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Learning to teach: A focus on the personal rather than the technical aspects of teacher education

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Abstract

This study compares interview data from four pre-service teachers who took part in an ethnographic study in 2006 whilst on their teacher education course and then were interviewed again in 2015 about their subsequent careers. Their conceptualisations of knowing and of becoming a teacher are explored in order to comment on the process of learning to teach. The article uses concepts from Heidegger's philosophical enquiry into Being (readiness-to-hand and authenticity) to comment on the longitudinal data analysis. Viewing the interview data through a Heideggerian lens in order to consider the experience of teachers enhances an appreciation of the learning process and helps the researcher see respondents as subjects beyond the fieldwork. Heidegger's ideas are forwarded as a way for pre-service teachers themselves to consider their own conceptualisations of knowing and becoming so as to recognise and understand what it means to be a teacher. This approach to pre-service teacher education is considered in relation to current research on teacher education and the concerning rate of teacher attrition. With many teacher education systems increasingly focusing on the technical and measurable aspects of teachers' work the paper promotes a need for opportunities to enquire into and develop the personal, philosophical and theoretical perspectives of teacher education.

Key words

Pre-service teacher education; readiness-to-hand; authenticity; Heidegger.

Introduction

The research data for this paper originates from a year long doctoral study which explored the learning opportunities for pre-service teachers when learning on the job as they participated in their first school teaching practice (Douglas, 2011). The school placement was an eight month extended practicum which constituted their main school experience before undertaking a second and much shorter placement in a second school. Nine years later a second research study followed up eight of the respondents from the earlier ethnographic study (four teacher educators and four, at the time of the initial study, pre-service teachers). The four university-based teacher educators were re-interviewed about their changing role and experiences of working in teacher education in England over the nine years since the first study (see Douglas 2016). In this article the focus is on the four pre-service teachers who were interviewed twice in 2006 and then again in 2015. The article explores the reflections of their experiences of learning to teach and how they believe these experiences have influenced their learning in their subsequent careers. Two of the participants have remained in teaching, one is about to return and the other has left the profession. Although working from a small data set, the longitudinal nature of the fieldwork is relatively unusual in current ethnographic studies in teacher education. The use of Heidegger's ideas as sensitising concepts in a teacher education context is also uncommon as he did not address this area directly himself. Nevertheless, his ideas offer a new lens through which to view research in teacher education which often emphasises descriptive analysis.

Citation

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Learning to teach

A major struggle for public education around the world is the attrition of teachers. 'Western countries such as Ireland, Spain, Sweden and the USA are facing teaching gaps' (Lindqvist et al., 2014, p. 94) and as well as the UK and Australia 'the Netherlands also faces the problem of attrition among beginning teachers' (den Brock et al., 2017, p. 893). Gallant and Riley's study (2014) into the reasons why teachers in Australia leave the profession cite disillusionment and a mismatch between ideals and the reality of teaching as key factors. They suggest that such disillusionment is caused by a lack of opportunity for personal growth. The indication is that accountability measures and regulation can lead to a decrease in teachers' motivation and commitment. Recently developed standards for teachers' professional development in England (where this study took place) (Department for Education, 2016a) omit reference to the personal aspects of teaching and focus on pupil attainment and measurable outcomes. The current performative culture in England means that the personal and affective aspects of teaching such as emotions are being neglected in teacher education owing to the pressures of satisfying criteria for set standards and for meeting pupil progress targets (Douglas, 2017; Korthagen, 2004). Recent trends of teachers leaving the profession in Europe and globally suggest that more can be done to support them in initial training and in subsequent professional development activities.

Research in teacher education has highlighted numerous approaches for developing the learning of pre-service teachers. For example, the benefit from learning in schools comes from using the expertise of teachers and developing a critical evaluation of ideas as they arise in the work situation (Hagger and McIntyre, 2006). Forms of distributed expertise found in the school context have also been identified as key to pre-service teacher learning (see Edwards, Gilroy and Hartley, 2002). However, examining difference and promoting debate and inquiry is recognised globally as being difficult when working in teacher education school and university partnerships (Smagorinsky, Cook and Johnson, 2003; Smagorinsky et al., 2004; Schulz and Hall, 2004). A less disruptive approach often advocated by government ministers is where teaching is seen as a craft 'best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman' (DfE, 2010). This technicist view conceptualises learning to teach as a matter of simply acquiring competence 'on the job' (Furlong and Smith, 1996).

