstract theoretical understanding of the experience” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 4). That is, a grounded theory or, as Strauss and Corbin (2005) suggest, the research findings constitute a theoretical formulation of the reality under investigation achieved through the analysis of the empirical data.

Grounded theory was introduced in the seminal work of sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their 1967 text The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. This text formed the basis for a method of qualitative analysis different from other qualitative methods. Within the general parameters of a qualitative research paradigm, the key features of a grounded theory methodology include:

• collecting and analysing data in a systematic, simultaneous, and continuous process of coding and constant comparison
CHAPTER 3 ELEMENTS OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- generating the conceptual framework from empirical data, rather than from pre-conceived logically deduced frameworks or hypotheses
- considering any relevant literature and revealed during analysis
- using theoretical sampling to confirm conceptions and is used to elaborate and refine categories in the emerging theory.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that “[in] discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept” (p. 23). They argue that of necessity data collection and analysis occur together with data being coded as collected, then taken back to the field for confirmation or disconfirmation. For this investigation, this occurred in the repeated sorting, ongoing comparison, and systematic coding of the data derived from semi-structured interviews with the nineteen participants. This will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Over the past four decades, there have been deviations from the original 1967 grounded theory method. Glaser (1978) subsequently elaborated on grounded theory methodology and, while this created a rift between the two original proponents, Strauss and Corbin (1987) attempted to clarify the analytical process for researchers. Strauss and Corbin (1990) outlined complex systematic coding techniques that were strongly criticised by Glaser (1992) on the grounds that their techniques involved the intentional manipulation of data, the complication of a conditional matrix and unnecessary axial coding. Others supported Glaser’s view of the quasi-quantitative, positivist flavour of Strauss and Corbin’s interpretation (Goulding, 2002; Silverman, 2000). With the passage of time, Glaser (2001, 2002, 2007) defended what he identified as the one true method of grounded theory.
From her constructivist position, Charmaz (1994, 2003, 2006) perceived positivist, objectivist assumptions in the writings of both Glaser, and Strauss and Corbin, suggesting, for instance, that Glaser’s view that theory is ‘discovered’ in the data implies an objective reality already exists to be captured. In contrast, constructivist grounded theory as advocated by Charmaz (2000) assumes multiple realities that are yet to be identified through an epistemology of co-creation of understanding.

This investigation uses the central elements of a constructivist version of grounded theory as advocated by Charmaz (2006). The key features of the constructivist grounded theory approach used in this research are presented in Figure 3.1.
Figure 3.1 outlines the key grounded theory methods and approaches including “data collection, coding and analysing through memoing, theoretical sampling and sorting to writing, using the constant comparative method” that are
also reflective of some aspects of the Glaserian approach to grounded theory (Glaser, 1998, p. 12). Chapter 4 will discuss how these were implemented in this investigation. Based on Hutchinson (1988), Charmaz (2006), and Elliott and Lazenbatt (2005), Figure 3.1 also demonstrates that the elements of a grounded theory approach should not be considered as separate procedural steps in the research process. Instead, they “need to be considered as a continuous cycle of data collection, analysis and sampling” (Elliott & Lazenbatt, 2005, p. 50) with researchers collecting, coding and analysing the data simultaneously. Hutchinson (1988) further suggests that the process of comparative analysis helps to tease out emerging themes by searching for their structure, temporality, cause, context, dimensions, consequences, and relationships to other themes and data. Clearly, this analysis is done following the completion of the initial contextual work that is undertaken (as it was in this investigation as noted in Chapter 1) to determine the nature of the research, including the research questions and to account for the decision to adopt a grounded theory approach as the most appropriate method of data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 provides specific details concerning the determination of an appropriate research setting, selection and recruitment of suitable participants, and the tools developed for the collection, coding and analysis of data.

A grounded theory approach implies that no preconceived theories or hypotheses are used to frame the work and that only a limited initial review of the literature be undertaken. As reported in Chapter 2, I followed Strauss and Corbin’s (2005) recommendation and completed an initial survey of the literature only to situate my understandings in the context of career change into teaching. In doing so, I remained alert to McCallin’s (2003) advice that it is important for the researcher not to “pre-empt the problems that might be defined by potential participants” (p.
206). In acknowledging that the preliminary literature review provides a foundation of professional knowledge, Strauss and Corbin (2005) refer to this approach as ‘literature sensitivity’. While the role of the literature review has been a matter of contention, for his part Glaser (1978) refers to this as developing theoretical sensitivity derived from past familiarity with the literature in areas of professional practice, but not to the extent of stifling creative effort in theorising. Hence, the initial literature review provided only an initial point of entry into the field of investigation and a level of sensitivity that assisted in generating the research questions. Moghaddam (2006) states that such a review of the pertinent literature should only “reveal current thinking in the area, and should not bring out any hypotheses” (p. 3). Only following the construction of the grounded theory does “previous knowledge [literature] become[s] data to be integrated into the study, using constant comparative analysis in order to refine emerging concepts and categories” (McCallin, 2003, p. 206). As shown in the later chapters and notably Chapter 9, a more comprehensive engagement with the literature followed the construction of the explanatory grounded theory. I adopted this position as a deliberate choice until such time as the grounded theory began to take shape on the basis of the substantive evidence derived from the coding of and theoretical sampling within the empirical data which will be discussed in the following section.

### 3.5 Coding, theoretical sampling and constant comparison

Grounded theory approaches involve the three processes of open coding, axial coding, and selective (or focussed) coding. These three processes are used to organise the data for further analysis and interpretation drawing upon theoretical sampling and constant comparison methods. These processes will be briefly discussed in general terms in this section and then elaborated on the basis of specific
examples in Chapter 4. Moghaddam (2006) likens the coding process to a pyramid (see Figure 3.2), with open coding at the base, and axial and selective codings toward the peak as reductions are made in the number of concepts or categories as previously coded concepts and categories are aggregated. Given the reciprocal relationships between data collection and analysis in a grounded theory approach, each of these processes, and hence each level of the pyramid, may overlap.

This initial open coding phase involves naming each word, line, or segment of data (Charmaz, 2006) in breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising empirical data (Strauss & Corbin, 2005). The purpose of open coding is to develop general insights into the content of the empirical data before proceeding to more detailed focussed coding and, beginning to build the explanatory grounded theory that such empirical data support.

Axial coding is then undertaken to further refine the open coded categories. Strauss and Corbin (2005) suggest the purpose of axial coding is to reassemble data that may have been fractured during open coding, to then put the data back together.
in new ways by making new connections between categories and (if any) subcategories. According to Brown, Stevenson, Troiano, and Schneider (2002), four analytical processes occur in axial coding:

1. Continually relating subcategories to a category
2. Comparing categories with the collected data
3. Exploring the density of the categories by detailing their properties and dimensions
4. Exploring variations in the occurrence

Strauss and Corbin (2005) suggest axial coding allows the researcher to answer the questions of who, when, where, why, how and with what consequences. This is all done with the intent of exploring the interrelationships between data collected in greater depth.

Open and axial coding are followed by selective or focussed coding through which categories obtained through open coding are shown to be related to other categories. In this way the initial codes and categories can be re-explored emphasising the dominant categories and building up relationships between them. In the initial stages, the coding phases of the research process are typically very time-consuming.

Figure 3.3 depicts the construction of a grounded theory through the identification of initial concepts in the open coding process, refining those concepts through axial coding to construct themes. Once the constructed themes are compared with and against each other the contributory categories can be constructed and refined through selective coding. These categories were then subject to ongoing or constant comparison to establish and construct the ‘core category’ (Glaser, 2001). While Figure 3.3 may give the impression that this is a linear process, in a grounded
theory approach the researcher must continuously go back and forth within the data in what is essentially an iterative process.

\[ \text{Figure 3.3 Developing a grounded theory: overview of coding procedures} \]


In this way, constant comparison is the essence of the continuous cycle of collecting and analysing data and provides a “method of analysis that generates successively more abstract concepts and theories through inductive processes of
comparing data with data, data with category, category with category and category
with concept” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187). Through constant comparison among and
between participant responses, the categories can be grouped around possible
themes. This aligned with the description provided by Glaser and Strauss (1967) who
saw it as involving labelling a concept that portrays an underlying meaning that
assists in categorising and sorting empirical data. As new information is collected
and coded, it is compared to already existing data, categories and emergent themes.
Where it proves to be necessary, new categories can then be created.

Not to be confused with the general sampling process of acquiring
participants, theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006) forms an essential component of
this approach enabling the continual re-examination of empirical data in light of the
developing categories. In a grounded theory approach, the initial sorting and coding
of the empirical data typically gives shape to tentative groupings and categories.
Theoretical sampling in this context then involves the investigator delving further
into the empirical data “seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine
categories in [the] emerging theory” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96). Along with the on-
going collection of further data and the coding of the initially gathered empirical
data, the properties and categories of the theory are continuously compared across
the data until no further variations are apparent (Glaser, 2007). When this becomes
the case it can be considered that a point of saturation has been reached where data
obtained from subsequent participants does not add any ‘new’ information. The
categories can be regarded as being sufficiently “saturated” with data so that they
can then be further sorted and/or diagramised to “integrate [your sic] the emerging
theory” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96).
3.6 A qualitative informational isomorph

The point at which saturation had been reached within the data has been referred to by Ford (1975) as a “qualitative isomorph” and by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a “qualitative informational isomorph”. As also used in the biological sciences, isomorphism is seen to exist when organisms with different backgrounds display a level of similarity. As noted by DiMaggio & Powell (1983), isomorphism is a process through which one unit in a population comes to resemble “... other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (p. 147).

Within grounded theory research, as explained in the previous section, such similarities and resemblances are identified on the basis of constant comparison until, as Jennings (2005) explains, a point of “redundancy with regard to information is reached (p. 111). As will be considered in Chapter 9, such a qualitative isomorph formed the basis for explaining, generalising, and theorising (Ford, 1975) and, hence, the construction of an explanatory grounded theory.

3.7 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has provided an overview of the interpretive constructivist paradigm and its ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological perspectives. While it is essential to ensure congruity between all four perspectives, much of the discussion in this chapter has been devoted to aspects of grounded theory seen as offering a set of methods appropriate to achieving the aims of this investigation. This research was interpretive in studying the meanings attached to social realities within a specific social setting. Such interpretations of the empirical data provided the basis for the construction of an explanatory grounded theory rather than the ‘testing’ of a pre-existing theoretical perspective derived from the literature. It was considered that a grounded theory approach provided a systematic structure
for analysing qualitative data that resonated with the voices of research participants. Categorical coding of data and inductive reasoning through constant comparison among the data formed the basis for constructing ‘Becoming’ as the explanatory grounded theory. Mindful of the axiological implications inherent in such an approach, grounded theory allowed me to enter a setting in which those who directly experienced the social process of making a career change and becoming secondary school teachers were to be found.

In the next chapter I will focus on the methodological perspective of the interpretive constructivist paradigm presented in this chapter and how it was operationalised in this investigation. The account of the specific research methods and how these were implemented will include a detailed account of how I recruited participants prior to gathering data through semi-structured informal interviews. I will also discuss the subsequent steps concerned with coding, analysing and interpreting the information they provided and on which the explanatory grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ was constructed.
CHAPTER 4 APPLYING GROUNDED THEORY METHODS: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT, DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

I have no data yet. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data.
(Doyle, 1897, p. 15)\textsuperscript{16}

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a general account of the interpretive constructivist paradigm and its four major perspectives (ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology) in which this investigation was located. However, any appraisal of the outcomes of this investigation requires a full explication of the methods and procedures that were developed and implemented to generate, analyse and interpret the empirical data upon which the explanatory theory was constructed based on the two aims and associated research questions that framed this investigation:

1. To explain the reasons that had influenced people’s decisions to change careers and become secondary school teachers.

The related research question for this first aim was stated as:

\textit{RQ1 What reasons do individuals who are planning to make a career change into secondary school teaching identify as influencing their decision to make such a change?}

2. To develop an understanding of the experiences of a cohort of career change participants while students of a particular pre-service teacher education program, including aspects they had found more challenging, as well as aspects they considered had supported and enhanced their career change.

\textsuperscript{16} From the first Sherlock Holmes novel, \textit{A study in scarlet.}
ambitions while developing their new professional identities as secondary school teachers.

The related research question for this second aim was stated as:

**RQ2** What aspects of a teacher education program do individuals who are planning to make a career change into secondary school teaching consider best support and enhance their successful change of career?

Providing this more specific explication of the methods used to construct the explanatory grounded theory is the key purpose of this chapter.

The chapter begins by detailing the criteria and procedures used to identify, select and recruit participants within the confines of satisfying ethical approval requirements. The mechanisms I used to further filter participants to ensure those whom I selected had experienced making a career change with the aim of becoming secondary school teachers are also described.

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data. The processes involved in establishing rapport, gaining trust and conducting the interviews are outlined. The interviews were intended to create opportunities through which the voices of the research participants would be fore-grounded.

Data analysis procedures that were used are then examined. These include the approaches followed in coding, constructing and analysing the data to identify the concepts, themes and categories that emerged from the stories of the career changers on which the core category was constructed. All of this is essential information since grounded theory is specifically derived inductively from the phenomena under investigation. The chapter concludes by addressing the ethical considerations of this investigation.
4.2 Selection and Recruitment of Participants

This investigation initially required me to enter a suitable research setting. I followed a “convenience sampling” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 18) approach to locate the investigation in a setting and among a population which were both accessible and demonstrably relevant to the dual aims of the research. Accessing a suitable research setting was relatively straightforward since at the time of the investigation I was employed by a regional Queensland university offering a one-year full-time Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching (Secondary) for which I was also the Head of Program.

The initial stage involved accessing a list of all students who had successfully completed the Graduate Diploma program within the 2009 academic year. Within the confines of the ethical approval requirements for this study (refer to Appendix D), the Dean of School granted permission for this information to be released and used for research purposes. This includes approved access to information contained in the University’s student tracking enrolment database.

4.2.1 How many were enough?

Questions concerned with the number of participants, sampling and sample size are of less importance in a grounded theory approach than in quantitative investigations where notions of random sampling, sample size and adequacy determine the validity and reliability of findings. Creswell (2003) suggests twenty to thirty participants are sufficient for a grounded theory investigation while Mertens (2005) indicates approximately thirty to fifty participants should be considered. As noted in the previous Chapter, in Merten’s view, the upper range allows for theoretical sampling required for constant comparison until saturation is apparent. Bryant and Charmaz (2011) emphasise researchers should determine the size of their
sample based on what is manageable for them and claim that twenty to thirty
interviews are usually adequate to reach saturation. Importantly, given the nature of
the qualitative paradigm within which the research was located, Morse (2008)
suggests fewer participants are required in a grounded theory investigation, to
guarantee quality data, but warns: “more bad data does not make good data” (p.
231).

It was essential that only those who had experienced career changes in
becoming secondary school teachers were selected and included. In the event, only a
limited number of participants met the defined criteria and were available for
interviews. The cohort of potential participants was screened. By definition, those
who undertook training immediately following completion of an undergraduate
degree program were excluded since they were not, in fact, changing careers.

As I contemplated how I would select potential participants from the
available student database, I remained mindful of Charmaz’s (2006) and Merten’s
(2005) advice about collecting data until saturation had been reached. It was,
therefore, important to ensure I had selected a sufficient number of participants to
allow for this in collecting and subsequently analysing comprehensive data on which
to construct the grounded theory. I over-selected participants and identified some
‘standby’ participants in case saturation was not reached by those initially selected.
In that event I would need to consider either:

• selecting further participants who had completed the program in the previous
cohort; and/or

• revisiting my memos and the development of the emerging grounded theory to
ensure that rather than a lack of information, the lack of saturation was more a
reflection of the way I had coded and interpreted the data in identifying themes.
In such circumstances, I appreciated I would need to revisit the categories and reconsider the approach I took in developing the explanatory theory.

4.2.2 Establishing Selection Criteria

To be eligible for selection, participants needed to have successfully completed the Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching (Secondary) at the end of the 2009 academic year. This initial stage yielded over fifty potential participants. This list was then examined against the definition (as presented in Chapter 2) of a person who had experienced a career change. This required further information about the participants including age, length of time between initial degree completion, and previous careers to be clarified. Two main questions were considered:

1. Was there a gap between the completion of the participants' undergraduate degrees and undertaking the postgraduate pre-service education program?
2. Was there evidence to suggest a potential participant had experienced a previous career prior to deciding to make the career change?

In general, on the basis of these questions, a participant would be at least twenty-five years of age assuming that they had commenced their undergraduate degree at eighteen years of age (at a minimum) and were around twenty to twenty-one years of age in their final year of a three-year university degree. This then left a four to five year gap for them to have developed a previous career up to around twenty-five years of age or older. It was also essential that their previous experiences had been in a non-education related career, although it was acknowledged that some potential participants may have been engaged in some work-place training activities. This was
worth noting since the review of the literature\textsuperscript{17} had led me to the view that prior work related experiences gained through such activities often attracted career changers to a teaching career. I, therefore, needed to be open to the possibility that prior work experiences in training settings within the former workplace may have prompted consideration of a career change into teaching, a view also expressed by Richardson and Watt (2005, 2006) and Watt and Richardson (2007, 2008). In differentiating my investigation from such previous research it is worth noting that the studies carried out by Richardson and Watt and also ACDE (2005) and Williams and Forgasz (2009) were concerned with recruits into teaching in general, rather than those enrolled in postgraduate pre-service teacher education programs as had been the case for those participating in my investigation.

Participant selection was not influenced by such factors as gender, teaching areas, prior study area within their previous degree, full-time or part-time study within the pre-service teacher education program, or mode of attendance (internal face-to-face or distance). At least in the initial stages, these factors were not considered likely to be significant given the aims of the investigation to seek a range of participant reasons for, and experiences of career change into teaching.

These further selection procedures yielded over thirty potential participants. However, a number of factors impeded the recruitment, participation and subsequent interviewing of all those who were thereby eligible to participate. Not all eligible participants who were approached were willing to participate while others who had initially agreed to participate chose to withdraw prior to the actual interview.

\textsuperscript{17} see for example DEEWR (2008)
4.3 Recruiting the Participants

Decisions on how to invite participants were somewhat clouded by ethical dilemmas originating in my prior relationships with participants as former students. By the time of the investigation the potential participants were geographically dispersed, and their physical locations generally unknown. For this reason I decided that e-mail contact offered the most appropriate, and least intrusive, form of initial communication. If they did not want to participate then they could simply choose not to reply to my email. Appendix E contains a copy of the original email sent to the potential participants seeking their interest in the investigation.

Of all emails sent, only one potential participant declined to participate and that was due to health issues. In responding back to each potential participant who had replied I attached the information sheet and consent form (see Appendix F) and asked that, if they still agreed to participate, the consent form be signed and returned at or prior to the interview. (Appendix G contains a copy of this email text.) Purposefully these emails were phrased in such a way as to commence or, for most participants, re-establish rapport.

There remained some potential participants from whom confirmation was not received and an alternative means of approach that would not contravene my ethical stance needed to be considered. An easy alternative could have been direct telephone contact. This, however, was abandoned for two reasons. Firstly, I did not want participants to feel obliged to participate through a direct ‘out-of-the-blue’ telephone conversation with one of their former lecturers; and secondly, there was no guarantee their telephone numbers listed on the database would be current due to their possible relocation following their graduation.
Moreno, Fost, and Christakis (2008) suggest researchers could use a social networking web site to identify and communicate with potential subjects for recruitment purposes. Described as the ‘Google of people’ (Jarvis, 2007), I decided to use Facebook to recruit other identified potential participants. Once I had located the participants on Facebook, I sent a ‘friend request’ with a simple message to their inbox. (See Appendix H.) Deliberately, the text of this Facebook message was kept brief and informal so as to not seem ‘academic’, but rather seeking a connection with someone who was now a ‘friend’ to converse about their study experiences. Facebook proved itself a worthwhile recruitment tool with five further participants agreeing to participate through this medium.

By following the participant selection criteria and recruitment procedures, nineteen \((n=19)\) former students of the Graduate Diploma program became the actual participants who shared their career change stories and experiences. These nineteen participants were recruited from the thirty students identified as meeting the filtering selection criteria. It is on the basis of their stories and experiences as career changers that the grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ was constructed.

### 4.4 Profile of the Career Changers

Summary profiles of the actual participants are provided in Appendix I. By allocating a pseudonym to each participant, the career changers were anonymised to protect their identity. Protecting the true identities of participants was necessary in order to satisfy the requirements of the CQUniversity Australia Code of Conduct for Research. (Refer to Appendix D.) Charmaz (2006) also suggests that using a pseudonym creates a sense of smoothness in the final thesis. The use of a pseudonym also assists the ‘flow’ of the participant stories while also providing a sense of participant personalities and identities for the reader.
The following discussion highlights some of the more general demographic details of the nineteen career changer participants in ways that have also been reflected in other investigations.

- **Gender**

  Indicative of the gender distribution in the entire student cohort in the Graduate Diploma program, the participants included fourteen women and five men who satisfied the selection criteria of career changers. With women comprising around 75% of the total, this gender ratio is consistent with other statistical information detailing pre-service teacher trainees (see DEEWR, 2008; House of Representatives, 2007; OECD, 2005; Richardson & Watt, 2005, 2010; Richardson, Watt, & Tusvaer, 2007).

- **Age**

  As defined in Chapter 2, for the purposes of this investigation, career changers were over the age of twenty-five. Participant ages ranged between twenty-five and sixty-one years with approximately half aged between being thirty and forty years. This age range reflected the wider situation observed by the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT, 2007).

- **Qualifications**

  All participants had completed, at a minimum, a Bachelor level qualification as required for admission to graduate-entry pre-service teacher education study. The highest qualification completed by two participants was a Masters degree. A further four held graduate qualifications at either Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma levels. Eleven participants held more than one formal qualification including

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18 As Board of Teacher Registration, Queensland (BTR, 2007) Submission No. 37 in House of Representatives (2007).
Certificate, Diploma, Associate Degree, Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and Masters level qualifications. While most participants had qualifications in areas other than education, four had completed Certificate IV Workplace Training and Assessment and a further participant had completed an Associate Degree in Vocational Education and Training.

Qualifications in the three main discipline groupings of Science, Business and Humanities at the Bachelor degree level were represented among the Bachelor degrees that participants had completed.

• **Teaching Areas**

Among the nineteen participants thirty-eight teaching areas were identified. The majority of career changers had completed Science-related qualifications and science disciplines including Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Aerospace and Multi-strand science comprised the largest teaching areas. These were followed by Business disciplines (nine), Humanities-related disciplines including the Arts (seven), Mathematics (six) and Health-related (three).

Reflecting the conclusions drawn by Boyd et al. (2011), all that the nineteen women and men who shared their career change stories had in common was they came from diverse backgrounds. Indeed, there was no ‘typical’ career changer who participated in this research. The only commonality that they all shared was the pre-service program of study they had completed in their quest to become a secondary school teacher.

### 4.5 Data Collection Method: Semi-structured Interviews

The credibility and veracity of grounded theory research ultimately depends upon how the data were gathered, analysed, stored and reported. The data for this investigation were *spoken data*, that is, data contained in a “stretch of oral language
recorded in some durable or lasting form that can be revised as desired” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 173). The spoken data for this investigation were collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews that were digitally recorded and then transcribed. I deemed this method apt for this research. The minimal structure ensured the interview remained focused and ‘on track’. The interviews themselves provided flexibility and the ability to check my interpretations and any new aspects arising during the conversations. While I was the interviewer on each occasion, the interview approach afforded the opportunity for the voices of research participants to be heard throughout the data collection process. This was important since, by definition, a grounded theory is directly grounded in, and substantiated by, the empirical data constructed and reconstructed through collaboration between participants and researcher. As the research instrument, facilitating a multi-voiced reconstruction of the participants’ reasons for, and experiences of becoming secondary school teachers, my voice was that of a “passionate participant” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 215) where my role was to listen and engage with the conversation occurring. Typically, each interview took approximately 30-minutes with the possibility (subject to participant availability) of “returning to the field to gather focussed empirical data to answer analytic questions and fill conceptual gaps” (Charmaz, 2003, p. 312) if it became necessary during the transcription and interpretation of the recorded interviews.

I considered the interviews as generating rather than collecting empirical data through what was as close as possible to a regular conversation undertaken in an interview setting. Inevitably I was included as a ‘co-producer’ of the data that emerged during the conversations. I appreciated that an interview
... is not a neutral tool, for the interviewer creates the reality of the interview situation. In this situation answers are given. Thus the interview produces situated understandings grounded in the specific interactional episodes. This method is influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer, including race, class, ethnicity and gender (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 36).

I considered that the effects of such personal and demographic characteristics on participants were likely to be quite minimal. I was also mindful of the possible influences arising from my personality which Punch (2005) argues may impact qualitative research. Essentially, my role was one of listening attentively to what was being said, thinking of how to move the interview/conversation forward or in a different direction (Byrne, 2004), probing responses and seeking clarification while all the time ensuring the participants’ voices were heard as they spoke of their experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Throughout all of this, I was mindful of the need to avoid creating a power difference since the participants had volunteered to help in the investigation. Given our past relationships while they had been students, this was particularly important. I followed Fontana and Frey’s (2005) advice to “forego the academic role” (p. 60). Certainly there was no intention on my part to impose a series of ideas or conclusions on the participants.

To maintain some semblance of a conversational style (or at least a conversation with a purpose) the questions, how they were presented, and the order in which they were presented were structured only to the extent necessary to focus the conversation without impeding the flow of rich data that participants wished to share regarding their career change experiences. I acknowledged that the interview questions had the potential to “inevitably foreground some data and background or exclude data” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 172). To ensure minimal structure in
the conversations with each participant, but to place focus on the intent of the conversation, the questions were divided into two sets reflecting the dual aims of the investigation. (See copy of the interview questions in Appendix C.) The first part of each interview focussed on various aspects related to the participants’ reasons in their decisions to take up new careers in secondary school teaching. The questions in the second part of the interview focussed on aspects of the pre-service teacher education program participants had undertaken to achieve their career change ambitions. To maintain a conversational approach, all questions were open-ended and included nothing that may have directed participants to a pre-conceived set of response categories. While the copy of the interview questions in Appendix C shows an apparent order of questions, in reality the sequence was modified as each conversation unfolded. The final question was designed to allow participants the opportunity to discuss any other aspects they considered relevant to their career change experiences.

Depending upon the situation of individual participants, interviews were conducted either face-to-face or over the telephone. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in locations on campus such as a vacant tutorial room, meeting room, or a small study space in the library. It is acknowledged these locations may have had the potential for past power differentials between student and lecturer to influence how some participant might respond. A room on campus can never be completely neutral for a past student or a lecturer because they always retain traces of previous power differentials in which participants are re-situated as students and the researcher is re-situated as lecturer. However it was thought the authenticity of such meeting places on the university campus where the participants had previously been students would enhance the responses obtained. Meeting participants in such settings certainly
removed any perceived power differentials that may have arisen had the interviews been conducted in my office, for example.

Face-to-face interviews were not possible with all participants. Some had taken up teaching positions in distant locations making it necessary to complete nearly half of the interviews (nine in total) via telephone. Completing interviews in this way proved to be more difficult due to the less personal nature of telephone conversations and the absence of face-to-face interactions. None of the participants commented on these issues or alluded to any feelings of unease. However, I felt that the telephone presented a barrier to me as interviewer as I could not readily gauge the non-verbal reaction to questions or statements except through the spoken responses. However, participants were not totally unfamiliar with this form of communication. When they had been students studying in the distance mode as several of them had, most communication with me as their lecturer had been through telephone and email.

4.5.1 Establishing Rapport and Gaining Trust

Establishing an effective relationship with participants is fundamental to the interviewing process allowing for greater depth of data and for the information to flow more freely. As Angrosino (2005) emphasises, for a real, two-way conversation to exist this should be a reciprocal relationship between participants and the interviewer. Fontana and Frey (2005) advocate the establishment of a close rapport with participants as paramount to an effective and successful interview in which interviewees are encouraged, by questions and other non-verbal methods, to produce elaborate and detailed answers (Rapley, 2004). The semi-structured interview and the ‘normal’ conversational approach used in this investigation were aimed at enhancing and facilitating rapport with each participant. Congruent with the
theoretical paradigm within which the investigation was located, this was seen as preferable to following the formalities of a pre-developed questionnaire or even had participants been gathered together in focus groups.

The nature of the relationship that existed between the participants and me held the key to the conversational dynamic. This past relationship, however, may have impacted, in largely unknown ways, the authenticity of the data participants provided. For example, some, perhaps, may have provided responses they thought would be ‘pleasing to my ears’. This potential threat to the collection of authentic data would have been exacerbated had the participants been interviewed while they were still students. It was for this reason that the interviews were conducted only after participants had completed their program of study in the hope that, this would enhance the level of trust in the interview relationship. Fontana and Frey (2005) emphasise that “gaining trust” (p. 655) is one of the most important necessities facilitating effective interviews.

Moreover, I needed to distance myself from the participants while also demonstrating empathic understanding in order to engage them in the interviews. I needed to ensure that my role as Head of Program and lecturer did not impact the extensions that might have added to some of the pre-established questions used in the semi-structured interviews. Additions such as *Please tell me more about this.* *How did this make you feel?* and *So how did this impact your goal to be a secondary school teacher?* became important, allowing me to become somewhat detached while still encouraging participants to voice their own feelings. After all, I had ‘travelled the journey’ with the participants throughout their career change and played what I consider to be a pivotal role in their becoming secondary school teachers as their Head of Program. Now, I simply needed to allow them the
opportunity to articulate their understandings of the career changes they had made by
the sharing of their stories and experiences rather than forcing the conversation.

In addition to their stories of what had prompted them to become secondary
school teachers, and the attractions they saw in such a new career, I also needed to
guide the conversation to encourage them to voice their experiences while students
of the pre-service teacher education program they had completed in making the
career change. The questions about the program sought their feelings about how
aspects of the program had assisted in their becoming secondary school teachers. I
did think that some participants might see this as an opportunity to vent their feelings
about situations for which they held quite negative feelings. For this reason, I was
very careful about the way I phrased the questions in this part of the interview. I also
developed a statement to signal to them the purposes of the questions in this part of
the interview that said: The following questions will relate to the experiences you
had in your teacher training program. I am interested to know the aspects of your
program that you liked/disliked that you felt either enhanced or hindered your
journey to become a teacher. This statement was intended to focus the conversation
on exploring the program overall, rather than having participants dwell only
particulars such as I really disliked ... lecturer or that course was not good, I didn’t
like it.

4.6 Spoken to Written: Transcribing the Interview Data

Transcription has been described by Bird (2005) as the “act of (re)presenting
original oral language in written form” (p. 228), the importance of which cannot be
ignored. Transcription is a selective process and it is impossible to record all features
of talk and interaction from recordings (Davidson, 2009). To produce a working
document that was usable for rich analysis to be undertaken before the transcription
process commenced I needed to determine how I wanted to use its outputs for subsequent analysis. I decided the transcription process needed to include both translation (Slembrouck, 2007) as well as transformation (Duranti, 2007). I followed Tilley’s (2003) suggestion and handed the mechanics of the process to a paid transcriber who used the Olympus AS-5000 PC Transcription Module Software, converting the mp3 audio media files to written typed form. I worked closely with the transcriber to make certain the final product resulting from transcribing data from audio to typed manuscript met my needs for further analysis.

Transcription practices exist along a continuum between naturalised and denaturalised transcription. The former includes as many utterances and as much detail as possible whereas the latter focuses more on the informational content (MacLean, Meyer, & Estable, 2004) which, while creating a verbatim account, removes “idiosyncratic elements of speech (e.g., stutters, pauses, nonverbal, involuntary vocalisations)” (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005, p. 1273). Charmaz (2000) suggests denaturalised transcription is best used in a grounded theory approach given that the focus is on meanings and perceptions rather than the intricacies of language and delivery. Oliver et al. (2005) challenge this view, because “within speech are meanings and perceptions that construct our reality” (p. 1274). For the purposes of this investigation I decided that a blended approach to transcription would be most useful, capturing some aspects of the nuances and characteristics of speech, but not to the point of becoming a Conversation Analysis. I instructed the transcriber accordingly.

Bird (2005) suggests the best format for transcription is to prepare the data as a dramatic script, presenting the transcript much as one reads a dramatic play or piece of prose, where the eyes move left to right, top to bottom. I negotiated with the
transcriber to convert the first interview into such format and email it to me for viewing and approval to ensure it was in the format I wanted. This was important since, as Oliver et al. (2005) suggest, in the haste to begin data analysis, “it can be easy to use a transcription style that fails to match one’s research objectives or concerns over participant confidentially” (p. 1274).

Due to the transcriptions being done by someone other than myself, inevitably they included interpretations placed upon the data by that third party. To offset any possible bias in this procedure, once they had arrived back I read through each transcript while listening to the mp3 audio file to ensure the transcript adequately captured all of the meanings and any nuances I may require in the coding and analysing the data. Given Davidson’s (2009) warning that it is impossible to record all features of talk and interaction from recordings, I needed to ensure any interpretations made by the transcriber did not intrude on the construction of meaning and that the voices of the participants had not been lost. The further listening to the interviews allowed me to regain ownership of the data as well as extending my reflexive thoughts about each interview and the meanings participants had constructed concerning their career change experiences. This also provided an effective starting point for the coding and construction processes.

In the end, I came to accept that regardless of the approach taken, my transcripts were subjective and, therefore, contained an unknown degree of bias in their representations of participants’ experiences of their career changes. All transcripts are selective in one way or another (Davidson, 2009) and this, in turn, can affect the interpretation and analysis underpinning the construction of the grounded theory. As Brooks (2010) explains, “the data we collect, transcribe, and analyse may be impacted both by the processes through which transcription is achieved as well as
the depth of the researcher’s engagement with these processes” (p. 1228). In all of
this I was at some pains to remain alert to Bird’s (2005) view that transcription is a
political act, where transcribers themselves have a political and social stance and
“any act of transcription produced by such a being must of consequence be
subjective. When representing an oral voice in written form the transcriber becomes
the channel for that voice” (p. 228). At best, this makes a truly objective account of
the recorded data difficult. This further underscored the importance of maintaining
my epistemological stance and reflexive practices including maintaining the
reflexive journal discussed later in this chapter.

Originally, I had approached transcription of the interviews as being a quite
mechanical and taken-for-granted process. Someone else (the transcriber) simply
converted spoken words in the audio format into a document. Not until the data
arrived back as written transcripts did I realise the importance of the transcription
process and the possible impacts of this on my subsequent construction of meaning
and interpretation. In foregrounding the reasons and experiences of the participants,
the transcripts took ‘centre stage’ and were integral to the construction of the
grounded theory.

4.7 Data Analysis: Open, Axial and Selective Coding

To establish the basis for constructing the grounded theory, the transcribed
data were scrutinised through coding using the three layers of open, axial and
selective coding that were outlined in general terms in Chapter 3. Applying the
coding schema devised for the investigation enabled themes and categories to be
constructed and then considered further through constant comparison between
participant responses within the individual transcripts. While codes are devised on
the basis of the empirical data, as noted by Charmaz (2003), invariably the codes are
influenced by the researcher’s own theoretical perspective as acknowledged through the reflexive stance.

4.7.1 Operationalising the coding process

4.7.1.1 Open coding

As the initial process of sorting the information into usable ‘chunks’, open coding allowed me to become more intimate with the data. While seen as a very systematic and mechanical process, Charmaz (2006) cautions that while “we may think our codes capture the empirical reality . . . it is our view: we choose the words that constitute our codes” (p. 9). It was, therefore, imperative to ensure this coding process and the naming of coding categories captured all relevant data, and allowed them to ‘speak for themselves’, rather than allowing my own biases or interpretations of the data to pre-empt or force the formulation of categories or themes.

I followed Glaser’s (1978) original advice to code everything that was captured as data. Consequently, in seeking similarities and differences between them, I coded the concepts I identified in the data according to their meanings and relevance to the aims of the investigation. Consistent with the grounded theory approach, interviewing participants and coding and analysing their responses occurred as parallel tasks. Thus, once the first interview was completed, it was transcribed and then coded, while the second interview was undertaken, and so forth. Together with memo-writing and drawing of constant comparisons, this synchronous data collection and data analysis supported a structured analysis that further illuminated the emergent concepts and themes.
In following Glaser’s (1978) advice of ‘coding everything’ within open coding, I also focussed on the three interrelated questions about the data that he emphasised:

1. *What are these data a study of?*

   This question was important to keep focus on the ‘grand tour’ questions that framed the interviews (as shown in Appendix C) while also looking at the individual components of the data in context. This established the need for me to be open to the emergent themes and allow for the ‘flow’ of the concepts and themes by focusing on the ‘big picture’.

2. *What category does this incident indicate?*

   Open coding led to the identification and construction of the core category, the focus of the investigation and the emergent explanatory theory. This identified an overriding pattern that emerged from the data or “... the prime mover of most of the behaviour seen and talked about in a substantive area” (Glaser, 1998, p. 115). The core category was constructed through inductive reasoning and interpretation applied to the participants’ accounts of their reasons for embarking on their new secondary school teaching careers and their experiences while students of the pre-service teacher education program each of which were contextualised by the dual aims of this research. Adopting this approach and the inductive process of retrieving general principles from particular facts or instances about career change allowed me to discover “what is going on!” as Glaser (1998, p. 115) put it.

3. *What is actually happening in the data?*

   Considering this further question allowed me to explore the interplay between the collected data contained in the participants’ constructions of their reasons for,
and experiences of, their career change and my interpretations of their realities. Rather than merely reading the participants’ career change stories, I was able to engage in interpreting and analysing the data, thereby maintaining a productive focus on the development and organisation of the categories. My main focus was on developing and enhancing the bonds between the raw data, the research questions and intent, and the themes as they were constructed.

