Career crossroads: motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW Department of Education primary schools

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Career Crossroads:

Motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in

NSW Department of Education primary schools

This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

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UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

Ruth Lusty

Master of Education – with Distinction (University of Wollongong)
Bachelor of Arts (University of New England)
Diploma of Teaching (Armidale College of Advanced Education)

School of Education in the Faculty of Social Sciences

2016
I, Ruth E. Lusty, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Education, in the School of Education, Faculty of Social Science, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

(Signature)

RUTH LUSTY

18 February 2016
ABSTRACT

This Australian study investigates the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW Department of Education (NSW DoE)\(^1\) primary schools. Although existing literature relating to notions of mid-career and worker motivation is extensive and cross-disciplinary, literature specifically related to teachers in mid-career has, until recently, been limited. The three areas of *mid-career, teachers* and the *organisational context of the NSW DoE*, underpin this research and contribute to developing conceptualisations of the professional lives of mid-career teachers. This study builds upon the broad themes identified in my recent Delphi study (Lusty 2013). As there is little literature specific to mid-career teachers in the Australian context, this study will contribute to new conceptualisations of mid-career teachers as a group, and fill the gap in knowledge about the working lives of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools.

Underpinning this qualitative study is a constructivist philosophy employing an interpretive, naturalistic approach. The trustworthiness and authenticity of this research has been established through the use of methodological tools based on the conceptualisations of Guba and Lincoln (1999; 1985). Strategies to enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were used, including peer debriefing, member checking, the use of *thick* description (Geertz 1973; Ryle 1971), auditing processes and on-going reflexive practice. A single case, bounded by Sydney Region within the NSW DoE, was studied. Fifteen participants meeting the criteria for mid-career teachers, defined as having 8–15 years teaching experience, were purposefully chosen from a variety of locations and situations. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken using an interview guide and resultant data was thematically analysed. A coding manual was developed and was used to enhance the management, analysis and interpretation of the data collected. *Dedoose*, an online data management tool, was employed to support this process. Using an inductive approach, the analysis process was iterative, rigorous and documented in a reflexive journal. Ethical principles and practices were maintained at every stage of the research study.

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\(^1\) Previously known as NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) and NSW Department of Education and Communities (NSW DEC), the current name NSW Department of Education (NSW DoE), used in this thesis.
Analysis and synthesis of data resulted in three unique outcomes: the development of a Typology of mid-career teachers, a Framework for school leaders and a related Mid-career leadership tool, designed for implementation in professional practice. The Typology of mid-career teachers provides a new way to differentiate teachers in the mid-career stage of professional life. The Framework for school leaders clarifies specific knowledge, attitudes and actions effective school leaders employ to maximise the potential of mid-career teachers. By synthesising the typology and the leadership framework, the Mid-career leadership tool was developed, enabling school leaders to correctly identify mid-career teachers and appropriately differentiate their support. In this way, the effective development of mid-career teachers, through their preferred focus of quality classroom teaching or leadership aspirations, can be achieved. Mid-career teachers are a valuable human resource with half their career still ahead of them. An informed understanding of the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers and an investment in their development is an investment in the future sustainability of the teaching profession.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Reginald Charles Bennett (1923–2011), whose love of learning and quiet encouragement laid the foundation for believing I could achieve whatever I set out to do.

Thank you dad.
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CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This doctoral research examines the working lives of mid-career teachers in the New South Wales Department of Education (NSW DoE) primary schools. It has arisen directly from my experience as a career teacher with the NSW DoE. Throughout my career I have been highly motivated, both in my work as a classroom teacher and, for the last 15 years, in my executive leadership role as a teaching Assistant Principal. I maintained my motivation through personal resilience, reflective practice and continuing academic study. I could see however, that other teachers were not always able to remain consistently motivated at different points in their careers. This led me to think about differentiating factors contributing to this, as well as potential ways to provide support in my executive role. My motivation to undertake this doctoral study was to be able to contribute knowledge specifically to my workplace and more generally, to the teaching profession as a whole.