Originally termed competencies, national teachers' standards in England (DfE 2013) are regularly revised in order to assess pre-service teachers during their teaching course. Research studies note that when meeting set standards is the main concern in learning to teach there is a danger of reducing the role of teachers to that of technicians who with narrowly defined competencies simply implement set strategies (Tatto, 2006; Douglas, 2017). Hence, focusing on meeting required teachers' standards is not seen to encourage pre-service teachers to develop broader vision or take into account the context of their work and participants. In contrast, a participatory approach to pre-service teacher education leads to questions about why good teachers work in the way that they do. This does not view learning simply as a way of understanding what works but recognises the need to understand why particular strategies work in specific classroom situations (Edwards and Protheroe, 2003). This can support pre-service teachers in focusing on the 'why' questions of education and their own educational values. It may also help them in transforming their learning to new situations.

There are growing numbers of pre-service teachers in England and in other countries in work-based learning that are not taking part in university-led teacher education courses (Douglas, 2017). The findings of a national review on teacher training in England (DfE, 2015) reflect the contested place of universities in teacher education and forward a view of the dominant constructions of knowledge for teaching being practical and focused around the immediate demands of contemporary practice in schools. Education policies influenced by a turn towards neo-liberalism (Furlong, 2013) have developed and been reinterpreted as a means of raising standards of education and achievement in schools. In Australia and Asia too, the impact of the policies and practices in teacher education are

seen to be shaped by global forces underpinned by an overriding economically-driven ideology (Tang, 2011; Brennan and Willis, 2008). In many European and North American settings teacher education policy has also been affected more by the need to recruit teachers than by longer term planning and thinking (Menter et al., 2009).

The increased monitoring of teachers' performance especially in terms of pupil attainment and the growing culture of accountability impact on how teachers see their work (Ball, 2008). With greater use and interrogation of performance data uncomfortable relationships between the collective and the individual in school departments change the nature of teachers' work and their learning. Requiring teachers to overcome their own personal struggles as their values and beliefs are challenged puts pressures on individuals and makes new demands (Ball and Olmedo, 2013). This paper explores the struggles, values and beliefs as expressed by four participants over a nine year period. It focuses on their conceptions of knowing and of becoming a teacher.

The theoretical perspective: viewing data through a Heideggerian lens

The data analysis considers how people view themselves in relation to their experiences in teaching and focuses on their thoughts on learning to teach. In this article I initially view both sets of data through concepts from Heidegger's work on the nature of the existence of human beings (readiness-to-hand and authenticity) and I use these as sensitising concepts in order to newly interpret my research data: sensitising concepts are seen as provisional guides to a changing and complex reality (Willis, 2000). Relatively little has been written on the significance of Heidegger's work on educational thought and practice with many writers being discouraged from reading his notoriously neologised texts (Peters, 2009). As anyone familiar with Heidegger's work will be aware, my use of his concepts as sensitising concepts and his use is different, as 'for Heidegger they are fundamental to his whole phenomenological ontology and understanding of *Dasein* as the place where being reveals itself' (Wringe, 2015, p. 35). *Dasein* (there-being) denotes the way of life, or Being of the human (Magrini, 2012). In my more modest usage the concepts are interpreted simply as sensitising concepts through which to view my empirical data.