The open coding stage involved finding key words and phrases in the data contained in the transcripts. The data were broken down into usable ‘clumps’ relevant to the investigation. It was important not only to read what individual participants were saying but also to interpret the data in terms of the multiple viewpoints present in the data. Initially, each transcript was systematically read line-by-line, constantly coding each component. This involved highlighting dialogue in the transcribed interviews and assigning a code name which Creswell (2003) refers to as a representative name to these initial pieces of data. The early code names came from the data and were not influenced by any other source. These codes appeared to stand out as areas of interest identified in key words or phrases participants had used. A list of these open codes was kept on a coding sheet (Appendix J) with a brief description of what the code meant. Memo comments provided reminders of the meaning, the possible contribution to further analysis, together with reflective questions to be considered later in reference to the open codes. As the process continued the list of open codes was updated as each transcript was coded and any new identified codes added.

The NVivo software program was then used to recognise and group the identified key words and phases under broad code headings, creating a series of initial concepts or tree nodes. As further data were coded, these initial words and
phrases were compared across the responses provided by each participant. Where it was apparent that such identified words and phrases could be sustained through such comparisons they were merged to create the open code concepts. This process of going backward and forward within and across individual transcripts continued until the series of code concepts was determined based upon all data collected. Table 4.1 presents the concepts following open coding.
As expected, the original tree nodes in NVivo were initially quite broad and no clear picture emerged from the data following the review and coding of all transcripts. Instead, there appeared to be an ever-increasing number of codes with no obvious connections to each other. I needed to find links among the data to make it more useful. To find such links I conceptualised wider groupings as they emerged through the data. Initially this was achieved by making broad connections to the

Table 4.1 Concepts after open coding

| I wanted to be a teacher from a young age |
| I wanted a change from previous job/lifestyle |
| I needed a change |
| Teaching is my career choice |
| Subject choice in my degree |
| Secondary vs. primary school teaching |
| Previous teaching or training experience |
| Volunteering as a ‘teacher’ |
| Place (location) |
| Not my first attempt at doing an education degree |
| The link to subject area or broad discipline area |
| The link to previous job/employment/career |
| Teaching is a lifestyle choice for me |
| The appeal of length of time (one year) |
| I was inspired by previous teachers to become a teacher |
| I want to help people learn |
| My friends are teachers |
| I come from a family of teachers |
| Internal vs. external mode of study |
| Full-time or part-time study load |
| Enjoyment or satisfaction of teaching |
| Dissatisfaction with former employment/career |
| Age or maturity or life experience |
| Specialised knowledge |
| I liked the prac |
| Residential schools were good |
| Social presence on-line |
| Feelings of isolation |
| Likes of program |
| Work hours worked for me – family time |
| Why secondary school teaching? |
| Becoming a [subject area] teacher |
| Becoming a ‘specialised’ teacher |
| My mentor helped |
| I liked the assessment |
| Becoming a ‘real’ teacher |
| Registration and accreditation |
| Mentoring |
| Deliberate choice to teach a subject |
| Being an Intern meant being a teacher |
concepts on the basis of concept names only. This created some difficulty as it occurred to me that while I was regrouping the names of the concepts, they were potentially being interpreted in ways that may have differed from the textual components of the data and the meanings provided by participants. For that reason I undertook a further lengthy process of revisiting the data within the concepts that I initially developed to determine whether the name I had allocated truly reflected the nature of the concepts and that this level of aggregation across the data contained in individual transcripts could be justified. This was the start of the axial coding process.

4.7.1.2 Axial coding

Axial coding is a more specific process of linking data together by relating concept to concept around a complex process of inductive thinking involving several steps (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is so named because coding occurs in the process of linking concepts at the level of properties and dimensions around the axis of an emerging category. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), this involves documenting the properties and dimensions of the emerging concepts from the open coding phase, and forming a series of themes that identify the conditions, actions and interactions associated with a phenomenon.

The axial coding that followed the initial open coding required me to go ‘back in’ and reconnect with the information by re-examining the data and the interpretations I had made by conducting a repeated comparison of the data. This was necessary because the initial concepts I had developed were very broad and connections among the data were not immediately apparent. The deeper analysis afforded through axial coding was required to make sense of the coded data under these broad descriptive codes. After significant arranging and re-arranging of the
data following the procedures of constant comparison, a clearer picture of wider themes emerged. Through this further coding of the data, seventeen themes were identified that included data that were richer and more dense, with recurring ideas being linked to one another to create the identifiable and sustainable themes.

Subsequently, the seventeen themes were grouped around the four contributory categories that had emerged, namely:

- **The Attractions: Teaching as a New Career**
- **Past Experiences: Foundations of a New Teaching Career**
- **The Journey to a New Career: Entry to the Teaching Profession**
- **Developing a New Professional Identity**.

It is worth noting that both Glaser (1978) and Charmaz (2006) recommend the use of gerunds as a means of detecting processes and actions (Charmaz, 2006, p. 49). The four contributory categories that were constructed were not identified as gerunds *per se*. However, as will be demonstrated later in the thesis, and especially in Chapter 9, the gerund ‘Becoming’ was used to signify the core category of the constructed explanatory grounded theory. Nonetheless, as will demonstrated in Chapters 5 through 8 of the thesis, the four contributory categories that underpin ‘Becoming’ as the core category were depicted using *in vivo* terms. That is, terms derived from the authentic data contained in the interview transcripts provided by the research participants. The results of the axial coding process are shown in Table 4.2.
Table 4.2 Axial coding: development of themes and the creation of the four contributory categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Contributory Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Enjoyment received from teaching</td>
<td>Enjoyment/satisfaction from teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Satisfaction when teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I want to help people learn</td>
<td>Helping young people learn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The link to previous job/employment/career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teaching is my career choice</td>
<td>Always wanted to be a secondary school teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I wanted to be a teacher from a young age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Deliberate choice to teach subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Not my first attempt at doing an education degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Secondary vs. Primary school teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Becoming a ‘specialised’ teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Becoming a [subject area] teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Why secondary school teaching?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Specialised knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Subject choice in my degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The link to subject area or broad discipline area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Teaching is a lifestyle choice for me</td>
<td>Family &amp; lifestyle factors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Work hours worked for me – family time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My friends are teachers</td>
<td>Influence of significant others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I come from a family of teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I was inspired by previous teachers to become a teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Dissatisfaction with former employment/career</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction arising from previous career experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I wanted a change from previous job/lifestyle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I needed a change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Previous teaching or training experience</td>
<td>Formal teaching or training experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Volunteering as a teacher</td>
<td>Informal teaching or training experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Age</td>
<td>General life experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Maturity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Life experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. The appeal of length of time (one year)</td>
<td>Study load</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Full-time or part-time study load</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Internal vs. external mode of study</td>
<td>Study mode</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Place (location)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Feelings of isolation</td>
<td>Collaborating and engaging professionally with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Social presence on-line</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Registration and accreditation</td>
<td>Professional accreditation and status of the program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Becoming a ‘real’ teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Residential schools were good</td>
<td>At ‘The Res’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. I liked the assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Likes of program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. I liked the pract</td>
<td>‘Through ‘The Prac’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Mentoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. My mentor helped</td>
<td>Working with a Mentor Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Mentoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. My mentor helped</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. ‘Becoming’ a ‘real’ teacher</td>
<td>During the Internship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. Being an intern meant being a teacher</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Before reaching the point of being able to construct the explanatory grounded theory, a core category as the central focal point of the investigation needed to be constructed. This was considered during the selective coding process.

4.7.1.3 Selective coding

Following the approaches described in Chapter 3, selective coding involved the integration and refinement of the four contributory categories developed through open and axial coding as the basis for identifying the core category around which the grounded theory that is presented in Part 2 of the thesis was constructed. Labelled on the basis of the \textit{in vivo} term, ‘Becoming’ was identified as the core category to which the four identified contributory categories contributed. Each of the four categories underpinning the core category will be explored in depth in Chapters 5 through 8. The accounts of these categories are then integrated and interrogated in Chapter 9 in which the explanatory grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ is restated and discussed. Chapter 10 provides an evaluation of the investigation.

Having outlined the procedures followed in coding the empirical data gathered in the course of the interviews and the contributory categories that emerged as coding proceeded, the following section will discuss the further methods that were applied in terms of constant comparison, theoretical sampling, saturation, and memo-writing.

4.8 Constant Comparison, Theoretical Sampling, Saturation and Memo-writing

4.8.1 Constant comparison

The development and refinement of the contributory categories were based on constant comparison across the transcribed responses of the participants in the manner I described earlier. This was the essence of the continuous cycle of
concurrently collecting and analysing data characteristic of a grounded theory approach. That is, constant comparison “. . . generates successively more abstract concepts and theories through inductive processes of comparing data with data, data with category, category with category and category with concept” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187). As I mentioned previously, the initial sorting, coding and labelling of the data through which underlying meanings and themes could be portrayed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) failed to produce meaningful aggregate categories. For this reason, and as new data were collected and coded, participant responses were compared. In this way, the four contributory categories, and the core category on the basis of which the explanatory grounded theory was constructed, were identified as being substantiated and sustained by the data.

4.8.2 Theoretical sampling

Theoretical sampling (as opposed to the purposeful sampling I undertook to select participants) formed the foundations of the process of drawing constant comparisons among the empirical data to generate and support the four contributory categories and the core category. As described by Charmaz (2006), “initial sampling in grounded theory is where you start, whereas theoretical sampling directs you where to go” (p. 100). I employed theoretical sampling in this way to develop the emerging theoretical categories following my further scrutiny of the empirical data in light of the developing categories and “. . . to elaborate and refine categories in [the] emerging theory” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96). That is, regularly sampling from within the empirical data provided by the participants to ensure that the concepts and categories could be supported and sustained by what the participants themselves had said about their career change reasons and experiences. This could well have required further interviews with new participants or re-interviewing earlier
participants had the generation of further empirical data to clarify any questions or doubts about the four contributory categories become necessary; however, in the event this proved unnecessary. In fact, by engaging in theoretical sampling my re-examination of the original set of data served to demonstrate that a point of saturation had been attained where no new information or additional categories and themes were emerging from within the obtained data.

4.8.3 Saturation

Constant comparison and theoretical sampling provided the means for substantiating the identified categories and determining that a point of saturation had been attained at which the data could be sorted and diagramised in order to integrate the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006, p.96). In following these procedures it became apparent that the information contained in the further participant transcripts was, to all intents, redundant. Any further comparisons across the identified properties and categories failed to discern any further variations (Glaser, 2007) and added little to the theory that was emerging. At this point of saturation I considered that all elements of the theoretical construct had been covered and relationships between categories had been validated. On this basis I made the decision to stop theoretical sampling as advised by Glaser (2002) and no further transcribed interviews were analysed.

Table 4.3 provides an example of how the point of saturation was determined. Through coding multiple references to the key words and phrases, in this example, ‘helping others’ could be constructed as a recurring term in the data. When relationships across the data were compared further to determine the point of saturation, this term became even more pronounced as a major concept in the data as
a common reason that participants had provided in explaining why they had chosen a new career as secondary school teachers.
### Table 4.3 Saturation of a theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key words &amp; Phrases</th>
<th>Participant responses</th>
<th>Theme -&gt; Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>FRED:</strong> I’ve always worked with young people and received great satisfaction out of knowing they have “got it”, that I have helped them in some way after I have taught something. It is a real buzz.</td>
<td><strong>Helping others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>WINIFRED:</strong> I enjoyed my own children when they were young; I believe that I have something to offer to young people because I have life experience. I can help them, if I can’t do something to help them at least I can put them on path to – or show them where they can go to get help. I really enjoy that part of working with young people.</td>
<td><strong>The Attractions: Teaching as a New Career</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>JANE:</strong> My children really sparked my interest to become a teacher...and just thinking about wanting to know more about children, particularly boys, and to help them learn and understand them more.</td>
<td><strong>Helping others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>JANE:</strong> I’m not a jack-of-all-trades. I’ve got specialist skills and I wanted to use those specialist skills to help students the best way I could teach maths and business in a high school.</td>
<td><strong>Helping others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>JANET:</strong> It’s the whole helping their physical, spiritual, educational growth.</td>
<td><strong>Helping others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>LORNA:</strong> I suppose the only other thing that really started me thinking about teaching was I really like being able to help people with regard to learning. Even as a student myself, when I was in high school, I was one of the smarter kids at school, so I had a lot of friends that I used to be able to sit down and help do their homework, and explain this if the teacher was busy doing something else. That’s kind of been something that I’ve been doing for a long time. I like being able to help people.</td>
<td><strong>Helping others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CAMERON:</strong> I see my job as helping people learn and finding the right way to do that through teaching. I have been interested in learning for a long time, I think I have developed skills that allow me to help people learn what they need to know.</td>
<td><strong>Helping others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MARIA:</strong> It’s all about [me] having that positive influence on young people. To help them.</td>
<td><strong>Helping others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MARIA:</strong> And just different things in my life, I guess, just kept steering me away from – from that type of study, and kept drawing me back to working with people, you know to help people.</td>
<td><strong>Helping others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MARIA:</strong> And be able to, I suppose, help other people through it. I think that that’s what a teacher is being about. It’s about seeing young people today, and then working with them. In terms of helping them, I suppose, with things like their future careers, or their</td>
<td><strong>Helping others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MARIA:</strong> …wanting to be able to help them. I guess, continue that in their lives, and continue to stay positive is my role. I want to be able to help young people.</td>
<td><strong>Helping others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>BO:</strong> I sat there and thought about it for a year and a-half, and I got progressively, frustrated with what I was doing, which was, essentially, very, very, very high end paperwork, but paperwork all the same. I just wanted to do something where I can actually help people.</td>
<td><strong>Helping others</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.8.4 Memo-writing

Memo-writing (Charmaz, 2006) was pivotal throughout the interrelated investigative stages of data collection, sorting and coding data, and writing drafts of the findings. The memos were essentially notes that I wrote to myself throughout the research process. I came to agree with Goulding’s (2002) view that these “can help map out the emerging theory and are used to identify concepts and their properties” (p. 65). While similar checklists for memo writing have been provided by others (see, for example, Strauss & Corbin, 2005), as I wrote my memos I adopted the advice of Charmaz (2006, p. 82) to:

- define each code or category by its analytic properties;
- spell out and detail processes subsumed by the codes or categories;
- make comparisons between data, data and codes, codes and codes, codes and categories, categories and categories;
- bring raw data into the memo;
- provide sufficient empirical data to support definitions of the category and analytic claims about it;
- offer conjectures to check in the field settings;
- identify gaps in the analysis – may require theoretical sampling;
- interrogate a code or category by asking questions of it.

While coding the data, for instance, I wrote memos to alert similarities and differences between participant responses and what they had to say about their experiences. The memos in the following example (Figure 4.1) focus on the difference between ‘looking for’ and ‘needing’ a change.
In the later stages as I considered the coding and categorisation of responses to establish the themes, I wrote memos such as the following (Figure 4.2) to serve as reminders of the concepts contained within the identified categories.
Reflexivity

As I gathered and analysed the data and as codes and categories emerged I wrote memos as reminders to myself. At a different, but related, level, reflexivity, as explained in Chapter 3, was important throughout the entire research process. To focus the decisions and interpretations I made as the investigator, and to document my experiences as I interacted with the participants I maintained a reflexive journal. This provided a constant reminder of my epistemological stance. The reflexive journal served the further purpose of guiding my interpretations and analysis of empirical data. I regarded reflexivity as the ability to turn back to the original thoughts and responses expressed by participants and how their interactions with me...
and the responses they provided may have influenced my own approaches, position and vice versa. Through the reflexive stance I also sought to consider and evaluate any effects this may have had on my inductive reasoning and the interpretations and constructions as the explanatory grounded theory was being constructed.

4.9.1 Maintaining the reflexive journal

The reflexive journal included entries prior to, and following, each of the information gathering interchanges as I recorded the “continuous interplay between analysis and data collection” (Strauss & Corbin, 2005, p. 158). Following the advice of Charmaz (2000) the journal also recorded the role(s) I played, how this impacted the situation and the interpretations of the generated knowledge, and the possible influences of my prior work and experience on the perspectives that I adopted. While not a data collection or analysis method per se, the reflexive journal was important in recording any issues I considered might have influenced the research process and/or findings. In the various journal entries, I also recorded my thoughts, ideas and difficulties associated with research as I engaged with the participants. The journal enabled me to scrutinise the knowledge generated throughout the research process, to address any personal or professional challenges and how I responded to these. Further, the journal included my thoughts during the transcription and coding stages regarding the nature, clarity and adequacy of the empirical data I had gathered, and the identified categories, themes and the possible linkages and relationships in constructing the grounded theory. Appendix K provides some examples of the entries I made in the reflexive journal at various stage of the investigation.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

Research involving humans as participants and sources of information has the potential to give rise to a number of ethical concerns. Prior to commencing this
investigation I was required to make application for formal approval and ethical clearance through the National Ethics Application Form (NEAF) system to which CQUniversity Australia subscribes. Full details of the ethical clearance application and approval and allocated code are included in Appendix D. The application for ethical clearance and approval addressed the following ethical issues:

- Participation in the investigation on the part of former students of the pre-service Graduate Diploma in Learning and Teaching (Secondary) was entirely voluntary. Prior to their participation, participants were provided with detailed information regarding the project’s aims and the nature and extent of their involvement such that, when and if they elected to participate, they did so on the basis of informed consent. Formal recording of participants’ consent was made through their completion of the relevant proforma. See Appendix F for a copy of the Participant Informed Consent form and Information sheet provided to the participants.

- Similarly, participants were advised of their rights to withdraw from the project at any time without needing to provide reasons for their withdrawal.

- In order to resolve a potential ethical dilemma, the decision was taken to approach and interview participants only following completion of their study program. It was considered highly likely that had the interviews been undertaken prior to their completing the program this would have placed both the participants and me in a difficult position that had the potential to exert detrimental impacts on the formalities of the learning/teaching relationship that existed while participants were enrolled as students in the program.

- It was important to consider and protect the confidential nature of all information provided by participants and the need to safeguard their anonymity. For this
reason, both in this final thesis and in any other relevant publications based on this research, participant (and school) identities have been kept confidential.

Moreover, as outlined on the informed consent form, pseudonyms were used to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

- Raw data contained in the digital recordings of participant responses were erased upon completion of the transcription, and identifiable details such as names and locations were erased from the publicly available record to further protect the identity of the participants.

- Participants were offered the opportunity to view and verify the contents of the transcript of their individual interviews. This allowed participants to verify the validity and accuracy of their responses. The verbatim transcripts also enabled the participants to check that the constructions and interpretations placed upon their responses truly represented their experiences. Under no circumstances were participants able to view the responses made by other participants.

- The transcripts of the dialogues with participants have been securely stored in a locked filing cabinet. Information was entered in a personally allocated computer provided by the University and the user name and password is known only to me. In accordance with the CQUUniversity Australia Code of Conduct, five years after the completion of the research project, the data will be disposed of in a manner described by the CQUUniversity Australia Policy.

- The Participant Informed Consent Form included a section for participants to indicate if they wished to receive a summary of the investigation’s key findings. On completion of the research, a summary in plain English will be sent to those participants who showed their interest in this. Those participants who may wish to view the final thesis will be advised how to locate the abstract and final thesis
CHAPTER 4 APPLYING GROUNDED THEORY METHODS

within the CQUniversity Australia Library or on-line. For this purpose, and as a matter entirely of their own choice, participants were requested to provide their contact details on the Participant Informed Consent form.

4.11 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has been the last of the four chapters that comprise Part One of the thesis, each of which has aimed to contextualise my research. The stated purpose of this chapter has been to provide details of the specific methods used in this investigation and against which the veracity of the study and ‘the explanatory grounded theory can be determined. Achieving the aims of the research, those being to understand the reasons for people embarking on new careers as secondary school teachers, and their experiences as students of a pre-service teacher education program through which they came to realise their career change ambitions, required the generation and interpretation of empirical data. The voices of participants were fore-grounded as they told their career change stories which formed the heart of the data from which I was able to comprehend ‘what is going on’ and so systematically construct a theory.

The participants and I became immersed in gathering and interpreting the empirical data that revealed the participants’ multiple realities and experiences concerning their decisions to become secondary school teachers and their experiences in achieving their career changes. The chapter has provided details of how the participants were recruited and the semi-structured interviews in the course of which they shared their career change stories and experiences. It has also outlined in detail the approaches followed in coding, constructing and analysing the data in order to identify the themes and concepts that emerged from the stories they had related.
It has also been acknowledged that in any study founded on grounded theory methods the investigator plays a pivotal role as a research instrument. For this reason also in this chapter I have also documented how I positioned myself in the investigation, and the practices I adopted in order to ensure a reflexive approach that was congruent with my epistemology. Included among these were the memos that I wrote to reflect my on-going thoughts and ideas as categories were identified and the concepts underpinning the grounded theory began to emerge as well as the regular entries made in the reflexive journal I maintained throughout the investigation. A record of these details is imperative given that the theory was derived from my inductive reasoning about what was happening as the data were analysed and interpreted. Overall, the specific grounded theory methods I have outlined in this chapter provided the basis of the four contributory categories that form the foundation of the core category ‘Becoming’. A detailed discussion of these categories and the explanatory grounded theory comprises Part 2 of this thesis.
PART 2
‘BECOMING’
AN EXPLANATORY GROUNDED THEORY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHING AS A NEW CAREER

‘Becoming’ a secondary school teacher as a new career can be explained and understood by the attractions some career changers feel toward teaching, and their past experiences that heighten the reasons for such a change. Career changers felt attracted to teaching by the satisfactions of helping young people learn, perceived family and lifestyle benefits, realising long-held ambitions to teach, and the influences of significant others. The past experiences they gained in their previous careers performing work-related teaching and training roles, in voluntary organisations, and through life in general added further reasons for their choice of new career. The attractions and past experiences provided the context for their journey to a new career as students of a pre-service teacher education program through which their new professional identities as secondary school teachers were developed. In making their journey to a new career they completed a program offering flexible study load, distance and blended learning mode, collaborative learning and professional registration. They acquired their new professional identities through on-site practicums, attending residential schools and completion of an internship that provided opportunities to complete authentic assessment tasks under the guidance of an effective mentor. (Grounded theory of ‘Becoming’)
The following chapters present the four contributory categories underpinning ‘Becoming’ as the core category of the grounded theory through which the career change decisions and experiences of nineteen women and men can be explained and understood:

- **The Attractions: Teaching as a New Career**
- **Past Experiences: Foundations of a New Teaching Career**
- **The Journey to a New Career: Entry to the Teaching Profession**
- **Developing a New Professional Identity**

These are then followed by Chapter 9 in which the grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ will be presented in its entirety and finally Chapter 10 that will provide an evaluation of the investigation, its limitations and contributions.
CHAPTER 5 THE ATTRACTIONS: TEACHING AS A NEW CAREER

I have always been attracted to teaching.  
(Leonard)

5.1 Introduction

The nineteen women and men who participated in this investigation had completed undergraduate degrees in diverse fields including, among others, accountancy, biochemistry, aviation, and theology. They had then embarked on their initial careers in equally diverse professions. At some point along their previous career pathways, and for a variety of reasons that this investigation aimed to explain, they had then decided to change careers and become secondary school teachers. In telling their stories of their career change experiences, two questions emerged that provide the core of this chapter: firstly, what had prompted them to change careers; and, secondly, what had attracted them specifically to secondary school teaching as a new career?

When they articulated what had attracted them to a new career as a secondary school teacher, five themes were identified from the coding and analysis of the empirical data provided by the participants:

• **Personal enjoyment and satisfaction from teaching** and how they thought teaching would satisfy their needs for personal fulfillment.

• **Helping young people learn** through teaching and the rewards and satisfactions that this would provide.

• **Always wanted to be a secondary school teacher**, a want some had held from a young age and now sought to fulfill after various obstacles had intruded, or other opportunities and options had initially caused them to embark on non-teaching careers.
**Family and lifestyle factors** attracted some career changers to secondary school teaching along with the appeal and practicality of working during school hours while rearing their own family.

**Influence of significant others** including family members or friends who are, or had been, teachers, as well former teachers who had inspired and attracted them to become a secondary school teacher.

Figure 5.1 summarises the five clusters of reasons for being attracted to new careers as secondary school teachers:

![Figure 5.1 The Attractions: Teaching as a new career](image)

While each of these clusters of reasons are discussed separately in this chapter, as Figure 5.1 also suggests, in explaining what had attracted them to secondary school teaching, the career changers often expressed a combination of reasons for embarking on their new careers. Invariably, in telling their stories they referred to
situations and events in their lives that had initially sparked their interest and that had provided the momentum for them to investigate other career options; and then subsequently had prompted them to consider new careers as secondary school teachers. The influences and impetus provided by these situations and life events, and what had encouraged them to see secondary school teaching an attractive option are explored in this chapter.

5.2 Personal enjoyment and satisfaction from teaching

In talking of the personal satisfaction and enjoyment they had experienced from previous teaching and working with others, several career changers saw this as the main reason for deciding to change careers and become secondary school teachers. Leonard, for example, had already amassed a wealth of experience in teaching in various contexts, including training pilots and working as a workplace trainer and assessor, and had always found teaching very satisfying and enjoyable. Importantly, Leonard raised a fundamental question:

\[ I \text{ had always received satisfaction out of teaching. That is why I teach. If you’re not getting job satisfaction out of teaching then you should be asking yourself: Why teach? } \]

In referring to what attracted him to teaching, Leonard compared the satisfactions he receives from teaching with the satisfaction he had previously received from flying as an international airline pilot:

\[ \text{Every day that I have a good lesson or something that [goes] down well, I expect that I’ll continue to enjoy those experiences – more than flying.} \]

\[ \text{It’s a little bit different. Flying, you sort of get a reward first, on a personal basis, and although you get that from teaching, it’s slightly} \]
different between the two. The satisfaction is not instant – you have to work at it. But this [teaching] is where the real satisfaction is.

Bo also compared the different satisfactions she had experienced in her previous career as an engineer with the satisfaction she felt when being a volunteer in her child’s class in a reading program:

I was part of the mums’ group that would go and teach reading in the mornings, or help with reading, and I got more satisfaction from that than I did my day job and I thought, “teaching – yes”.

Other career changers spoke about the satisfactions and enjoyment they received when working with young people as being a major consideration that had driven their decisions to move into teaching. As Leonard put it:

There’s the basic enjoyment of seeing someone progress in their class that gives you the zest to keep going.

Similarly, Fred indicated:

I’ve always worked with young people and received great satisfaction out of knowing they have “got it”, that I have helped them in some way after I have taught something. It is a real buzz.

In thinking about her reasons for wanting to become a teacher, for her part Winifred said:

I just enjoy it…I like working with young people. And I think that’s one of the things that you need to do, is make sure that you enjoy [working with] young people…and my enjoyment of young people has a lot to do with why I became a teacher.

Many of the reasons that these career changers gave in explaining what had attracted them to become secondary school teachers, and the satisfactions and
enjoyment they gained through working with children and adolescents are also found in previous investigations. These previous investigations include those of MCEETYA (2005), OECD (2005), Watt and Richardson (2008) and Williams and Forgasz (2009). Leonard’s reference to the *basic enjoyment* he experiences can be likened to the personal fulfillment to which DEEWR (2008) refers in its account of what attracted people to teaching. The OECD (2005) suggested that this basic enjoyment and sense of personal fulfillment reflects the potential for the job to provide intellectual fulfillment as a further reason to change to a teaching career.

### 5.3 Helping young people learn

Helping young people learn was identified as a further theme explaining what had attracted participants to teaching as a new career. By the very nature of their profession, teachers work with other people in helping them to realise their potential. Loewenberg Ball and Forzani (2009) define teaching as “helping others learn to do particular things” (p. 498). Some of the career changers in this investigation indicated that wanting to ‘help others’ had been a major reason for their having been attracted to a new teaching career, feeling as they did that teaching would satisfy their needs for personal fulfillment in helping others learn. As Janet, mentioned:

> It’s the whole helping their physical, spiritual, educational growth.

As Lorna explained:

> *I suppose the only other thing that really started me thinking about teaching was I really like being able to help people with regard to learning. Even as a student myself, when I was in high school*, I was *one of the smarter kids at school, so I had a lot of friends that I used to*...

---

19 In this investigation, ‘high school’ and ‘secondary school’ are used interchangeably to mean schooling between Years 8 and 12 within the current Queensland, Australia, school system.
be able to sit down and help do their homework, and explain this if the
teacher was busy doing something else. That’s kind of been something
that I’ve been doing for a long time. I like being able to help people.

In discussing his being attracted to a teaching career Cameron went a step further. As
he put it:

_I’ve always been interested in the learning process. Not so much the
teaching, but certainly the learning process. I see that the main thing I
need to do is bring the skills that I’ve learned to the new generation. I
see my job as helping young people learn and finding the right way to do
that through teaching. I have been interested in learning for a long time.
I think I have developed skills that allow me to help people learn what
they need to know._

In her conversations, Winifred explored the link between having _enjoyed_ her own
children when they were growing and now enjoying working with young people and
helping them as a teacher who could draw on a wealth of life experiences. She said:

_I enjoyed my own children when they were young; I believe that I have
something to offer to young people because I have life experience, I can
help them; if I can’t do something to help them at least I can put them on
path to – or show them where they can go to get help. I really enjoy that
part of working with young people, helping them learn._

In her comments Jane saw similar links between her parental experiences and her
decision to become a teacher:

_My children really sparked my interest to become a teacher…and just
thinking about wanting to know more about children, particularly boys,
and to help them learn and understand them more._
When asked about what had attracted her to teaching Maria referred to being a positive influence when she stated:

It’s all about [me] having that positive influence on young people. To help them.

While teaching had not been her first career choice and while she had also contemplated a career in law, at a deeper level Maria added:

I’d say teaching to me is even more than a career. I suppose it’s a bit of a calling, like my true vocation. It’s something that sort of found me, I think, more than I found it. But, yeah, I think I’m meant for it. I’m meant to help people.

Prior to this [pre-service teacher education] degree, I was originally going to study Law and become a lawyer. And just different things in my life, I guess, just kept steering me away from – from that type of study, and kept drawing me back to working with people, you know to help people.

Perhaps not surprisingly given that she had completed a Bachelor of Theology intending to become a secondary school teacher in Studies of Religion, Maria also saw a wider pastoral care role in teaching and the opportunity it presented in offsetting some of the negative perceptions that she saw society ascribing to young people when she said:

I guess I see it [teaching] as more of maybe a type of service. That’s what I was meant to do. And be able to, I suppose, help other people through it. I think that that’s what a teacher is being about. It’s about seeing young people today, and then working with them. In terms of helping
them, I suppose, with things like their future careers, or their future plans in life, being people in society.

I think in the media they’re [young people] often portrayed in such a negative light, or you hear a lot of negative things about young people, and the way the world’s going, and in 10 years time it’s going to be lost. And I don’t see it like that at all. I think they’ve got tremendous promise and potential, and just real, I don’t know, enjoyment of life, a lot of the time. And, yeah, wanting to be able to help them, I guess, continue that in their lives, and continue to stay positive is my role. I want to be able to help young people.

The attraction to teach and share skills and knowledge with others reported by MCEETYA (2005), and having something to offer that may help young people, were also apparent when participants discussed what had attracted them to teaching. The reasons mentioned by these career changers also align with the larger point made by the OECD (2005) that choosing teaching as a career can be associated with a person wanting to make a contribution to their society, and the similar point made by the ACE (2003) that people choose teaching so they can give back or make a difference. The reasons articulated by participants such as Jane and Janet who were influenced by their experiences as parents, provide further support to Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant’s (2003) view that wanting to positively contribute to children’s development attracts people to choose teaching as a career.

5.4 Always wanted to be a secondary school teacher

Seven of the participating career changers indicated that from a young age they had always wanted to be a teacher. While they had undertaken their original undergraduate degrees and followed previous career paths, they had now come full
circle to where they had always wanted to be. Rose typified this situation when she indicated:

\[
I \text{ did contemplate being a teacher when I first finished school, but I, I had stumbled upon, a different path. I was using my chemistry in a laboratory sense to analyse historic paint. Very ‘stimulating’, but I realised this was not what I really wanted to do.}
\]

As shown in the following extract from her interview, Frances also travelled down a different pathway prior to her new-found teaching career mostly because her geographical location had made it impossible to attend face-to-face classes and a distance education pre-service teacher education degree was not available to her at the time:

\[
\text{Before I actually started my Commerce degree, I looked at teaching then, but because I was living in X and there were no teaching courses available for external studies at that time, because that was pre-internet. So I enrolled in a degree I could do external. So I’ve been looking at it for a long time and now the time was right for me.}
\]

Always wanting to be a teacher was also indicated in the responses of Ted and Lorna. Ted said:

\[
\text{It sat in the back of my mind for a while that, potentially I could become a high school teacher, but I think I was just so busy with, you know, day-to-day life, and work, that I never really thought to follow it through.}
\]

While for her part Lorna stated:

\[
\]

20 The terms ‘external’ and ‘distance’ are used in this investigation to mean studying off-campus and not attending weekly face-to-face lectures and tutorials.
Teaching was always something I really wanted to do. But I didn’t have the right “in” for it. It was actually in the back of my mind when I first did my Biology degree. I knew that just being a biology person, like a scientist, I was limiting my job prospects. And it was pretty much a prospect of staying here and not moving. I knew that there would have to be some sort of other avenue that I had to go into, and teaching was always one of those things that was kind of in the back of my mind as something I wanted to do, even from when I first started my degrees. So because I could not get ‘that job’ I wanted, I did the tag-on teaching degree.

In her responses Clair spoke about the link between how from a young age, she had liked and enjoyed teaching others, and wanting to share her passion for accountancy. As she explained:

*Even from a young age I knew I liked to teach, to teach people... and I love accounting. So my base is accounting... and my love of it and then wanting to share that passion with others – so teaching.*

Clearly, both Clair and Lorna valued the linkages between the discipline knowledge they had acquired from their initial degrees and the further knowledge they had gained through their previous work related experiences, both of which supported their move to a teaching career. It would appear that it is not only the knowledge acquired from an undergraduate degree *per se* that is important. Making the change to a teaching career also requires the passion to teach the knowledge from a particular discipline area and that has been made more meaningful by work-related experiences.
Norma considered teaching was what she was always going to do with her life:

*The feeling that I could teach has always been alive since I was young. I always thought I could teach. I knew that I’m good as a teacher. I can explain things well.*

Winifred commented:

*I had considered teaching earlier on in my life. Originally that’s why I decided to do the Certificate IV to go and teach at TAFE and now a secondary school teacher.*

Janet noted that changing work circumstances had been the trigger for her to pursue her previous thoughts of becoming a teacher when she said:

*If the lab had not closed down I would still be there – there was nowhere else for me to go as I could not move towns – I saw this as an opportunity to do what I was going to do years ago before I did this micro-biology thing.*

All of the participants indicated that in embarking on their career change they had felt attracted to teaching in general. During their conversations, they emphasised some further and more specific aspects that had attracted them to become secondary school teachers. The particular attractions they felt for secondary school teaching provided further information in answer to the question: “What attracted you to a secondary school teaching career?”

### 5.4.1 Preference to working with older students

For some career changers, the attraction to becoming a secondary school teacher was based on their preference to work with older students rather than working with *little kids*. As Ivy, for example, indicated:
I think I can handle and work better with older students – high school kids more so than the little ones.

Lorna put it a little differently when she said:

Oh I like little kids, no problem there, but I figure I would have a better impact on a more mature student being a high school teacher.

The prospects of dealing with developmental issues associated with younger students had deterred participants like Frances from choosing primary school teaching. As she explained:

I spoke to a friend of mine, who’s a teacher aide, and she usually works with the year four to sevens. And she’d just done a day with the year twos, and she was saying, “Oh, my gosh, they were tying shoelaces” and – and I just thought, “I can’t do that.” I could work with four to seven comfortably – but I’m not a little people person to teach developmental things like tying shoelaces. And I realised suddenly that I could be put in a year one class for a whole year if I was primary trained, and that would be a nightmare for me.

Janet made much the same point in saying:

I don’t like little people. It’s probably an awful thing to say, but I don’t – I don’t really ‘do’ little kids. I prefer older ones when they can toilet themselves and give them a simple instruction and they might listen.

Janet’s thoughts were also reflected by Norma’s admissions:

I’m very bad with little kids. I had this experience when I used to do some volunteering work when my son was in kindergarten. I would have to give multiple instructions – I realised that I’m not fit for primary teaching at all – I never even considered it – I would have been a flop in
that because I would expect too much from the kids and my instructions wouldn’t have been proper there. So I made the deliberate choice to become a secondary school teacher.

A measure of apprehension was detectable in Leonard’s responses when he said:

*I never considered primary school teaching at all. I think it might be a male thing that I couldn’t sort of see myself focusing on the – the little people, although I don’t have anything against it or get anything from it, I suppose I was a little bit afraid of it – ‘of the unknown’.*

### 5.4.2 Being a ‘specialist’ teacher

Some career changers were attracted to a career as a secondary school teacher because it gave them the opportunity to use their specialist skills and knowledge. At least within the Queensland schooling system, secondary school teachers are regarded as ‘specialist’ teachers in their particular discipline area subjects. As an entry requirement to the pre-service program they had undertaken, these career changers needed to have demonstrated a significant knowledge base and a measure of subject specialisation in two distinct teaching areas based on their undergraduate qualification. In contrast, those wishing to become primary school teachers are required to be more generalist teachers. This was the point that Jane made when she said:

*I’m not a jack-of-all-trades. I’ve got specialist skills and I wanted to use those specialist skills to help students the best way I could teaching maths and business in a high school.*

This went somewhat further for Bo who, in admitting a probable level of boredom with primary school teaching, indicated:
When it went for me to decide what to do, I very quickly realised that I’d probably get bored with primary school as I would be teaching everything, rather than my specialty.

Leigh also spoke of using her specialist knowledge as a secondary teacher when she noted:

I wasn’t using my science degree that much. And when I sort of thought about primary versus secondary, the main driving factor behind that was the fact I already had a specialised degree, and I wanted to use it.