The choice of a Doctor of Education degree, a professional doctorate, offered the best avenue to achieve this purpose. From as early as 1998 (Malloch 2010) it has been commonly accepted (Kot & Hendel 2012) that a professional doctorate ‘enables the candidate to make a significant contribution to knowledge and practice in their professional context’ (Evans, Fisher & Grichting 2007) through the application of research to the study of work-based problems or issues. The emergence (Malfroy & Yates 2003; Neumann, 2005) and growth (Kot & Hendel 2012) of the professional doctorate over the past 25 years allows professionals to engage in knowledge creation in a variety of less traditional modes (Clerke & Lee 2008; Fink, 2006; Malfroy, & Yates 2003). Beyond knowledge creation and resulting contributions to professional practice, the professional doctorate has a direct impact on the candidate’s career development, extending their knowledge, skills, professionalism (Burgess & Wellington 2010) and their ability to influence organisational change (Costley 2010). As a veteran teacher my

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1 For the purpose of this study, mid-career teachers are defined as teachers having 8–15 years teaching experience.

2 Previously known as both NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) and, more recently, NSW Department of Education and Communities (NSW DEC). For consistency, the current name adopted on 1 July 2015, NSW Department of Education (NSW DoE) will be used throughout this thesis.
aim was never to pursue an academic career; however, as a result of the doctoral journey I have indirectly benefited professionally, personally and academically.

1.2 Audience

Complex interactions between the university, the profession and the workplace as conceptualised by Lee, Green and Brennan (2000), suggest that ‘new types of knowledge and new types of relationships’ (Malfroy & Yates 2003, p. 120) are forged from research critically located in professional workplace settings. The audience for this doctoral dissertation is three-fold addressing the university academy, the teaching profession and the workplace, specifically the NSW DoE primary school context. Despite the diversity of these three audiences, the point of intersection reflects the creation of new knowledge relevant in all three spheres, as illustrated in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Audience for this dissertation](image)

**Note:** Figure 1 based on the original conceptualisation of Lee and colleagues (2000) and its subsequent development by Graham (2013).
The three major outcomes of this doctoral research project are the development of a Typology of mid-career teachers (Chapter 4, p. 80), a Framework for school leaders (Chapter 5, p. 108) and a related Mid-career leadership tool (Chapter 6, p. 132) suitable for implementation in professional practice. The Typology of mid-career teachers provides a new way to differentiate teachers in the mid-career stage of professional life and the Framework for school leaders helps clarify specific knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and actions effective school leaders should employ to create positive environments which enhance the potential of mid-career teachers. The Mid-career leadership tool enables school leaders to quickly identify mid-career teachers and provide them with targeted and differentiated support. By maximising the potential of mid-career teachers, school leaders not only enhance the commitment and achievements of mid-career teachers, they augment their potential effectiveness in the workplace.

1.3 Background to the problem

The growing intensification and complexity of teachers’ work over time has been widely recognised (Apple 1986; Ballet & Kelchtermans 2008, 2009; Easthope & Easthope 2000; Gardner & Williamson 2006; Hargreaves 1994; OECD 2005; Pillay, Goddard & Wilss 2005; Vanblaere & Devos 2015). Schools and teachers worldwide have engaged with continuous change over the past few decades (Ballet & Kelchtermans 2009). In the Australian educational context this has been particularly evident with the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Education Agreement (2009) setting the direction for a national curriculum, currently being implemented. Complementing the introduction of a national curriculum has been the introduction of national standards for the accreditation of teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2011; n.d.). These key initiatives have implications for individual teachers, school leaders and their communities, school systems and related accreditation authorities. More noticeably than ever, Australian teachers face the challenge of keeping pace with unprecedented change in the current educational environment. Shields (2013), referring to the growing complexity of the educational landscape, which she refers to as part of the VUCA — volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous — environment, acknowledges the difficulties arising from the unpredictable and rapidly changing world of the 21st century.
Demands on Australian teachers continue to increase in complexity and expectation without commensurate apportioning of time for these additional activities (Gardner & Williamson 2006). The ever-changing work environment and its associated impact on teachers’ workload is reflected in teachers out-of-hours work completed at home, documented as typically being 24.5 hours per week for Tasmanian teachers (Gardner & Williamson 2006). This trend is confirmed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), which states that teachers are among the most likely to have been overemployed\(^3\) in 2007. While in the past teachers have been self-motivated to upgrade their knowledge and skills, there is now an external imperative for accountability in meeting the requirements of compulsory accreditation, adding to existing pressures. Increasing demands on teachers mirrors increasing burnout and attrition levels (Pillay Goddard, & Wilss, 2005; Ramsey 2000; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2009). This impacts teachers’ feelings of well-being and competence, particularly apparent at decision points in their careers. The attrition of beginning teachers from the profession is well documented (Burghes et al. 2009; Darling-Hammond 2010; DEST 2003; Hong 2012; Ingersoll 2001), but less well known are the factors impacting on mid-career teachers. Despite high attrition rates for beginning teachers, in reality the majority of teachers stay in the profession (Day 2008), yet little is known about how they adapt and survive or how they maintain their motivation and effectiveness throughout their professional lives.