Readiness-to-hand

According to Heidegger there are two ways of knowing: 'readiness-to-hand' and 'presence-at-hand'. The latter is considered to be more detached and theoretical and in Heidegger's analogous example can be viewed as one's way of knowing that tools (such as a hammer) are available for use but are not necessarily handled. 'We just stare at the hammer' (Heidegger, 1927, p. 69) knowing it through 'presence-at-hand' but the more we may handle it and use it through 'readiness-to-hand' the more fundamental our relationship with the hammer becomes. We may grasp things 'practically' rather than as objects for our detached consideration with a kind of thinking that operates in and through the doing itself (Williams, 2013, p. 62). This active and practical way of knowing has been associated with teachers who may privilege a personal growth model of teaching; teachers who are interested in the life of the learner (Marshall, 2000). A philosophy of personal growth through teaching influences the expectations of teachers of their relationship with learners which may be based upon knowledge of the learners as individuals and an awareness of their lives outside the classroom (Bousted, 2000). Thus, learners are encountered relationally taking on multiple aspects of their being rather than seen as merely present at hand, as static and available 'objects of physical science' (Donnelly, 1999, p. 936) or as 'empty containers' (Heidegger, 1998, p. 167).

Arguably, in teaching one is expected to work in a 'presence-at-hand' mode where everything is measured and the scientific and theoretical predominate, yet much of what one engages in is 'ready-to-hand' as it is personal and relational (Pike, 2003). Teaching can therefore be seen as resistant to detached and theoretical knowing because one of its central characteristics is that it is brought about through being with others. Hence, teaching may not be seen as a technique to acquire but as

a way of being with others (Donnelly, 2006). Data associated with these two different ways of knowing is discussed when considering transcripts generated from interviewing teachers at the beginning of their careers and nine years later.

Authenticity

The experience of being a teacher in a Heideggerian sense revolves around the notion of authenticity (Brook, 2009). Learning is an essential characteristic of the being of humans. Firstly, Heidegger suggests that we de-structure the preconceptions about teaching as an idea (for example that it's about teaching content, learning outcomes or students as objects). Then we ask what characteristics are fundamental after clearing away such perceptions about teaching. Authenticity refers to the genuine and extraordinary possibilities of being human whereas inauthenticity refers to simply doing what everyone else is doing. Heidegger comments on the human way of being in the world as taking a number of different forms from mindless everyday activities we undertake through routine basic acts to complex social interactions and significant facets such as parenthood (which may profoundly influence a person's way of being). Yet humans tend to live by routine and cling to the 'numbing attractions of everydayness' (Polt, 1999, p. 77). As long as we 'own' the choices given to us by the specific possibilities open to us in our 'average everyday existence' we are then authentic (Heidegger, 1927, p. 69). Hence, we may then engage with anticipatory moments of becoming. Therefore, the primary meaning of authenticity is becoming (Brook, 2009, p. 52). My data analysis questions what this means for my respondents in terms of becoming teachers and learning to teach.

The research study

In the original research study (a year-long ethnography based in one secondary school undertaken in 2006) I interviewed each pre-service teacher twice and observed them working with mentors and university tutors in the school setting (Douglas, 2014). In this 2015 follow up study I interview each participant again and explore responses in relation to questions about their learning to teach and their subsequent careers in the nine years since the first study. The interviews were semi-structured, qualitative and designed to find out what respondents thought about their experiences of learning to teach, and how these had developed over time. In focusing on understandings rather than checking accuracy of accounts, interviews were an appropriate way of exploring the conceptual position taken by respondents with regards to their learning and their careers. The two research questions asked:

1. How did your experience of learning to teach affect your continued learning and your subsequent career?
2. Have your opportunities to learn changed since taking the teaching course?

Each interview lasted approximately an hour and they were recorded and transcribed verbatim. I located the individuals through social media and the interviews took place using Skype computer software.

Findings from the interviews

In this section data extracts are analysed referring to the concepts of readiness-to-hand and authenticity from Heidegger's work in order to illuminate a conceptual understanding of what may influence learning to teach. I focus on two of the participants (Danni and Lauren) in order to illustrate how the generated interview data answer the research questions and how the analysis comments on previous findings from the earlier ethnographic study. However, I shall also comment briefly on the research data from the other two respondents (Oxanna and Carla). Danni and Oxanna are discussed together as they are both still practising teachers whereas Lauren and Carla are not.