The attraction that some career changers felt in becoming specialised secondary school teachers reflects the passion they also held about a particular discipline area, and drawing on this in teaching that subject area. This was also seen in Ivy’s responses:

Because of my subject choices of home economics and health education, it sort of fits in nicely with secondary. And something that I can teach students about the things that I know and I’m absolutely passionate about.

On a related theme Lorna had figured:

. . . well there’s not really that much call to be teaching a subject like biology to primary school kids. It is a specialised area. I figured secondary school teaching would be the best way for me to utilise both my degrees to their potential and what I wanted to teach.

As Jane explained her decisions regarding a new career in secondary school teaching:

In the end it came down to the areas that I enjoyed the most, and I really, really enjoy maths and I find it rewarding to teach more complex maths
rather than basic maths. It wasn’t to do with the age of the children. It was more to do with the subject area, and the content of the subject and the desire to teach that.

This same theme was also seen in the responses provided by Johanna who said:

As a secondary teacher I was able to capitalise on the fact I could utilise my past, you know my degrees and knowledge and work experience – you know, what I knew and I could use that in the classroom.

Clair was also in this group of participants more interested in secondary rather than primary teaching based on the capacity to use the knowledge gleaned from undergraduate degrees and previous careers:

I have an accountancy degree, I was an accountant. I love accounting and wanted to be able to teach accounting. I love children, but I couldn’t handle primary school. What could I teach them about accounting? They don’t do accounting at primary school.

5.4.3 Secondary school teachers get jobs

Their perception that it would be easier to gain employment as a secondary school teacher was a major draw card for some career changers. Teachers are employed to teach as primary or secondary school teachers. Although the idealism many career changers articulated when talking about what had attracted them toward a new career in teaching cannot be lightly dismissed, others expressed more practical reasons for finding a career as a secondary school teacher attractive. Employment opportunities for secondary school teachers in regional areas of Queensland and elsewhere are greater than the demand for primary school teachers (Miles, et al. 2009). While three of the career changers had originally chosen primary school teaching, ultimately the enhanced prospects of gaining employment following
completion of their pre-service teacher education program became part of the attraction they felt toward secondary school teaching.

Having completed her first practicum in primary teaching Johanna, for instance, indicated:

> When I came back, I chose secondary because of stability – the ability to actually get a job. Not many jobs in my [geographic] area are in primary but I also thought I didn’t feel like I was able to pass on my skills in primary.

As noted in her earlier comments, Frances had admitted she felt unsuited to primary school teaching. She also voiced similar pragmatic reasons together with family commitments for her choice of a new career as a secondary, rather than primary, school teacher. As she said:

> I initially chose primary school. And then just speaking to people I realised – and probably the newspapers were just a few different clues – that I wasn’t able to leave here to get employment because my children are at school here. I guess I just worked out that there was an over-supply of primary teachers, and I knew experienced primary teachers that were having trouble getting fulltime positions.

The demand for secondary school teachers, especially in science is reflected in Anne’s comments:

> I don’t know whether I chose it [secondary school teaching] but the fact I could be a science teacher influenced the decision. I had originally chosen primary, but considering there’s a demand for science teachers and that would have improved my chances of getting a job.
In accounting for what had attracted them to a new career specifically in secondary school teaching, the views expressed by these career changers are not inconsistent with findings reported in other investigations. The research carried out by MCEETYA (2005), for example, found that of those interviewed \((n=2,500)\) in that study only 11% reported that they enjoyed working in their specialised subject areas as compared with just 1.8% of entrants into primary pre-service teacher education for whom working within areas of specialisation had been a consideration. Conversely, the research carried out by DEEWR (2008) noted that “enjoy my subject areas” was the most significant among reasons those in that study gave for choosing secondary school teaching.

The realities of a new career founded upon employment prospects that participants also mentioned were apparent in the earlier findings of DEEWR (2008). Similar to the findings presented in this section of this chapter, that report identified the “high likelihood of gaining employment” was a factor in people choosing a teaching career. The DEEWR (2008) report, however, was concerned with those entering careers as either primary or secondary school teachers, as opposed to those in this investigation all of whom were embarking upon new careers specifically in secondary school teaching.

### 5.5 Family and lifestyle factors

In discussing what had attracted them to pursue a new career as a secondary school teacher, some career changers referred to a number of interrelated family and lifestyle factors they considered went with being a teacher. Such extrinsic reasons (Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010; Mtika & Gates, 2011 p. 425) are not inherent in the work itself, but included what some saw as the convenience of working hours and vacation periods that fitted with their family and other commitments.
Career changers who had children themselves indicated that the perceived lifestyle factors of ‘being a teacher’ had attracted them to their new career choice. In regards to work hours and holidays, several participants spoke of the convenience (for them) of aligning their daily work routines with the needs of their children. This scenario is apparent in Frances’ responses:

*I have five children, all school age, and so teaching is very practical for me, as in school holidays and after school.*

Anne referred to the prospect of working the same hours and having the *same work patterns* as her children as an attraction to teaching:

*I thought if I worked as a teacher, I’d be working the same hours as my kids. I’d be falling into the school holidays with them. Through my study I was able to get them into bed and then do my study at night. And I thought I could probably keep up that same work pattern as a teacher doing my prep at night then getting up and going to work when they were going to school.*

Such apparent congruities between the working hours of teachers and the hours their children also spend at school are often quite mythical. Norma, for example, made this discovery and indicated that the realities of scheduling her family life with school life were not necessarily realised; as she indicated:

*I used to think that the timings are like 8 to 3, but I no longer think that it’s true because I’m often at school later than that.*

*She did, however, reiterate the views of both Anne and Frances in saying that she could spend more time with her family during school holidays. There were no relatives upon whom she could call to mind her school-aged children, so for Norma having school holidays with her children*
was an important consideration. She did indicate, though, that this had not necessarily been a major attractant that influenced her decision to become a teacher...that was one thing that supported my decision. Not influenced, but supported my decision.

In her comments, Rose was a further participant who suggested *lifestyle factors* accounted for why she was attracted to a new teaching career:

*The other reason I chose secondary school teaching were some lifestyle factors. I currently have a baby but it’s, a way to blend the skills I already had with having family. I was able to timetable my personal life with school life, which is really work life.*

Maria made the career change from working as a boarding school supervisor mainly working after-school hours. As her responses revealed, she spoke of teaching as affording her *normal work hours*:

*I think one of the main reasons I ended up deciding, well moving into teaching was because I wanted a job, which had more normal working hours, you know, working during the day. I know now teachers don’t just work nine to three – most of our prep work is done at home. For me now, this can happen without my other job.*

In coming to realise that a teacher’s workday often extends well beyond the end of the school day, Maria shared a similar view as that which had been expressed by Norma.

The family and lifestyle factors mentioned by career changers included aspects of their personal daily life, their commitments, responsibilities and routines. These aspects were considered poignant when these career changers referred to the convenience of a teacher’s work pattern matching their family routine. Their views
were in keeping with the conclusions drawn by Watt and Richardson (2008) who reported that ‘time for family’ rated as one of the top five reasons career changers have for choosing teaching in that “teaching hours fit with the responsibility of having a family” (p. 414).

5.6 Influence of significant others

When some of the career changers spoke about what had attracted them to a career in teaching, they often explained that they had been influenced or inspired by significant others in their lives. The significant others whom they identified included two groups: friends or family members who were themselves teachers; and teachers whom the career changers had directly experienced in the past and who had encouraged or stimulated them to become teachers themselves.

5.6.1 The influence of friends and family who are, or were, teachers

Some career changers had been influenced to become teachers through friends who were teachers. Coupled with her dissatisfactions with her previous employment, Bo referred to how she was very envious of one of her friends who had made the career change from engineering to teaching and the social interaction that this had afforded. As she said:

\[
I \text{ had a friend who swapped from Engineering into high school teaching about 18 months before I did. And when he did so, I was actually very envious of him. And while it didn't spur me at that point to do anything, I sat there and thought about it for a year and a-half, and I got progressively, frustrated with what I was doing, which was, essentially, very, very, very high end paperwork, but paperwork all the same. I just wanted to do something where I can actually help people.}
\]
Anne spoke of friends whose experiences had stimulated her own interest in pursuing a new career as a secondary school teacher. As she noted:

*One of my friends, or a couple of my friends did the Grad Dip years ago, internally, and they’ve gone off and become teachers. I think I’ve always had teaching in the back of my mind as an option as a career. It was looking at my friends who had done the change and what they did and how they became what they did, yeah it was part knowing someone I knew did it [the grad dip] that helped me and part this was what I was going to do.*

It was Ted’s girlfriend who had together with his passion for teaching dance in a private dance studio that had influenced him to undertake his career change. As he explained:

*My girlfriend did this same degree in 2008, and, it was probably at the end of that, I think I just noticed the sense of achievement she felt, and my interest picked up in doing the one-year degree that would, give me an opportunity to sort of continue that line that I was going down with – with the dance teaching.*

He did, however, make the point that:

*My girlfriend didn’t directly encourage me and say, “You should do this course,” ’cause as far as she knew I was quite settled in the accounting at the time. But I think it was just from seeing how well she did and hearing about the atmosphere at her school, and I think it was this inspiration that drew me back to my interest in teaching. It picked it up again.*
Peter too talked of his partner as part of his being attracted to a new career as a secondary school teacher:

*My partner was a schoolteacher. She suggested I do it – that was one of the motivating factors. I watched her going to school, and coming back, and all the holidays, and, you know, she seemed to really like it, and, so I decided that I would do the same thing she did.*

As shown in the following extract, Peter’s daughter is also a teacher and he acknowledged that this too might have played a part in his decision to make the career change:

*My daughter is a schoolteacher. She is one of the people that said that it’s really good, and it’s pretty portable if you want to travel with it. She enjoys it. And yes I guess you can say there was an influence there. I think mainly from my partner more so than my daughter.*

The influence of family members had inspired and influenced a number of these career changers to become teachers. Rose put it in an interesting way when she commented:

*Teaching is sort of my family business. Both of my parents are teachers. My sister’s a teacher. My two best friends are teachers. You know, it is sort of in the blood! It was only time before I would become a teacher, it was no surprise – a bit expected since teaching was in the family.*

Quite similarly, Norma said that it:

*Could be that teaching is genetic. My dad loved to teach. He wasn’t a teacher but he was good at explaining things, and he used to exemplify things. He is a good teacher. I get it from him – you could say he was my encouragement to be a teacher.*
The influence of family members was also apparent in Janet’s responses when she indicated:

My mum, and my sister are both secondary school teachers, so I had a bit of an idea of what would happen there. It was actually Mum who suggested it. For years she’s been telling me she always thought I’d make a good teacher, and she said, “Now’s the time”.

Likewise Fred said:

I have two brothers, both of whom are teachers. I could see how my brother was flourishing and enjoying living because he really loved it. And I thought, “I can be like that”.

As seen in the following interview extract, apart from her hatred of her previous job, Jane pointed to her sister-in-law’s experience as a teacher as having been something of a driving force in her own career change decisions:

In my husband’s family, his sister’s a teacher, and her husband’s a teacher. That would have had some influence, for sure, because just talking to my sister-in-law about things. I’d say I used to hate work and I don’t find it very rewarding, and she’d talk about her job, and it’s like, “Yeah, teaching sounds – while it’s hard work – it sounds like it would be a lot more rewarding” and that’s probably what triggered me to think about it.

5.6.2 Inspirational previous teachers

Five career changers reported they had been attracted to a new secondary school teaching career because they had felt inspired by teachers whom they had had during their own years as school students. In most instances these had been teachers who had taught them in secondary school. As Russell (2002) echoes it, “the more
students like their teachers and feel their teachers care about them, the more they enjoy school and find it interesting” (p. 25). While not making quite the same point, Ivy said:

*I had an amazing Art teacher when I was at high school, and one really good English teacher, and it’s always just stuck in my mind that I want to be like them, I wanted to be that kind of teacher.*

As Rose recounted:

*I had a truly a fantastic chemistry teacher in high school who really just made science acceptable and particularly supported girls in science...even though he was a male teacher. And so that’s just where it clicked for me to become a chemistry teacher someday.*

Similarly, Bo said:

*I think you’ve got to go back to when you were at school yourself. I had some very good teachers when I was coming through school. One was my maths teacher at the time saying, “Well, you don’t really know a subject until you teach it.” And, you know that statement has always been a challenge to me. Well, you know, how do I do it? Do I really understand it? You know, am I as smart as I think? He has inspired me to challenge my thinking, even today as a teacher myself, to become a teacher like him.*

Maria’s thoughts about the influence of previous teachers were quite similar as the following extract illustrates:

*When I was at high school, some of the teachers who I met who, I guess, did have a good impact on my life, in terms of making me believe I could do whatever I wanted. So real positive teachers that I consider now*
inspired me to become a teacher. I liked what they did and how they made me feel. You could say they shaped the way I thought and think today.

The same thoughts were echoed by Cameron when he said:

> When I started getting into senior education, I had a couple of teachers that were very good, and, I really appreciated them. I was thinking when I first started thinking about teaching, it was when we started getting into senior – it was when I saw what teaching was all about – teaching real subjects to real kids – not ones who were misbehaving but wanted to be there to see their schooling through.

Interestingly, Cameron also indicated that if he was to gain employment as a teacher it would ideally only be in the senior years (years 11 and 12). In much the same terms, Fred spoke of inspirational past teachers as having been those who taught real subjects to real kids in senior (years 11 and 12) and it was at this level that he saw himself teaching.

The influences or inspiration received from ‘significant others’ is not a key feature found in previous research when considering the attractions to change careers into teaching. In their research, Watt and Richardson (2008) found that the “social influences of others” (p. 410) rated as the second lowest reason given by those changing career into teaching. The DEEWR (2008) report, however, identified the “influence of past teachers” and “family roles models” as two features that played a part in the decision to choose a new career as a secondary school teacher. Given the focus of the present investigation, it is worth noting that that report (DEEWR 2008) argued that the influences of “significant others” are not unique to those attracted to
a secondary school teaching career since the same influences are also found among
those attracted to primary school teaching.

5.7 Summary of Chapter

Through the interpretations made of their stories, the reasons that brought the
participants in this investigation to such a career change decision have been explored
in this chapter. As their narratives have demonstrated, these people spoke of a wide
range of interrelated reasons to explain what had attracted them to teaching as their
new career.

Some participants had been attracted to a new career as secondary school
teachers because they saw it as giving them personal enjoyment and satisfaction. Not
unexpectedly, in talking of their reasons for changing career, several participants
reflected findings from other research in identifying altruistic reasons and the
attraction of helping others, especially young people, realise their full potential as an
important factor in explaining their attraction to teaching.

For some career changers, teaching had been something they had wanted to do,
or felt capable of doing, for some time. In articulating what had attracted them to
teaching as a new career, the participant stories took on a somewhat sharper focus as
they talked about what had influenced them to choose secondary school teaching
specifically. Some acknowledged that not all who have ambitions to become
schoolteachers have the skills and personal qualities and attributes needed to work
with younger primary school-aged children. This, along with the fact that they would
have the opportunity to engage their passions for the areas of specialisation in which
they had initially been trained through their undergraduate degrees, underpinned the
reasons some participants had in regarding themselves as more suited to a secondary
school teaching career. The perceptions of others that they were more likely to gain
CHAPTER 5 THE ATTRACTIONS

employment over their primary teacher counterparts was an important reason for having chosen secondary school teaching that cannot be dismissed.

The convenience of family and lifestyle factors played a significant role in making teaching seem like an attractive option for the career changers in this investigation. Presented on a more pragmatic level, and again reflecting responses made by career changers in other research, the (often mythical) belief that school teaching was a career that could proceed harmoniously with their own family and their own child-rearing commitments, was the attraction that caused some career changers to consider this new career option. Timing of their children’s school day with their workday as teachers as well as having school holidays with their children played an important and influential role in their career change decisions.

Some career changers were influenced to become a teacher by significant others in their lives. While they may have initially developed careers in different fields, some had been attracted to a new secondary school teaching career influenced by significant others in their families who are, or were teachers themselves. Additionally, some career changers found inspiration from previous teachers whom they had encountered in the course of their own learning journeys while at school.

This chapter has provided some initial insights into those aspects that, in their terms, career changers considered had attracted them to new careers as secondary school teachers. For a good many participants there was, however, a further magnet that had drawn them to teaching as a new career option. Some talked of their experiences in teaching in their previously paid employment duties, while others spoke of their experiences in teaching obtained as volunteers in roles they undertook in community organisations and other agencies. As the following chapter will elaborate, regardless of where such past experiences had been gained and enjoyed,
they generated a palpable passion for teaching and a further set of reasons that had drawn career changers to teaching as a new career.
CHAPTER 6 PAST EXPERIENCES:
FOUNDATIONS OF A NEW TEACHING CAREER

The key to my success as a teacher would be my range of experiences.  
(Johanna)

6.1 Introduction

As with the preceding chapter, the aim of this chapter is to construct a scenario founded on the stories that the participating career changers recounted concerning the personal attributes, characteristics and situations that had prompted them to decide on a career change into secondary school teaching. When people engage in various events, situations and activities they have experiences and acquire knowledge and skills that become the reference points for future decisions and actions. Past experiences exert both positive and negative influences. The analysis and interpretation of the empirical data demonstrated that their past experiences had influenced the decisions participants had taken in embarking on new careers as secondary school teachers. Whether they considered them to have been positive or negative, the common element throughout their discussions was that past experiences had first caused them to think in general terms about making a career change, and then to think more specifically about a new career in secondary school teaching.

The fusionist ontology that underpinned this investigation and which has been previously outlined in detail in both Chapter 1 and further in Chapter 3 was particularly relevant in developing an understanding of the influences and impacts exerted by past experiences on the participants’ decisions to embark on a career change into secondary school teaching. That is, such an ontology presents a world view that suggests whatever may become has its origins in whatever may have been
in the past, and such past situations form the basis for on-going change. For the participants in this research it became apparent that their past experiences in a variety of ways had influenced their career change decisions.

The career changers spoke of their past experiences at four interrelated levels:

• **Dissatisfaction arising from previous career experiences** including the lack of fulfillment that had been the catalyst for career change decisions.

• **Previous formal teaching or training experiences** that had provided some of the skills and insights into the nature of teaching-related roles.

• **Previous informal teaching or training experiences** as unpaid volunteers that had provided skills and insights relevant to teaching-related roles.

• **Life experiences** together with age and maturity that were seen as assets in new careers as secondary school teachers.

As shown in Figure 6.1, founded on the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data, this chapter has been structured around each of these four themes.
Dissatisfaction arising from previous career experiences

Dissatisfaction with previous careers had been the catalyst for thinking about a career change. The less than satisfying experiences of career changers in their former careers are discussed in this section of the chapter.

Those who had been dissatisfied with their previous career experiences generally expressed feelings about: workplace conditions; the fact that they could not see any prospects for further career progression; or, simply, that they no longer found their career rewarding. Some of these participants indicated that they had indeed previously considered a career in teaching, but had pursued another career path linked to their undergraduate degree specialist area. Their dissatisfaction had reached the point at which they realised they had perhaps been mistaken in their initial career choice and wished to return to their earlier ambitions to become a
secondary school teacher. Jane typified the career changers in this group when she said:

*I just did not find my job rewarding anymore – you could say I was really dissatisfied. For me the big driver was the fact knowing that I’ve always enjoyed the teaching part, and for me it was just not being able to do a job that I liked to do so I started looking elsewhere – that was when I enrolled in the Grad Dip.*

Ted also spoke about work conditions and the lack of work-related satisfactions which, as shown in the following extract from his interview transcript, he considered has pushed him toward taking up a new career in teaching:

*There wasn’t a great degree of job satisfaction, not real rewards…and the work atmosphere I was in had a very high turnover. It wasn’t the healthiest work atmosphere. But I think ultimately it was that need for, human interaction that pushed me toward teaching. Where I was working at – in the accounting industry it was a case where you’re put in front of your computer, you’re told to work for eight hours, you don’t talk to anyone, don’t disrupt them, don’t ask questions. I mean, probably like I said…the dissatisfaction, I think, with my previous career.*

And, as he indicated further in his interview:

*Realistically I was not happy in the occupation I was in – there was no challenge and thought maybe teaching would be a better option. I really like teaching.*

As she pointed out, for Janet her dissatisfaction with her previous job, at least in part, reflected her need for more social interaction in her workplace as shown in the following extract from her interview:
While I was enjoying it, there was no challenge. There was only sort of certain times when I could train people, or when I could do the school visits, that sort of thing. And I’m not a person who gets shut into a lab and can’t talk to other people. You know, I wanted to be able to talk and engage with other people, I’d really been searching for something a bit different, something that would challenge me ‘cause I was just doing the same thing every day and it gets a bit boring – I was not happy. I was feeling bored and my brain was rotting away basically. I wasn’t using my brain to its full potential at work so I investigated the Grad Dip.

However, as she explained further:

*I think the lab closing was a real catalyst for change. I was enjoying myself, but we’d actually run a few school days and I thought, “Oh,” you know, “this is good fun. It’s a bit different to being locked in a lab and – and playing with swine flu or something.” You know, no one really wants to talk to you. I do think the closure of the lab was a real catalyst, but I think, probably for a year or two before that I had considered it, but all the stars aligned all at once with the closure.*

Leigh’s impetus for change also arose from dissatisfaction with her previous work in a teaching role with post-compulsory school students. However, as she explained, there were aspects that she enjoyed that had prompted her career change:

*At the end of the day, I was not particularly happy in that job… I looked at the job and pretty much pulled apart the components of my job that I enjoyed – the parts that I enjoyed were working with the students, and showing them how to do things and I thought, “Well, okay, so that’s part of my job I enjoy.” “Then how can I actually” you know, “enhance*
For Norma, as she spoke of experiences that had stimulated her to think of making a career change rather than the job itself, it had been the high expectations in a low paid position. As shown in the following extract, it was this that had contributed to her dissatisfaction with her previous employment:

*I didn’t last a long time there in my previous job because their expectations were too high. They used to make us work long hours and it was very poorly paid. I was not suited to it at all. So I think those were more of the aspects that made me quit the job more than the job itself.*

In recounting her previous work experiences Frances said that she was not suited to the work. As she explained:

*I went back into the workforce, working for a financial advisor, and I realised that the work didn’t suit me at all. I was then stuck, and so then I started looking at teaching again.*

The dissatisfactions that these and other career changers had experienced in their previous workplaces and occupations demonstrate the more general point that such dissatisfaction typically prompts people to consider changing careers. This has been shown in similar research into career change in general such as Donohue’s (2007) investigation. Carless and Arnup (2011) also commented that feeling dissatisfied “leads to thinking about changing jobs or careers and subsequently intentions to search for new positions and actual search behavior” (p. 80). From their study of the attractions into teaching, Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) reported dissatisfaction with a previous career as a characteristic of those who decide to move into a teaching career. Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) also found
that one of the further attractions of a new career as a secondary school teacher was the thought of making use of the specialist subject knowledge they possessed. This was something about which career changers sometimes felt frustrated when they had been unable to make full use of their knowledge in their previous careers.

6.3 Previous formal and informal teaching or training experience

In their conversations about making their change to a secondary school teaching career, all participants spoke fondly of their past experiences when undertaking teaching or training roles. Some considered that it had been through these experiences they had come to see teaching as an attractive career option. Several career changers reflected on their past training and teaching-related experiences acquired through their previous formal workplace functions. For example, one had been a laboratory assistant who also conducted workshops for visiting school aged children. Others had engaged with school aged students completing traineeships. The teaching-related experiences for other career changers had been associated with less formal roles such as being a volunteer at a local school, or in recreation and leisure settings as a coach or umpire. Some continued these roles during their pre-service teacher education programs.

Whether formally and informally, these career changers had experienced something of a preview of what a teaching career might be like, the rewards and satisfactions that might be associated with such a career, as well as the opportunity to develop and practise some of the initial skills and qualities that would be required of them in a secondary school teaching context. As shown in the following sections, through their experiences they had come to see secondary school teaching as an attractive alternative career possibility.
6.3.1 Formal [paid] experiences

Several participants ($n=18$) came from careers that had involved being formally engaged in teaching or training others. For some participants the ‘others’ comprised workplace colleagues undergoing training programs, while for other career changers the ‘others’ included secondary school aged learners. Table 6.1 outlines the career changers’ range of teaching and training related experiences, the asterisk (*) indicating those whose prior experiences had involved teaching or training secondary school aged learners.

Table 6.1 Previous formal teaching or training experiences ($n=18$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Changer</th>
<th>Prior formal teaching/training experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ivy</td>
<td>Foster-care team leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Chemical laboratory instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerrie</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Snowboard Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonard, Johanna, Winifred, Frances, Clair, Leigh, Jane</td>
<td>Workplace trainer and assessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony; Ted, Rose</td>
<td>University tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances</td>
<td>CPA certified trainer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>Medical laboratory instructor conducting workshop with school groups*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Teacher’s aide*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>School IT system administrator/IT support to teachers*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clair, Ted</td>
<td>Supervising students completing traineeships*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winifred</td>
<td>School media relations officer*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Boarding school supervisor – including after-hours tutoring*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winifred, Johanna, Norma</td>
<td>TAFE /vocational education teacher*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>Recruitment officer (recruit school aged students to higher education)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorna</td>
<td>School science laboratory technician*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonard</td>
<td>Flight instructor*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johanna</td>
<td>Hospitality trainer and assessor – supervising apprentice chefs*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh</td>
<td>Conservation and land management youth worker*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted</td>
<td>Private dance studio teacher*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The career changers drew direct linkages between their engagement in past teaching or training experiences and feeling attracted to new careers as a secondary school
teacher. Many times throughout their conversations, they expressed the enjoyment and satisfaction they had obtained from teaching in these past roles. This can be seen in the following extracts from their interview transcripts:

If this is what teaching is about I realised I could do this for the rest of my life. You could say I loved it. (Fred)

I was training the young, the younger staff… and that sort of twigged with me and, I would think I liked this feeling and that’s where it all developed. You could say I loved the feeling it gave me. (Clair)

…when I started doing it, I realised that I had a passion for it. I worked with the kids and shared what I knew with them. I loved it, you know. I really did. And I realised I had an attribute for it. (Johanna)

As shown in the following extract, Winifred expressed the enjoyment and fulfillment she felt about her past teaching experiences, and her belief that her age and maturity positioned her well to offer something to young kids:

I really enjoyed working with the kids there [at school]. I looked at it – I believed that I had something to offer, being a mature age person and all, to teach some of the young kids today the avenues open to them.

When asked about his past experiences that had a teaching or training focus, Ted reported on his time as a university tutor in the following terms:

I fell into tutoring work [at university]. My interest was really picked up there – that’s what drew me to math teaching. There was this kind of spark that said “you can do this” – so I did.

Recalling the feelings of fulfillment and personal gratification that many career changers had felt from the teaching-related functions they had undertaken in their
past careers clearly came to the fore as they contemplated a career change. The influences of such intangible rewards were apparent when Leonard said:

*I enjoy teaching very much. In my old job I would get the reward of taking a raw pilot and teaching them to fly solo, or [taking] a soldier who is untrained and making him trained. I get a reward from that sort of thing – that is partly why I am here now teaching.*

In her responses, as shown in the following extract Norma commented:

*You could say I was drifting into teaching. Any job I had they put me in some kind of teaching role. I don’t know why, maybe they saw the teacher in me, so I was always responsible for all sorts of trainings that took place from checkouts to labs!*

As she than said:

*Doing the grad dip was the next logical step for me.*

Ted also referred to his past experiences of working with secondary school aged learners when he indicated:

*I’ve previously been teaching tap dance to secondary school kids, I had a familiarity with that age group so I was just happy to go into what I was familiar with in teaching that age group.*

Additionally, he acknowledged that:

*It was from working as an accountant and working with the younger staff that probably pushed me down that path, but it was doing the part-time [university] teaching and [doing] dance teaching that helped lead me down that path [to secondary school teaching].*

Ted also said that the formal nature of teaching with structured lessons and the need to develop learning outcomes appealed to him much more than the *ad hoc* approach.
he had been required to follow when working day-to-day on a ‘needs’ basis while training other staff in the accountancy firm.

Jane was also one of the career changers who indicated she had enjoyed performing her previous roles that had involved formal teaching when she responded with:

*The big driver for me was knowing I’ve always enjoyed explaining things, you know teaching others – yes I have always enjoyed that part of all the jobs I have had.*

While there were other career changers who indicated they had felt attracted to teaching through formal or paid teaching or training experiences gained in their previous employment; for others their attractions to a new secondary school teaching career flowed from the voluntary roles they had performed and the initial development of teaching or training related skills.

### 6.3.2 Informal [volunteer] experiences

Table 6.2 lists the types of informal teaching and training related roles some career changers had undertaken. By definition, such voluntary roles were usually unpaid. Nonetheless, those career changers who engaged in them tended to regard such roles as having provided a foretaste of teaching that then attracted them to seek a possible future career as a secondary school teacher. The experiences, enjoyment and satisfactions gained by these career changers in their voluntary roles exerted impacts on their feelings of being attracted to teaching that were similar to those experienced by other career changers who had engaged in teaching and training-related activities as part of their previously paid employment.
Table 6.2 *Previous informal teaching or training experiences (n = 9)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Changer</th>
<th>Prior informal teaching/training experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frances, Lorna, Rose</td>
<td>Sports coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorna</td>
<td>Sports umpire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivy</td>
<td>Craft workshop instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breastfeeding Association support personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted</td>
<td>Youth theatre drama class facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma</td>
<td>Voluntary tutor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter, Frances</td>
<td>Volunteer teacher’s aide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>After-school supervision (homework club)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>Volunteer coordinator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gaining experiences when working as a volunteer was especially poignant when speaking about engaging with children or adolescents in such informal environments. As Lorna, for example, put it:

*I used to coach netball and umpire and that sort of thing. I’ve always been a confident person with regards to being able to communicate with people, give them instruction, and that sort of thing. These skills really helped me.*

Of his time spent as a volunteer in a school teaching learners aspects of media production Peter said:

*I enjoyed working with the kids – showing them my craft – I enjoyed it especially since there were good outcomes that came out of it. All of those things helped me as I developed skills that I have now formalised through my Grad Dip.*

For him the satisfactions came when there were *good outcomes*. Although he did not elaborate on this, an obvious question is whether he would have received the same levels of satisfaction had the outcomes not been so good. It is also worth noting that Peter was working as a volunteer, entering the classroom as an ‘expert’ as opposed
to being the regular class teacher. In such a context it could be reasonably assumed that so long as the situation with an expert visiting the class was managed correctly, the outcome would be successful. This cannot always be assumed in the context of day-to-day classroom dynamics. However, one may well wonder if Peter had not experienced positive outcomes, whether his previous experiences as a volunteer in a classroom would have made the career change into teaching such an attractive option.

Ivy had been involved in conducting social skill workshops with foster care adolescents during school holidays, and this had been an influence over her career change decisions. As she explained:

*I was working with children already – but with [school] teaching I still get to be there for them but in a much more positive sense. I really like that kind of commitment – I really enjoy it – it was a parallel career transition...it was what I was already doing, but not in a formal sense of the experience.*

Whether they had been acquired as part of the workplace in which they had been employed, or in performing voluntary roles, clear links existed between past teaching or training experiences and the decision of these career changers to make the change to become a secondary school teacher. Teaching was what they had always done in their work-related or voluntary roles, even if they did not necessarily possess the necessary formal qualifications to take it further. Regardless of how they had acquired such experiences, they saw attaining a formal teaching qualification as a natural progression. The findings of the DEST (2007) report support the notion that previous engagement in teaching or training roles can influence career changers’ decisions to become teachers, a point also noted by Salyer (2003).
6.4 General life experience

General life experiences can make important contributions to the skills repertoire of teachers. In addition to the experiences they had gained through their formal and informal teaching and training related roles, given their ages it was not surprising that some participants also saw themselves as bringing more general life experiences to their new teaching careers. Several career changers expressed the view that the skills and attributes they had gained through their general life experiences were just as important as the content knowledge they had acquired through their university studies.

All of the career changers held at least one university degree. Some career changers considered that this, together with their experiences and skills from previous careers, (including the skills acquired through formal or informal teaching and training in some cases), and the wealth of general knowledge they had acquired as mature adults, contributed a rich body of expertise as they embarked on their new teaching careers. As Fred, for example, commented:

*I think my key skills are my age – it’s my life’s experiences. Without my life experience I would not be able to teach the content I can teach now – for instance, we were talking the other day about politics again. We were talking about, prime ministers, and I’ve met two prime ministers in my life, so I could use this experience.*

As can be seen in the following extract, Winifred too explained how she felt her life experiences had been part of what had attracted her to teaching:

*I believe I had something to offer, being a mature age person. Life experience is probably a big one. I can help them…the changes that I’ve had in my career path through my life, there’s a lot that I can offer*
and make kids realise, “Well, look, if you don’t like something, you can change. You’re never too old to go back to study.”

In her responses Frances made an interesting comment insofar as she believed that she may not have been successful had she entered the teaching profession when she was younger:

*I knew the time was right...I had enough maturity to do it. I don’t know if I could have been nearly as successful had I been 21 doing this. In fact, I’m sure I wouldn’t have been – I have real world knowledge to use in the classroom, not just the stuff I learnt in my degree.*

As shown in his comments, Leonard also referred to his *worldly experiences* that he considered assets on which he drew when considering his *preparedness* for a teaching career:

*The whole worldly experience thing, which gives you the ability to cope very well within the classroom environment, is my asset – it has really prepared me. As I can see from my peers on this course, we were all very good in our subject matter, and we’ve got a lot of other experience in it, and that makes it easy to teach because when you’re an expert in those areas, or near to it, helps.*

What Leonard referred to as the *ability to cope* that arose from his life experiences, Rose described as her *preparedness* that came with maturity. Although she had contemplated a teaching career earlier in her life, she was now content that she made the decision later in life. Her view was that approaching teaching as an adult with some life experience would assist in classroom management. As shown in her following comment, she believed that she felt less intimidated than she might
otherwise have been by the smaller age difference between the students and herself had she embarked on a teaching career fresh out of university:

I was kind of always headed this direction but I think fresh out of university at 21 I personally would not have been mature enough to handle it. So coming at it as an adult with some life experience and, and not being intimidated by a classroom of 18 years olds...is huge and I think a lot of teachers who come straight out of uni may run into issues of competence. I knew I was prepared.

Leigh made a similar observation in saying:

I guess the fact that I haven’t come straight from school into working as a teacher has helped. I actually have some real world work experience behind me. I definitely don’t think I could have gone straight from school to become a teacher, as I like the fact that I’ve had a bit of other life experience. I’d just say the different skills that I’ve learnt over the years have prepared me and have all come together with my degrees and stuff to help me make the decision to become a teacher.

Ivy also noted that:

It’s having work as well as life experience that have prepared me. Being older things don’t seem to frazzle one as easily as maybe someone that is fresh out of school. I would hope the kids would view me more as a mother figure rather than a young thing that might be at the party on Saturday. I would hope my parenting skills will help – especially with the tough ones.
Some of the career changers were like Jane who saw close links between general life experiences, and the experiences they had acquired while working in the field in which they also wanted to teach. As Jane said:

*I think, it would be very difficult to teach, particularly Maths A, do it justice without having some sort of industry experience, but then, on the other hand, I just think, “Well, I wouldn’t be where I am now if I hadn’t done those other things as well.” I think I am a better teacher now rather than if I had have gone on to teaching earlier because of what I have life experiences gained through my industry experience.*

Johanna made similar observations in saying:

*The key to my success as a teacher would be my range of experiences. It’s my business background of being in hospitality, and running my own business. And without that previous experience at work and business, I don’t think I would have been able to take those skills then into the classroom.*

In expressing their views concerning the contributions that their general life experiences might bring to their careers as secondary school teachers, these career changers pointed to two aspects that are worthy of further note: firstly, the enhanced ability to relate student learning of theoretical concepts to practical *real world* situations; and secondly, the greater maturity that some felt they brought to their teaching praxis.

On the first of these there seems little doubt of the additional value that general life experiences, especially those gained in relevant prior work contexts, can contribute to the classroom experiences of learners with whom these career changers were destined to engage. Darling-Hammond (2006; 2010) advocates the view that
learning can be enhanced and made more meaningful and effective when theoretical concepts can be illustrated through practical examples. Obviously, including examples drawn from their own general life experiences in their teaching strategies is one step removed from the central tenets of pedagogies that have been variously described as ‘theory-practice learning’ or ‘experiential learning’ (Jarvis, Holford, & Griffin, 2003; Smith & DeFrates-Densch, 2009; Stanley, 2005). Nevertheless, the use of such ‘real world’ examples can contribute to the beginnings of deeper learning.

The second point made by participants that through their general life experiences they brought a greater maturity to their new careers is more controversial. It raises some fundamental questions and reasonable doubts regarding the links between maturity and chronological age alone. Considering they had come from previous careers, and had completed previous university degree programs, certainly, these career changers were members of a somewhat older age group. However, whether their chronological ages also provided them with the maturity that some claimed as advantageous in their new teaching careers can be questioned in terms of what constitutes ‘maturity’. Carruthers (2010), for instance, notes that maturity takes several forms including physical or biological maturity associated with chronological age; cognitive or psychological maturity related to the ability to find and utilise appropriate information in decision-making; emotional maturity related to the ability to know oneself, maintain self-control and take responsibility for one’s own decisions; and, relationship maturity or the ability to relate effectively with others. As a cautionary note, those who claimed they brought the benefits of greater maturity to their new careers needed to be mindful that maturity exists in the combination of all four of these dimensions.
A not unreasonable question for these career changers to consider might have been: “Have I grown up, or have I just grown old?” To suggest that their maturity would be advantageous in their teaching careers implies that those who saw their life experiences contributing in this way had achieved at least some development of emotional maturity. Carruthers (2010) suggests that, among other attributes, an emotionally mature person is resourceful under stress, dependable, able to persevere in task completion and problem solving without complaining, and able to take personal responsibility for decision-making. From this it can be seen that quite apart from chronological age alone, maturity also demands the ability to take responsibility for one’s actions that comes with wisdom.