At the other end of the scale, Australia and many other countries are faced with an ageing teaching workforce (OECD 2005, 2013b). At the time of the data collection for this study in 2012, almost half of the primary school teachers in the NSW DoE were over the age of 50 (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012c). Consequently both in Australia and internationally, concern is focussed on attracting and retaining new teachers to the profession. In the NSW DoE specifically, initiatives to attract people to areas of potential shortfall include ‘active promotion of teaching as a career through the teach.NSW campaign, teacher education scholarships and retraining programs and a range of incentives’ (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012c). At the same time, mid-career teachers currently in the workforce receive very

\(^3\) Defined as employed people who prefer to work fewer hours each week, taking into account how that would affect their income (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).
little attention and can be described as *invisibles* (Zweig 2014a), often overlooked yet critical to organisational success.

As outlined in greater detail later in this thesis (Chapter 2), the retirement rate for primary teachers in the NSW DoE has grown steadily over the last fifteen years (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012d), reflecting the upward trend resulting from the *baby boomers* reaching retirement age (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2014b). It is projected that the majority of late career teachers will retire by 2017, leaving many essential teaching and leadership roles vacant. The scale of this exodus of experienced teachers is unprecedented: with almost half the teaching workforce leaving the profession within the next two years, organisations such as the NSW DoE will increasingly rely on mid-career teachers to fill these critical gaps. The role of mid-career teachers will be crucial in maintaining organisational stability as well as providing leadership sustainability into the future. It is therefore essential not only to identify who mid-career teachers are, but also to understand their existing skills and abilities in order to assess how best to support their transition into the wide array of key teaching and leadership roles.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify and investigate the factors that impact on the professional lives of mid-career teachers in NSW Department of Education (NSW DoE) primary schools. Using an interpretive approach, the aim is to develop an image of the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers, as seen through the eyes of mid-career teachers themselves. Using case study methodology, this study builds upon the broad themes identified in my previous Delphi study (Lusty 2013). The Delphi study was undertaken as a special project in 2010 to fulfill a coursework component of this Doctor of Education degree. The Delphi study article, subsequently published in 2013, was based on the outcomes of the Delphi study research project. The outcomes of the Delphi study helped to inform my thinking in the early stages of the analysis of the case study data. This thesis study further aims to build on the recent work of Day and Gu in the United Kingdom (2010), and add to the conceptualisation of mid-career teachers as

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4 ‘Baby boomers’ are defined as people born from 1945 to 1965 inclusive (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007).
a group by filling the gap in knowledge about the working lives of mid-career primary school teachers in an Australian context: the NSW DoE.

1.5 Research questions

The overarching research question being asked is: What are the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools? As this study unfolded, it became evident from the data collected that leadership in the NSW DoE workplace appeared to be a significant area linked to mid-career teachers’ professional lives. Although not initially envisaged, I felt it was an important theme to investigate. As a result, the subsequent question was added: How can educational leaders enhance the effectiveness of mid-career teachers on student outcomes? Knowing how to support mid-career teachers should result in improved organisational effectiveness, particularly in relation to the core business of schools: improving student outcomes.