All respondents had successfully completed their teacher education course and had qualified as teachers after an initial probationary period in post.

Danni and Oxanna

Danni

After completing her teaching course Danni worked in a state school for three days, increasing to four days a week for four years. She took on subject leader responsibilities during this time and moved on to full time teaching for a further four years. At the time of interview she had just resigned from her post in order to become a subject leader full time in an independent boarding and day school.

Oxanna

After completing her teaching course Oxanna taught foreign students for 2 years before taking up a full time post in a small school (150 pupils) in the UK. After teaching there for 5 years she travelled for a year and then secured a full time teaching position at a secondary school in the UK.

In 2006 Danni explained how the teacher education course challenged her desire to be told how to teach:

I think they [the university tutors] are trying to teach us how to make people independent learners because they are expecting us to be, which I resent, and I want them just to tell me. So they are making us work it out, and they are putting into practice what they want us to teach. (2006)

Danni accepts that there are not necessarily set answers to the questions she has about learning to teach but it is up to her to 'work it out' for herself. She values hearing what teachers say about their work and the fact that they don't all think the same way acknowledging that approaches and personal 'models' of education are developed through individual preference:

Working with different teachers is nice because you get different inputs, so what one person thinks is important another might not. And that's really important. So it is fitting in to my model of what education is. My model is changing. (2006)

Danni compares the pupils she is seeing in the classroom with her own children:

I still worry about what my eldest would do here because he would just switch off because he could. He would just sit at the back of the class and do nothing. My child wouldn't be the one who is mucking about but he may be just doodling. And I watch those ones, and they are not causing a problem and they do write some things down but they could do so much more. (2006)

She recognises that good teaching is 'working it through with the class' and working closely with individual students in order to open up possibilities for them to learn. This was not so apparent to her in her previous experience when working as a teaching assistant:

As a teaching assistant before I might have thought you [the teacher] are not very good are you, but actually they are. They are working it through with the class. (2006)

Throughout the teaching course Danni expresses her experience of learning to teach in very emotional terms. She anticipates visits from her university tutor with trepidation ('I just go to complete terror. It's so stupid because he is so lovely. But I am just completely, oh my goodness

this is it. I will cry for days.’) When reflecting on how the experience of the course has affected her ideas on education:

It’s like my whole life’s before me. It’s been a huge personal learning curve about what I am like and how I react and oh it’s just massive, and what I think about state education. These sleepless nights after talking to [the university tutor] about whether I was going to get a state or private job; I have had to re-think everything. It has changed me dramatically about everything. And I also struggle hugely with what I am doing to my children by doing this. So at the end of last term I was on the verge of giving up because [child name’s] report was so bad. And I sort of love it but I cannot love it enough because I am so worried about my children (2006).

Danni embraces the opportunity to learn to teach albeit initially preferring a less demanding and didactic approach than one that challenges her own opinions. She understands the desirability of her learning independently and welcomes a diversity of ideas from those she works with, recognising that these will be influenced by her own experiences in education (her ‘model’) and her role as a mother. She emphasises the emotional aspect of her learning and recognises that this is integral to her experience of being a teacher which in turn influences her ideas on education.

Oxanna also recounts the emotional side of her learning to teach:

People are there to back you and want you to succeed. It is that emotional investment from the staff that I really savour. For me teaching is such an emotional profession, so that is really important (2006).

Like Danni, Oxanna acknowledges the collaborative learning environment of the teaching course (‘I think that everyone is learning all the time. There’s definitely that sense of learning from each other.’). She shows concern when pupil outcomes appear to take priority in some teachers’ talk of their teaching:

I hear lots of talk about grades: ‘I don’t want this student in my set upsetting my grades’ and stuff like that. I hate that because grades don’t really mean anything. Whether you get an A* or an A doesn’t really matter at the end of the day (2006).