Much of what these participants had to say about the benefits of their age and maturity in their new teaching careers can be related to the life stage within Erikson’s (1950) eight-stage framework of psychosocial development. In general, most career changers could be located within what Erikson described as the stage of “generativity” in middle adulthood. Generativity is the concern for guiding the next generation, and socially-valued work and disciplines (such as teaching) are expressions of generativity which may generate the feelings of accomplishment that several career changers considered they derived from their previous experiences. These past experiences had provided the attraction for them to pursue their new career options as secondary school teachers.

6.5 Summary of Chapter

The participants in this investigation shared their stories about their former careers and the influences of their past workplace experiences on their decisions to change careers. Bearing in mind that at any point in time people may develop both positive and negative feelings about a particular experience, the career changers in
this investigation spoke of previous career experiences they had found to be less than rewarding and less satisfying. The lack of work satisfaction often emerged as a powerful reason for contemplating a new career path, and for these participants, this was a change to a new career as a secondary school teacher.

Not all workplace experiences to which the career changers referred had been totally dissatisfying. For those career changers whose previous work had involved engagement in teaching and training activities with former work colleagues, such past experiences provided some impetus for thinking about a secondary school teaching career when the point of wanting a career change had been reached. Others who had experienced teaching and training in performing less formal, voluntary roles also found these experiences had stimulated their ambitions to make the career change into secondary school teaching.

Other more general life experiences were also reflected in the specific change to a secondary school teaching career. Participants provided fulsome accounts of those previous life experiences they regarded as having been behind their career change decisions. These general experiences of life they regarded as assets on which they would draw throughout their new found teaching careers included what they referred to as ‘general knowledge’, ‘real world knowledge’ and ‘worldly experiences’. These life experiences are invariably wide-ranging with some career changers indicating such experiences stem from age; however, age alone does not equate to maturity, but does contribute to rich experiences they considered contributed to their career change decision.

As the research participants reached the further step of putting their decisions into action, they then searched the range of available study programs that would make their career change possible. The chapters that follow explore the experiences
of the career changers as students in the teacher education program they had
completed and the opportunities and challenges that this program had afforded them
as they undertook their journey to new careers in becoming registered teachers in
Queensland secondary schools.
CHAPTER 7 THE JOURNEY TO A NEW CAREER: ENTRY TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The journey for me was easy because I could choose the way I could enrol - it really helped me do what I wanted to do. If the flexibility was not there, I would not be here now.

(Winifred)

7.1 Introduction

In aiming to understand the experiences of those who embark upon a career change into secondary school teaching, this chapter adopts a somewhat different focus from that of the preceding two chapters of the thesis. Those chapters were concerned with the reasons the career changer participants considered had drawn them to teaching as a new career option in general, and to secondary school teaching in particular. Chapter 5 considered what had attracted the participants to teaching while Chapter 6 explored how past experiences had influenced their career change decisions.

In achieving their career changes, participants then had to take the further steps in finding a suitable pre-service teacher education program they could complete that would provide their point of entry into their new careers as secondary school teachers.

This chapter explores what career changers were looking for in a training program, and the attributes of the chosen program that they considered had been important to them, both in terms of the supports that were provided and the challenges that completing the program had presented for some participants. Four themes that reflect attributes of the program were identified through the analysis and interpretation of their stories, namely:

- **Study load** and the option to study full-time over one year or part-time over two years.

- **Study mode** and the choice to complete the program as an internal student, a distance student or in a ‘blended’ learning framework.
• **Collaborating and engaging professionally with others** acknowledging that learning is social and requires ‘contact’ and collaboration with others.

• **Professional registration** as a necessity to gain employment as a teacher.

These four themes are illustrated in Figure 7.1:

![Figure 7.1](image-url)

*Figure 7.1 The Journey to a New Career: Entry to the teaching profession*

All four program attributes contributed to the journey to their new careers that participants had undertaken. Importantly, for most career changers what they had found attractive was a combination of these program attributes. That is they had been variously attracted to the specific program they undertook because it was professionally accredited and could, if the career changer so wished, be completed in one year of study, either on-campus or through distance learning modes. Aside from the professional accreditation requirements of the program and the University’s program rules for satisfactory student progression that were intractable, as illustrated
in Figure 7.2, flexibility in terms of study load and study mode allowed career changers to ‘tailor make’ their program in light of their other plans and commitments.

Figure 7.2 Relationship between study load and study mode

7.2 Study Load

The pre-service program the participants had completed required one year of full-time study, or two years part-time equivalent. Depending upon their personal circumstances, the career changers found both of these program options attractive. It was also possible for them to blend their study load with the option of converting from
a full-time load in their first term of study to a part-time load in their second and subsequent terms.

7.2.1 One year full-time

In interpreting what career changers had to say about being able to complete their pre-service program in one year of full-time study, it is important to note the structure of the academic calendar rather than a school or even annual calendar. The university year begins in March with the final Internship required in the program being completed in early November. In other words, in reality, a nine month study period is required to complete the program over ‘one-year’.

Being able to complete the change to their new career in one year was attractive for a number of career changers. Bo, for instance, indicated:

*When you put it all together, it’s really like working out acceleration in physics, it’s about how fast and the time it takes, it’s all relative.*

While the option of completing it within one year was a feature of the program participants had undertaken, one-year pre-service programs are not new within the Australian teaching landscape. Following World War II a number of one-year (or two-year part-time) university-based Graduate Diploma of Education (‘Dip-ed’ or ‘Grad-dip’) programs were established in Australia to prepare secondary school teachers (Dyson, 2003). These provisions responded to the post-War baby boom that, coupled with the Federal Government’s immigration policy of the time, saw an increasing population and hence a growing demand for schooling. Paired with this was the fact that more children were staying in school longer, stretching resources to the limit and placing mounting pressure on the secondary schooling sector. Teachers colleges needed to produce sufficient graduates for the growing education industry as rapidly as possible.
The one-year ‘Dip-ed’ has historically been a favoured pathway (Barcan, 1995). The ‘Dip-ed’ program targeted those who had successfully completed their initial university degree, who, after a further year of study, could qualify as registered teachers. Originally delivered at teachers colleges controlled by the State Departments of Education, these programs came, and continue, to be offered by most Australian universities. Recruitment into the one-year secondary pathway has focussed on attracting people with the appropriate content knowledge base usually within two teaching areas based on their previous undergraduate study. As was noted in describing the profiles of the participants in this research, the career changers already possessed an undergraduate degree and needed only to complete a one-year ‘end-on’ program to make their career changes into secondary school teaching as opposed to their other option of completing an entire four-year undergraduate degree. The one-year full-time option served to correct a view that Ted had held as he noted in the following comments:

\[ I'd\ always\ had\ the\ impression\ that\ you\ needed\ to\ do\ a\ full\ three\ or\ four-year\ degree\ to\ become\ a\ teacher.\ However\ after\ finishing\ my\ undergraduate\ degree,\ I\ found\ out\ I\ could\ just\ do\ a\ one-year\ program.\ If\ I\ had\ to\ do\ a\ full\ undergrad\ degree,\ I\ would\ not\ have\ done\ it. \]

Of the one-year option Leigh said:

\[ The\ main\ driving\ factor\ behind\ me\ becoming\ a\ secondary\ school\ teacher\ was\ the\ fact\ that\ I\ already\ had\ a\ degree.\ I\ had\ the\ degree;\ I\ had\ the\ knowledge\ so\ I\ thought\ ‘yes\ all\ I\ had\ to\ do\ was\ the\ end-on\ Grad\ Dip’. \]

Clair shared also shared this view:

\[ I\ had\ the\ knowledge\ and\ proficiency.\ I\ did\ an\ accounting\ degree.\ I\ was\ an\ accountant\ and\ it\ seemed\ obvious\ to\ me\ that\ I\ would\ transition\ to\ become \]
an accounting teacher as fast as possible through the one-year grad dip that I could tag on the end of my quals.

Having the knowledge and proficiency that Clair considered she brought to her one-year pre-service program was also mirrored by Rose who commented:

*The one-year program specifically sparked my interest in a transition to teaching because for someone who already has several degrees and in their mid-30s with a wealth of experience, this seemed to be a very efficient way to move from the degrees I had together with the relevant industry work experience into a teaching position in just one year.*

Several participants indicated that being able to complete their pre-service teacher education program over one year had been significant in their career change plans.

Clair, for example, said:

*Well basically, it was a time factor... it really is not that long. You know really more than anything else, the faster I could become a teacher the better.*

As shown in the following comments, Jane and Norma shared Clair’s view:

*I was really looking for a way that I could get into teaching quickly. You know, becoming a teacher in one year.* (Jane)

*I just wanted to get it done quickly. I thought if I just lingered on I’ll just lose it. I just wanted to finish it off quickly and get a job teaching.* (Norma)

While it was clear that time was of the essence for some who wanted to make the change to their new secondary school teaching careers, their responses indicated that time alone was not their only consideration. Several career changers were also very aware of the relationship between length of time to complete the program and the
availability of income to support their career change. This was the case for Ted who explained:

*The fact that it was one year was something that, realistically I could put my life on hold for if need be rather than three or four years. I did without a full-time income, but that was okay, as I would see the rewards when I get a job teaching.*

Completing a pre-service teacher education program over one year full-time typically means a sacrifice in income to allow the career change to happen. Taking on part-time employment opportunities outside the realm of study load are difficult because of practicum and coursework requirements of one-year pre-service programs. It was this that was behind Ivy’s comment in saying:

*I wanted to get it done as fast as possible. I couldn’t be without an income for an extensive period of time, but I could for a year.*

While Fred’s original intention had initially been to make his career change through the part-time option as shown in the following extract while finances were tight he:

*... bit the bullet. I knew I could manage for a year without an income. I just put everything on hold for the year to restart my life.*

Further, for him:

*The idea of getting it done, getting out there, getting it over with, done, teaching, earning an income and doing what I wanted to do was the clincher.* (Fred)

Frances expressed similar thoughts in saying:

*I needed to get back into the workforce fairly soon, just money-wise. So the one-year appealed to me. In fact, had it been two years I probably wouldn’t have done it because I would have had to be back in the*
workforce before that point. The one-year program was definitely appealing so I could get a paid job ASAP. I felt if I could get through one year and then, you know, hopefully walk into a teaching job that would be great.

As shown in the following extract, and bearing in mind that she faced redundancy, Janet shared her feelings:

*The only reason I did it [change career into teaching] was because I could do the one-year grad dip and start teaching to earn a salary straight away.*

While it may seem that the real attraction in being able to complete their pre-service program within one year was associated with the relatively short period that they would be without an income, for some career changers income was not the sole consideration. Of necessity, in terms of curriculum design, Graduate Diploma programs compress as much information as possible into the two terms of study. Some pre-service teachers find it quite challenging to cope with the study load, needing to learn new concepts and become familiar with a schooling system; all of which may be quite alien to their prior experiences. Nonetheless, as Leigh indicated:

*I had considered doing it part-time, but I’m kind of one of those people that…all in or nothing in. I wanted to get it done and if I was going to do it, I was going to do it full-time. I would rather struggle with the workload for a year, than struggle for two.*

Bo cast a slightly different perspective on the one year study option when she said:

*I did it full-time because I either do something, or I don’t. It’s just who I am, I either do it a hundred per cent, or I don’t do it at all. I don’t know how to do things half-hearted. If I’d done it part-time, I still would have put the same hours in, I just would have done it on half the courses.*
However, as discussed in the following section, there were a number of career changers for whom the two-year part-time study load had proven attractive.

### 7.2.2 Two years part-time

While the one year of full-time study option was attractive for some career changers, five found the possibility of completing the program across two years of part-time study appealing. In different ways, income considerations underpinned the views of both groups. Those who found the program attractive because it only required them to be without a source of income for one year were matched by those who wanted to remain in paid employment while realising their career change ambitions over two years. Johanna, for instance, noted:

> I couldn’t really study full-time, financially, and then I also had the opportunity to secure a job at TAFE. The money wasn’t great, but needed. This was sort of pursuing my interest in teaching anyway while I was becoming a teacher for real. So it was a matter of…combining the two things at the same time.

She regarded being able to complete the program part-time as an attribute that gave the University a competitive edge. As she said:

> I was looking at XYZ university also. You know but they were just totally inflexible. There’s no way. I just would have abandoned the idea. Totally. They didn’t offer it part-time…and they weren’t flexible in the delivery. That’s how it’s done, and that’s our way it is done. Either you fit in or you don’t.

In her interview responses Winifred also spoke of her need to maintain an income while studying. As she said:
When I started the course I was looking at doing it fulltime but then realised that I was often working 30 hours a week and I just couldn’t do it fulltime: the flexibility and the financial side of it. It’s very hard to give up work for a year because there’s no assistance to help, financially, if you haven’t got a job for a year while you choose to do it full-time.

This was the view also expressed by Leonard who commented:

Knowing that I could do it part-time means I could keep working, support myself, and continue along my learning curve. The great thing with that was that with my particular job, while I was overseas I could use my downtime in hotel rooms and that to get into my study on-line and reflect on how things were progressing in the classroom.

For others, being attracted to the pre-service program because of its part-time study option was not wholly about income. This is demonstrated, for example, by Anne who said:

I did find it quite good doing it part-time, because I think if I’d done it fulltime, my head would have been full of all these new ideas. Whereas doing it part-time I had that chance to stand back and let the knowledge sink in. The other reality was I really needed to work to support my family.

In discussing what he had seen as the benefits of completing the program part-time over two years, Cameron thought that full-time study would have been too intense. He also noted some advantages in moving into the second year of the program with a basis in his first year of study. As he put it:

It was very much more intense than previous uni experiences. I felt in my second year I had a huge advantage over all the other guys starting off in the first year. . . coming into the second year, the majority of those
questions I have already answered . . . and so, just sitting in the lecture
and seeing the looks on the faces of all the other people and you’re
thinking, “I know exactly what you’re like at the moment...you know, “it’s
gonna get overwhelming.”

As her comments illustrate, for Johanna the flexibility offered by the part-time study
load was a distinct advantage:

Ah, that was because I had my business interest at the time. And also then,
simultaneously, I got offered a position at TAFE. I was, in between doing
TAFE and doing it part-time, and then there was a four month contract at
TAFE I had to do fulltime, so that meant that I couldn’t do my practical. I
had to move my practical into the beginning of the next year. You know, I
couldn’t thank the uni enough for that. Otherwise it wouldn’t have been
possible.

In addition to the attractions that career changers felt about the study load options
offered by their pre-service education program, some had been attracted by the options
that the program offered in terms of possible study modes.

7.3 Study Mode

Flexible study options such as those available in the pre-service program the
career changers had completed are typical features of contemporary university study.
Many universities provide programs that offer options of internal face-to-face, external
distance learning, or ‘blended’ modes of study. The career changers in this
investigation had experienced the program as either internal students attending face-to-
face tutorials or as external distance learners completing the coursework components
of the program on-line with ‘res school’ support. For some, there was the third option
of using the provisions made in individual program courses to develop their own
'blended learning’ approach to study. In these terms, while enrolled as distance learning students, some career changers had attended some face-to-face classes if their schedule and geographical location permitted. Additionally within a blended learning framework, others had been internal students attending face-to-face classes while also making use of the discussion forums and on-line study materials made available for the distance learners.

7.3.1 Internal face-to-face

A number of participants considered being able to study as an on-campus, internal student had attracted them to this pre-service program. As Rose commented:

I found being face to face and the ability to ask all my questions right there and then - I found that very helpful.

Both Rose and Norma also saw the attractions in being able to undertake the program as internal on-campus student, something they thought reflected their own learning style and how they engage in the learning process. For her part, Norma said:

I chose to be internal because I’m the old school of thought where I like to hear from the teacher, that’s the way I’ve always learned and I thought it would be good if the teacher is there to help me at every step. I have never studied external and would never be able to do that because of who I am and how I learn.

Along similar lines, Rose indicated:

I chose internal because I’m of the old bricks and mortar school generation. The face-to-face to me was very helpful. As in internal student, I found it immensely helpful. I found being internal very helpful. I found networking with other students in the same boat very helpful.
There was something of a divide among the career changers between those who had been attracted to the program because of what they perceived as benefits of studying as internal students, and those who saw benefits in being able to undertake the program as distance learners. Cameron, for example, was one who felt that:

*Compared to internal students, I thought I was disadvantaged by being external. When you’re internal, even if you don’t turn up to the tutorials and lectures all the time...you have access to people to talk to almost immediately, and lecturers to talk to almost immediately. I don’t think, they really appreciated how much easier and how much extra support, extra access they got by being internal students to their lecturers.*

Lorna also saw the benefits of being an internal student with a *structured week* with timetabled classes to attend and what she termed *dedicated study time*. As a distance learner Lorna had to find that time, to be self-motivated and not to become distracted, all of which she found difficult because all of her study was based at home. This had been more difficult to manage than when she had studied for her undergraduate degree where she could attend classes and *put aside* her *dedicated study time*.

The benefits of being an internal student compared to the distance students, were seen by Frances in the following terms:

*We used to exchange information, which was, again, being an internal student, I benefitted out of it [being internal] because we were constantly in touch with each other – not just in class but outside where we would meet and discuss stuff.*

Being *constantly in touch* with her peers and staff as Frances put it is no doubt essential in any study context. It is a good deal easier to achieve in being an internal student who can make contact at least on a weekly basis. Distance students were
encouraged to make such contacts initially at the ‘res school’ and continue them afterwards. While some had felt somewhat isolated as distance learning students, as will be noted in the following section, there were those for whom this study mode had been a notable program attractant.

7.3.2 Distance learning

In the distance learning, off-campus mode that was a study mode option in the program participants had undertaken the lecturer/s and students are separated spatially and temporally (Liu, 2008), but with compulsory face-to-face intensive ‘res schools’ on-campus. Maria was one of several career changers attracted to the program by the flexibility of being able to study through distance learning. In thinking about being a distance student even though she was located in the same city as that in which the program was offered on-campus she said:

*It was the fact that it was going to be flexible, so you would not need to go into classes or lectures. So I would still be able to keep working, as well as studying. That was certainly a very big thing.*

Clair also had the option of internal study, but had chosen to study by distance although she had attended some internal classes when she could. As she said:

*I could go to classes if I wanted to or I could study at home at my own pace, around the other things I needed to do, like look after my family and my work schedule.*

Other participants commented on what they saw as the attraction of completing the program in the distance mode and the associated flexibility that allowed them to complete their studies at their own pace. Bo, for instance, said that being a distance student had facilitated her career change when she commented:
I couldn’t have done it if it was an internal course. Even if I were in Rocky, I would have chosen to do it external because me becoming a teacher was a personal choice. I wanted to have the minimum impact on my family as possible. Now, obviously, there was a huge impact on my family last year and, you know, it still is ongoing, but being external – I went to school when the kids went to school and I did all my work at night when my kids were in bed, so I was still able to do my mum things and I was still able to be a wife – it had the most smallest impact on the rhythm of my family life.

Other participants had been able to blend their modes of study often enrolling in the face-to-face internal mode in their first term, followed by enrolment in the distance learning mode in their second term. As will be shown in the following section, this was also an attractive option for some career changers at various stages of completing their study programs.

7.3.3 ‘Blending’ the modes of study

While there may seem to be a divide between internal, on-campus study and distance learning, these study modes are not mutually exclusive and for a number of the participants the possibility of blending these modes of study had been a significant program attraction. Reflecting on the descriptive terms used by Garrison and Vaughan (2008), blended learning can be defined as “the thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences” (p. 5).

For participants like Frances, blending study modes provided the flexibility that enabled her, and others, to tailor their program in terms of their individual needs as learners, their personal circumstances and career change arrangements. Frances had commenced the program as an internal student, but then decided to enrol in the
distance learning or *flex*\(^{21}\) mode so she had time to manage her personal family commitments while studying. She described her experiences in the following terms:

*I initially chose internal, and as it got further into the program, and the pracs kicked in, I went flex. I think I stuck with the internal up until pracs. And then I just ran out of time, as in family, and getting here for a Monday for classes – my Mondays were too precious, I had to use them for other things, so I went flex.*

Moreover, without the option of studying in the blended mode she said:

*I think I would have crashed and burned if there was only an internal option. I don’t physically think I could have kept up with the assignments, done all the pracs, and still got the washing done.*

Regardless of their study load or mode, a key attribute that a number of these career changers wanted in their pre-service program were opportunities to learn and practise the skills needed to engage and work collaboratively with others. As will be discussed in the following section, some participants attributed their successful completion of the program to their contacts and working relationships with others who were also becoming secondary school teachers.

7.4 **Collaborating and engaging professionally with others**

Swan and Shea (2005) state that learning “always involves interactions among people on some level” (p. 3). Regardless of their physical location, their mode of study or their study load, the face-to-face and mediated on-line devices that will be discussed in this section, are attributes of the program that participants had completed that were aimed at promoting interactions and nurturing collaboration. Maintaining flexible

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\(^{21}\) The terms flex, flexible learning, external and distance were used interchangeably by the career changers in their conversations about studying at a distance from the university.
communications with members of the university staff and, more importantly, with their program colleagues through the range of communication devices and channels available had supported and facilitated their new career journeys.

7.4.1 On-line collaboration and engagement

Participants had been able to communicate through asynchronous discussion boards, on-line synchronous chat sessions and individualised or group email batches generated through the on-line LMS. Many of them indicated how they had benefitted from, and even enjoyed, participating in the on-line learning networks that were actively encouraged with their pre-service colleagues and university lecturers. Ivy exemplified this when she said:

*I felt great about the on-line study. There were no issues with it – I thought it was fantastic. We were all in it together – the students and the lecturers. I went through enormous amounts of printer cartridges though, but other than that, it’s no dramas at all. I like to have stuff to take with me, but it would be suitable for people that, you know, like me, don’t mind sitting there and reading all the forums and things.*

As she indicated in her following comments, Jamie also liked the on-line components of the program:

*I liked the fact that you had access to the chat boards that you could use if you needed to. I didn’t actually use it too often, but I liked the fact that it was actually there. So if you wanted to, you could touch base with people who were doing the same course vocation. Some people wrote some weird things. Some people who needed to refrain from writing on them, but it was interesting to read.*
Wilson and Albion (2009), and Pham (2002) concluded that there is a growing demand for external distance pre-service teacher education programs that are offered on-line. A number of positive features of such programs were identified including the fact that while students enjoy being able to study and learn at their own pace, the university can also reach a greater population with an intensified focus while enabling flexibility in study load, mode and location. In her comments Bo said:

*The fact it was on-line really helped and suited me where I could log on and log off as I pleased. Download stuff and trash it if it was no good or bookmark it and go back later. It kind of promoted the flexible part of flexible learning.*

Similar feelings were expressed by Janet who explained:

*I contributed to the forums where I could and if I wanted to. It was flexible. And if I could help people where I could I would, but not if I didn't want to. I did use the discussion forums sometimes. And it was easy, straightforward, no real dramas there at all. I'm not the sort of student who wanted to be in the lecturers’ faces, or wanted to be on every discussion board. I just wanted to sort of get in, get my work done. If I was in a [face-to-face] class you can’t really hide, but with on-line you can contribute if you want to.*

Leigh, Bo, and Janet all indicated the advantages of using an on-line platform in the delivery of distance learning programs, especially in terms of the interactive capabilities of the LMS such as the discussion forums. Bo did, however, express her concerns about such interactions in the following terms:

*I found a lot of the on-line chat “romantic” but it depended on who was on line, let’s just say. People on-line aren’t often the people that you get the
best advice from. Some students may get the wrong message if they just listen to the students who are responding. It could be disastrous!

Ivy also referred to this. However, as can be seen in the following comments, she spoke from the perspective of having been one of the students who may have provided a wrong answer:

*It was great to log on and see that someone had posted a question and I would try and answer it – sometimes the wrong answer, but that was part of the, you know, learning process. No different to getting it wrong in [a face-to-face] class if I was in one. It was just like we were in a classroom.*

Ivy and other career changers support the view that when implemented effectively, engagement via on-line discussion forums has the potential to provide learning support so that rather than feeling isolated, those engaging feel able to freely communicate with each other. The career changers who participated in this investigation valued the interactions among student peers as having been all-important in their learning processes.

In establishing and nurturing learning in this way, the university lecturer is a further essential element. Ultimately, it is this person who plays the important role of facilitating the learning through overall program design strategies; setting up opportunities for students to engage with each other; and then joining and engaging with students as an active participant in learning on-line. For one, Bo said:

*It was good when the lecturers would come in over the top and interject and put those serial ‘posters’ back in their box.*

The use of mediums such as on-line discussion forums through a LMS requires both lecturer and student to be cognisant of the system’s functionality. As Ivy commented:
I’m really comfortable with computers, so having everything on-line is—was fine. I could see that others who were not as savvy as me would struggle to even get in and ask for help.

Like some of her career change colleagues, Maria though that:

. . . it was the blackboard sites on-line that was very, very handy in terms of being able to ask questions, and also seeing other questions that people were asking about the different courses. It was good to engage with others.

So that was really good to know there were others ‘out there’.

In explaining his experiences of engaging and collaborating through on-line interfaces, felt that:

There are certain types of collaborations you can use, you know, mainly to do with social presence. The main thing I found is what I wanted to do was to know that there is someone else out there somewhere, someone that is on-line and in the same position as me or struggling through a bit of work, or just doing something in the course on-line right now.

The notion of “social presence” was originally developed by Short, Williams, and Christie (1976, p. 65), who used the term to explore and explain the effects that a communication medium has on the way people communicate. As a phenomenon, social presence can be arrayed along a continuum with the face-to-face medium having the most social presence, and written, text-based communication the least.

Some career changers extended their learning networks beyond the LMS interface. Engaging in more organic mediated on-line spaces and using additional devices such as Skype, MSN Messenger, Facebook and self-generated blogs and wikis, the career changers attempted to create their own effective learning networks. In
his following comments Cameron outlined how several career changers had sought to build what he described as a *community approach to learning*:

*When we set up a Skype group at the end of the first term – that was very, very good. I’d start working at 10 o’clock at night, and I could see that there was two of the five people on-line right now. Even though I hardly ever called them, I knew that “Okay, they’re just in the next room. They are going through what I’m doing – I’m going through right now.” And if I have a question, I know that it’s right there. So the idea of presence is quite important if you’re trying to build like a community approach to learning.*

The distance mode of enrolment brings additional challenges for universities that invest in on-line delivery methods. While Wilson and Albion (2009) have argued that on-line learning provides opportunities for interaction amongst students who are geographically distant from each other, Merryfield (2001) claims students studying on-line find the isolation and the difficulties in establishing bonds with their learning colleagues to be particular issues. Cooke and de Bettencourt (2001) have indicated some of the issues in on-line learning engagement are due to the lack of interaction among students and the further lack of interactions between students and university teaching staff. Attendance at a ‘res school’ may at least, in part, serve to offset these difficulties for distance learners. The career changer participants felt the need for such regular interactions to ensure the effectiveness of on-line mediated learning. With the appropriate supports in place as part of the program design, they agreed that the opportunities to engage with their peers on-line had enhanced their learning.
7.4.2 Off-line collaboration and engagement

While the career changers had been encouraged to develop and maintain interactions and relationships with their peers and with University staff through the medium of on-line engagements, this did not necessarily ensure the issues of isolation were resolved. Hramiak’s (2010) research found that students experienced enhanced pre-service teacher training experiences when they participated in a blend of both on-line and face-to-face learning interactions. That study of pre-service teachers studying on-line in the UK concluded that, while on-line exchanges and interactions contributed to enhancing learning opportunities, this could be further facilitated through face-to-face contacts (Hramiak, 2010). Through such physical contacts, social spaces could be constructed and the individual’s social presence consolidated. In following this line, the participants, especially those studying in the distance mode, had been encouraged to make contact with their peers attending the first ‘res school’ who also resided within their particular home geographic location and with whom local networks could be created and maintained following the ‘res school’. As micro-learning groups, these self-initiated groups committed to meeting face-to-face on a regular basis to support each other. As Lorna said:

At the res we had opportunities to network and stuff and make contact and get to know others we could then keep contact with when we went back home. A lot of people I think did not see the use in this – but I did – it was great to meet with others on our home turf and chat to others about issues and just touch base.

Bo went further when she stated:

They [the study groups] were far more use than those chat boards. And we didn’t meet very often. But, you know, maybe once or twice a term, but it
was enough as a relief valve. And also as a touchstone on, “Yeah, I’m not
actually being completely hopeless here.” Then when we needed help or
something we would think, “All right, let’s go back and do it again.”

Ivy had initially engaged with a study group in her hometown. However, she had then
decided not to participate. As she said:

. . . I basically did most of my study just on my own bat, because you can
then do things when you can instead of having to be ready for other people
because you’re meeting on Friday morning. It became quite inflexible.

Through both on-line and off-line engagement within the mediums that have
been outlined, pre-service teachers in their ‘learning networks’ became part of a
“webby nonlinear causality of peers influencing peers” (Inman, Reed, & Sands, 2004,
p. 364). In these ways, distance learners particularly had opportunities to connect,
communicate, collaborate and engage with others to promote professional sharing and
reflect on practice. It is evident that such sharing and reflection also served to sustain
and support students when they were on placement, a period that as Gunawardena
(2004) suggests, sometimes raises further challenges for pre-service teachers who may
feel lonely and disconnected from their peers and the institution—feelings that
sometimes cause them to drop out before completing their program.

The career changers indicated they understood that the aim in providing a
range of support mechanisms and engagement tools was to ensure they successfully
completed their study program. In recounting their experiences, some participants felt
that the supports and devices built into the program had been quite significant in their
new career journeys. This essential successful completion of their program of study
enabled the career changers as graduates of the pre-service teacher education program
to apply for professional accreditation as a registered teacher, as essential step for
anyone wanting to teach within a school. The extent to which this had been an attraction for these career changers will be discussed in the following section.

7.5 Professional registration

To be eligible for appointment as registered teachers at least in Queensland, Australia, it was essential that the program completed by the career changers satisfied the requirements of the professional accrediting body, the Queensland College of Teachers. This attribute of the pre-service program had been important for all career changers since effectively they would not have been able to progress their plans for a new career in secondary school teaching without being accredited. For the three career changers who were already employed as formal trainers/instructors in non-school based contexts, the fact that the program was formally accredited had been the major attraction. Lacking accredited teaching qualifications, but having a range of teaching-related experiences, and qualifications including Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment, Johanna and Winifred had been unable to be registered as schoolteachers and found the long-term prospects in their previous careers both limited and insecure. Both of these career changers were previously employed as teachers in the TAFE sector. As well as the insecurity of their casual appointments, each acknowledged they were unable to progress further on their TAFE career ladders because they were not, in their terms, a real teacher. Completing an accredited pre-service teacher education program would enable them to reverse this situation:

*I was a teacher, but a TAFE teacher. They just could not offer me what I wanted, you know stability, but EQ [Education Queensland] could. But I could not teach for them [Education Queensland] with what I had, I did not have registration. It [TAFE] was a great experience – if I had not taught at TAFE I would not be a real teacher now.* (Johanna)
TAFE for me was like a stepping-stone – I enjoyed working there. I knew I was going to be a real teacher, you know, a registered teacher – I had my certs in business, so I could teach there. It was going from semester to semester with no through line that worried me. At least with [school] teaching I could follow the kids through, term to term, year to year with stability. (Winifred)

Leonard made the point even more forcefully when he said:

I’ve been in instruction all my life….I felt like an incomplete teacher, even though I had the VET trainer qualification, I just didn’t feel complete. I needed the qualification to be registered.

These three career changers had been somewhat frustrated in not holding the formal qualifications necessary to be registered as what they described as real teachers by the accrediting body. For them, one of the attractions of the pre-service teacher education program was that it offered the means of surmounting this frustration.

7.6 Summary of Chapter

Changing careers is a good deal different from simply changing jobs within the same occupation. Almost invariably, career changers require re-training to equip them with the skills and knowledge commensurate with the tasks and functions associated with their new career. Having made the decision to enter a new career as a secondary school teacher the participants had then completed a pre-service teacher education qualification that was the means of acquiring the skills and knowledge needed for this new career. The career changers referred to four aspects of the program they considered had assisted their journeys to their new career.

Firstly, often reflecting their financial situations and other personal commitments and obligations, some career changers had been attracted by the
flexibility of the program and the option of completing it (and hence the change to their new teaching careers and re-entry into the paid workforce) in the minimal one-year full-time study load. On the other hand, there were those who were attracted by the possibility of spreading their study load over two years of part-time enrolment enabled them to continue their income generating employment and/or attend to family and other responsibilities.

Secondly, the mode of study was important. Taking account of their individual circumstances, some career changers had decided to complete their program as internal, face-to-face students. For reasons associated with their personal circumstances, and, for some, their geographical locations, others had been attracted to the program because it could be completed in the distance mode. A number of career changers suggested it was the ability to commence as internal students, and then move to the distance mode as their circumstances changed that was a program attribute that assisted their career change decision. Based on the experiences recounted by these career changers, it was clear that any program aimed at facilitating a career change and the ambitions of those undergoing a journey to a new career must provide a measure of flexibility and choice in both study load and study mode to accommodate the needs and personal circumstances of those seeking such opportunities.

Thirdly, opportunities to collaborate and engage with others were regarded as essential in pre-service teacher education. In the form of on-line and off-line engagements between staff and students, and between students and students, these program design initiatives, instructional strategies, and student support structures were purposefully developed to nurture and support the career changers in becoming secondary school teachers. While some participants had found some of these program attributes challenging, the career changers spoke of a series of in-built student supports
in the pre-service program that assisted in facilitating their journeys to their new career as a secondary school teacher.

Finally, completing an accredited pre-service teacher education program that afforded professional registration was important to these career changers. They had all previously qualified for their undergraduate degrees, which they had used as a point of entry into their previous careers. Their decisions to embark on new careers as \textit{real teachers} (as some participants put it) made it necessary for them to complete a pre-service teacher education program and then apply for registration as secondary school teachers.

As well as recounting their experiences of the various attributes of the pre-service teacher education program that they had completed, the career changers spoke of the opportunities for professional development and the acquisition of new professional identities as they made the change to their new teaching careers. Chapter 8 focuses on aspects of developing a new professional identity, the fourth contributory category in the grounded theory constructed on the basis of the reasons and experiences of the career changer participants.
CHAPTER 8 DEVELOPING A NEW PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

It was the pre-service program that helped me become a real teacher – being a teacher is about developing an identity as a teacher.

(Rose)

8.1 Introduction

The career changers who participated in this investigation possessed knowledge acquired through their previous degrees, work and life experiences. For them, becoming a teacher required the acquisition of further skills in order to apply that knowledge and transform it to become ‘teachable’ knowledge, or as Shulman (1986) refers to it, “‘pedagogical content knowledge” (p. 9), that is, the combination of content and pedagogy: what to teach and how to teach it. Acquiring and developing such ‘teachable’ knowledge required them to come to know what it is to be a teacher. In this process they began the development of new professional identities as teachers through what Cobb (2009) refers to as transforming information and experience into knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes.

This chapter focuses on the structures in the Graduate Diploma program that the career changers had studied that were designed to facilitate the development of their new professional roles and identities. As this chapter shows, they considered these as essential in facilitating and enhancing their development as pre-service teachers preparing to make the career change into secondary school teaching.

In coding, analysing and reconstructing the empirical data, four themes were identified from what these career changers recounted as program attributes and experiences that had assisted the development of their new professional roles and identities:

- **At ‘The Res’** during which they engaged face-to-face with university lecturing staff and their colleagues on-campus at intensive residential schools.
• **Through ‘The Prac’** during which knowledge of how to be a teacher was acquired through being able to practise being a teacher in a school setting.

• **Working with a Mentor Teacher** who had been integral in supporting their professional development.

• **During the Internship** through which the career changers moved from being pre-service teachers to being autonomous interns in the classroom.

As shown in Figure 8.1, these four themes associated with the development of a new professional identity converged and interconnected as the career changers made their moves into new careers as secondary school teachers.

![Figure 8.1 Developing a New Professional Identity](image)

8.2 **At ‘The Res’**

The compulsory residential schools in their program were colloquially described by the career changers as a ‘res school’ or ‘the res’. The participants agreed that
attending intensive face-to-face ‘res schools’ supported the flexible nature of the
distance learning study option in the program, and facilitated their career changes. In
this they endorsed Robinson’s (2009) view that

attending residential schools allows the distance learning student to indulge in
a full campus experience, including interaction with staff and with peer
students, access to enrichment activities, learning support, careers advice and
social time, all integrated in time and space (p. 136).

As the career change participants in this investigation explained, the ‘res schools’ they
completed catered for these vital features of student engagement, assisted the
development of their learning capabilities, and, importantly, contributed to the
consolidation and development of their professional identities as teachers.

Attendance at three ‘res schools’ was a compulsory requirement in this Graduate
Diploma program. The schools are ‘residential’ in the sense that students enrolled in
the distance mode attend on-campus classes over a designated period. Those
completing the program in one full-time year of study completed all three ‘res schools’
in that year while those completing the program part-time over two years met the ‘res
school’ attendance requirement over both years of study. As shown in Table 8.1, for
all students in this program, ‘res schools’ commenced at the very beginning of their
studies. The first ‘res’ experience coincided with the University’s Orientation Week
(O-week) for all commencing students. Those returning to university studies after
some time spent in their previous careers found both ‘the res’ and the ‘O-week’
experiences particularly helpful. Overall, the ‘res schools’ are designed to facilitate the
entry of all students (including career changers) into the teaching profession.
Table 8.1 Focus of residential schools

Note. Adapted from On-line student handbook (n.p.), by Central Queensland University, 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential School 1</th>
<th>Held prior to week 1 of the first term of study (4 days)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The focus of the first residential school is to ensure the students have the necessary knowledge to begin their study within the program. One of the main aspects covered in the first residential school is the transition into the first in-school professional experience. Students attend workshops focusing on a range of topics related to professional experiences including ethical practices as an emergent teacher; an introduction to the world of teaching; behaviour management micro sessions; and sessions on developing productive relationships in and out of the classroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential School 2</th>
<th>Held prior to week 1 of the second (and final) term of study (3 days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The focus of this residential school is to review progress to date and prepare for the second and final term of study. Students complete an individual learning plan focusing on their strengths and professional challenges as an emergent teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Residential School 3</th>
<th>Held prior to the internship at the end of the program (3 days)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The focus for this last residential school is to prepare for the internship (final in-school block placement). Students are briefed on registration and employment processes and the transition from pre-service teacher to intern as they prepare to take full responsibility for learners at times allocated by their mentor teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 8.1 shows, through intensive workshops based on the courses they study each term, pre-service teachers progress from an initial orientation to the program and program requirements in the first ‘res school’ designed to establish the early foundations in developing a professional identity as a teacher. At this initial ‘res’, students have opportunities to connect with others in the program of study, to be oriented to both the program and the profession, and possibly more importantly for those enrolled in the distance mode, to develop the beginnings of relationships with their peers. Leonard recalled these aspects of ‘the res’ in saying:

*I remember we were told to make friends and what not at that first res school. This was so important as part of our journey to connect and build those relationships for later on when we left the res.*
The subsequent ‘res schools’ build on these initial foundations and provide for more advanced development of students’ learning as they prepare for entry into ‘the prac’ and subsequently into the required internship period spent in school settings. In all of this, ‘res school’ attendance is designed to facilitate, support and enhance all pre-service teachers personal and professional development, including these career changers, while studying at a distance from the university.