1.6 Assumptions of the study

This qualitative study, undertaken through the lens of naturalistic inquiry, assumes that reality is socially constructed (Mertens 2005) and focusses on human interaction within the natural setting. As expounded in Chapter 3, although researcher/participant interactions cannot be seen as objective, researcher influence has been minimised through appropriate skill development and the rigorous application of established naturalistic techniques and personal ethical practices. Data analysis procedures are well-documented and transparent, clearly presenting outcomes from the participants’ perspectives. The use of reflective practice throughout this research project makes researcher decisions, choices and interpretation explicit. Overall it can be shown that this research demonstrates ‘value-resonance’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 38) as the paradigm, substantive theories, methodological decisions and study context exhibit congruence.

1.7 Limitations of the study

This study has developed over time. At its conception, the study aimed to develop a detailed and informative image of the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers within the context of the NSW DoE workplace in order to inform organisational practice. In the period the research project has been undertaken, the organisation itself
has continued to evolve in response to the political and educational climate in Australia, outwardly marked by the change of name from the NSW DEC to the NSW DoE. Despite such changes beyond my control, my research outcomes, derived from close analysis of data, have generated important knowledge and practical tools that may be applied in the workplace. However given the scope of the study — the NSW DoE setting — generalisation of these finding to other sectors such as the Catholic Education and Independent sectors, would have to be cautiously drawn and tested in each unique environment. Although generalisation across sectors may not be possible, transferability within the NSW DoE setting may be realised when sufficient conformity between different workplace settings is established. The potential for transferability across NSW DoE locations needs to be appropriately tested, taking into consideration congruence of school communities, with particular attention to the leadership/mid-career teacher relationships. Testing the application of the Typology of mid-career teachers and the associated Framework for school leaders across locations within the NSW DoE organisational context, over time may ultimately lead to improved outcomes for mid-career teachers, their students, school communities and the wider NSW DoE organisation.

1.8 Scope of the study

This research focusses entirely on mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools. It is important to understand the motivations and concerns of teachers at any career stage. Such understanding allows school leaders to gain insights that enable them to value, support and maximise the potential of teachers in their schools. However considering the current state of the ageing teaching workforce in the NSW DoE and the related implications for teachers in mid-career, my choice to investigate this group is timely and critically important for the successful transitional shift of roles and future leadership sustainability of the NSW DoE workforce. The contextual scope comprising of the NSW DoE was chosen because it is the largest provider of public education in Australia as well as the largest employer of teachers in the southern hemisphere, and prior to my recent retirement it was my workplace. This research will enable me to make a positive contribution to the teaching profession, the NSW DoE and individual mid-career teachers themselves.
1.9 Significance of the study

Very little empirical research specific to mid-career primary school teachers in NSW schools has been published. This study is significant as it builds on the few previous studies (Lusty 2013; Watson & Hatton 2002), filling the gap in knowledge related to mid-career teachers in the current Australian context. The development of a thorough picture of the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools contributes to the understanding of the professional working lives of mid-career teachers and this knowledge can be utilised by school leaders and others to identify, develop and support mid-career teachers in their various roles in NSW DoE schools. The three major outcomes generated by this research, the Typology of mid-career teachers, the Framework for school leaders and the related Mid-career leadership tool have important implications for future leadership and management practice.

1.10 Thesis structure

This introduction situates my research study in relation to the current Australian educational environment, with particular reference to the NSW DoE context. In this chapter, I briefly define mid-career teachers, identify the research question and describe this study’s purpose. Importantly I recognise and make explicit the assumptions, limitations and scope of the study, and I make clear the significance, outcomes and intended audiences for this research. The current gap in knowledge relating to mid-career teachers in Australian primary schools is revealed as being an under-researched, yet critically important area in the rapidly changing Australian educational environment of this decade.

The literature review introduces the conceptual framework underpinning this study, consisting of three core areas of focus: conceptualisations of mid-career, teachers themselves, and the NSW DoE workplace. Presented in three sections and illustrated diagrammatically for clarity, it becomes evident that the three core areas and their sub-themes are, at times, complex and interconnected. A definition of mid-career teachers in the Australian context is developed. The literature presented provides depth and context to this study. It establishes what is known internationally and highlights the sparsity of empirical studies relating to mid-career teachers in the Australian context.
Chapter 3 documents the methodological approach employed for this study, based on the principles of naturalistic inquiry, as conceptualised by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This chapter demonstrates how this research is an appropriate fit for the naturalistic paradigm, as it fulfils the fundamental tenets which, when adopted, collectively identify the naturalistic paradigm. In particular, Chapter 3 outlines how the trustworthiness and authenticity of this research has been established through the well-documented use of established naturalistic techniques. Illustrative tables and diagrams are included to provide clarity and evidence of researcher practices. The development of a coding manual and the associated use of Dedoose, an online data management tool, are detailed as further evidence of the rigorous and iterative data analysis process. Ethical principles and practices, maintained during the entire research study, are documented.

The findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 are developed from the analysis and synthesis of data. Each of these chapters presents a unique contribution to new knowledge relevant to the identification, recognition, leadership, management, development, advocacy and success of mid-career teachers. Specifically, Chapter 4 reveals a new way to differentiate teachers in mid-career through the application of the Typology of mid-career teachers generated from this research. Four case profiles, illustrative of the four categories defined in the typology, are described. In Chapter 5 the focus shifts to school leadership, through the explication of the Framework for school leaders. Developed from the data, this leadership framework is designed to support school leaders in correctly recognising, supporting and maximising the potential of mid-career teachers in their schools. Although distinctive, when applied in practice, Chapters 4 and 5 are closely connected.

This connection is formalised in Chapter 6 with the development of a Mid-career leadership tool integrating both the Typology of mid-career teachers and the Framework for school leaders into a practical tool designed for implementation in professional practice. It is argued that such a tool is needed to maximise the untapped potential of mid-career teachers. The strategic application of the typology and leadership framework provides a range of potential benefits to school communities and their various stakeholders.
Finally, Chapter 7 presents the conclusion of this study, which summarises how this study bridges the gaps in knowledge relating to mid-career teachers in the Australian context and contributes to knowledge creation in this specific field. Identified limitations of the study are discussed, as are recommendations for future practice. Opportunities for further research are proposed which could lead to greater generalisation and wider application of the developed frameworks in the future. References and appendices are included after the final chapter.

1.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the collective aspects contributing context and background to understanding this thesis research project. A naturalistic inquiry investigating the professional lives of mid-career teachers in an Australian context, this study bridges the gap between current and future knowledge and practice in this field. The next chapter, examining the literature informing this study, is explored through the lens of a conceptual framework derived from the overarching research question, ‘What are the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools?’ Through this exploration, gaps in current knowledge are identified.
2.1 Introduction

The literature review in this chapter serves multiple purposes. It is evolutionary in the sense that although it initially provided a conceptual framework of underpinning knowledge relevant to my study, it developed during the research process to include literature related to themes arising from the data collected, and finally it incorporates literature relevant to the outcomes of this research study. It is important to recognise and understand that the literature presented here is bounded by the parameters of this research project in breadth and time and seeks to provide interconnections that illuminate the core purpose of the study, which is to answer the question: ‘What are the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools?’ Each subsequent chapter builds on the literature in this chapter, integrating literature that both informs and expands the knowledge being presented.

This doctoral research study is an in-depth qualitative study that investigates the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers. As explained in Chapter 1, my first study, a Delphi study, was published in 2013 (Lusty 2013). While the Delphi study is not included as part of this dissertation, it has contributed foundational knowledge to this field in the Australian context. Consequently, the literature presented in my Delphi paper is common to both research projects and is largely re-presented in this chapter. Rather than continually citing myself here, I would like to acknowledge my authorship of much of what follows as coming directly from my Delphi study paper. Therefore, this literature review includes, develops and expands my previously published work.

This literature review provides underpinning knowledge for the study of mid-career teachers, who could be considered to be the invisible workers (Zweig 2014a) of the teaching profession. Zweig (2014a) defines Invisibles as ‘people whose roles are critical to whatever enterprise they are part of’ (p. 7). Given that approximately 37 per cent of primary school teachers working for the NSW DoE at the time of my data collection could be classified, using my operational definition, as mid-career teachers (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012c), this is a significant proportion of the teaching workforce. David Zweig (2014b) adds:
in an age when self-promotion is encouraged and relentless, some very talented professionals prefer to do their work out of the limelight. "Invisibles" work in every field but have three traits in common: They are ambivalent about recognition. They are meticulous about their craft. They savor responsibility (p. 99).