Such comments that Oxanna hears from the teaching staff indicate a detached view of learners and are suggestive of Heidegger’s presence-at-hand conceptualisation of knowing which focuses on outcomes rather than personal possibilities. This is in contrast to a readiness-to-hand mode of knowing Danni emphasises when she talks of working ‘with’ pupils. This conceptualisation is further expressed in their 2015 interviews when both Danni and Oxanna talk of pupils as individuals recognising the multiple aspects of their lives outside the classroom:

Oxanna:

Everything I had learnt at my previous school, I almost had to start again. I had to try and get into the community as it were to access these kids. I am learning that it takes time. You have to invest time before you can really have the impact you want (2015).

Danni:

I know that some teachers will say ‘oh so and so is thick’. I will never say that because I have to believe if I am to teach the way I do, that everyone is capable and I will

endlessly say 'you can do it, you can do it, you can do it'. And I think that has a huge effect given the letters from the pupils I have had; you believed in me and therefore I could do it (2015).

Danni's recounting of her son's education reinforces her belief that 'everyone is capable' and subsequently this has influenced her approach to teaching:

My son struggled and they wanted to statement him; they said he might get some GCSEs and then he went on to get (I am going to boast now) 12 GCSEs, A levels A*, A, B and he's just graduated from [Name] University with a first. I really had to change the way I thought because I had been brought up with academic success is the most important thing but then I can remember the lecture [in the teacher education course] and they didn't use this phrase but 'you're not born with set intelligence'. So when I see it happen, I know it's true. (I've got quite emotional) and I have to believe that to teach. I had 2 GCSE classes this year and the senior leadership wanted to take 3 people out of them because they said they wouldn't pass and I wouldn't let them. I said, 'I am not having it, they are not going' (2015).

Danni's view of education appears to be significantly influenced by her being a mother (her way of being in the world) and her experience of seeing her children learn. She understands the importance of a disposition towards questioning in both her teaching and in her own learning. She talks of her work with learners as a humanistic endeavour in relation to each of her students. Her practical readiness-to-hand mode of working with students ('you can do it, you can do it') conveys an attitude which promotes possibilities of future success. This belief has been reinforced by the experience of seeing her son succeed. She voices frustration at the 'fear culture' in her current working environment:

There is student feedback at the end of the year and mine is always positive and it's lovely and they are charming but I still think that actually I have watched colleagues and that has been used against them. If a student doesn't like a teacher there's no help given and in fact they [the senior management] will use it as a stick to beat you (2015).

Danni's decision to move schools illustrates her desire not to follow an inauthentic mode of being by simply doing what everyone else is doing and accepting the fear culture she describes in her current school. She acts on her anxiety and takes responsibility for who she is and how she intends to develop as a teacher and learner. Her fundamental wish to value people is challenged by a punitive system of accountability where the senior management 'go for people they don't want any more'. Oxanna too values opportunities in her teaching career which allow her to follow the possibilities of being herself. She is influenced by the anticipatory moments of what she can become:

[The teaching course was] something that had an extreme influence over not only my professional work but over me as a person and what I hold to be most valuable. I value it a lot more so many years down the line than I did then. It was influential and supportive while allowing you to be yourself (2015).

Lauren and Carla

Lauren

After completing her teaching course, Lauren taught full time for a year in a state school and qualified as a teacher before continuing work at the same school on and off as a supply teacher for a further two years in between travelling. She then taught overseas for two years before undertaking

a Masters course in the UK. At the time of interview she was working as a project manager within the healthcare sector.

Carla

After completing her teaching course she taught full time for 2 years and then undertook a Masters degree overseas. Returning to the UK she taught for 2 terms before starting a full time doctoral study programme. This is about to end and she has secured a job teaching 3 days a week in a grammar school.

In the interview data from 2006 both Lauren and Carla refer to learning to teach as acquiring technique. Carla notes 'I need the experience of knowing what works and what doesn't'. In comparison to Danni who welcomes numerous possibilities of ways to teach, Lauren wants to please all staff but this appears to prevent her from feeling she can develop her own teaching style:

But each teacher does have a certain style and it is hard to know how to reconcile that; how to develop your own style, so that it fits in with everyone else's styles. I am struggling with the whole perseverance: 'come on pick up the pen, do the work, stop talking, pick up your pen'. If things don't get much easier in terms of planning lessons ... I am trying my hardest and spending absolutely ages thinking up games. (2006)

Neither of the pre-service teachers mentions the possibilities open to the pupils beyond learning the subject matter in the curriculum nor the value of this learning for the individual pupils. Instead, the curriculum itself is the focus of their considerations on learning.