The further reason for including compulsory ‘res school’ attendance in the program relates to professional accreditation requirements. The program is accredited by the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT). One of the QCT’s mandatory requirements for the accreditation of the distance learning offering of the pre-service teaching program is the inclusion of a face-to-face component. This is seen to achieve two purposes: firstly, to ensure that students are oriented to the nature of teaching; and, secondly to support their preparation for the in-school experiences while completing the required in-school practice teaching, and later the internship. As shown in Table 8.1, the three ‘res schools’ were designed to satisfy the mandatory minimum of 10 days face-to-face contact over the year of study. In terms of their experiences of the program, and specifically the ‘res schools’, the participants regarded the opportunities for social interaction, engagement, and networking with their program peers as particularly beneficial, a view expressed somewhat more strongly by those who had been distance learners. Maria, for instance, said:

*With the res schools, you were able to meet other people who are going to be studying with you. That was very positive and therefore knowing them, then when you went into schools, having their support; being able to work with them. And also, I think, the lecturers being, like, very approachable.*
Not feeling...worried if you needed to contact them with any questions or concerns.

In outlining the advantages of residential schools in overcoming feelings of isolation Cameron noted:

I think externally you’ve got a very high exposure of being isolated. Going to the res schools helped with this.

In saying this he echoed the view of Park (2008) that in the absence of such opportunities, distance learners generally feel “the risk of being isolated” (p. 16).

Gammie, Gammie, and Duncan (2002) assert that if appropriate support is not provided for distance students, those who develop feelings of isolation are more likely to withdraw from the program, a situation that has both “economic and social concerns for the university” (p. 16) if high rates of student attrition then follow. Reinforcing this view, Clair, for instance, indicated that:

If I had not attended the first res school, I would have quit. I wouldn’t have continued because it would have been too demanding – I wouldn’t have understood a thing coming from my background.

Cameron was one of several career changers who admitted they had not fully appreciated the benefits of attending ‘res schools’. However, and as shown in the following extract from his interview, as Cameron reflected on his experiences, he like others, came to appreciate that ‘res schools’ helped overcome feelings of isolation while also providing opportunities to engage with other students and taste aspects of a full university experience:

I didn’t like the idea of res schools to start with, but then I realised if you’ve made no friends at the res, there’s no real opportunity for you to make more friends. If you haven’t found somebody that is more or less that
can be a study partner, there’s no real opportunity to do that. If you haven’t got those lines of communication established, it’s all downhill from there. I just can’t see how people would be able to, you know, piece together what they think they need without that initial contact. We were made to feel as if we were learning in a community type experience.

For his part, Peter, said:

*I think the res schools are a pretty important part of the degree, especially when doing it distance, because it’s a great help to make contact and build those relationships with people you will be studying within the ether.*

Johanna likened the ‘res school’ experience to a *family reunion*. As she saw it:

*It was like as if we were all in it together – going back to the second res was like going to a family reunion, catching up with everyone – it was like we were brought back together to share our story at the res.*

Others, like Bo, considered that the ‘res schools’ had been critical to their success as students needing to acquire essential skills in preparation for the in-school experience. As shown in the following extract, Bo’s comment is interesting with its references to knowing the *non-romantic view* of teaching before going into the classroom and *all that important stuff* related to ethical practice in the classroom:

*The res schools were a great avenue for us to know the non-romantic view of what it’s like to go into a classroom today. I think that’s really essential especially the first one [res school] where we all introduced to so much on ethics and duty of care – all the things that I guess the university is obliged to go through – new ideas and knowledge that at the time we had no idea we needed to know all that important stuff.*
Understanding and learning about the dynamics of a modern day classroom and contemporary teaching practices can be quite foreign for career changers such as those in this investigation. In general, their understandings of both classrooms and practices reflected their own times as school students that, for most, had been at least five years ago. The initial ‘res school’ was aimed at providing an orientation to the teaching profession and contemporary teaching praxis. In this context, Bo’s comments raised an interesting point concerning two aspects: the amount of information and the briefings provided to pre-service teachers prior to their in-school placement at the first ‘res school’; and the need for pre-service teachers to acquire such information about modern classrooms even if its immediate relevance was not apparent. As she put it:

*Some of the little chats, the more down-to-earth ones about what’s going to happen, or what could happen were really helpful, because I think you guys [lecturers] have fairly non-romantic views about what it’s like to – to go into a classroom today, a modern classroom, not the ones we were used to seeing as kids ourselves. This really helped us understand what was going to happen to us.*

Ivy put it somewhat differently when she said:

*The res schools were just fantastic for consolidating what we needed to know, especially with all the different people that come and talk to us continuously about ethics and the code [of practice for teachers]. Without those chats we would have just been people ‘out there’ studying by ourselves and not have had opportunities to engage and be real teachers together talking about teaching.*

There are some important implications in all of this for those responsible for designing ‘res school’ programs. Clearly there is a need to provide ample
opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage and share aspects of their developing identities as teachers, something that is even more important for those enrolled in the distance mode. Given the widely dispersed geographic locations of career changers enrolled in the program, of the opportunities to network and engage with others at ‘the res’ Peter commented:

You know it’s fantastic to have the peer-to-peer communication within your subject areas. There was no one else in Gladstone who had my teaching area, so the res school was the only time I could talk to others about subject specifics, apart from when I was at school on prac.

Maria mirrored his feelings about the ‘res schools’ when she said:

Through the res schools, being able to meet other people who are going to be studying or on prac in your particular city really helped.

She went on to say:

The res schools were very, very helpful, and just to hear other people’s stories and know, “Okay, I’m not the only one struggling with this, or that.” And that made it all a lot more real.

It was evident that for these career changers the ‘res schools’ created meaningful learning experiences, opportunities to share opinions and mindsets, and possibilities for self-reflection and evaluation. As Rose put it:

It [the res] is an opportunity to get everybody in one place and to allow people to ask questions and seek clarification so that you don’t have people not understanding what to do, otherwise you may lose people by the wayside, for, all for want of asking some questions and networking. There’s some real networking that goes on there.

She continued:
I would say yes it was beneficial to go [to the res schools] because there were massive amounts of information given to us during res schools and clarification, we’re able to seek clarification on upcoming assignments and those sorts of things and on career paths and certifications and all those sorts of things you can’t learn in an email from your lecturers.

It is worth noting that Rose was not a distance student. Nonetheless she saw the importance of all students (both internal and distance) being together at the ‘res schools’, and for all students to have the opportunity to engage with one another. Regardless of their learning mode, all students completed the same assessment tasks so it was important for them to come together for initial discussions about assignments.

Although some participants expressed their initial reservations about ‘res school’ attendance, overall they considered attendance had facilitated and supported their career change ambitions. They saw the ‘res schools’ as providing opportunities (and, for some, their only opportunity outside of their in-school placement) to interact, engage socially, and network with each other and with their lecturers. More importantly, as a pedagogical device, the ‘res schools’ were used in the curriculum design of the Graduate Diploma program to provide intensive learning opportunities for students learning at a distance from the university.

8.3 Through ‘The Prac’

A teacher education practicum (colloquially described by participants as ‘the prac’) is a period of supervised teaching, during which the pre-service teacher is gradually introduced to the role, guided by a mentor teacher. Completion of the supervised practicum is a requirement of pre-service teacher education and subsequent accreditation and registration. ‘The prac’ is where the real practice of becoming a
teacher is enacted and learning about being a teacher takes place. This in-school learning experience “is a core element in an initial or pre-service teacher education programme” (Simpson, 2006, p. 241), and on-site learning that ‘the prac’ provides is viewed as essential to the program’s success (Cobb, 1999). ‘The prac’ allowed the career changers to reflect on their developing philosophies of teaching and their new professional identities since ‘the prac’ is also the “testing ground for theory/practice links” (Simpson, 2006, p. 241).

The University termed ‘the prac’ *embedded professional learning* (EPL) in which students’ ‘real learning’ about teaching is embedded through a model that aims to enhance the link between theory, practice, university-based study and the in-school placement. Darling-Hammond (2010) argues that, “extensive, well-supervised clinical experience linked to coursework using pedagogies that link theory and practice” (p. 234) is essential, but this requires a “wrenching change from traditional models of teacher education” (p. 234). As illustrated in Figure 8.2, embedded professional learning provides the central axis around which the components of university study, in-school placement, theory about teaching and the practice of teaching rotate. As will be shown in this section, the purposeful juxtaposition of theory and practice contributes to the development of new professional identities for career changers becoming secondary school teachers.
The career changers referred to two key aspects of ‘the prac’ that had helped surmount the theory-practice divide in their learning to become secondary school teachers. Firstly, the extended time spent in-field through ‘the prac’ arrangements, noting that they were placed in schools for three days per week for school terms two and three rather than as a block placement. Secondly, while completing ‘the prac’, they also completed ‘applied learning tasks’ requiring them to use the time in schools to complete authentic tasks that required them to use the host classroom to complete practical assignments for their university coursework. These aspects are purposefully designed to support what Beck, King, and Marshall (2002) describe as “bridging the divide between theory and practice” (p. 3).

8.3.1 Extended prac experience in schools

‘The prac’ saw the career changers immersed in a school setting for an extended period. In-school learning experiences are typically completed as part of a
‘block’ placement in which the in-school practice teaching component is completed in isolation from the university coursework and usually after university assignments are submitted. However, in the program that these participants had completed, the concept of ‘embedded professional learning’ was taken literally to describe learning embedded within and across the program of study and dispersed among the individual courses completed. Rather than undertaking a series of block practicums, the career changers were in school settings for three days per week during each term of their program. There they were able to put their learning from their university coursework into action in the real world context of the school. This aspect of the program’s curriculum design aimed to close what Korthagen (2010) refers to as the “gap between theory and practice in teacher education” (p. 407). It also aimed to support Darling-Hammond’s (2010) view that there is an important need to gain both extended and authentic experiences on practicum.

Despite the challenges that it presented, Anne admitted she had:

\[\ldots\text{appreciated the fact that it had to have lots of prac work involved in it, and I don’t think you could have the course without that prac work because that puts you in the situation that you’re working towards, so you get to see, very early on, if you’d like it or not, or if you can handle it, what you were going to do as a teacher.}\]

Clair also saw her in-school experiences as integral to her development as a teacher when she commented:

\[\text{The prac was excellent. If anything, if you ever thought about changing it, I’d probably even encourage more prac. I could not get enough prac. Prac – as much as it’s all words on paper, until you get out there and actually start to use ICTs and all these acronyms that suddenly fall into being. You}\]
know, the QSA\textsuperscript{22} and to actually sit there and see the, the form 5s and whatever it is that they fill out and to see them writing down and ranking the students. Prac. It’s all words in a book until you get out there. I want more prac. I want to teach.

Of her extended in-school prac experiences Frances said:

\textit{The fact that we were out there so much in the schools really helped.}

Rose also appreciated the extended time spent in schools. As she expressed it:

\textit{Oh, hands down the practicals were great. Absolutely. The EPL. I would liken it to say a nursing degree where it’s a doing sort of career not a thinking sort of career. And so the more that you do, the more skills you build. So I think, what is it, 86 days of student contact? I think that’s just immeasurably helpful. And I think it allows, you know, people who think, who think they’re going to love it, to discover that they love it and some people who think they’re going to love it, discover that, hey, I don’t love it and thinking this is maybe not where I want to be.}

Fred considered that:

\textit{My teaching was enhanced by the fact that we spent a lot of extended time in classes, in schools.}

In his interview responses Leonard said:

\textit{The EPL is great. The exposure rates there [at school], and the learning that happens ‘in the field’ is really good. If you follow the program pretty much the way it’s set out, it sort of, sets you up bit by bit as you move along in your learning to become a teacher – it was really heavily

\textsuperscript{22} Queensland Studies Authority}
scaffolded which for someone like me was great to see the jigsaw slowly coming together where the theory and prac all linked together.

The purposeful blending of theoretical (university-based) components and the in-school components as part of the program design provided the links between theory and prac to which Leonard referred. Given his knowledge of aerospace, he used a metaphor describing how looking at the pre-service teacher education program was akin to looking at an aeronautical chart. As he described it:

If you were able to look down on the program from the air, like looking at an aeronautical chart, you would see all of the pieces that all fit together nicely, university subjects and assignments and the prac is the glue that will hold it all together and you can see the route that you would need to take to get there – to become a teacher in the end. All the bits are there that are essential for the journey.

While possibly seen as only a subtle change of focus for in-school practicum, the blending of theory and practice represents a fundamental paradigm shift enabling the career changers to create, aggregate and disseminate knowledge in the contexts of twenty-first century learning organisations. As they experienced it, this paradigm shift required immersion within their in-school placement for much of their study program. There, immersed in a real-world learning context (namely, a secondary school), they were encouraged to establish the direct links between their in-school experiences and university coursework. This was further enhanced by university coursework assessment tasks that required them to complete ‘applied learning tasks’.

8.3.2 Applied learning tasks

During ‘the prac’ the career changers (like other pre-service teacher education students) were required to complete a series of applied learning tasks aimed at
bridging the theory-practice gap. As a matter of program design, these tasks were extensively scaffolded to ensure authentic and real learning occurred. Darling-Hammond (2006) has argued that “more authentic assessments for teacher education that link theory and practice . . . are beginning to change the ways in which teachers are taught” (p. 302). In completing these assessment tasks the participants drew on the joint resources provided by ‘the prac’ and those originating in their university coursework. The authentic applied learning tasks that linked theory with practice included:

- designing, implementing and critically evaluating lesson plans, units of work, and assessment packages;
- profiling learner cohorts for effective learning design considerations;
- utilising available information communication technologies for effective design, implementation and evaluation of learning experiences.

Norma summed up her learning experiences and the linkages between theory and practice when she said:

*Guided – our learning was guided – the guidance we got with the embedded professional learning – the thing that we did in the schools – the prac – that was excellent because whatever we were doing in the assessments, for the assignments, was what we were practising there, so it was theory to practice, really hands-on.*

Of his experiences Peter explained:

*I learned so much out of doing the assignments, and they supported me in the classroom – the assignments actually supported me in the classroom. So I think the actual program itself, and the way it was sequenced, was quite supportive of me in the classroom – it all linked from day one*
through to the end. It was all designed to support us. Without this support of it all connecting together, I think it would have probably have been difficult to use what we learnt. In this way, I was able to learn what I needed to learn in a real world context to be a teacher.

Ivy saw the applied learning tasks in a similar way. As she said:

_The fact that our assignments were also very relevant to what you do at school. Like it wasn’t as if you have some degrees what you study is completely different to what the real world is like. And I didn’t find that at all. Like, everything I’ve done at uni, I’ve been able to draw on in my teaching experience._

In contrast to the other career changers, in recounting her experiences of the program, Rose saw the divide between theory and practice as being a good deal sharper when she explained:

_I liked the practical assignments. Very good practical assignments…. the writing of units, writing lesson plans, those sort of things…were very helpful to me. Cranking out a 2000 word theoretical research paper, just to crank out a 2000 word research paper, I didn’t know that that was the most helpful. I think, by having already gone to university I’ve proved that I can crank out 2000 words on a subject. But I had never written a unit plan before. And that’s where I learned the most. The practical assignments really helped. I was after all learning how to be a teacher, not an educational theorist._

Leonard, on the other hand, very clearly saw the link between _the theory parts_ and how he could use these in his teaching practice when he said:
I was very happy with the way you could use the theory parts we learnt about and how you could use parts of this understanding and background in the prac – the integration of the theory and the practical went together.

In her style that often took a somewhat different view, Bo took all of this a step further in saying that she:

. . . liked how the whole assessment in the program was being used in the classroom, as well as for the course. I was thankful it was built into the workload. In a way it lessened the workload a bit – I don’t think we actually did less than we supposed to like at other unis - but it seemed less as we were doing both in tandem.

Traditionally, embedding the practice teaching in schools has seen pre-service teachers positioned in novice/expert dyadic relationships with their supervising mentors. Within the contrasting model developed within the Graduate Diploma program, the pre-service teacher is positioned in an embedded professional learning framework. In this, mentor teachers and pre-service teachers can work iteratively to construct, trial, revise and refine practices as members of the teaching profession. This approach has seen a shift from using the in-school experiences as the means of pre-service teachers developing their knowledge and skills about teaching through replicating the practices of the school organisation and a mentor teacher, but rather engaging the pre-service teacher in learning activities that leverage the learning potential inherent in the diverse practices of that real world context. The successful completion of ‘the prac’ as a pre-service teacher (and subsequently as an intern) is only possible through the support and active engagement of an effective mentor teacher, underscoring the importance of all parties being conscious of the shared responsibility for learning. The role of the mentor teacher in enhancing the career
changers’ learning to become a secondary school teacher and developing their new professional identities will be discussed in the following section.

8.4 Working with a mentor teacher

The career changers were in no doubt whatsoever about the important contributions that the teachers who had served as their mentors throughout the pre-service period had made to the development of their new professional identities. In paying homage to her supportive mentor teachers Winifred said:

*I had excellent mentor teachers that were really supportive. They helped me through it.*

Her comment reflects that of Graham (2006) who highlighted the significance of the learning site and the crucial role of mentor teachers as “models of exemplary practice” (p. 1127) in teaching. For students enrolled in pre-service teacher education programs in the distance mode, the mentor teacher is likely to play a much greater role simply because, when compared with their on-campus counterparts, such students have relatively limited access to faculty staff.

In their professional mentoring role, mentors play an important part in providing leadership, guidance and support to the emergent teacher. Lee felt that having an effective mentor teacher had been essential. As she went on to say:

*I pity any student that goes through the Graduate Diploma and doesn’t have as good a mentor teacher as what I had. Because I think they were essential. I don’t think I could have done it as well as I did, and been as prepared as I was for teaching without having a good mentor.*

Clearly, having a good mentor matters! Mentor teachers who allow access to their classes and teaching resources and share their expertise with pre-service teachers are
important links within the network of bonds formed by those learning to become teachers and acquiring their new identities as members of the teaching profession.

It is essential that mentor teachers allow their pre-service teachers to participate in the full range of tasks and learning experiences that will improve and develop them as teachers. This type of approach also enhances the role of pre-service teachers as valued functioning members of school sites. Anne indicated that in her role (as intern) she had been:

\[\ldots \text{ lucky and I had two good mentor teachers. The mentor teachers were interested in any new ideas that we had.}\]

Pre-service teachers need to come to know how schools and teachers operate in a real world context. During ‘the prac’, they learn about, and engage in, workplace culture, and develop strong relationships with other staff members and the pupils of the school site in developing their professional identities. As Frances said of her ‘prac’ experience:

\[\text{In my second semester I had a really supportive teacher, who really helped with resources; the whole staff room was very supportive. I felt like I was part of the school.}\]

Further, she came to appreciate the importance of working as part of a team and building a sense of belonging in developing her identity as a teacher:

\[\text{Even though you have sort of staff around, it’s still up to you to do it. But I think I enjoy that aspect, too. I don’t think I’m too much of a group person, I think I actually am a bit of a loner and like to run my own little show. But watching my mentor teacher ‘in action’, I know I can’t do that. I have to be part of the team and do what is required as part of a team. It was this prac experience that really showed me that.}\]
Of her experiences with her mentor teacher Jane commented:

_The other thing that was really helpful for me was our mentor teacher. He would proof-read my assignments for me. And I would say, “Right, this is the assignment we’ve been given – these are my ideas, what do you think?” And we’d have a discussion about it. And he would help in the formulation of my ideas. And even things like what’s in my unit plans, and my lesson plans for my assignments. I used all of those in the class on prac as well as for the assignments so he was aware of the link that needed to be there and he has supported me doing that. So it was really good, ‘cause obviously he had to read them, make sure they were all okay._

The relationship that developed between Jane and her mentor teacher exemplifies the importance of a mentor willing to offer assistance with all components of the pre-service teacher’s learning. In that sense, Jane’s mentor teacher played an important part in helping her find the bridge between the theory of her coursework and the practice gained through her in-school experiences.

For Lee, receiving quality feedback from her mentor teachers was important. As she recounted it:

_My mentor teachers were brilliant. I had fantastic mentor teachers….and the feedback I got from them was fantastic. They were always there, asking me questions, and talking me through things. Asked me things like, “Well, why didn’t you think that this particular activity worked?” Or, “Well, what was good about this one?” And, yeah, just anything like that, it was really good feedback, and, I think it was essential to feel part of the school – it was more than just my mentor though. I had a range of people giving me feedback – it was terrific – I was part of a team._
Reflecting on conversations with some of her program peers, Bo considered that she had been very lucky in being able to work with her allocated mentor teachers. As she said:

*The pracs, most definitely were the best part and with that, obviously – and I was very, very lucky, you know mentor teacher selection is just vital in that. I couldn’t say nicer things about my mentor teachers, and listening around, you know, I think I was lucky.*

It is interesting that Bo placed some emphasis on having appropriate mentor teachers for pre-service teachers. Although it had not been part of his experience, Leonard knew of some of his peers who had been allocated less effective mentor teachers. He recounted:

*I had a pro-active school, very good mentor teachers. I sat down at lunch in one of the res schools, and there were a couple of individuals there ... it had nothing to do with the uni, but they just got terrible mentors, and being tortured, it sounded like, at their school. It certainly didn’t happen to me, but I know if there’s a mechanism to come back to the uni, saying, “This is not working for me, what do I do at this point?”*

Such variations in experiences with mentor teachers are not uncommon. As Beutel and Spooner-Lane (2009) observe, in pre-service teacher education there is usually great variation from one mentor to another, especially in the level of mentoring provided and the type of mentoring experience. Simpson (2006) notes that some of the challenges associated with providing meaningful professional learning experiences in pre-service teacher education programs included ensuring consistency of good teaching practices as models for pre-service teachers; providing a range of practical experiences; ensuring appropriate supervision of pre-service teachers; and providing
suitable training for supervising mentor teachers. These challenges make explicit the need to define and enhance links between university coursework requirements and expectations, and the in-school learning experiences. These links need to be clear to ensure there is a shared understanding of roles and expectations across both contexts. Embedding the learning of pre-service teachers in schools presents the opportunity to engage them together with their mentors in the dynamics of a real-life educational setting. If such engagement can be made to work successfully the pre-service teacher and their mentors are able to co-create and extend their knowledge about effective pedagogies. In this, quality mentoring is an essential component of quality learning as career changers develop their new professional identities. This quality mentoring is needed through ‘the prac’ as well as during the Internship at the conclusion of the program.

8.5 During the Internship

In the pre-service teacher education program, ‘the prac’ culminated in a six-week teaching internship undertaken as a continuous block. Janet felt this internship period had been essential in her development as a teacher. In her words:

The internship was great. You know, ‘cause you were sort of left on your own, and you could really dig in and do your thing. It was essential to learn what it was really like to be a teacher without the constant supervision we had in the previous prac.

Teaching internships provide “an advanced professional experience within a pre-service teacher education program following completion of the required minimum number of days of supervised professional experience [and] provides a transition into the teaching profession” (QCT, 2011c, n.p.). Although internships have been part of pre-service teacher education programs in Queensland since the mid-1990s, there is
still considerable divergence of views as to whether formal internships should be a required component of teacher education. Currently, the QCT regards a teaching internship as an optional component in the design of accredited programs. As the QCT’s predecessor, The Queensland Board of Teacher Registration (BTR) developed a *Working Party on Internships in Teacher Education* “to re-examine internships in today’s professional learning contexts in order to inform future policy and guidelines” (BTR, 2004, p. 3). One important outcome of the Working Party’s report, *The Multiple Facets of Internships* (BTR, 2004) has informed the present-day intentions of internships to allow pre-service teachers (as interns) to become members of a teaching team, based on collaborative planning, teaching and mentoring. It is intended that interns become full, active members of the school learning community in which they complete their internship “provid[ing] pre-service teachers with the opportunity to contribute to a school community while providing them with a transition into the teaching profession through a reduced workload and the support of a mentor” (BTR, 2004, p. 12).

In her responses Maria recalled aspects of her internship experience in stating:

> It’s funny now when I think back, and I had my interview [for teaching positions] I didn’t even remember feeling nervous because I was just feeling so positive about the whole experience, especially after the internship and really feeling like I knew what was going on – I was in the world of teaching. So it [the internship] certainly did prepare me well.

Reflecting on the importance of the internship for him, Peter believed the entire program was designed to facilitate the transitions of pre-service teachers including career changers like him, first into the internship and subsequently into teaching as their new career. As he said:
I think the whole program was supportive of the transition to the internship, if I can put it like that. You know it [the internship] brought everything together....that might seem funny, but because all those things we learned, you got to do your internship properly and you were a teacher.

From her experiences Frances reported:

I thought the internship was really valuable. I was also very lucky in that I was basically given a full class and I was just let go with them, and so I really got a feel for what it’s like to be the teacher and have that responsibility, and go from lesson to lesson. I had every lesson with them, so it worked really well it was very, very valuable. I felt very confident going in as a first year teacher.

Similarly, Winifred said:

My internship was great – I was the teacher, they were my classes. It felt so real, you know real authentic.

Possibly summed up by Winifred’s statement, internships are designed to be ‘real’ in providing authentic teaching experiences. Perceiving it in this way the career changers saw the internship as an integral component in developing their new professional identity, a period in which they were no longer becoming a secondary school teacher, but had become the teacher.

8.6 Summary of Chapter

This chapter has been concerned with constructing and interpreting those aspects of the career changers’ experiences as students of the pre-service program that had contributed to their professional development as secondary school teachers. As they saw it, the program had contributed to the development of their new professional
identities through four interrelated aspects, notably: at ‘the res’, through ‘the prac’, working with a mentor teacher, and during the period of the internship. Career changers engaged with and interacted with their peers, university lecturers and school-based personnel as mentor teachers. These interactions were important sources for their own personal development as the career changers progressively came to understand their role as a teacher, and thereby came to develop their professional identities as secondary school teachers.

It was within and through the in-school components of ‘the prac’ and the internship that the career changers experienced the consolidation of their teaching practice as they connected with and functioned within authentic real-world learning environments. Here they were afforded opportunities to construct their own meanings and produce knowledge that they truly owned about teaching and teaching praxis. They achieved this through early in-school learning placements throughout which they were guided and encouraged by mentor teachers operating in collaboration with university staff and working within a program purposefully designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The linkages between their university coursework and their in-school learning were designed to support their professional growth and development as teachers. Those undertaking a career change into teaching, as well as others enrolled in the Graduate Diploma program, benefitted from such linkages in two important ways. Firstly, they were able to tap into the expertise of their mentor teachers with their long years of experience and extensive professional practice knowledge; and secondly, they were able to accept the opportunities provided for them to apply their own emerging knowledge of teaching praxis derived from their university coursework with its emphasis on the incremental completion of applied learning tasks in line with their professional growth and development.
In considering the professional development of the career changers in this study, this chapter has completed the set of four chapters each concerned with the four contributory categories that were used to construct and inform ‘Becoming’ as the core category of the explanatory grounded theory. The chapter that follows will outline the theory of ‘Becoming’ in terms of its connections with the extant literature and its possible application to career changes other than those associated with embarking on a new career as a secondary school teacher.
CHAPTER 9 BECOMING

While much of the available research is concerned with career changers’ motivations to teach it appears that less attention has been paid to their experiences as student teachers, and the process of ‘becoming’ teachers during teacher education (Williams, 2010, p. 639)

9.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the explanatory grounded theory of ‘Becoming’. To guard against imposing terminology of my own making, as far as possible in assigning descriptors to the core and contributory categories of the grounded theory, words that the participants had used were drawn upon. ‘Becoming’ employed as a gerund (Charmaz 2006) in the construction of the explanatory grounded theory, was used by several participants to describe their career change. That is, they were ‘Becoming’ secondary school teachers. This approach of using in vivo terms ensured the participants and their career change reasons and experiences were foregrounded throughout the construction of the grounded theory of ‘Becoming’.

Chapters 1 to 4 outlined the parameters of the interpretive constructivist paradigm within which the investigation was located and the grounded theory approaches used to gather, construct, and interpret the themes and categories from the data provided by the career changer participants. Chapters 5 to 8 presented the four contributory categories constructed on the basis of inductive reasoning that formed the cornerstones of ‘Becoming’. In discussing the grounded theory, linkages with the literature in the general field of career change and the more specific field of career change into teaching to which ‘Becoming’ makes its further contributions will also be established.

Changing careers has become commonplace in the 21st Century. Hof et al. (2011) comment “. . . people in industrialised countries today change careers and occupations at least once in their working lives” (p. 2). Australian labour force trends
reflect this pattern of significant labour mobility with individuals having multiple careers during their lifetime. In February 2012, for example, almost 20% of the Australian workforce had been with their current employer for less than one year and those most likely to change jobs were in the two age groups: 25–34 years and 35–44 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2012; University of Sydney, 2011). These age groups were well represented among this investigation’s nineteen research participants of whom seven were aged between 30 to 40 years and a further six were in the age group 35–44 years. Of the remaining six participants, five were in the 45–54 age group with one aged over 55 years (see Appendix I). In light of these labour force trends, the decisions made by the participants to terminate a previous career and embark on a new career as a secondary school teacher were not atypical. Their career change decisions were what Chudzikowski (2011) refers to as an “influential event” (p. 1) as they moved from their previous careers in non-education settings and professions to new careers in teaching. At the time of being interviewed, the participants had completed a pre-service teacher education program and were developing their new professional roles, functions, expectations and identities related to becoming secondary school teachers as their new careers.

9.2 ‘Becoming’: An explanatory grounded theory of secondary school teaching as a new career

‘Becoming’ is the core category of the explanatory grounded theory to which four categories constructed on the basis of the concepts and themes contained in the data contribute. These contributory categories are:

• *The Attractions: Teaching as a New Career*

• *Past Experiences: Foundations of a New Teaching Career*

• *The Journey to a New Career: Entry to the Teaching Profession*
• **Developing a New Professional Identity**

Figure 9.1 provides a visual representation of ‘Becoming’.

![Figure 9.1 The grounded theory of 'Becoming']()

This figure reflects this investigation’s fusionist ontology outlined in Chapters 1 and 3, and the ontological perspective that whatever may have been in terms of prior situations, careers and experiences merges or ‘fuses’ with whatever may become, in this case, by way of pursuing a new career as a secondary school teacher.

Metaphorically, the fusionist ontology presents a view somewhat akin to the legendary Janus of Roman mythology with eyes focussed simultaneously on the past and the future. Within the explanatory grounded theory, the four contributory categories that
constitute ‘Becoming’ originate in situations that have been parts of the past. In this construct, and in understanding what had influenced their career change decisions, two of the four contributory categories (The Attractions and Past Experiences) include a range of personal attributes and experiences that provided insights into the participants’ reasons for their career change. For some participants, their reports of having been engaged in a previous career included their recognition of ‘forces’ that had ‘pulled’ them toward their new secondary teaching careers. For others, past experiences included events and circumstances that had ‘pushed’ them away from their previous career path. Interacting with these categories are the two other contributory categories (The Journey to a New Career and Developing a New Professional Identity) both of which encapsulate the career changers’ experiences as students of the pre-service teacher education program they had completed in terms of its pedagogy, design and requirements, and the opportunities to develop a new professional identity as a secondary school teacher. While some participants had found aspects of the program design and requirements challenging, in general they considered the program had supported and enhanced their career change.

The construction of ‘Becoming’ as the core category and, likewise the construction of each of the four contributory categories, involved interpreting the career change accounts of each of the individual participants. While the four categories reflect generalisations, each category includes contributory themes (represented by the smaller squares shown in Figure 9.1) that were more important in the career change reasons and experiences of some participants, but were of lesser importance in the accounts provided by others. In adopting an interpretive constructivist grounded theory approach, these details provided the basis from which each of the four
CHAPTER 9 BECOMING

The four contributory categories of ‘Becoming’ are discussed in the following sections along with other studies of career change into teaching reported in the literature. The linkages between ‘Becoming’ and the wider literature will be considered within the discussion of each of the contributory categories. In those discussions it will be noted that while ‘Becoming’ supports some previous findings, it contests others.

As has been demonstrated throughout Chapters 5 to 8, the data provided by the participants have been aggregated and analysed within the separate contexts of each of the four categories that were constructed. However, in the final analysis, ‘Becoming’ presents a holistic view of the reasons for, and experiences of, career change into secondary school teaching. The four categories of the explanatory theory are ultimately interrelated and the order in which they are presented in the following discussion should not be taken as indicating that any of the contributory categories is in any way more or less important than any of the other categories.

9.2.1 The Attractions: Teaching as a New Career

The first aim of this investigation gave rise to a fundamental question: in deciding to make the change, why were these people drawn to new careers as secondary school teachers? Several participants spoke of ‘Attractions to teaching’ when describing what drew them to this possibility. From this The Attractions was interpreted and constructed as one of the categories underpinning ‘Becoming’. The Attractions included various events and circumstances that in various ways had inspired, initiated, or accounted for the participants’ career change reasons and
decisions, and provided the impetus for them to consider new careers as secondary school teachers.

As indicated in Figure 9.2, emerging from the coding processes I outlined in Chapter 4, *The Attractions* included five principal themes constructed from the reasons participants considered had drawn them toward their new secondary teaching careers, namely: *personal enjoyment and satisfaction from teaching; helping young people learn; always wanted to be a secondary school teacher; family and lifestyle factors;* and, *influence of significant others.*

*Figure 9.2 The Attractions: Teaching as a new career*
• **Personal enjoyment and satisfaction from teaching**

The prospect of attaining satisfaction from working in their new careers was a powerful reason that some participants considered had attracted them to teaching. For some, enjoyment and satisfaction had been absent in their previous careers and workplaces. The same enjoyment and satisfaction of which participants spoke, and more generally the enjoyment and satisfaction some felt in working as a teacher with children, were identified in the findings of other investigations reported in the extant literature including those of Anthony and Ord (2008), Campbell (2010), Chong and Low (2009), DEEWR (2008), Hobson et al. (2009), Manuel and Hughes (2006), MCEETYA (2005), OECD (2005), Richardson and Watt (2005, 2006), Richardson et al. (2007), Wang and Fwu (2002), Watt and Richardson (2008), Williams and Forgasz (2009), and Younger, Brindley, Pedder, and Hagger (2004). Typical of these is the research of Williams and Forgasz (2009) in which 81.8% of 375 respondents said, “I believe teaching will give me high job satisfaction” (p. 102). Some of the terms people, including those who participated in this investigation, used in expressing the rewards they believed could be achieved from a teaching career have been reported by Richardson et al. (2007) who state “[t]he desire for a more meaningful and satisfying career was mentioned in various guises with participants using words such as ‘rewarding’, ‘satisfying’ ‘challenging’, ‘diverse’ and ‘interesting’ to describe their perceptions of a teaching career” (p. 230). *Rewarding* and *satisfying* were words frequently used by the participants in this investigation to describe the satisfactions they anticipated from their new secondary teaching careers. They mirrored the findings of Campbell (2010) who noted of her respondents “[m]any (16%) anticipated that teaching would be more fulfilling” (p. 8).
• **Helping young people learn**

As an extension of the satisfaction and enjoyment that attracted some of them to consider becoming a secondary school teacher, some participants had been attracted to a new teaching career through which they could help young people learn. Other investigations to acknowledge ‘helping others to learn’ as an important reason for some individuals deciding to become teachers include Anthony and Ord (2008), ACE (2003), Manuel and Hughes (2006), MCEETYA (2005), OECD (2005), Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003), and Richardson et al. (2007). Among the three “fundamental reasons [for entering teaching]” they identified, Manuel and Hughes (2006) included “… the desire to work with young people to make a difference in their lives …” (p. 20). Helping young people learn as the major reason for becoming teachers voiced by some participants further supports the findings of Anthony and Ord (2008). In their study 21 of their 68 respondents who had decided to become secondary teachers expressed “the desire ‘to make a difference’ to the lives of young people and ‘to give something back’ to society” (p. 366). Both of these investigations support the conclusion presented in the grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ where the career change participants had been attracted to a new teaching career where they could help young people learn. Like the participants in the aforementioned studies, the career changers in this investigation believed they would receive personal enjoyment and satisfaction from helping young people learn. This perceived personal satisfaction and enjoyment is a major ‘push-pull’ aspect that supported their decision to change career and become a secondary school teacher.

• **Always wanted to be a secondary school teacher**

Some participants spoke of how they had always wanted to be a teacher and more specifically, how wanting to become a secondary school teacher had been a long
held ambition. They often spoke quite emotively of the earlier personal, family and/or economic circumstances that had caused their desires to remain unrealised.

This long-held reason of some participants in deciding to embark on a new teaching career is not reflected in all previous research on career change. In fact it is, for example, challenged by Campbell (2010) who found ‘always wanted to teach’ to be one of the least motivating factors when her respondents spoke about becoming a teacher; However, wanting to teach as a reason for new career decisions does align with the findings of other research. For example, in studying career changers, Anthony and Ord (2008) identified “always wanting to be a teacher” among a defined set of “antecedent factors” (p. 365) accounting for such a career change especially among those for whom the “time is right” (p. 368) as they experienced “a convergence between a long held desire to teach and the opening of that possibility” (p. 368). Of their “The Time is Right” respondents, these investigators comment that,

[m]any participants (n=28 [of 68]) noted that they had previously considered teaching at an earlier stage in their lives. For various reasons they had found themselves working in other jobs – often related to teaching – but had retained the desire to teach when circumstances, especially family circumstances, were more favourable. (Anthony & Ord, 2008, p. 366)

Others researchers such as Richardson et al. (2007) identified participants for whom “[t]eaching was a dream ambition” (p. 154), a situation also noted by Manuel and Hughes (2006) who comment: “The desire to teach is driven by intra-subjective factors: comments such as ‘to fulfill a dream/always wanted to be a teacher’ figure prominently here” (p. 13).

Much of the extant research literature on career change into teaching makes little specific mention of those attracted to new careers as secondary school teachers as
opposed to teaching in general terms. In line with the stated aim of this investigation, the participants were career changers who sought a new secondary teaching career. This is an important difference in terms of this investigation’s contributions. While they share some of the general reasons for being attracted to teaching, within the theme always wanting to be a secondary school teacher for some participants there were more specific forces that explained their attraction to a career as a secondary school teacher. The analysis of these forces created the basis of an additional set of more specific reasons that participants had for wanting to become secondary teachers.

While they may not have had a long-held ambition to become secondary school teachers, to become qualified to teach a particular subject in which they had developed special expertise through their formal training and qualifications, and their workplace experiences, was a major attraction for some participants. Secondary school teachers are trained to teach particular subject areas. Hence, for these participants wanting to become a secondary school teacher was related to the more specific opportunities to use their previously acquired knowledge, skills and experiences in their new teaching careers. More widely, others perceived secondary school teaching as providing opportunities to use what they described as the knowledge derived from their general life experiences gained as parents, members of community organisations and workers in their previous occupations in facilitating the learning of young people.

As was shown in the profiles presented in Chapter 4, the participants held qualifications in a diverse range of disciplines. The opportunities to use knowledge and skills previously acquired from a non-education related career or qualifications confirms the findings of earlier investigations including those of DEEWR (2008); Manuel and Hughes (2006); Miles et al., (2009); MCEETYA (2005); Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003); Tigchelaar et al. (2008); Wang and Fwu (2002); and,
Younger et al. (2004). Like those in this investigation who had decided on a new secondary school teaching career, among their participants Manuel and Hughes (2006) observed “. . . the opportunity to continue a meaningful engagement with the subject of their choice” (p. 20) ranked among the three fundamental reasons given for entering teaching.

In confirming the view that the opportunity to maintain contact with those discipline areas in which they have expertise is what attracts some individuals to new secondary teaching careers, ‘Becoming’ is at odds with the findings of other research. Anthony and Ord (2008), for example, noted that “[i]nterestingly, given the decision to enter secondary teaching, only 12 [of 68] teachers directly expressed passion for their subject area when discussing their career choice” (p. 367). Further, Chong and Low (2009) observed that among their participants “love of subject . . . ranked lowest in this category [altruistic factors] with only 4.8% of respondents citing this as their primary reason for joining teaching” (p. 63). ‘Becoming’ posits a view that also contests that of Williams and Forgasz (2009) who observed that while some career changers considered workplace skills and knowledge important, “least importance was placed on specific content knowledge related to their former employment fields” and further that while

[it] might be expected that students enrolled in secondary teaching programs might be more subject-focused . . . when their responses were examined separately, it was surprising to find that specific content knowledge was mentioned only three times among the 157 enrolled in these courses (p. 104).

This stands in contrast to the nineteen participants in this investigation of whom twelve specifically mentioned that they were attracted to secondary school teaching by the opportunities to make use of their content knowledge.
• **Family and lifestyle factors**

Several participants mentioned family and lifestyle factors as reasons that had attracted them to teaching. For those with young children, the attractions of a new secondary school teaching career were often linked to how this might assist with the practicalities involved in family and lifestyle routines and schedules. Some saw teaching as providing work hours and time for family around school holidays. Bruinsma and Jansen (2010), Mtika and Gates (2011), Watt and Richardson (2008), and Williams and Forgasz (2009) have also noted this perceived convenience of working the same hours as their children spend in school, and the ability to plan family vacations during school holidays. Of their respondents, Anthony and Ord (2008) reported “time for family, lifestyle (family-friendly and holidays) and remuneration – were coded in 20 [of 68] instances” (p. 366). Similarly, Richardson et al. (2007) reported respondents who saw teaching as “... a career that is satisfying, fulfilling and suits the family situation” and “fits in with family as well as career goals” (p. 154). Williams and Forgasz (2009) reported respondents who considered that “[t]eaching provides work with family friendly hours [60% of respondents]” and that “teachers have good holidays [37.4% of respondents]” (p. 102). These, together with the participants in this investigation, would agree with Smith and Pantana (2010) who suggested that the typical career switcher (their term) “will experience a similar type of salary, but a different lifestyle—a more family-friendly work life that satisfies their altruistic drive to be a positive element of change in society” (p. 17).

• **Influence of significant others**

A number of participants explained their attraction to teaching, and more specifically secondary school teaching, in terms of the influences of significant other people in their lives. They mirrored Zeichner and Gore’s (1990) view that the greatest
influences on how people learn and become teachers are those that pre-date teacher education, including their own school experiences and teachers, previous work experiences and parenting. Some participants had made the decision about their new career choice because they came from a “family of teachers”, or had close associates who are teachers.

For some participants important influences also stemmed from significant others in the form of teachers whom they had experienced while school students themselves. The influences over career change decision-making derived from past teachers have also been noted by Campbell (2010), Chong and Low (2009), DEEWR (2008), Manuel and Hughes (2006), Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003), Richardson and Watt (2006, 2010), Watt and Richardson (2007), Williams and Forgasz (2009), and Younger et al. (2004). Richardson and Watt (2010) reported that for their career changers, past teachers were seen as providing both positive and negative role models. Others, such as Richardson et al. (2007), suggest the decision-making influences exerted by past teachers are relatively minor when compared to other forces that attract a career changer toward teaching. Chong and Low (2009) found that only 5.5% of their respondents indicated “inspired by role models” (p. 63) as the reason for choosing teaching as a career. Williams and Forgasz (2009) reported only 39% of their respondents having specified “I was inspired by a mentor or role model” (p. 102). The theory of ‘Becoming’ provides some evidence to challenge this view. As discussed in Chapter 5, several participants expressed the view that a past teacher had played a ‘special role’ in their earlier lives. When they came to consider a career change into secondary teaching, such an individual had provided a significant influence and role model. These views confirmed those reported by Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) that individual teachers had been influential in some career
chancer’s decisions to become a teacher; and the further views of Manuel and Hughes (2006) who reported that almost three quarters of their respondents agreed their decision to become a teacher had been influenced by “a significant teacher or mentor” (p. 15).

9.2.2 Past Experiences: Foundation of a New Teaching Career

As a further contributory category on which ‘Becoming’ is constructed, the participants’ accounts of their Past Experiences demonstrated how who and what they had been in the past merges with who and what is becoming. Past Experiences also demonstrates that “becoming implies growth and change” (Zaborskis, 2011, p. 1). Following the fusionist ontological perspective derived from the works of Driesch (1914) and to an extent supported by the concepts contained in critical realism outlined in Chapters 1 and 3, such growth and change is seen to have its basis in past states of being. Participants appreciated that further personal and professional growth was required in their becoming secondary school teachers. However, they also spoke at length of who and what they had previously been and their Past Experiences. These accounts provided further insights into the reasons for their decisions to become secondary school teachers.

Regardless of the nature of such change, when people make the decision to terminate an existing career and embark upon a new career, Past Experiences can exert both positive and negative influences. In their terms, participants referred to past experiences as ‘pull’ or ‘push’ factors that variously impacted on their career change decisions in ways identified in the earlier studies of Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003, p. 100) and Anthony and Ord (2008, p. 364). Participants regarded themselves as being in control of some of these factors and the related experiences they delivered and felt that these factors had ‘pulled’ them toward becoming a secondary school
teacher. On the other hand, those participants who had experienced them, felt that other **Past Experiences** such as having been made redundant were typically beyond their control and described these as having ‘pushed’ them out of, and away from, their previous careers and workplaces.

As shown in Figure 9.3, **Past Experiences** as a further contributory category in ‘Becoming’ includes four themes constructed from the career change stories that participants had shared: **dissatisfaction arising from previous career experiences**; **previous formal teaching or training experiences**; **previous informal teaching or training experiences**; and, **general life experiences**.

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**Figure 9.3 Past Experiences: Foundations of a new teaching career**
• **Dissatisfaction arising from previous career experiences**

People sometimes change career because they feel dissatisfied with their previous employment or workplace and believe that a different career would be more satisfying. Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant (2003) describe the lack of satisfaction in a previous career and workplace as ‘push’ factors, the same term used by several participants who had been attracted to a secondary teaching career because they believed teaching would offer more enjoyment and satisfaction. In relating negative past experiences as reasons for their career change decisions the participants had affinities with those who had participated in previous investigations such as that of Anthony and Ord (2008). In their study, job dissatisfaction included “... lack of fulfillment, undesirable work conditions, being apart from family, not fitting in the corporate world, disillusionment and lack of challenge or scope for progression” (p. 365). They too, identified such experiences as ‘push factors’ “that provided momentum (or activation energy) towards seriously re/considering teaching as a career” (Anthony & Ord, 2008, p. 365). Like the experiences of some of the participants in this investigation, those who participated in their study led Carless and Arnup (2011) to conclude, “[f]eeling dissatisfied leads to thinking about changing jobs or careers and subsequently intentions to search for new positions and actual search behavior” (p. 80). As has been shown in Chapter 6, among the participants in the present investigation there were also those who were similar to Anthony and Ord’s (2008) respondents who saw “their dissatisfaction with their jobs in terms of relationships: they felt they didn’t fit in their workplace or they felt isolated and needed more interaction with people” (p. 365).

As noted earlier, as well as those who were dissatisfied with past work situations there were those who had experienced more complex situations resulting...
from business closures and redundancies. While not all of these had been necessarily
dissatisfied with their previous workplaces and situations, having been ‘pushed’ out of
their previous careers they too had then decided to embark on new secondary teaching
careers.

• **Formal and informal teaching or training experience**

  The *Past Experiences* described by several participants included having been
engaged in teaching-related and/or training activities in their previous careers and
workplaces. The experiences gained in performing these activities had prompted their
plans to become secondary school teachers. Other participants had made their career
change decisions because, as part of the positions they held in voluntary community
organisations, they enjoyed engaging in learning and teaching activities while
instructing young people. Williams and Forgasz (2009) suggest that having worked
with children in the role of coach (or even as a parent) provides the enjoyment that
prompts some people to consider teaching as a new career.

  Given their *Past Experiences*, some participants considered they already
possessed a set of skills they regarded as generally appropriate to teaching, and
particularly secondary school teaching. As discussed in Chapter 6, equipped with the
experience of teaching or training roles through their work or their recreational
pursuits, and often with a “passion for their area of specialisation”, these career
changers had discovered what has been described as “... a sense of personal
fulfillment in helping others to develop and learn” (DEST, 2007, p. 28).

  Other investigations of career changers have also found these, and other, *Past
Experiences* gained through teaching-related and/or training roles in a previous
workplace or within voluntary organisations can become part of the attraction to
teaching. Wilson and Deaney (2010), for instance, have noted that, along with
previous supervisory and team experiences, “[t]hey [career changers] do however often have direct experience of learning in the workplace” (p. 170). For their part, Anthony and Ord (2008, p. 366) claim that previous teaching-related roles as diverse as having been or being a teacher aide, a tutor in English as a Second Language courses, a dance or music teacher, or as an outdoor activities instructor, provide experiences that they regard as ‘pull factors’ attracting some people to teaching as a new career.

Tigchelaar et al. (2008) offer the further view that, in addition to involvements in teaching and training-related roles, the work experiences of those whom they describe as ‘second-career teachers’ are of benefit in becoming a teacher. Despite the fact that “[r]esearch on the specific nature of career-changing teachers’ prior work experience is limited” (Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2008, p. 14), the participants in this investigation were in no doubt as to how their past experiences had contributed to their becoming secondary school teachers. In this, they were like many of those in Anthony and Ord’s (2008) research who “. . . referred to their prior occupational experiences when talking about their perceptions of preparedness to teach” and who “were aware that they brought specific skills – often expressed in contrast to younger teachers – to their new role” (p. 369). They underscored the significance of previous work experiences and expertise for the beginning teacher in “. . . affirming these teachers’ identity and sense of worth . . .” and further that “. . . their experience in the ‘real’ world endowed credibility and ensured that their lessons had a sense of relevance” (Anthony & Ord, 2008, p. 370).

**General life experience**

As well as their former workplace and voluntary organisation involvements in teaching-related and training activities, most participants also brought a wealth of
more general life experiences to their new careers. Given these, and the further experiences that some had attained as parents of their own adolescent children, some participants considered such Past Experiences added richness to their development as a teacher and their interactions with secondary school learners. Some expressed the view that as a teacher, a ‘more-mature’ person could draw on their past experiences of life in ways they thought less likely among their more youthful colleagues who had entered the profession directly following completion of their undergraduate degrees.

Whatever their Past Experiences may have been, and again aligned with the fusionist ontological perspective, it is undeniable that “[t]hey [career changers] are shaped by life experiences” (Tigchelaar et al., 2008, p. 1538). Like the participants in this investigation, those in other research made frequent mention of “broad life experiences”, “general life experiences”, “maturity and wisdom” and “breadth of knowledge” (Williams & Forgasz, 2009, p. 104). Grier and Johnston (2009, p. 57) claim that their maturity gives such people greater confidence in undertaking classroom management, understanding student learning within the school culture and accessing content knowledge. They see such maturity as also bringing patience and resilience to confront obstacles and greater confidence in being able to make real world connections in their teaching.

While Past Experiences may be considered as assets, some have presented an opposing view. Mayotte (2003), for instance, notes that “… having these valuable skills, experiences and knowledge developed through a previous career does not automatically make the transfer to teaching an easy one for career switchers” (p. 682). For their part, Smith and Pantana (2010) also suggest “[t]his influx of life-experienced newcomers into the field holds a variety of implications for school administrators and how they supervise instruction” (p. 3) and, further, that “[t]heir age may lead
supervisors to assume they are bringing more life experience into the classroom than they actually are” (p. 16). Given that at the time of this investigation the participants had only recently taken up their first appointments as secondary school teachers, the issues and challenges of mature-aged career changers mentioned in the literature were not pursued with them. This, however, may be an area worthy of research in the future.

9.2.3 The Journey to a New Career: Entry to the Teaching Profession

To enter the teaching profession, participants had completed a pre-service teacher education qualification, as the key to their career change in becoming secondary school teachers. This qualification provided the credential that enabled them to work as registered teachers. In addressing the second aim of this investigation, participants were asked to discuss their experiences as pre-service teacher education students. While several spoke of the challenges they had found in completing the program, they, and others, also pointed to some of the features of the program they considered had facilitated and supported The Journey to a New Career.

As shown in Figure 9.4 four key features of the program were included as themes in the construction of The Journey to a New Career as a contributory category of ‘Becoming’. These were the choice of study load, the choice of study mode, collaborating and engaging professionally with others and professional registration
Each theme of this category will be discussed in terms of the aspects of the program participants considered had facilitated their journey while also noting some of the aspects they had found challenging. In what follows, study load and study mode are discussed as separate themes of the Journey to a New Career category. In many respects they are part and parcel of the same phenomenon of flexibility that several participants reported had attracted them to the particular study program. Some participants had not necessarily sought a ‘fast-tracked’ means of completing their pre-service teacher education program in the minimal one-year time span, nor the option of completing the program as distance education students. There were others who
echoed the views of Smith and Pantana’s (2010) respondents that study load together with study mode had been important in making their career changes in enabling them to tailor their study choices and patterns with their personal circumstances and financial commitments.

- **Study load: Full-time or part-time**

  The participants had completed a pre-service teacher education program that gave them the option of one year full-time or two years part-time study. A full-time study load enabled them to complete their career change in the space of one year. This was important for some participants who were able to support themselves (and, for some, their families) over this relatively short period before taking up their new career and its associated income. Some participants saw this as an ‘accelerated’ pathway to their new career, as had participants in Campbell’s (2010) study. Some participants likened the full-time study load to their experiences of being in full-time employment, a familiar experience for them in terms of time commitments.

  Others, who had family and other commitments that made studying full-time impossible, found the possibility of completing the pre-service program part-time over two years an attractive option. Still others found a part-time study load allowed them to continue working full-time or, in some cases, to reduce their current employment to part-time, while also being able to realise their career change ambitions. The attraction of a part-time study load is not unusual, especially since there are increasing pressures on students in higher education, related to work and/or family responsibilities that must be balanced with their studies, whether full or part time (Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhard, 2006). For what were usually quite varied reasons, as the circumstances of some participants changed, some who had commenced their program full-time made the decision to move into a part-time study load, while others moved from part-time
study to full-time. Woodley, de Lange, and Tanewski (2001) note that “[p]art-time students usually take twice as long to complete a course of study compared to their full-time counterparts . . . Throughout this protracted study period, the circumstances in a student’s life are likely to change” (p. 117) as was the case for some participants in this investigation.

- **Study mode: Internal, distance or blended**

  The differences in study mode, namely: internal; distance (through on-line learning); and a ‘blended’ mode of study were important program features for some participants. There is some degree of overlap between study load and study mode in that part-time students typically study at a distance and on-line while full-time students generally attend internal classes on-campus. This apparent difference is, however, overly simplistic. Some participants had taken the option of studying full-time while being enrolled in the distance study mode. Furthermore, regardless of their study mode choices, all students in the program were required to engage in on-line discussions and other interactions with their peers and staff members. In addition, and again regardless of their study mode, all were required to attend intensive ‘res schools’ conducted on-campus.

  While required to abide by any conditions of enrolment established by particular universities, people choose to study in different ways and, as learners, adapt their study mode to their particular personal circumstances and situations. Some participants spoke of learning styles that they felt could best be satisfied by face-to-face attendance at lectures. They reflected Lankbeck and Mugler’s (2000) point that for some students, face-to-face instruction offers the advantage of having an instructor to “guide, correct, and answer questions on the spot” (p. 5). Other participants considered that as a distance education student they had greater flexibility in accessing
educational opportunities that were critical to their career change. Without this flexibility, geographic isolation or family and other commitments that made on-campus attendance impossible would have thwarted their career change ambitions. In speaking about distance and on-line study modes, the participants mirrored Smith and Pantana’s (2010) observation that “[n]early half of potential career switchers would choose to remain in their present field or to delay their switch to teaching if a distance or on-line option were not available” (p. 19). As a future phenomenon, these authors predict that “[w]ith looming teacher shortages, educational leaders may find that their faculties are made up increasingly not only of more second-career teachers, but also of those prepared predominantly on-line” (Smith & Pantana, 2010, p. 19).

All of this provides some important insights into the third mode of study available to participants that many saw as advantageous. This was a ‘blended’ study mode offering the choice of studying some course components in the internal mode while attending the compulsory ‘res school’, while undertaking in-school placements, or, completing course components on-line. The advantages some participants found in the convergence of face-to-face, on-line instruction, and blended instruction, over traditional and on-line instruction alone, support the views of Dukes, Waring, and Koorland (2006), Marsh, McFadeen, and Price (2003), and Martyn (2003) who also proclaim that a blended study mode encouraged asynchronous learning; allowed students more time on task; and catered to different learning styles. To these advantages some participants in this investigation added that a blended study mode both facilitated and enhanced interactions among students and teaching staff. They concurred with the view of Davis et al. (2011) that “[b]lending on-line learning and traditional teaching methods benefits student learning and achievement and it is becoming part of effective practice worldwide” (p. 1). As Wooten and Hancock (2009)
suggest, it is quite likely that the point has now been reached where students and other professionals not only want, but also demand this type of blended experience in their university coursework and professional development.

While such growing demands and expectations may well be the case, as they recounted their study experiences some participants told of their concerns and reservations about on-line learning which initially some had found quite challenging. Although they understood that on-line learning enabled students who would otherwise be excluded by distance factors and/or personal circumstances to be included, an initial lack of confidence about computer-based technologies meant not all participants were comfortable with the on-line learning components of their study. The points they made underscore the views of such other investigators as Bore (2008), O'Neal et al. (2007), Shin and Lee (2009), Stephen and Barford (2005), and Topcu and Ubuz (2008), all of whom urge that participant experiences must be carefully planned and implemented so the lack of face-to-face time does not impact negatively their successes.

While Sawchuk (2009) has raised questions concerning the validity and appropriateness of on-line offerings as part of a blended learning mode, such offerings provide opportunities for greater flexibility and extended access to learning. Several participants considered that, for them, a blended learning mode including on-line offerings provided effective learner support while also giving them more flexible study options in the blurring of the boundaries between face-to-face and on-line learning. For them, a blended study had provided them with access, flexibility and support during *The Journey to a New Career* and they shared the view of Davis et al. (2011) that “blended pedagogies expand the learning community by overcoming conventional constraints of time and space” (p. 1).
• **Collaborating and engaging professionally with others**

In recounting their experiences, a number of participants spoke of the importance of being able to share ideas and engage professionally with others. School teaching is, after all, a social profession that requires teachers to work, engage and collaborate with other teachers on a daily basis and these participants saw learning to effectively collaborate with others was essential in their professional growth and development. For them, strong links existed between study load, study mode, and opportunities to engage and collaborate with others. Whether they were working on-line or off-line, acquiring the skills needed to engage with others in a collaborative learning environment is a design feature of the pre-service program participants had completed. Such social interaction promotes effective communication while fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie.

Participants spoke of a variety of communication channels and techniques they used to facilitate their contact and interactions with others. They often tailored their method and level of engagement with others to balance with their personal circumstances, their own learning style, learning needs and study commitments. The communication channels they used included learning with others on-line using live synchronous chats, asynchronous discussion forums, self-devised wikis and blogs, and the use of social media that had all been included as part of the pedagogies employed in designing and developing the pre-service teacher education program participants had completed.

On a purely voluntary basis, where it was possible for them to do so, some participants engaged with others off-line through self-organised study groups in specific geographic locations where several of them resided. Establishment of these groups often followed initial contacts at ‘res schools’. When it came to collaborating
with others in this way, a number of participants considered that such face-to-face contacts with their peers had enhanced their learning experiences.

Theorising about what these participants were saying about their Journey to a New Career it became apparent that having a supportive collegial environment was vital in making an effective career change. Strategies, structures and systems were in place within the pre-service program participants had completed to encourage the development of a mutually supportive ‘community of learners’ (Rogoff, Matusov, & White, 1996, p. 396). Several participants recounted feeling they had acquired the knowledge and skills they would need as secondary school teachers by engaging, building, sharing and distributing learning among themselves, and with university lecturers and their mentor teachers in schools.

- Professional registration

Given the importance participants placed on registration and professional accreditation this was included as a theme in The Journey to a New Career category of ‘Becoming’ since without such status their future employment prospects would be effectively reduced to zero. Becoming a school teacher in Queensland requires completion of a program of study accredited with the teacher registration body, the Queensland College of Teachers.

As some participants spoke about their Past Experiences in teaching-related and training activities in their previous careers or in the context of voluntary organisations, it became clear that the need to gain formal recognition of their qualifications and registration as a teacher was paramount. Some participants held approved training qualifications such as a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment and had previously taught in non-school contexts such as registered training organisations. While these experiences and qualifications may have enabled
them to consider themselves already to be teachers or trainers, to become a secondary school teacher they needed to satisfy the formal accreditation and registration requirements.

Of the importance of accreditation, Professions Australia (2012) notes that the “[c]ompletion of an accredited course of study is generally a key criterion for registration under government legislation or membership of a professional body” (n.p.). While some participants spoke of the challenges involved, such as compulsory ‘res school’ attendances throughout their program, all understood the importance of accreditation in safeguarding the public interest from those who might seek to practise as a professional without possessing the necessary and approved qualifications. Additionally, the House of Representatives (2007) noted, “accreditation can help to raise professional status and drive quality improvements within the pre-service sector” (p. 22).

In Queensland (and also in South Australia) teachers have been required to be registered since the 1970s (House of Representatives, 2007, p. 21), a requirement that made later appearances in other States and Territories, and soon across all of Australia. In specifying accreditation requirements, a distinction is drawn between “provisional registration for graduates and full registration for teachers who have demonstrated sufficient satisfactory teaching experience in schools” (House of Representatives, 2007, p. 21).

In summary, in discussing their Journey to a New Career, participants emphasised study load; study mode; the advantages of engaging and working collaboratively with others; and the need to complete a pre-service education program through which they could become registered as teachers. These themes within The Journey to a New Career also relate to Developing a New Professional Identity as a

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secondary school teacher. This latter category of the explanatory grounded theory will be discussed in the following section which considers the program processes and requirements that participants experienced as they began to acquire and develop their new identities as teachers.

9.2.4 Developing a New Professional Identity

 Undertaking a career change requires Developing a New Professional Identity. Participants recounted the further aspects of the pre-service program that had encouraged and facilitated the development of their new professional identities as secondary school teachers. Wilson and Deaney (2010) observe that “learning to teach is actually a process of becoming a teacher” (p. 179), a process that goes beyond merely obtaining employment as a teacher or obtaining the skills and knowledge to perform the functions of a teacher. Becoming a teacher is more about “developing a sense of self-identity and purpose” (Wilson & Deaney, 2010, p. 170). Reflecting what several participants said of their ‘prac’ experiences, Danielwicz (2001) states that becoming a teacher is “an identity forming process whereby individuals define themselves and are viewed by others as teachers” (p. 4). While related to the nursing profession, Waugman and Lohrer (2000) offer the further view that in acquiring professional identities, individuals come to take on the profession’s goals and social mission; advocate its knowledge; learn the technology and language of the profession; and integrate the professional role into their identity and other life roles. Reflecting similar experiences reported in the research undertaken by McKinney, Saxe, and Cobb (1998), the participants in this investigation considered that Developing a New Professional Identity involved learning the behaviours, norms, and roles they thought would be expected in their future occupations.
Any identity is comprised of the meanings individuals give themselves or are ascribed to them by others (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000). As an ongoing process, those creating new identities as teachers, subsume teacher identities . . . to be an evolving, yet, coherent being that consciously and unconsciously constructs and is constructed, reconstructs and is reconstructed in interaction with cultural contexts, institutions, and people with which the self lives, learns and functions. (Rodgers & Scott, 2008, p. 751)

Wilson and Deaney (2010) explain that these new “social identities” (p. 172) are usually contextualised and “include traits, characteristics and goals linked to a social role or social group of which the person was, is, or may become a member” (p. 172).

In these terms, ‘the prac’ provided participants with the beginnings of their new social roles as secondary school teachers interacting within school-based social groups of which they became members and through which they experienced the formation of a specific professional identity (Ragins, 2009).

As a contributory category of ‘Becoming’, Developing a New Professional Identity was constructed on the basis of four themes: at ‘the res’ (residential school) where they initially learnt and then consolidated their new role as a teacher; through ‘the prac’ (in-school practicum) which provided opportunities to develop their new professional identities through teaching practice; working with a mentor teacher, through whom they experienced effective role models and further support in becoming a secondary school teacher; and during the internship designed as a culminating experience in which they were afforded opportunities to cement their new professional identities in moving from being a pre-service teacher to being a ‘real teacher’. These themes are illustrated in Figure 9.5.
Each theme will be considered separately in the following discussion. Participants however experienced the elements contained in each theme concurrently, particularly when undertaking ‘the prac’ or ‘the internship’ during both of which they were working with a mentor teacher.

- **At ‘The Res’**

  Attendance at residential schools (‘res schools’) provided opportunities for participants to network face-to-face with like-minded individuals and share ideas through intensive sessions on-campus. Some participants spoke of their initial resistance to ‘res school’ attendance. As they reflected on their experiences, however, they indicated how they had then come to see that ‘res schools’ made meaningful
contributions to the development of their professional identities and acquisition of the essential tools of the teaching profession. Their attendance also satisfied the mandatory requirements for teacher registration that all participants sought in making their career changes.

The participants also considered ‘res schools’ important in establishing informal connections, contacts and relationships with both peers and staff through which they could share their career change experiences. While it was not only aimed at the learning needs of those studying in the distance mode, for these participants in particular, ‘res schools’ afforded opportunities to connect with others studying in the same mode and often in much the same circumstances. Through their accounts, participants who had been enrolled in the distance mode left little doubt that attending intensive on-campus sessions had been an important curriculum design device that enabled the development and sustenance of support networks that helped them overcome feelings of isolation. For several participants, the initial relationships developed at their first ‘res school’ continued through to the completion of their program. Such relationships often became the basis for location specific ‘study groups’ that extended beyond the expected on-line contacts. In observing the contribution made by ‘res schools’ to the development of a new professional identity, Robinson (2009) also notes that it also offers opportunities to establish the beginnings of professional networks for the future.

- **Through ‘the prac’**

As most participants recounted, it was while completing ‘the prac’ that they came to experience the beginnings of acquiring their new professional identities. It was during ‘the prac’ that they began to “... internalise behavioral norms and standards and form a sense of self and commitment to a professional field” (Weidman,
Twale, & Stein, 2001 p. 6). Like the career changers in Campbell’s (2010) study, they saw the teaching practicum as a highly valuable experience.

Reflecting the views of Beijaard (2006), participants spoke of ‘the prac’ as contributing to their initial development of a sense of identity as they experienced the interaction between their personal philosophies and professional practice. Throughout their student teacher experiences they felt what Beijaard (2006) described as a “constant becoming” (p. 4). Britzman’s (2003) view that learning to teach is a “process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become” (p. 31) was also important in interpreting what participants said of their experiences of ‘the prac’. Underscoring the focus of this investigation and giving meaning to the accounts of some participants Williams (2010) stresses that,

as more career change students enter teacher education, a greater understanding is needed of how these students learn, and in particular, how they construct their new professional identities as student teachers and in time, as full members of the teaching profession (p. 639).

For some participants ‘the prac’ was not something with which they were totally unfamiliar since they had undertaken teaching-related and training tasks in their former occupations and careers. As also indicated by Ng, Sorensen, Eby, and Feldman (2007), for them the magnitude of the impact of their career change decisions was possibly somewhat diminished given their Past Experiences discussed earlier in this chapter. Reflecting Mayotte’s (2003) point, such experiences “go beyond the boundaries of a single employment setting and . . . individuals accrue knowledge in the form of competencies developed through on-going and changing work experiences” (p. 683). For some participants, however, the merging of what they had
been and what they were in the process of becoming was not always straightforward. The experiences reported by some participants supported Mayotte’s (2003) view that “having these valuable skills, experiences and knowledge developed through a previous career does not automatically make the transfer to teaching an easy one for career switchers” (p. 682).

- Working with a Mentor Teacher

A further critical input to Developing a New Professional Identity is the role played by an effective mentor teacher. In providing what are intended to be authentic learning experiences for pre-service student teachers, the mentor teacher also provides guidance and further support in the formation of the career changer’s professional identity and development of their teaching praxis. Rather than merely being allowed to observe the mentor in action which some considered had been a less than rewarding experience for them, the research participants more generally felt that the most effective mentor teachers allow the career changer to practice their teaching capabilities within their (the mentor’s) classroom and provide feedback and support.

As participants spoke of their experiences in Developing a New Professional Identity it became clear that having adequate support was integral in making their career changes. As noted through the work of Santiago (2004) and Wheeler (2011), adult learners in particular see having support as an important component in making their career change. The ‘career switchers’ in Mayotte’s (2003) investigations also “believe[d] support to be essential” (p. 682). However, that research also revealed that career changers “do not necessarily receive the support they need because they are often not viewed as novices due to their age and prior experience” (p. 682).

Participants consistently voiced the view that where it had been effectively provided, the support they had received from their mentors had been integral to their
career change and acquisition of their new professional identity. Some considered it was while working with their mentors during ‘the prac’ that their becoming a secondary school teacher was actualised. Their views agreed with Hudson and Hudson’s (2010) opinion that in pre-service teacher education, “[o]ften at the heart of the mentees’ experiences is the relationship with their mentors” (p. 3).

As they considered what made for an effective mentor teacher, participants described such a mentor as one who, in going beyond the role of being the assessor of the teaching practice, guided and assisted them through their teaching experiences. This description reflected Hudson and Hudson’s (2010) view that,

[s]uitable mentors must be prepared in their roles as pre-service teacher educators by having particular knowledge to take deliberate action in their mentoring, and by developing the specific skills to critique constructively both their own teaching practices and their mentees’ practices (p. 4).

What remains is the challenge for many pre-service education programs of “locating a sufficient number of teachers to be mentors” (Walkington, 2005, p. 54) willing to take on the added workload associated with providing effective support and guidance for a pre-service trainee. In the absence of sufficient and effective mentor teachers, it is reasonable to assume that in the schools the professional development of pre-service teachers may be jeopardised.

• **During the Internship**

Within the program the career changers had completed, ‘the prac’ culminates in an internship of six weeks duration undertaken in a school to which they had been attached in previous ‘pracs’ and usually with the same mentor teacher. While the internship is designed to enhance the change from a previous career, equally importantly it marks the move from having been a pre-service teacher to becoming a
graduate teacher. While completing their internships, internees engaged in authentic professional experiences of a kind they would experience upon graduation. In a very real sense, the internship provided participants with the ultimate experiences in

_Developing a New Professional Identity._

Participants valued the internship experience in moving them from being a pre-service teacher operating within a very scaffolded environment in which they were learning the tools of teaching, to being an intern with a degree of autonomy in the classroom as ‘the teacher’. Several participants indicated it was through the internship they came to feel they were really becoming secondary school teachers and developing their new professional identities. As some put it, during the internship they felt, ‘like ‘a real teacher’ doing ‘real teacher tasks’. They regarded the period spent working as an intern as when the ‘real learning’ involved in becoming a secondary school teacher occurred.

9.3 A qualitative informational isomorph

To summarise the previous sections of this chapter I reflected on the core category of the theory of ‘Becoming’, its four contributory categories, and the elements and concepts that these included. As explained in Chapter 3, these reflections were based on Ford’s (1975) notion of a ‘qualitative isomorph’ that Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as the “qualitative informational isomorph” (p. 294), a ‘hypothetical’ participant that, more or less, exemplifies all participants in the investigation as discerned in, and supported by, the data at the point of saturation. In addressing the investigation’s dual aims, as a convenient summary of the theory of ‘Becoming’ such an informational qualitative isomorph exemplifies:

- The attributes and characteristics of the nineteen career changer participants in terms of age, gender and qualifications
• Participant reasons for embarking on a new career as a secondary school teacher

• Participant experiences of the pre-service teacher education program through which their career change ambitions had been realised.

Figure 9.6 encapsulates the outcomes of these reflections.

*Figure 9.6 Career changers seeking to become a secondary school teacher: ‘The Qualitative Isomorph’*
In light of the summary provided by the qualitative informational isomorph and the more detailed outline of ‘Becoming’ and its four contributory categories, the question remains: does this explanatory grounded theory fulfill the aims of the investigation? This question and the wider implications of ‘Becoming’ will be considered in the following sections.

9.4 Has ‘Becoming’ Achieved the Aims of the Investigation?

This investigation had two aims.

1. To explain the reasons that had influenced people’s decisions to change careers and become secondary school teachers.

2. To develop an understanding of the experiences of a cohort of career change participants while students of a particular pre-service teacher education program, including aspects they had found more challenging, as well as aspects they considered had supported and enhanced their career change ambitions while developing their new professional identities as secondary school teachers.

These aims were addressed through the adoption of a grounded theory approach within an interpretive constructivist paradigm. ‘Becoming’ as an explanatory grounded theory was constructed from the accounts provided by nineteen participants, and the methods and processes involved in inductive reasoning.

Constructed from the career changers’ accounts of their reasons and experiences, and the links established between these constructs and the wider literature, as an explanatory grounded theory ‘Becoming’ has acknowledged the multiple realities of career change found among the participating career changers. *The Attractions and Past Experiences* as two of the contributory categories underpinning the theory have provided comprehensive insights into the participants and the reasons
for their career change decisions, thereby achieving the first of the investigation’s dual aims. Through these categories the diverse reasons recounted by the participants for making the change to a new career can be better understood. Included among these reasons are personal situations and circumstances that at the time of contemplating a career change had both ‘pulled’ them toward a secondary school teaching career, while ‘pushing’ them away from their previous career paths. The reasons for such a major life change also reflected their past experiences and the influences exerted by significant others in their lives.

Each of the two further contributory categories of ‘Becoming’, The Journey to a New Career and Developing a New Professional Identity, have provided detailed accounts of the career changers’ experiences of the pre-service teacher education program they had completed in realising their career change ambitions. In addressing the investigation’s second aim, these two categories have provided insights that contribute to understanding their experiences as students of that program. The categories have also pointed to aspects that should be considered by those who design and provide such programs of study.

The four categories that contribute to ‘Becoming’ as the core category of the explanatory grounded theory provide the basis for considering its wider implications.

9.5 The Wider Implications of ‘Becoming’

As an explanatory grounded theory, ‘Becoming’ has been constructed on the basis of the reasons for, and experiences of, those embarking on new careers as secondary school teachers. However, the explanations and understandings that ‘Becoming’ has provided have wider applications in situations in which individuals may be changing to new careers but in professions other than teaching. The theory of
'Becoming’ has identified the following aspects as contributing to successful career changes in these more general terms:

• ‘Becoming’ has demonstrated the importance of understanding the reasons individuals may have in deciding to make a career change. Understanding the reasons behind a career change is useful for those who may be advising and supporting such people in their career change ambitions. For instance, such understanding can provide insights into the levels of motivation that those who intend to change their careers bring to the tasks that are involved in achieving this outcome.