Carla:

I am very interested in my subject and when I am teaching I don't feel I have enough contact with my subject. When I plan a lesson I need to feel confident about the knowledge of that subject. Most of the time it is ok but I still learn stuff from researching to teach a lesson because I don't feel confident if I don't know a lot more than I need to teach (2006).

When pupils' learning is the focus of the interviews it is commented on in collective rather than individual terms. Lauren:

I do sometimes feel like when I was teaching in China, they at least do realise that education, they see it as a way out of things. They see it as a way forward. Whereas, here they all take it for granted and they don't put so much in, they don't appreciate it so much (2006).

Carla:

As a student teacher you are trying to reach a point where you are a teacher and having a class on your own is a sign of this (2006).

Viewing the pupils as a collective does not recognise an authentic mode of being a teacher with positive social interactions and anticipatory moments of becoming. Fewer acknowledgements are given to pupils' individual characteristics. The value of appreciating pupils as individuals when they are learning, and of developing an awareness of their lives outside the classroom (a readiness-to-hand way of knowing) is little mentioned in Lauren's and Carla's comments. Lauren talks of her and

her pupils' learning in terms of 'lesson planning and strategies for sequencing'. This is in contrast to Heidegger's attitude to learning which is not about understanding correct interpretations or gaining a command of facts.

Unlike data from Danni and Oxanna, emotions about the work in the classroom were intentionally played down. Carla:

I tend not to use my emotions. Ok I am feeling this but it doesn't matter. This is what I have to do. I guess that is a character flaw or attribute, I don't know (2006).

The follow up interviews in 2015 also reflect a presence-at-hand mode of knowing apparent in the 2006 data. Although recognising a way of knowing as a way of being with others in an active and practical sense with a focus on the individual, Carla expresses difficulty in establishing such a readiness-to-hand mode in the classroom:

I always thought that certain areas need to be covered but it is mainly about getting them [pupils] to be curious about something and then satisfying that curiosity. And I thought that's good teaching, but in class you can't actually do that because you are teaching A now, then B, C, D and all the way to Z, and you can't devote so much time on A even though they have questions, which is the best part of the lesson, when they ask questions (2015).

Lauren expresses frustration at the lack of her own learning in her teaching. Her comments also illustrate that her way of knowing is very much in a presence-at-hand mode:

I did feel that I was not really learning very much as a teacher and I wasn't really gaining enough in life experiences. I do remember feeling after the teacher education course that in terms of actual practical training I think the University could have done more to go through lesson planning in a more methodical way so that I felt I had more strategies. The difficulty with lesson planning is making sure that everything is very well sequenced and structured so that it builds up in a logical rational manner (2015).

But Lauren then goes on to say:

I don't know even if they had told me that this is necessary in a didactic way I would have been able to absorb it. We hadn't really had a clear idea of how to deliver segments of a lesson. It's definitely something that I have come to think about and understand to be a key consideration in planning lessons but I don't know to what extent that would have helped me then. I am contradicting myself to an extent saying that that would have been helpful but the flip side of that is that yes it probably would have been helpful but would I have been in a position to absorb this information? I don't know (2015).

Lauren doubts that her suggestions for her preferred way of learning in the teacher education course would have actually benefited her learning to teach. She feels that she needed time to absorb the learning process. This became a priority for her professional and personal development which she put before developing her teaching career. Gaining 'life experience' and the opportunity for further study enabled her to feel that she could still follow her goal of following a socially productive career.