• Knowledge of the past experiences of those intending to make a career change provides useful insights into their reasons for undertaking such a change. These insights also provide some understanding of the repertoire of existing skills and knowledge that career changers may bring to their new career setting, and on which they may draw in progressing their career change ambitions. Past experiences originating in whatever may have been the situation in the past provide the antecedents for changes, including career changes. In line with the fusionist ontology underpinning this investigation, such past experiences are fused to and merge with whatever may become in the future.

• Those seeking to enter new careers usually find that some formal training is necessary. The accounts of the experiences that the career changers voiced demonstrated the importance of the level of flexibility in such programs in terms of both study load and completion time to accommodate personal obligations and employment commitments, especially in situations where the latter provide all important sources of income during the retraining period. ‘Becoming’ has also demonstrated that it is essential that the training program satisfy any mandatory
accreditation requirements where these are relevant to the new career. For career changers to be able to realise their career change ambitions any training program must be recognised by relevant professional bodies.

- ‘Becoming’ has shown that while they are acquiring the knowledge and skills required of their new careers, career changers also need opportunities to develop their new professional identities. This can be achieved in authentic settings that afford career changers incrementally designed opportunities to put their new skills and knowledge into practice. If this can be undertaken collaboratively with an effective mentor and university staff as members of a supportive learning community while also working in a ‘real world’ setting, the acquisition of a new professional identity in the chosen new career is likely to be even more successful.

9.6 Summary of Chapter

In presenting ‘Becoming’ as the explanatory grounded theory of career change into secondary school teaching, this chapter has integrated the more detailed discussions of the four contributory categories contained in Chapters 5 to 8. Constructed on the basis of the accounts of the nineteen career changers who participated in this investigation, ‘Becoming’ provides an explanation of the reasons people have for terminating their existing careers and embarking on new careers as secondary school teachers. The theory also provides some understanding of their experiences in realising their career change ambitions. In constructing the grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ commonalities among the reasons and experiences of the individual participants were identified within the theory’s four contributory categories. Such aggregations were constructed on the basis of constant comparison across, and theoretical sampling within, the accounts provided by the participants. Analysis of the career change reasons and experiences also revealed uniquely individualistic
combinations of the elements included within each of the categories that contribute to ‘Becoming’ as the explanatory grounded theory’s core category.

The reasons for becoming a secondary school teacher can be found in The Attractions and Past Experiences, two of the four categories that contribute to the grounded theory. The Attractions included the ‘pull’ factors that drew people toward secondary school teaching and the factors that had ‘pushed’ them away from their previous careers. The insights that participants provided into their Past Experiences offered further explanations of their career change decisions. The reasons and experiences recounted by the participants originated in past situations and what they had been. In the context provided by this investigation’s fusionist ontology, whatever may have been in the past merges with whatever is becoming in terms of their future identities as secondary school teachers.

Past situations, experiences and circumstances provided explanations to account for the career changers’ ambitions to become secondary school teachers. Understanding the career change processes requires insights into the experiences that participants reported from their time as pre-service teacher education students. Through the explanatory grounded theory it is now better understood that in making their Journey to a New Career as a secondary school teacher, career changers seek an accredited pre-service teacher education program that offers a supportive learning environment through which they are able to collaborate professionally with others, and the flexibility of study load and study mode that accommodates their personal circumstances and obligations. Throughout the Journey to a New Career opportunities for Developing a New Professional Identity at a more general level are required. The new identity as a secondary school teacher is best acquired through the completion of authentic learning tasks while being engaged with colleagues and
mentors, and being immersed in learning environments as interns in the process of becoming ‘real teachers’.

In this Chapter each of the four contributory categories of the explanatory grounded theory and the conceptual elements contained within them has been outlined and discussed separately. However, they are components of a whole and need to be viewed holistically in order to fully understand the lived realities of becoming a secondary school teachers as a new career.

The adequacy of the constructed grounded theory and its explanations rests on an evaluation of the methods and approaches used in completing the research. Such an evaluation, together with acknowledgement of the investigation’s limitations and delimitations, is provided in the final chapter of the thesis which also points the way forward for further research.
CHAPTER 10 CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.

(Churchill, 1942, n.p.)

10.1 Introduction

In introducing this thesis I drew on the words of the fictional Alice in her conversation with the Caterpillar to illustrate the significant changes a person experiences when they decide to change careers and become secondary school teachers. That conversation was used metaphorically to illustrate the ongoing career changes that have a basis in prior situations. This is the essence of the perspectives provided by a fusionist ontology. That is to say, what may have once been merges with what may become. Alice considered such changes to be ‘puzzling’. Through the accounts provided by the career changer participants, ‘Becoming’ as an explanatory grounded theory, was constructed as a means of explaining the ‘puzzle’ of career change into secondary teaching.

The previous chapter presented the key findings of the investigation in terms of its dual aims to explain the reasons of people in deciding to pursue a new career in secondary school teaching; and to understand their experiences of the career change process as students of a pre-service teacher education program they had completed. To meet these dual aims, the investigation was located within a qualitative interpretive constructivist paradigm and used a grounded theory approach to gather the data which, when inductively interpreted and analysed, provided the basis for the constructed grounded theory. In reflecting upon the journey that has been undertaken and in looking forward to where the findings may lead, this final chapter begins with an evaluation of the processes and procedures that were followed in constructing the
theory. It then acknowledges the perceived limitations and delimitations of the research, and offers a series of recommendations for future investigations.

10.2 Evaluating grounded theory research

Evaluation involves using criteria that are the accepted standards for best practice against which any investigation can be judged. There has been considerable debate among qualitative researchers concerning the most appropriate criteria to adopt when evaluating such investigations. (See, for example, Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The criteria generally used to evaluate quantitative research are not well-suited to the evaluation of qualitative investigations, especially those founded on a grounded theory approach and inductive reasoning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In responding to critics of grounded theory research in its original form, Glaser (1978) suggested measures for evaluating a developed grounded theory. These original measures together with Charmaz’s (2006) further refinement have formed the basis for the development of a series of questions for evaluating the explanatory grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ and the methods and approaches used in its construction. I asked whether the research was credible; whether it was original; whether it had generated saturated findings that resonated with a body of data that reflected “the fullness of the studied experience” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 182) of the participants; and finally, whether the research was useful to those making career changes to professions other than teaching and the institutions and authorities responsible for their training and recruitment. Figure 10.1 illustrates these four evaluation questions.
CHAPTER 10 CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

10.3 An evaluation of the investigation

The four evaluation questions will be addressed separately in the following section, mindful that in assessing a constructivist grounded theory investigation they are ultimately interrelated.

10.3.1 Is the research credible?

Credibility, or plausibility, relies on the congruity between the research findings and reality and as such is considered one of the most important factors in evaluating qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Given information detailing how the data were collected, presented, analysed and interpreted, when it comes to evaluating the credibility of the research, the underlying question is whether the results and findings are believable or likely to be true (Charmaz, 2006).
and “that it makes sense [such that] the reader will have an immediate recognition that this theory, derived from a given social situation, is about real people or objects to which they can relate” (Stern, 2007, p. 21).

Credibility depends on two major aspects: systematically generating and interpreting empirical materials; and establishing believable patterns within the empirical materials that, when they are linked together, provide the basis of a grounded theory. As Charmaz (2006) emphasises, in practice this required a very close familiarity both with the setting and the topic, and from the perspectives of both the investigator and the participants. In terms of “intimate familiarity with the setting or experience” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 84), I had experienced my own career change and had become the Head of Program and a main lecturer in the Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching (Secondary) that the participants had completed. In my professional role as well as lecturing in the program I have been the main course facilitator and advisor to both current and potential students. In that role I have come to know some of the intimate details of their career change ambitions and related matters at very close quarters.

Credibility of the research also depends upon gathering sufficient data from multiple empirical sources, and systematically comparing the categories constructed from the data (Charmaz, 2006). In terms of multiple empirical sources, nineteen career changers participated in this investigation. While their accounts were eventually aggregated as the theory was constructed, each participant initially had their own ‘unique’ account of career change reasons and experiences. In following the iterative processes of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), constant comparison of the empirical data throughout both open and axial coding processes ensured that the systematically constructed categories included all participant responses until a point of theoretical
saturation was reached and the data gathered to that point deemed sufficient. In terms of credibility it was also important to ensure that the data presented sufficient evidence to “allow the reader to form an independent assessment …” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 182), and to demonstrate that the grounded theory was robust and well-founded on theoretical constructs directly derived from the data. To achieve this, throughout Chapters 5 to 8 I included extensive verbatim extracts drawn from the transcribed participant interviews to illustrate the theoretical concepts, themes and categories that I determined through my interpretations of the data. To ensure my interpretations were consistent with the data, I drew on the notes I had recorded both in my reflexive journal and the memos I compiled. These allowed me to make more specific interpretations of the career changers’ accounts and link my interpretations directly to the data I had gathered.

In following grounded theory methods carefully and thoroughly, every effort was made to present a “credible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants’ original data” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). Following the identification and interpretation of the emerging concepts and categories and the initial construction of the grounded theory, I undertook ‘member checking’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998) by presenting a preliminary outline of the theory to six of the participants who were asked to provide feedback as to its accuracy in depicting the general reasons for, and experiences of, career change into secondary school teaching. The passage of time and the fact that by the time of their participation in the investigation the participants had moved on to their new teaching careers meant that it was not possible to gain further input from all nineteen career changers. Allowing for the fact that their individual accounts had been aggregated in the processes of coding and categorisation and that this had caused an inevitable loss of some individual detail,
the six former participants agreed that the grounded theory reflected the essence of
their lived experiences in embarking on their career changes into secondary school
teaching. They also agreed that the theory reflected their reasons for making the
change, the issues that had variously impacted them, and their views regarding their
pre-service teacher education program experiences. For example:

*This all sounds so familiar, it really could be called ‘my story of becoming
a teacher’. It is so true.* (Winifred)

*You’ve really hit the nail on the head with this one – I can relate to
everything you’ve said. The reasons are some of what were in my mind
when I made my decision. The experiences of the prac and the internship
with my mentor is just so true.* (Maria)

Further, I took note of Dey’s (2007) point, and the need to check “the degree to
which our theoretical claims are consistent with well-established knowledge in the
field” (p. 117). In this, throughout the theorising chapters I ensured the critical
inclusion of the literature in which I highlighted the similarities and differences
between this investigation and previous studies. That is, in the interests of
demonstrating the credibility of the constructed grounded theory and the methods and
approaches on which it was founded I drew on the existing literature which Goulding
(1998) describes as “another informant” (p. 52).

### 10.3.2 Is the research original?

Whether the research can be regarded as ‘original’ is the second evaluation
criterion that Charmaz (2006) posits. While it is difficult to claim any investigation as
truly ‘original’, one of the main reasons I started this research was the lack of in-depth
knowledge about career change into secondary teaching.
In terms of the literature in the related areas of career change, recruitment into teaching, and reasons for entering the teaching profession, the grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ provides a number of “new insights” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 182) emanating from the deeper understandings of the reasons for, and experiences of, those who decide to change careers and become secondary school teachers. On that point, as discussed in Chapter 5, the investigation offers new insights through its central focus on career change into secondary school teaching, as opposed to several past projects focussed on the recruitment of school leavers into the teaching profession. Relatedly, a number of previous studies have not delineated the level of teaching (that is, primary or secondary) unlike this investigation in which those seeking to enter the profession as primary school teachers were excluded. Some originality can be claimed for the investigation in its exploration of the participants’ reports of their experiences in undertaking their pre-service teacher program that are the substance of Chapter 7. Again, this provided “new insights” into elements and attributes of that program that career changers considered had both facilitated and supported their decisions to become secondary school teachers and the formation of their new professional identities, together with those elements that some had found more challenging especially in being a distance education student studying on-line.

The combination arising from the dual aims to investigate both the reasons for, and experiences of, career change into teaching represents a significant “new conceptual rendering of the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 182) which was not apparent in the approaches and findings of other investigations. As such, the investigation has offered a new theoretical perspective grounded in the real world experiences of participants that contribute directly to the further understanding of career change in general, and of career change into the teaching profession more specifically. It has
demonstrated some of the issues related to the recruitment of members into the teaching profession at a time when government and other authorities are intent on expanding the teaching labour force to meet demand for teachers, particularly in disciplines that have proven difficult to staff. Those with the experience of previous careers and qualifications are able to make important contributions to the teaching profession. It has also demonstrated a number of important elements and attributes related to postgraduate pre-service teacher education such as program structures, modes of offering, and support structures that need to be considered by higher education institutions presently providing teacher training programs. Using ‘originality’ as the basis for evaluation demonstrates that the investigation also offers a platform for both extending and refining some ideas and approaches in current practices for pre-service teacher education. This is especially so in the context of mature aged career change students undertaking a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program. In particular it has been shown that time required to complete training programs is an important consideration for career changer students. The investigation has also demonstrated that, although some career changers prefer on-campus learning experiences, training programs offering the flexibility of part-time enrolment, and studies that can be completed largely off-campus find a ready acceptance among other mature aged career changers who often retain employment commitments, family obligations and other commitments while studying.

The investigation has also shown that students perceive benefits in having an early opportunity to become immersed in their future professional settings while on placement in schools undertaking ‘the prac’ and completing assessment tasks that relate directly to the authentic tasks undertaken while observing and/or teaching classes in situ. The value students place on being able to undertake such tasks in
collaboration with experienced and highly motivated mentor teachers has also been demonstrated in this investigation. It has clearly established the need for universities to ensure that the training experiences of students are facilitated by well-chosen mentor teachers; that rigorous selection processes are in place; and that there are appropriate supports provided to those who are willing to share their experience and expertise as role models for those seeking to become secondary school teachers.

As an original piece of research, the investigation has established the importance of ensuring that potential entrants to teacher education who are intent on using this as a vehicle for making a career change are carefully selected and then oriented to the nature and challenges of both the program and the profession. Doing this may avoid situations in which only after the event do students develop their understanding of the time and professional commitment that being an effective teacher requires. As will be shown in addressing Charmaz’s (2006) third evaluation criteria, on these and other matters the voices of the participants resonated throughout the investigation.

10.3.3 Does the research resonate with rich data reflecting the fullness of the experience?

The explanatory grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ resonated strongly with the data contained in the accounts of their career changes that the participants had provided. This resonance illustrating “the fullness of the studied experience” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 182) is particularly evident in the excerpts from the verbatim transcripts included throughout Chapters 5 to 9 throughout which participants tell of their own lived realities of career change and provide vivid descriptions of aspects of these realities.
The participants’ voices were consistently foregrounded as they spoke in terms that formed the basis for constructing ‘Becoming’ as the core category of the grounded theory and the four main contributory categories. The category descriptors used to label these four main categories (The Attractions; Past Experiences; The Journey to a New Career; and Developing a New Professional Identity) were derived directly from the in vivo terms participants had used in their accounts.

The semi-structured interview approach used as the basis for collecting data was intended to create opportunities through which participants were able to share ‘full’ accounts of their career change into teaching with minimal intrusion by the investigator. In maintaining the reflexive journal and in writing memos I recorded any apparent nuances that participants attached to various aspects of their conversations with me. However, in evaluating the extent to which the research findings reflected the fullness of their experiences, it is acknowledged that it is inherently difficult to ensure all possible aspects of ‘Becoming’ were taken into consideration. There may well have been some aspects that participants deliberately chose to withhold that may have inhibited a totally ‘rich’ set of data. The richness of the data is also reduced by the fact that in this investigation some participant attributes such as gender and cultural differences were not directly considered. In assessing the extent to which all details of the full experience of career change into secondary school teaching resonate throughout the constructed grounded theory, I also acknowledge that as I searched for generalisations I made decisions regarding which data in the accounts provided by the participants would be coded, aggregated, constructed and reconstructed. My decisions and selections may have limited the richness of the data to an unknown extent.
10.3.4 Is the research useful?

In her fourth evaluation criterion, Charmaz (2006) questions whether the research is useful. Within the context of this investigation the question would be: is the information that has been provided useful for those working with career changers as career counsellors, advisers, trainers and employers. Evaluating this investigation and the explanatory grounded theory on the basis of this criterion occurred both generally and specifically.

Generally, the research makes a useful contribution to knowledge of career change at a time when it is commonplace for people to have multiple careers throughout their working lives (ABS, 2012; University of Sydney, 2011). The theory has the potential to explain more general career change experiences among those who embark on new careers in professions and occupations other than secondary teaching. The investigation has highlighted some of the major reasons people have for making a career change. As suggested earlier, this knowledge is useful to those working with adults intending to move into a new career in other professions. Knowledge of such aspects as time commitments, work/life adjustments, the impacts on families when undertaking a study program aimed at achieving a career change can be applied to others who are contemplating such a change though the completion of training programs required to achieve a career change. If the information concerning the experiences and processes recounted by the participants is reflected by other career changers, it is of use to institutions that provide training, and, more importantly, re-training. The information that this investigation has provided is useful in recruiting students, and then ensuring that program provisions and structures encourage their retention and successful completion.
More specifically, in light of the projected shortfall in the numbers of teachers required to meet future demands, the findings are useful to government and non-government authorities that employ teachers and universities responsible for their pre-service training in developing effective recruitment campaigns. With the knowledge that this investigation has provided, such campaigns can be informed by a deeper understanding of the reasons people have in wanting to become teachers. This information is particularly useful in seeking to recruit career changers whose qualifications and experiences offer the potential to overcome teacher shortages in curriculum areas such as sciences, mathematics and technology that have proven difficult to staff.

Further, universities will find the insights afforded by this investigation useful in designing suitable study programs. In particular, the information derived from this investigation in terms of the participants’ experiences as students of a pre-service teacher education program (as reported in Chapter 7) contains useful insights that will assist in the further design and on-going improvement of study programs. ‘Becoming’ has demonstrated that such programs need to be designed such that they meet the learning needs of students in ways that offer a measure of program flexibility so that study can be balanced with other life commitments. That is, programs students find appropriate to their needs in terms of study load and study mode congruent with their personal, familial and professional circumstances.

In relation to this and other evaluation criterion, in its contributions and relevance to existing knowledge in both the substantive areas of research and more generally, it is considered that ‘Becoming’ has utilitarian value. The evaluation has, however, also revealed a number of the investigation’s limitations and delimitations, which will be discussed in the following section.
10.4 Limitations and delimitations of the investigation

In considering this investigation’s limitations and delimitation, the definitions of these terms offered by Bryant (2004) were adopted. That is, limitations were regarded as “those restrictions created by your methodology” (Bryant, 2004, p. 58) while delimitations were seen as “factors that prevent you from claiming your findings are true for all people and in all times and places” (Bryant, 2004, p. 57).

10.4.1 Limitations

The limitations originating in how I approached the research topic, and the grounded theory methodology I designed and applied in collecting, analysing and interpreting the data are acknowledged in the following discussion.

From the outset, I defined the research topic of career change into secondary school teaching such that the investigation was located within a specific context, a context with which I had both a personal and a professional affinity. Consequently, it presented a particular point of view regarding the reasons people have in deciding to pursue new careers in secondary school teaching, and their experiences in making such a career change through a pre-service teacher education program. The study’s participant cohort was limited to those career changers who had chosen secondary school teaching. It did not include those who chose primary school teaching, although the same program incorporated both student cohorts. Moreover, in including a particular cohort of research participants who were selected following their completion of that program and appointments as secondary school teachers, the topic was defined in such a way that it was also time specific. Being both context and time specific is acknowledged as a limitation. If the same participants within the same research setting were to be questioned at another point in time later in their teaching careers they may well have provided different views, ideas and information. Similarly, a different cohort
of participants may have offered different reasons for, and experiences of, career change.

It is also acknowledged that the selection of research setting and context was a matter of some convenience for me as the investigator. That is, during my time as the investigator I also continued in my professional role as Head of Program. While acknowledged as a limitation that is difficult to assess, in deciding to include the experiences of participants who had previously been students of that pre-service teacher education program, I also had some vested interest. That is, I was interested in understanding how participants had experienced the learning activities and opportunities to develop the beginnings of their new professional identities that were built into their study program.

In terms of the limitations arising from the research design, ultimately the investigation is limited by my own professional biases and preferences and the decisions I made in locating the research within a qualitative research paradigm and using a grounded theory methodology as the means for achieving its dual aims. The limitations arising from the design aspects of the investigation are also reflected in how I went about establishing and sustaining interactions and relationships within the research setting, that is, how participants were selected and the approaches that were used in undertaking semi-structured, conversational interviews with someone with whom they had had previous relationships as students. In terms of the procedures used in coding the information participants had provided, there are possible further limitations to be acknowledged in how I went about identifying and interpreting the underlying themes and categories in analysing the empirical data.

It is inevitable that research founded on a grounded theory approach leads to the development of a theory that is, logically, grounded in the experiences of a specific
group of participants at the point in time when data were collected and analysed.
While this may be seen as accounting for the limitations that have been acknowledged, it also accounts for some of the investigation’s delimitations.

10.4.2 Delimitations

There are two delimitations directly associated with the investigation being based on a very specific research setting, situation and time. Both of these limit the extent to which the research findings may be applied to other groups of people in similar contexts embarking upon career changes into secondary school teaching.

A grounded theory approach was the method chosen as best suited to the achievement of the dual aims of the research. At some future point, the grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ and its main contributory categories might be compared with the findings of others who have studied similar experiences, that is, students at other universities studying a similar program also for the purpose of becoming secondary school teachers. However, for the present, the explanations and understandings that derived from the constructed theory relate only to the reasons for, and experiences of, such a career change among those career changers who participated in this particular investigation.

In considering the investigation’s delimitations, it is also necessary to acknowledge that it was contextually situated. As Sarantakos (1998) emphasises, all social research has a “real life context” (p. 61). In focussing on a particular group of career changers, completing a particular postgraduate pre-service teacher education program at a particular point in time, the investigation has presented a segment of life that cannot be considered to represent all of life.

Despite its limitations and delimitations, given the aims of this investigation, an interpretive constructivist paradigm and grounded theory approach represented the
most effective framework for identifying and understanding the reasons for, and experiences of, those embarking on new careers as secondary school teachers. In the words of Charmaz (2006), a “theoretical interpretation or explanation of a delimited problem in a particular area such as…education” (p. 189), has been established. The lived experiences of the nineteen career changers who participated in the research provided the foundations for such a ‘theoretical interpretation or explanation’. Their accounts, and my interpretations of what they shared with me, have provided what Flick (2002) describes as a preliminary and relative version of the world through which their reasons for, and experiences of, career change can be explained and better understood.

10.5 Opportunities for further research

In acknowledging the limitations and delimitations of any investigation potential opportunities for further research can be identified. In this, it is worth noting Glaser’s (1998) recommendation that it is appropriate to end an investigation by considering “where to go next for research along the lines of the theory developed” (p. 199). Several possible areas that are worthy of further investigation emerge from this research. To these can be added those opportunities that arise from the further consideration of what Glaser (1998) describes as “comebacks” (p. 200), that is, categories that were not considered for the core or contributory categories of the constructed grounded theory during analysis and interpretation but which may be significant enough to warrant further investigation.

Some of the opportunities that have been identified as the basis for further research reflect the specificity of this investigation. Although a point of saturation was attained within the research data, the investigation has been restricted by its limited number of participants in a single program of study. While Priyadharshini and
Robinson-Pant (2003) indicate that “small is beautiful” (p. 97), opportunities for further research exist to verify its findings through a wider selection of participants. This could include conducting the same research but sourcing the participation of pre-service teachers from another university so as to compare possible impacts arising from differences in the design of pre-service programs. Further, this research could be extended to compare experiences and approaches to the preparation of teachers between regional and non-regional/metropolitan universities.

There are similar opportunities for further research to investigate the experiences of internal, on-campus pre-service student teachers and those who decide to complete their pre-service training as distance education or external students. Part of this further investigation could also focus on student perceptions and attitudes toward the use of on-line learning platforms as the basis of course and program delivery.

In constructing the explanatory grounded theory the possible influences related to gender and other differences among participants were not considered. Opportunities for further research can be identified in the possible ‘comebacks’ (Glaser, 1998) to focus directly on female and male career changers to determine if there are different reasons for becoming a secondary school teacher that are gender specific. Likewise, any gender-related differences in career change experiences would also be worthy of further investigation. In addition to gender, the inclusion of race and class differences among career changers could contribute to an even richer understanding of the reasons for, and experiences of, career change than has been achieved in this investigation.

There are other ‘comeback’ factors worthy of further consideration as a basis for further research. For example, throughout this investigation, and particularly in Chapter 4 and Appendix I, relatively little direct attention was given to demographic factors, apart from age. Other aspects that could be investigated further include
whether being a parent, or needing a second income within a household, impact career change reasons and experiences, especially among people who feel some attraction to secondary school teaching as their new career. In terms of parental status, Wilson and Deaney (2010), for instance, found that, “often they [career changers] are parents who enter the classroom more confident than their first career counterparts about their role as an authority figure” (p. 170). While some aspects of parental status were briefly touched on throughout this investigation, they were not deemed sufficiently significant. Hence, there are opportunities for further research to consider whether being a parent influences how career changers perceive the possibilities of a new career as a teacher, and, more particularly, a secondary school teacher.

Bearing in mind that the career changers who participated in this investigation had, at the time of being interviewed, only recently taken up their new careers, further research opportunities exist in conducting a longitudinal study focussed on those who have made the change to new careers in teaching. As Williams (2010) attests, there is “relatively little known about their career transition during the teacher education period, particularly in the contemporary Australian context” (p. 640). For their part, Manuel and Hughes (2006) conclude that the links between motivations to teach, expectations of teaching, and satisfaction and success as a teacher have not been thoroughly explored within the Australian context. A possible longitudinal study would aim to understand the further experiences that may or may not have followed chronologically from the time of the career change. Such a research project could, for instance, follow up the career changers who participated in this investigation to determine whether the satisfactions and fulfillment they saw in secondary school teaching were in fact realised. Given anecdotal and other evidence of high ‘burn out’ rates among members of the teaching profession, it would be very interesting to
ascertain whether those who had made the significant career change in becoming secondary school teachers, had continued as members of the teaching profession.

As a matter of choice, and also some convenience, this investigation focussed on participants who had decided to become secondary school teachers. Some of the participants had initially chosen to become primary school teachers but had then decided on new careers as secondary school teachers. An area worthy of further investigation would be to determine whether the main contributory categories and theoretical constructs of the explanatory grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ are also found among those career changers seeking to become primary school teachers; or whether such categories and constructs that explain career change reasons and experiences relate only to those embarking on new careers as secondary school teachers.

As established from the outset, this investigation specifically focussed on a career change pathway into teaching through completion of a one-year postgraduate pre-service teacher education program. Possible future research questions arise as to whether the same reasons and experiences that were identified in constructing the grounded theory of ‘Becoming’ exist among career changers who do not possess an undergraduate qualification. For any potential career changers in that situation, the only pathway to new teaching careers would be to complete a full four-year teacher education degree. The prospects of undertaking a four year program might well impede the career change ambitions of some individuals.

There are further research opportunities to ascertain the impacts of the proposed national move to a two-year secondary postgraduate pre-service teacher education program from 2016 (QCT, 2011b). Based upon the experiences reported by several participants in this investigation, it can be argued that the time it takes to train
and make the change from one career to a new teaching career is a significant factor influencing the decisions career changers make. Hypothetically, the proposed extension to a two-year training period could make the prospect of a new teaching career less attractive. The fact that it may well take longer to realise such a career change will impact the supply of secondary school teachers, something that may prove to be a significant issue during the transition from one-year to two-year pathways when few graduates will be available to enter teaching in the short term.

Several aspects related to the design of pre-service teacher education programs also lend themselves to further investigation. For example, as well as considering the experiences reported by pre-service teachers as has been the case in this investigation, researching the role of ‘the prac’ and especially the internship from the perspective of the teachers who mentor career changers is an area worthy of further exploration. Such an investigation could, for instance, focus on the different perceptions mentor teachers may have of those entering a teaching career having experienced a previous career compared to their perceptions of teacher trainees who enrol in a pre-service teacher education program directly from school or immediately following the completion of their undergraduate degree. An additional object of such further research could be to determine, from the perspective of a mentor teacher with long years of experience, whether having previous teaching or training experience makes a contribution to the professional development of career changers seeking to become teachers.

Finally, there are future research opportunities associated with testing the explanatory theory among individuals who, while also changing careers, do so into fields and professions other than teaching, or into secondary school teaching in particular. For example, it would be worth considering the applicability and
explanatory powers of ‘Becoming’ to those who change careers and decide to enter other professions such as nursing or law.

The opportunities for further research that have been discussed in this section would serve to progress the cycle of theory testing and its further development and refinement. These and other opportunities would also allow for the assessment of the “modifiability” of the theory advocated by Glaser (1978, p. 4) in his evaluation criteria.

10.6 Some final comments from the participants

This research had two aims: firstly, to explain the reasons that had influenced people’s decisions to change careers and become secondary school teachers; and, secondly, to develop an understanding of the experiences of a cohort of career change participants while students of a particular pre-service teacher education program, including aspects they had found more challenging, as well as aspects they considered had supported and enhanced their career change ambitions while developing their new professional identities as secondary school teachers. In order to realise these dual aims a grounded theory approach within an interpretive constructivist paradigm was adopted as the preferred methodology so that the voices of the participants would be foregrounded throughout the investigation. Accounts of their reasons for, and experiences of, career change provided the foundation for constructing the grounded theory of ‘Becoming’. This being so, it is apt that the career changer participants should have the final say. In telling of their own career changes, and in telling of their own ‘Becomings’ they said:

*I think I was born to be a teacher but it wasn’t until I actually got out there that . . . that particular interest in me was sparked. I don’t think you can*
become a teacher, you are born to be a teacher. You either got it or you haven’t. (Clair)

. . . it’s just sort of something that I just knew that this is what I wanted to do. And I’ve had several goes at becoming a teacher - I just can’t imagine doing anything else. (Ivy)

If someone had said to me in grade 12 you’re gonna become a teacher I would have laughed. . . . it wasn’t until I was actually in that training role that I realised that there was that passion there. (Clair)

And I think, um, even people that know how and why you need to do this, unless you’ve got the drive on the inside to want to do that, then I don’t think you can. (Lee)

. . . my inherent belief that it’s valuable and worthwhile. . . I don’t think teachers exist on a pedestal, but I believe what they do is very important, and maybe undervalued. That’s why I decided to become a teacher. (Bo)

While the participating career changers expressed diverse reasons and recounted wide-ranging experiences, at least at the time of the investigation they were convinced that becoming a secondary school teacher was something that they wanted to undertake.

But, what of the fictional Alice whose thoughts introduced this thesis? Perhaps she would say:

‘How puzzling all these changes are! I’m never sure what I am going to be from one minute to another’ (Carroll, 1865 reprinted 2000, p. 105)
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Appendix A

Previous research in career change into teaching

*Undergraduate = college or university program of study designed for those who have not yet completed a bachelor's or similar degree
* Graduate Entry = includes programs designed for entrants who already possess an initial university qualification. Includes postgraduate pathways comprising Graduate Diploma, Post-graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate and post baccalaureate programs where a first undergraduate degree is a pre-requisite for entry to such programs
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Authors/Investigators</th>
<th>Article/Investigation/Report</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Initial Teacher Education (ITE) focus</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Data Collection process</th>
<th>Key Findings/Features relevant to this investigation</th>
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</table>
| Anthony & Ord (2008)  | Change of career secondary teachers: motivations, expectations and intentions | Teaching Workforce | Undergraduate and graduate entry | New Zealand | 68 newly qualified change of career teachers | Qualitative and Quantitative: Questionnaire of large cohort, followed by interview of sample | Three cluster groups of teachers developed to illustrate the relative influence of different combinations of reasons to become a teacher:  
• Looks Good  
• Time is Right  
• Teaching is Me |
| Australian College of Educators (ACE). (2003) | Career change entrants to teaching | Primary and Secondary pre-service teacher education | Graduate Entry | Australia | - | Report on current trends in career change pathways into teaching | • provided a national profile of career change entrants;  
• documented select attitudes, experiences and needs of career change entrants; identified the benefits of and issues involved in attracting career change entrants to the teaching profession;  
• mapped current Australian and overseas practices and approaches; and  
• provided options and recommendations for action by key stakeholders. |
| Birrell & Rapson (2006) | Cleasing the myths away: Higher education’s place in meeting workforce demands | Teaching Workforce | Undergraduate and graduate entry | Australia | - | Report for the Dusseldorf Skills Forum | • Too much emphasis is placed on university education  
• a choice must be made between trade training and university education  
• there will be declining numbers of young people entering the workforce |
| Bruijnum & Janssen (2010) | Is the motivation to become a teacher related to pre-service teachers’ intentions to remain in the profession? | Primary and Secondary pre-service teacher education | Undergraduate and graduate entry | Netherlands | 198 | Quantitative: Questionnaires | • Factors that attract students to teaching programs and how to retain them in the profession through understanding motivation to join the profession. |
| Campbell (2010). | Developing a graduate diploma to cater for career-change adults | Primary pre-service teacher education | Graduate entry | Australia (Melbourne) | 25 | Qualitative and quantitative: Questionnaires, surveys, and interviews | • Provide detail on the aspects of a pre-service program which enabled mature-aged students to succeed in their career change and highlights future challenges. |
| Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) (2008) | Staff in Australia’s Schools 2007 | All school sectors | N/A | Australia | 5209 primary teachers (final response rate 30%), 5394 secondary teachers (33%) 1116 primary leaders (5%) 1393 secondary leaders (5%). | Qualitative: Survey | • Provides a detailed picture of the Australian teacher workforce  
• Information used to assist in future planning of the workforce. |
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<th>Data Collection process</th>
<th>Key findings/Features relevant to this investigation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). (2003)</td>
<td>Australia’s teachers: Australia’s future: advancing innovation, science, technology and mathematics</td>
<td>Primary and Pre-service teacher education</td>
<td>Undergraduate and graduate entry</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>A Review Committee considered a total of 241 submissions to a series of discussion papers. Submissions from government and non-government school education authorities; most universities; teacher professional associations; industry, peak parent, principal, teacher and union bodies; as well as a diverse group of individuals. Community based meetings and discussions across the country as well as visiting schools to experience innovative practice.</td>
<td>• Teacher workforce planning needs to be undertaken in close association with analysis of overall labour market trends since the knowledge and skills teachers have are often in high demand in other sectors of the economy • Need for flexible pathways into teaching • Relevant practical experience for career change entrants</td>
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<td>Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). (2007)</td>
<td>Research on change career pathways into teaching: Final report</td>
<td>All school sectors</td>
<td>Undergraduate and graduate entry</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>‘Desktop research’ of career change programs and initiatives. A scan of relevant research literature related to career change into teaching. Focus groups</td>
<td>• RPL and RCC to enable academic programs to focus on the gaps in skills and knowledge of career change teachers • Recruiting those from the locations in which the vacancies exist and matching specialisations to the requirements of known vacancies • Design programs, in consultation with registration and accreditation bodies and education providers, to ensure they meet the needs of all parties • Mixed mode delivery including distance and flexible arrangements for block components of programs</td>
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<td>Grier &amp; Johnston, (2008)</td>
<td>An Inquiry into the Development of Teacher Identities in STEM Career Changers</td>
<td>Secondary pre-service teacher education</td>
<td>Graduate entry</td>
<td>United States of America (California)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Qualitative: interviews, field observations, and analysis of curriculum products for each participant</td>
<td>• Career changers rely upon skills developed in their previous careers to navigate through a new profession • Returning to the life of a student again was difficult. • Career changers value interacting with their traditional aged peers in the program as these relationships were beneficial to their own socialisation into teaching as they developed their teacher identities.</td>
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<td>Haggard, Slostad, &amp; Winterton (2006)</td>
<td>Transition to the school as workplace: Challenges of second career teachers</td>
<td>Primary and Secondary pre-service teacher education</td>
<td>Graduate entry</td>
<td>United States of America (Pennsylvania)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Qualitative: Open-ended surveys</td>
<td>• Teacher educators who address the needs of second career teachers, such as increasing field experiences, providing classroom management and time management strategies, may lead second career teachers to use the unique competencies they bring to the teaching-learning setting.</td>
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<td>Hobson, Mulder, Tracey, Homer, Ashby, Mitchell, McIntyre (2009).</td>
<td>Becoming a teacher - Teachers’ experiences of initial teacher Training, induction and early professional development: Final report</td>
<td>Primary and Secondary pre-service teacher education</td>
<td>Undergraduate and graduate entry</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Longitudinal study: 1. An annual survey, completed by an initial sample of 4790 student teachers (‘Wave 1’) and by 1443</td>
<td>Qualitative and Quantitative: Survey; in-depth, face-to-face interviews; and regular email exchanges</td>
<td>• Outlines key features including motives for undertaking initial teacher education and the preconceptions, expectations and concerns about being a pre-service teacher and then as a trained teacher. • Reasons for the retention and attrition amongst beginning teachers.</td>
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<td>Hof, Strupler, &amp; Wolter (2011)</td>
<td>Career Changers in Teaching Jobs: A Case Study Based on the Swiss Vocational Education System Secondary (vocational education) pre-service teacher education Undergraduate and graduate entry</td>
<td>- Monetary motives are important when changing a career to teaching</td>
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<td>Kember (2008)</td>
<td>Being digital: The Challenge for Career-change Beginning Teachers Primary and Secondary pre-service teacher education Graduate entry</td>
<td>- Career changers have diverse backgrounds</td>
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<td>Manuel &amp; Hughes (2006)</td>
<td>It has always been my dream: Exploring pre-service teachers’ motivations for choosing to teach Secondary (vocational education) pre-service teacher education Undergraduate pre-service teacher education</td>
<td>- Past experiences are essential beliefs about contemporary learning that may be central to supporting career-change beginning teachers to develop familiarity and confidence in using digital pedagogies</td>
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<td>Mayotte (2003)</td>
<td>Stepping Stones to Success: Previously Developed Career Competencies and Their Role in the Education of Pre-service Teachers</td>
<td>United States of America Primary and Secondary pre-service teacher education Graduate entry</td>
<td>- The know-why, know-how, and know-whom career competencies provide a framework for the discussion of career-change beginning teachers’ motivations and barriers to change</td>
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<td>Miles, Greer, Akbar, Dawson, Lyons, Purnell &amp; Tabert (2009)</td>
<td>Investigating the barriers and enablers in attracting and retaining suitably qualified pre-service teachers to specialist roles in Queensland State Schools: Final Report</td>
<td>Secondary Teacher education</td>
<td>Undergraduate and graduate entry</td>
<td>Qualitative: Interviews, observation and critical incident journals</td>
<td>1,557 participants including 243 secondary pre-service teachers, 98 secondary school teachers, and 98 non-teaching professional organisations</td>
<td>• Significant recruiting difficulties in certain secondary teaching specialisations failure to follow a desired career, springboard to other careers, to upgrade, and teaching out of vocation. • Ability to engage with and support male teachers, low status profession, and lack of trust of male trainee teachers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministerial Council on Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). (2005)</td>
<td>Demand and supply of teachers matter: Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers</td>
<td>Secondary Teacher education</td>
<td>Undergraduate and graduate entry</td>
<td>Quantitative and qualitative: Questionnaire and follow-up qualitative interviews</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>• Comprehensive international analysis of trends and developments in the teacher workforce. • The report provides positive examples of where policies are making a difference. • It spotlights countries where teacher shortages have been a concern, there are recent signs of increased interest in teaching, and policy initiatives appear to be taking effect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Priyadharshini &amp; Robinson-Baird (2013)</td>
<td>The attractions of teaching: an investigation into why people change careers to teach</td>
<td>Secondary Teacher education</td>
<td>Undergraduate and graduate entry</td>
<td>Qualitative: Interview and critical incident reports</td>
<td>More than 25 countries</td>
<td>• Identified a pattern of six character profiles for career change: the parent, the successful careerist, the late starter, the serial careerist, the young career changer, and the freelancer. • Identified a series of ‘pulls and push’ that motivated a change into teaching.</td>
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APPENDICES