Discussion: the personal challenge of learning to teach

Both Danni and Lauren at times appear to experience the world as uncomfortable, 'where one is alienated from oneself or from the world' (Vandenberg, 2008, p. 255). By putting the familiar in an unfamiliar light (Danni's relationship with her children and Lauren's desire to follow a socially productive career) anxiety provides an opportunity to see one's life potentially with greater insight and more resolve. It is when things fail us that we appreciate their importance (Heidegger, 1927). The process of training to become a teacher and the learning opportunities in this process have been seen in research studies to be an emotional, often anxious and personally challenging time for pre-service teachers (Sutton and Wheatley, 2003). This process, I would argue, occurs at a time which lends itself to focusing on the questions fundamental to a person's aspirations and purpose in life. Lauren explores other career possibilities and pursues authentic relationships in other professional situations. Unlike Danni, she did not find these in the classroom. For Danni, some of her worries as a mother anxious about the education of her son are addressed by her learning to teach. The course and her subsequent experiences of teaching reinforce her developing understanding of how one learns. She is helped in understanding this through her own learning as a pre-service teacher and her undertaking of the maternal role. Appreciating how this develops over time (from starting her course to teaching in schools alongside her son's educational development) enriches an understanding of how Danni's past, present and future fit together.

My methods of generating and interpreting data over a nine year period consider respondents' conceptions of their experiences with reference to their past and future and analyses their sense of themselves as beings-in-time (Steiner, 1987), albeit from data generated from just two snapshots on widely separated occasions. Their perceptions of themselves are considered with reference to previous iterations of themselves. Viewing data through a Heideggerian lens helps a researcher see respondents in a coherent totality (Trubody, 2015), as individuals with a life beyond the fieldwork. This ready-to-hand approach to a way of knowing is also applicable to all respondents' relationships: how university tutors and school mentors work with pre-service teachers for example, and how pre-service teachers and then teachers speak about their work with pupils. Viewing respondents as operating within an authentic mode (and inauthentic mode when following everyone else in order to accomplish their everyday activities) opens up questions around personal aspirations and what is seen as valuable to each individual. Data illustrating Danni's understanding of the learning process when she shares her views from both a parental and professional perspective show an authentic response to how she perceives learning to teach. However, in times of heightened anxiety and crisis of meaning, Lauren questions teaching as her life's purpose in wanting to pursue a socially productive career.

Concluding points

The findings of this research indicate that considering new ways of enabling teachers to appreciate an understanding of their learning to teach would be beneficial for them. If teaching is more than subject delivery and measurable outcomes then teacher education and professional development opportunities would benefit from a focus on personal aspiration and anticipatory moments of becoming. Reinforcing teachers' appreciation of their own individuality and enhancing their awareness of making a difference to the lives of their learners (Campbell, 2018) will help teachers tackle the many constraints on their practice. Recent trends in England of teachers leaving the profession (DfE, 2016b) suggest that more can be done to support them in initial training and in professional development activities. Current performative cultures neglect the emotional aspects of teaching in an overriding drive to meet set targets. With an increasing focus on the technical and measurable aspects of teachers' work there is a need for opportunities to enquire into and develop the personal, philosophical and theoretical aspects of teacher development.

Commentaries on Heidegger's notion of education have been forwarded such as on being in teaching (Donnelly, 1999), poetic learning (Pike, 2003) and authenticity and ICT (Peters, 2009; Riley, 2011; Trubody, 2015). But none of these use Heidegger's concepts as a lens through which to analyse longitudinal diachronic empirical data. In this article I have used secondary sources for drawing attention to what is to be thought when considering Heidegger's concepts as well as citing his own words. The dilemma arises in that I may misrepresent his ideas and my writing fall 'into the kind of representational thinking that Heidegger always sought to overcome' (Lewin, 2015, p. 230). Nevertheless, utilising an analytic process informed by the ideas of Heidegger presents a significantly different picture from the dynamics of more traditional research in teacher education which often emphasises descriptive analysis (Douglas, 2014). Heidegger's concepts such as readiness-to-hand and authenticity are also promoted as ways for teachers themselves to consider their own conceptualisations of knowing and becoming.

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