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<tr>
<td>Richardson &amp; Watt (2005)</td>
<td>I've decided to become a teacher: Influences on career choice</td>
<td>Secondary pre-service education</td>
<td>Quantitative: Survey</td>
<td>Five factors relating to social status, career fit, prior education, and time spent in the classroom were identified. Sample size: 74 from a subset of Australian universities (n = 278).</td>
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<td>Richardson &amp; Watt (2006)</td>
<td>What motivates people to change to teaching?</td>
<td>Pre-service and graduate entry</td>
<td>Qualitative: Survey</td>
<td>Seven themes were identified: (1) financial reasons, (2) love of teaching, (3) family reasons, (4) teaching as a career, (5) teaching as a civic duty, (6) teaching as a challenge, and (7) teaching as a lifestyle. Sample size: Australia (n = 169).</td>
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<td>Richardson &amp; Watt (2010)</td>
<td>Alternately and traditionally certified teachers: The same but different</td>
<td>Secondary pre-service education</td>
<td>Quantitative: Survey</td>
<td>Four main clusters were identified: (1) financial gains, (2) teaching as a career, (3) teaching as a civic duty, and (4) teaching as a lifestyle. Sample size: United States of America (n = 121).</td>
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<td>Salyer (2003)</td>
<td>Why do people become teachers?</td>
<td>Undergraduate and graduate entry</td>
<td>Quantitative: Survey</td>
<td>Three main reasons were identified: (1) love of teaching, (2) social status, and (3) financial benefits. Sample size: United States of America (n = 90 from a subset of 758 American n = 121).</td>
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<td>Tysvaer (2007)</td>
<td>What motivates business-related careers to change to teaching?</td>
<td>Secondary and graduate entry</td>
<td>Quantitative: Survey</td>
<td>Results provide insights to schools about similarities and differences between alternatively certified and traditionally certified teachers. Sample size: United States of America (n = 38 of Alabama) and United States of America (Michigan) n = 121.</td>
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<td>Skilbeck &amp; Connell (2004)</td>
<td>Teachers for the future: Changing nature of society and related issues for the teaching workforce</td>
<td>Classroom teachers and 100 school principals</td>
<td>Quantitative and qualitative: Open ended questionnaire and focus groups</td>
<td>Need to attract teachers to 'hard to staff schools' and recruitment of teachers with career experiences in other occupations. Sample size: United States of America (n = 721).</td>
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<td>Smith &amp; Pantana (2010)</td>
<td>Preservice Secondary School Teachers in a Broken Online Residential Preparation Program: Characteristics and Motivations</td>
<td>Graduate entry</td>
<td>Quantitative and qualitative: Focus group and on-line survey</td>
<td>Profile: Characteristics, expectations, and perceptions were explored using the FIT Choice (Factors Influencing Teaching Choice) Scale and focus groups. Sample size: United States of America (Virginia).</td>
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<td>Tigchelaar, Brouwer &amp; Korthagen (2008)</td>
<td>Crossing horizons: Continuity and change during second career teachers’ entry to teaching</td>
<td>Secondary pre-service teacher education</td>
<td>Graduate entry</td>
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<td>Wang &amp; Fwu (2002)</td>
<td>A back-up choice or not? Pre-service graduate students’ views of choosing teaching as a career in Taiwan</td>
<td>Primary and Secondary pre-service teacher education</td>
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<td>Motivational factors influencing teaching as a career choice: Development and validation of the FIT-Choice Scale</td>
<td>Primary and Secondary pre-service teacher education</td>
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<td>Watt &amp; Richardson (2008)</td>
<td>Motivations, perceptions, and aspirations concerning teaching as a career for different types of beginning teachers</td>
<td>Primary and Secondary pre-service teacher education</td>
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<td>Australia (Sydney and Melbourne)</td>
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<td>Watt, Richardson &amp; Pietsch (2008)</td>
<td>Choosing to Teach in the STEM disciplines: characteristics and motivations of science technology, and mathematics teachers from Australia and the United States</td>
<td>Teacher education</td>
<td>Undergraduate and graduate entry</td>
<td>Australia (Sydney and Melbourne) United States of America n = 245 United States of America n = 86</td>
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<td>Williams (2010)</td>
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<td>The motivations of career change students in teacher education</td>
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<td>Wilson &amp; Deane (2010)</td>
<td>Changing career and changing identity: how do teacher career changers exercise agency in identity construction?</td>
<td>Secondary pre-service teacher education</td>
<td>Graduate entry</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Younger, Brindley, Pedder &amp; Hagger (2004)</td>
<td>Starting points: teachers’ reasons for becoming teachers and their preconceptions of what this will mean</td>
<td>Secondary pre-service teacher education NOTE: Not focused on just career change</td>
<td>Graduate entry</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
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Appendix B

Definition of other terms and phrases used in this thesis

Pre-service teacher education

Pre-service teacher education is the education and training provided to an individual before they have undertaken any teaching as a schoolteacher. Pre-service teacher education in Australia is offered by tertiary education/higher education institutions such as universities or colleges. Also referred to as an ‘initial teaching qualification’, (and acknowledging some State-by-State differences within Australia) pre-service teacher education programs of study are available in early childhood teaching (birth to year 3 including kindergarten and preparatory schooling), primary school teaching (year 1 to 6); and secondary school teaching (year 7 – 12). The participants in this research were all intent on becoming secondary school teachers by making the transition from their previous careers via completion of the pre-service Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching (Secondary) at a regional Queensland university.

Pre-service teacher

A pre-service teacher is an individual training to become a schoolteacher through enrolment in a pre-service teacher education program at a university or college. A pre-service teacher who has completed their initial teaching qualification is known as a ‘graduate teacher’. Graduate teachers have completed a qualification that meets the requirements of a nationally accredited program of initial teacher education. Those who are awarded this qualification have satisfied the Graduate Teacher Standards of the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL, 2011).

Teacher registration
All school teachers in Queensland must be registered with the Queensland College of Teachers as that State’s professional accrediting body. Registered teachers have successfully completed all requirements of an approved/accredited pre-service teacher education program. Teacher registration ensures that only appropriately qualified and suitable people are employed to teach in schools.

**Postgraduate**

Study undertaken after completing a first university degree. In this investigation, the career changers completed a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program of study following completion of their initial bachelor’s degree. Importantly, this had been in a non-education disciplinary area or areas and for most participants the initial bachelor’s degree had been completed some years previously and had initially led them into their first careers from which they sought to make the transition to become secondary school teachers.

**Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching (Secondary)**

The Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching (Secondary) was the postgraduate pre-service teacher education program participants in this study had completed in order to make the transition in changing careers and becoming secondary school teachers. The Graduate Diploma is a program of study accredited by the regional university that participants had attended, and more importantly, by the Queensland College of Teachers. The program is designed to prepare secondary school teachers to teach in two teaching areas. The study load of the program is either full-time over one year (two university terms) or part-time over two years (four university terms). The mode of study is either internal attending on-campus face-to-face classes, or through distance education as an alternative to on-campus attendance with students being provided with study materials, engaging on-line through a Learning Management
System (LMS) and attending compulsory residential schools. A blended learning approach to study involving a combination of internal and distance learning is also available to students.

**Distance education**

If enrolled in the distance education mode of study students do not attend the institution but choose to study off-campus. The student and their lecturers are separated by space, distance and time. There is a focus on teaching methods and technology to engage students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting such as a lecture room. Distance education programs of study that require a physical on-site presence for any reason (including residential schools as is the case in the Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching program) have been referred to as ‘hybrid’ or ‘blended’ programs of study (Vaughan, 2010).

**Residential schools**

Residential schools provide an intensive on-campus experience for students who are studying by distance education. Their attendance at a residential school also provides students with the opportunity of meeting face-to-face with lecturing staff and their peers studying in the same program. In teacher education programs, the compulsory residential schools are also designed to equip pre-service teachers with an induction to teaching and to prepare them for in-school practicum requirements. The residential schools are sometimes referred to colloquially by both students and staff as ‘the res’ or ‘res school’ and these terms will be found throughout this thesis when participant voices resonate.

**Practicum**

As a period of guided, supervised teaching, during which the pre-service teacher is gradually introduced to the role of being a teacher under the guidance of a mentor
teacher, the supervised practicum is a requirement of pre-service teacher education and subsequent accreditation and registration. A pre-service teacher usually begins as an observer, witnessing and viewing their mentor teacher in action in the classroom prior to taking on small groups while working towards whole class delivery. The program of study completed by the participants in this research culminated in a final internship, a 6-week teaching block undertaken at the end of their program of study. During this time the pre-service teacher (now ‘intern’) takes sole responsibility for the planning and delivery of the mentor/s classes. Practicum is also referred to as ‘fieldwork experience’, ‘professional experience’ or ‘embedded professional learning’. Much like the case with ‘the res’ (residential schools), the practicum is sometimes referred to colloquially as ‘the prac’ and again when participant voices resonate in this thesis this term has been used.

Secondary school

Secondary schools are those that offer education between year 8 and 12 (defined in Queensland State Education terminology). Secondary school teachers teach a range of subjects and year levels and are usually trained to teach in two different teaching areas. Secondary schools are also referred to as ‘high schools’ and are found in both government and non-government education systems.
Appendix C

Sample Interview Questions

Section 1: What are the factors that influence a career change into secondary school teaching?

1. What sparkled your interest to enrol in a one-year pre-service degree to become a teacher?
2. Why did you choose secondary school teaching and the particular subjects you have chosen to teach?
3. Within your previous career, were you engaged in any kind of teaching or training?
4. Did this prior work experience have anything to do with you now becoming a teacher?
5. What do you consider to be the key skills you bring to teaching from your previous degree/s or work related experiences?
6. Would you consider teaching to be your career of choice?
7. Apart from what we have already discussed, is there anything else that might have sparked your interest in teaching?

Section 2: What are the aspects of the teacher education program that support and enhance a successful transition into teaching?

1. Have your ideas about teaching changed now that you have commenced your Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching (Secondary)?
2. Have your personal expectations of teaching been met so far within your pre-service teacher training?
3. Are there any aspects of your pre-service training that you have liked (or disliked)?
4. Have there been any times when you have thought about giving up and withdrawing? - if so, what was your main motivation for deciding to continue?
5. Could the experiences you have been provided with throughout your pre-service training be improved to assist you to achieve your goal to become a teacher?
6. What do you consider to be the main aspects of the pre-service program that have supported and enhanced your successful transition into teaching?
7. Would you recommend the one-year pathway into teaching?

Concluding Question:

Is there anything else you would like to tell me to help in my understanding of why you want to become a teacher?
Appendix D

Ethical Clearance Approval
27 February 2009

Mr Rickie Fisher
Faculty of Arts, Business, Informatics and Education
Building 33
CQU University, Rockhampton Campus

Dear Mr Fisher

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE ETHICAL APPROVAL PROJECT: H08/12-083,
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SECOND CAREER TEACHERS: A GROUNDED THEORY
STUDY OF REDESIGNING SELF THROUGH A POSTGRADUATE PRE-SERVICE TEACHER
EDUCATION PROGRAM

Thank you for submitting your research application to the CQU University HREC. The committee noted that this is an interesting project and looks forward to reading your final report as to the outcomes of your study.

The Human Research Ethics Committee is an approved institutional ethics committee constituted in accord with guidelines formulated by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and governed by policies and procedures consistent with principles as contained in publications such as the joint Universities Australia and NHMRC Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. This is available at http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/_files/r39.pdf.

On 27 February 2009, the Human Research Ethics Committee of CQU University acknowledged compliance with the conditions placed on ethical approval for your research project, Recruitment and retention of second career teachers: a grounded theory study of redesigning self through a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program Project number H08/12-083.

The period of ethics approval will be from 27 February 2009 to 31 March 2013. The approval number is H08/12-083; please quote this number in all dealings and correspondence with the Committee.

The standard conditions of approval for this research project are that:

(a) you conduct the research project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments required to be made to the proposal by the Human Research Ethics Committee;

(b) you advise the Human Research Ethics Committee (email: ethics@cqu.edu.au) immediately if any complaints are made, or expressions of concern are raised, or any other issue in relation to the project which may warrant review of ethics approval.
of the project: (A written report detailing the adverse occurrence or unforeseen event must be submitted to the Committee Chair within one working day after the event.)

(c) you make submission to the Human Research Ethics Committee for approval of any proposed variations or modifications to the approved project before making any such changes;

(d) you provide the Human Research Ethics Committee with a written “Annual Report” by no later than 28 February each calendar year and “Final Report” by no later than one (1) month after the approval expiry date; (A copy of the reporting pro formas may be obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee Secretary, Sue Evans please contact at the telephone or email given on the first page.)

(e) if the research project is discontinued, you advise the Committee in writing within five (5) working days of the discontinuation;

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

The HREC requires you to advise the Secretary in writing within five (5) working days if this project does not proceed for any reason. In the event that you require an extension of ethics approval for this project, please make written application in advance of the end-date of this approval, as extensions are not able to be granted retrospectively. This will ensure that you can proceed with your research with no interruption. Should you need an extension but not apply for this before the end-date of the approval, please submit a modification form, together with an explanation as to why an extension was not requested. This will then be considered by the Chair.

The Human Research Ethics Committee is committed to supporting researchers in achieving positive research outcomes through sound ethical research projects. If you have issues where the Human Research Ethics Committee may be of assistance or have any queries in relation to this approval please do not hesitate to contact the Secretary and Compliance Officer or myself.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Associate Professor Lorna Moxham
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

Cc: Project file
   Dr Roberta Harreveld, Dr Jenny McDougall (Supervisors)

Application Category: A
Appendix E

Original email sent to the potential participants seeking interest
Dear {insert name},

I am writing to seek your expression of interest in being part of a research project investigating career changers completing a pre-service teacher education program. The term career changers is used to describe people such as yourself who have already completed a non-education Bachelor’s level undergraduate degree and are making the transition into secondary school teaching by enrolling in the Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching (Secondary).

This research forms part of my Doctoral candidature. The aim of my research is to explore why people such as yourself would choose to become a secondary school teacher and further to explore the aspects of your program that support and enhance your transition into teaching.

The two research questions I am seeking to answer are:

What factors influence a career change into secondary school teaching for a cohort of adult learners?

What are the aspects of the teacher education program that support and enhance their successful transition?

If you choose to participate in this research project you will be asked a series of semi-structured questions in a 30-minute (maximum) interview with myself. The interview will take place on campus at CQUniversity Australia, Rockhampton or in another location suitable to yourself. The interview will be digitally recorded and later transcribed.

Your identity will remain confidential in accordance with the CQUniversity Australia Code of Conduct for research. The information provided will be anonymised and will be used only for the research purpose. It will be securely stored in files and locked in the researcher’s office located at CQUniversity Australia, Rockhampton.

If you would like to participate in this research, please collect an information sheet and consent form from Darlene Bowen, Placement Administrative Officer, on campus in Building 33, Room 2.39. Alternatively, please send Darlene an email (d.bowen@cqu.edu.au) and an information sheet and consent form will be emailed to you.

Should you choose to participate after reading the information statement, it would be appreciated if the signed consent form were returned to Darlene no later than {insert date}.

If you have any questions about the research, please use the contact details provided on the information sheet.

Thank-you for considering being part of this research project.

Kind regards

Rickie Fisher
Doctoral Candidate
CQUniversity Australia
Appendix F

Participant Informed Consent form and Information sheet
You are invited to participate in an interview as part of a research project for my Doctor of Education studies.

**The Project:**
People become teachers for a number of reasons. Teaching for some may not be their first career choice and they may transition into teaching after an experience within another career. This research will explore the concept of career change through investigating a group of adults as learners making the transition into a career in secondary school teaching. Considerations within this research include understanding how aspects of the career changers’ postgraduate pre-service teacher education degree support and enhance their transition from a previous career into teaching.

Two research questions are framed:

**RQ1** What reasons do individuals who are planning to make a career change into secondary school teaching identify as influencing their decision to make such a change?

**RQ2** What aspects of a teacher education program do individuals who are planning to make a career change into secondary school teaching consider best support and enhance their successful transition?

**The Participants**
The participants in this project must be those who have a completed a non-education Bachelor’s degree and have been employed in a non-education profession prior to enrolling into a postgraduate pre-service teacher education degree program.

**The Interview:**
The interview will take place on campus at CQUntiversity. You will be asked a series of semi-structured questions based on the two research questions listed above. The interview will be digitally recorded and later transcribed. Your identity and that of all participants will remain confidential in accordance with the CQUntiversity Code of Conduct for research. The information provided will be anonymised and will be used only for the research purpose. It will be securely stored in files and locked in the researcher’s office located at CQUntiversity Australia, Rockhampton Campus. If you do not wish to participate, it will not affect your academic standing as a student of the university.

**The Project Outcomes:**
This project is designed to gather data for the researcher’s Doctoral thesis. Information gathered may also be used for academic journals, conferences and book/s. Should you wish to receive a Plain English brief statement of the research findings or view the final thesis, please indicate so and provide your contact details on the informed consent form and I will forward you instructions on how to locate the abstract and final thesis within the CQUntiversity Library.

If you would like further information regarding this project or to discuss any aspects of the project, please do not hesitate to contact me. My contact details are:

Rickie Fisher  
Telephone: (07) 4930 9318  
Email: r.j.fisher@cqu.edu.au

Counselling options are available for all research participants via CQUntiversity Student Services on 132 786.  
Please contact CQUntiversity’s Office of Research (Tel: (07) 4923 2607 or email: research-enquiries@cqu.edu.au) should there be any concern about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.

Central Queensland University  CRICOS Provider Codes: QLD – 00219C; NSW – 01315F; VIC – 01624D
PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE ETHICAL APPROVAL PROJECT:
H08/12-083

Research Project:
A grounded theory study of career change:
Attraction and retention in a postgraduate teacher education program

Researcher’s name: Rickie James Fisher
Supervisor’s name: Associate Professor Bobby Harreveld & Dr Jenny McDougall

I consent to participation in this research project and agree that:

☐ An Information Sheet has been provided to me and I have read and understood it.
☐ I am willing to participate in the project on a voluntary basis.
☐ I have had any questions I had about the project answered to my satisfaction by the Information Sheet and/or by any verbal explanation provided.
☐ I understand that my participation or non-participation in the research project will not affect my academic standing.
☐ I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without penalty and that my identity will remain confidential.
☐ I understand that to maintain confidentiality of participants, fictitious names may be used in any publication(s).
☐ I understand the research findings will be included in the researcher’s publication(s) on the project and this may include conferences and articles written for journals and other methods of dissemination stated in the Information Sheet.
☐ I give permission for the interview involving myself to be audio taped or digitally recorded.
☐ I agree I am providing informed consent to participate in this project.

Name (please print):
Postal Address:
Email:
Signature: Date:

Please tick where relevant:
☐ I would like to receive a plain English summary of the research findings
☐ I would like to receive instructions for locating the abstract and final Thesis in the CQU University Library

Please contact CQU University’s Office of Research (Tel: 07 4923 2607 or email: research-enquiries@cqu.edu.au) should there be any concern about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.
Appendix G

Reply email to the potential participants

Hello {insert name},

Great to hear back from you!

Thank-you for agreeing to participate in my research and for agreeing to be interviewed.

To permit me to use the data from the interview, can you please fill in the attached consent form and post/scan back to me.

My address is in my signature below. If you prefer, I can post one to you with a reply paid envelope.

I will be in contact regarding a suitable time and location for the interview in the coming days.

I hope everything is going well in your new teaching career. I look forward to chatting to you about your experiences.

Cheers

Rickie
Appendix H

Facebook message sent to potential participants

Hello {Participant's name}!
Long time no talk.
I was hoping you would be able to make contact with me either through email (r.j.fisher@cqu.edu.au) or phone (49309318). I was hoping to chat to you for my doctorate about your experiences in the Grad Dip.
I look forward to hearing from you!
Cheers
Rickie
# Appendix I

## Profiles of the Career Change Participants

<table>
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<th>Age</th>
<th>M/F</th>
<th>Abbreviated Biography</th>
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<td>33</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Clair completed a Bachelor of Business (Accounting) in 2001. While working as an accountant, part of Clair’s work role was to train younger staff in basic accountancy skills as well as working with, and mentoring, secondary school students completing traineeships. After taking leave from work to raise a family, Clair decided to re-enter the workforce by retraining as an Accounting and Legal Studies secondary school teacher and completed her postgraduate pre-service teacher education program full-time over one year as an external student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Rose completed a Bachelor of Biochemistry in 1996 and a Masters of Arts (Historic Preservation) in 1999. Rose considered school teaching as a career path when she first left university, but other opportunities were made available upon graduating from her undergraduate degree. While working as a science tutor at a small university, Rose realised there were few long-term career opportunities available in the higher education sector and decided to retrain as a Chemistry and Physics secondary school teacher completing her postgraduate pre-service teacher education program full-time over one year as an internal student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Anne completed a Bachelor of Applied Science (Biology) in 1997 and a Graduate Diploma of Applied Science (Library and Information Management) in 2001. After working as a librarian for many years, Anne wanted a change of career and was motivated to become a Biology and Multi-strand Science teacher due to the demand for secondary school science teachers. Anne continued to work as a librarian while completing her postgraduate pre-service teacher education program part-time over two years as an external student so she could continue to financially support her family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Peter completed his metal fabrication engineering trade qualification in 1980 and worked as a fitter and turner before retraining as a carpenter in 1997. After a work related accident, Peter pursued his passion in the visual arts through the completion of a Bachelor of Fine Art in 2008 with the intention of completing a one year postgraduate pre-service teacher education program to retrain as a Visual Art and Film, Television and New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>Abbreviated Biography</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Media secondary school teacher. Peter gained experience in the classroom by working as a Teacher’s Aide. Peter completed his pre-service teacher education program as a full-time external student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Frances started a pre-service teacher education program after the completion of her first degree, a Bachelor of Commerce in 2000, but due to family and financial reasons, withdrew from study. Frances re-entered the workforce in 2007 as a financial advisor and completed a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment, however she became dissatisfied with working in the finance industry, so considered teaching once again. Due to the opportunity to complete a pre-service program in one year, Frances decided to complete a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program full-time as an internal face-to-face student with the teaching areas of Accounting and Legal Studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonard</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Leonard considers himself to have been in training all his life, working as a flight instructor from a young age progressing from a junior teacher to instructor to facilitator through to a senior instructor, working for State and Federal governments, RAAF and Boeing to train pilots. Leonard completed a Certificate III Coaching in 2001 followed by a Diploma of Racing in 2002 based on his passion for training racehorses. Leonard successfully completed a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment in 2006 to become a registered workplace trainer and assessor for the Queensland Government where he has taught adolescents within the racehorse and performance industry. Leonard completed a Bachelor of Aviation in 2008 followed by an Associate Degree in Vocational Education and Training in 2008. As an international airline pilot, Leonard completed a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program over two years as a part-time external student with the teaching areas of Aerospace Studies, Science and Mathematics. Leonard considers secondary school teaching to be his final career of choice and will move into secondary school teaching over a number of years upon completing his pre-service teacher education program – this is a financial decision based on his salary as an airline pilot versus a first year teacher salary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Maria completed a Bachelor of Theology in 2008 and has been a boarding supervisor in a Catholic secondary school as well as engaging in a variety of ‘teaching’ experiences as a private tutor, childcare assistant and after school care facilitator. Maria had a ‘calling’ to teaching, where she believes teaching ‘found her’, rather she...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>Abbreviated Biography</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bo</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>After completing a Bachelor of Engineering (Chemical) in 1996, Bo worked in a variety of engineering contexts in the area of strategic planning, business analysis and technical assistance. Bo became frustrated with working in the engineering industry and wanted to do something that focussed on working with people, so chose to retrain as a secondary school teacher motivated by the prospect of obtaining a teaching job without too much difficulty due to shortages of mathematics and science teachers. Bo completed a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program over one year full-time as an external student with Chemistry and Mathematics as her teaching areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winifred</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Winifred completed a combined degree in Bachelor of Arts (International Studies and Communication) and a Bachelor of Business in 1999. To enable her to teach Justice Studies and Business Studies at a local TAFE college, Winifred completed a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment in 2000. Winifred left TAFE due to the lack of permanency in her teaching areas and completed a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program part-time over two years as an external student while working as a school community liaison officer. Winifred’s teaching areas include Business Studies and Study of Society and Environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Cameron completed a Bachelor of Applied Science (Computing) in 1993 followed by a Postgraduate Diploma in Information Technology in 1994. Cameron has worked as a school information technology systems manager and has provided professional development for schoolteachers in information technology skills and practices. Cameron was motivated to enrol in a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program on advice from his workplace professional review when it was determined he had an interest in teaching. Cameron’s goal is to teach adults at a TAFE college or some other post-schooling option, but would teach in a school context if it involved working with Year 11 &amp; 12 students only. Cameron continued to work in IT support while completing his pre-service teacher education program as a part-time external student over a two-year period. Cameron’s teaching areas include Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>Abbreviated Biography</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Norma completed a Bachelor of Science (Biology, Zoology and Chemistry) followed by a Master of Science (Microbiology) in 1998. While working as a laboratory technician, Norma secured a position as a microbiology teacher at a technical college, teaching students in medical lab technology courses, nursing, pharmacy and histopathology. Norma took a leave of absence from working full-time while raising a family, engaging with part-time work in retail including working as a workplace trainer. While working as a histopathologist in a laboratory, Norma decided she needed to choose a career in which she could retire. This was the impetus for Norma to enrol in a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program, completing this program full-time over one year as an internal face-to-face student with the teaching areas Biology and Chemistry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Jane completed a Bachelor of Science in Social Science (Business Accounting) in 1995. After an established career as a chartered accountant and commercial analyst, Jane dropped to part-time after having children. Jane had always been interested in teaching but financially could not afford to do the additional qualification to seek teacher registration. Jane discovered she could complete a teaching qualification over one year, and because she was not receiving job satisfaction, enrolled and completed a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program full-time externally with the teaching areas Accounting and Mathematics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Fred completed his original degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1982. After a 20 year career working in student recruitment within the higher education sector, Fred decided to accept a voluntary redundancy due to significant change and restructure in the workplace. Fred did not want to retire and ‘do nothing’ so retrained as a secondary school English and Study of Society and Environment teacher through completing a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program full-time over one year attending internal face to face classes. Fred’s goal was to take advantage of the State government’s ‘grey nomad’ initiative and travel Queensland registering for supply/relief teacher work where possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivy</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ivy completed a Bachelor of Health Science (Family and Consumer Studies) in 2001. Ivy’s previous career to teaching was in family health, training foster carers while also conducting social skills workshops with foster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>Abbreviated Biography</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>children during school holidays as well as facilitated community workshops in protective behaviours and craft activities as rehabilitation. Ivy chose secondary school teaching due to her previous background in health studies with her teaching areas being Home Economics and Health Education. Ivy completed a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program full-time over one year as an external student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Prior to completing a Bachelor of Science (Biology) in 2006, Lee worked as a scientific assistant in a secondary school. Enjoying this experience, Lee had intended completing a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program upon completion of her undergraduate degree, but was informed she did not have sufficient knowledge from her undergraduate degree for two distinct teaching areas. Lee continued to work as a science assistant until regulations had changed for entry to teacher education, acknowledging multi-stand science as a teaching area. Lee completed a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program in one year as a full-time external student with the teaching areas Biology and Multi-strand Science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johanna</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Johanna’s has completed a Diploma in Hospitality Management, Certificate IV in Small Business Management and a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment. Johanna owned/operated a restaurant and developed a partnership with a registered training organisation to offer traineeships and apprenticeships while also working as a TAFE teacher of Micro-business, Business Management, and Hospitality. Johanna was initially going to complete a Bachelor of Science as a mature age student but decided her age may work against her given the need to gain full-time work. This prompted Johanna to enroll in a pre-service teacher education pre-service teaching qualification, however with the introduction of a Bachelor of Hospitality degree, switched to that program and used prior study as credit and completed the three year program over two years in 2007. Johanna used the completion of this Bachelor’s program to gain entry to a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program, completing it part-time over 2.5 years as an external student while still teaching at TAFE and running her small business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Janet completed a Bachelor of Applied Science (Biotechnology) in 2003 followed by a Graduate Certificate in Business Management in 2004. Janet worked as a microbiologist in a pathology lab and then in research. When it was announced the laboratory would</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>M/F</td>
<td>Abbreviated Biography</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Close, this became the catalyst for Janet to enrol in a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program. Janet completed the pre-service program over one year as a full-time external student while still working part-time at the laboratory. Janet’s teaching areas include Multi-strand Science and Mathematics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ted</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Ted started a Laws degree, but withdrew before completing all requirements. Ted completed a Bachelor of Business (Accounting) in 1998, his Honours program in 2000, followed by a career as an accountant. Ted has taught mathematics in a university enabling program as a casual academic and after work hours, teaches tap dance at a local dance studio. Ted enrolled in a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program after realising he was not receiving job satisfaction from accounting, but received satisfaction from dance teaching. Ted completed the pre-service program as a full-time external student with the teaching areas of Mathematics and Legal Studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leigh</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Leigh completed a Bachelor of Science in 2003 and a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment in 2006. Leigh taught conservation and land management to youth in a post-compulsory schooling program that provides employment and training opportunities to young job seekers. Leigh wanted a change in career and considered herself already in the ‘teaching industry’ so enrolled in a postgraduate pre-service teacher education program to formalise her teaching skills. Leigh completed the pre-service teacher education program over one year as a full-time external student with the teaching areas Biology and Multi-strand Science.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix J

**Coding Sheet: Open/Initial Coding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key words &amp; Phrases</th>
<th>Representative Name</th>
<th>Meaning/contribution/further questions to consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction</td>
<td>Change</td>
<td>What has influenced the career change? Feels about previous employment Employment conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stuck</td>
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<td>Atmosphere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boring/bored/boredom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transform</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New direction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Started looking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>How long it takes to do career change into teaching? Is length of time a factor?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quickly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Route</td>
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<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘just’ one-year</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole year</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Become a teacher</td>
<td>Being / Becoming</td>
<td>Focus on becoming – to be…</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pathway to becoming a teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enjoy/enjoyment from teaching others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reward/rewarding/rewards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm/enthusiastic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unpaid</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Experiences that have contributed to a career change</td>
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<td>Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>Words used to describe the reasons/motivation to become a teacher</td>
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<td>Spark</td>
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<td>Catalyst</td>
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<td>Passion</td>
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<td>Natural choice</td>
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<td>Help others</td>
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<td>Demand</td>
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<td>Influence</td>
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<td>Driving factor</td>
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<td>Employment</td>
<td>Career</td>
<td>Words to describe previous and future career</td>
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<td>Contracts</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key words &amp; Phrases</strong></td>
<td><strong>Representative Name</strong></td>
<td><strong>Meaning/contribution/further questions to consider</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Study</td>
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<td>Face-to-face</td>
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<td>Experience / Skills</td>
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<td>Previous</td>
<td>Age and maturity – same thing? Does age bring maturity?</td>
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<td>People who have influenced the change</td>
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<td>Inspirational teachers</td>
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<td>Positive teacher</td>
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<td>Residential school (the res; res)</td>
<td>Teacher education</td>
<td>Key aspects of the teacher education</td>
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<td>Key words &amp; Phrases</td>
<td>Representative Name</td>
<td>Meaning/contribution/further questions to consider</td>
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<tr>
<td>schools) The Prac Uni subjects Mentor Assessment Practical assessment Internship Study Guide On-line Discussion boards Classroom Virtual Computers Lecturers Study group</td>
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<td>program</td>
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<td>Practicum Practical Prac work In-school EPL Embedded professional learning Attachment Mentor teacher Internship</td>
<td>The Prac</td>
<td>The in-school component Compulsory component</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Secondary school teacher Secondary school teaching High school teacher Teaching Helping/ give help/helper Trainer TAFE teacher Mentor figure</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>What’s in a name? Labels provided to the role teacher</td>
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<td>Secondary High school Subject choice</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Secondary specific language</td>
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<td>Meaning/contribution/further questions to consider</td>
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Appendix K

Sample Reflexive Journal Entries

Reflexive Journal Entry during participant selection phase:

My first task is to decide who would participate and who would not. I retrieved the master excel spreadsheet of all students who had completed the program in 2009. This is a spreadsheet I had access to as Head of Program and coordinator of the final placement. In an ethical sense - do I have the right to access this information? It is acknowledged on the Ethical Clearance form that I will be accessing this information as a RHD student, and I have permission from my work supervisor...but still...should it feel strange that I know so much and can access so many details about the participants of my research? On the one hand it is easy because I know the students - but I know them as students and we have a pre-established hierarchical relationship. On the other there is a moral issue in that I know information about the participants because they (may have) confided in me as their program coordinator and may have revealed information to me because of that role.

Should I take advantage of that role and use the information?

Can I use this information?

This seems to be a moral and ethical dilemma I will need to acknowledge up-front in the interviews - but I need to acknowledge it now as I select who I would be interviewing. What will the criteria be for my selection of participants? Should I simply delete those who I do not think fit the criteria? Should I take into consideration the relationship I have had with the participants and select those who I have had a “good” relationship with - we all know some students did like their lecturers and some lecturers dislike some students. Should this be taken into consideration? Will it affect the way I ask questions? - Maybe it will work to my advantage to interview a range of students.
Reflexive Journal Entry after the first interview:

This was the first interview I conducted. It was interesting to ask the questions that I had been thinking about for such a long time. Before the interview I had to remind myself that this was an interview for a particular purpose – not a “chat with a former student”. It was difficult to forego the academic role. Even though this was constantly in the back of my mind; I needed to distance myself from the role as lecturer/program coordinator. I am not sure if I did this successfully or not as it felt more like a chat with a former student....... It was also gratifying to have [name] share some personal feelings towards her transition to teaching – her motivation was halted by starting a family and hence spoke about having children, raising the family and “putting her career on temporary hold to have a family first.” This is an interesting point I will need to keep in mind whether family is part of the dynamic to change career. Is it more than the career or is it lifestyle of a change of scene?

The location was not that ideal – a foyer area that had large glass doors that could be seen through from the main passage way. I located myself facing the door and [name] with her back to the door – she could not see people passing by, but I was conscious of that. I need to find an area that is more secluded - but at the same time I need an area that is in close proximity to my office - if this is to be the meeting place for the interviews - this also something that perhaps I need to reconsider. When [name] arrived at my door, she joked “for once I am not at your office door with tears dripping down my face - I feel good about being here”. This was a sign she had moved on from being a student - GOOD - Should this be a sign that indicates I keep my office as a meeting point in the first instance - or use somewhere else? Others may see the office as a reminder of being a student: the importance of location. At this point I will leave the meeting point being my office and see how the situation pans out with the next participant.
Reflexive Journal Entry after the fourth interview:

I was feeling a little apprehensive about doing this interview. [Name] and I had not developed the best of relationships during his time as a student and I was a little anxious to discover whether he had ‘moved on’ from that situation....this interview was okay......there were no major issues except I felt he was treating the conversation as a very formal account of his experiences. He did not ‘let go’ and explore the questions.

A concern: At the time of the interview, he was not employed as a full-time teacher (supply work only)- to what extent has this affected the interview gathering? Is this significant?

Most of the interview was a reflection back on his experiences rather than on the aspects pertaining to him as a teacher now and reflecting back on how the teacher training assisted him to do what he does now. This raises the question though - is the purpose of this data gathering to reflect back or is it about the participant talking about their experiences now as a teacher? The two are quite different - and further, of what impact does ‘being a teacher now’ have on the way the participants reflect back on their experiences. Would they look at their practicum experiences differently if they had more to compare it to i.e. their day-to-day job now as a teacher?

Have I selected the right time for these interviews? Should they have been conducted at the end of the Internship just after the certification of their grade BEFORE they started a job as a teacher?

Referred to me in the third person in the interview - e.g. “The program coordinator would organise the res school...” And “When the program coordinator spoke to us about...” This was quite strange - maybe he was attempting to distance himself from me. This worked fine, but did it impact on the generation of data?