My research (Lusty 2013) demonstrates that many mid-career teachers display similar traits. They are highly motivated and engaged in their work, doing their jobs year after year unobtrusively whilst they willingly take on increasing levels of responsibility. They quietly contribute to the core success of their schools and organisations yet this contribution is often overlooked and undervalued. Zweig (2014b) suggests that the challenge for managers is to ‘figure out who they are and what makes them tick’ (p. 99). My research contributes to our understanding of exactly that: who mid-career teachers are and what we know about them and their work.

Over the past fifteen years, there has been a renewed interest in the working lives of teachers and their development over time through various stages during their career (Bakioglu, Hacifazlioglu & Ozcan 2010; Brekelmans, Wubbel & van Tartwijk 2005; Day & Gu 2007, 2010; Hargreaves 2005; Kington, Reed & Sammons 2014; Lusty 2013; Lynn 2002; McCormick & Barnett 2008; Meister & Ahrens 2011; Oplatka & Tako 2009; Owen 2005; Richter et al. 2010; Yariv 2013). Focus has varied across career stages with large bodies of literature emerging that cover early career teachers (Long et al. 2012; Mansfield & Beltman; Mantei 2010; Manuel 2003; McCormack, Gore & Thomas 2006; Meristo & Eisenschmidt 2014; Tricarico, Jacobs & Yendol-Hoppey 2014; Watt, Richardson & Wilkins 2014) as well as experienced and late-career or veteran teachers (Berliner 2001; Carter 2007; Cohen 2009; Day 2002; Day & Gu 2009; Orlando 2014; Veldman et al. 2013). In the climate of this expanding field of literature, research specific to mid-career teachers, which prior to 2000 was limited, is beginning to develop (Konstantinides–Vladimirov 2013; Lusty 2013; Oplatka 2004; Richter et al. 2010).

Underpinning this change is an older body of literature informing this study, which provides context related to underlying themes and issues. The linear focus applicable to the industrial model and approach to education in society at the time is expressed in
foundational literature relevant to career stages (Fessler 1995). Even Huberman (1989a), who acknowledges that career trajectories differ between individuals and at times would be better characterised by discontinuity, still finds the linear career construct useful. More recent literature however, recognises that the changing global context (Shields 2013) and the rise of uncertainties (Day & Gu 2010) contribute to a more complex educational landscape requiring a new approach. Adapted from its original military application (Lawrence 2013; Moore 2014), the notion of VUCA, an acronym for volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, is a useful way to describe the 21st century reality (Shields 2013). Although career trajectories are still conceptualised in stages or phases (Day & Gu 2010; Day et al. 2007; Konstantinides–Vladimirou 2013; Lusty 2013), they are no longer thought of in simplistic, linear terms. These empirical studies have demonstrated the complexity of teachers’ professional lives and the impact of, and linkages between variously conceptualised domains and contexts. When examined as a whole, all the interconnecting themes from the literature produce contrasting images of mid-career professionals, some of whom are highly motivated, pursuing new career challenges, while others are disengaged in the workplace and are in need of support. In this chapter, literature relating to the focus of my interest, issues impacting on mid-career primary school teachers within the context of the NSW DoE, is explored within the conceptual framework described below.

2.2 Conceptual framework

The research question: ‘What are the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools?’ when deconstructed, reveals three core areas of focus: mid-career, teachers and the NSW DoE workplace. Therefore, literature underpinning this research project, as illustrated in Figure 2, provides a tripartite foundation for conceptualising the professional lives of mid-career teachers through an investigation of the domains of mid-career, teachers themselves and the specific organisational context of the NSW DoE. Examination of existing literature has shown that literature related to the concepts of mid-career workers and worker motivation is both broad and cross-disciplinary, being located in vocational, business, psychology, education and other journals. However, literature related to the fusion of worker motivation and mid-career professionals, specifically mid-career teachers, has until recently, been limited. The current work of Christopher Day, Qing Gu and their team (Day & Gu 2010; Day et al. 2007) accounts for a resurgence of interest in the area of teacher career
stages, providing an international context as background for this Australian study. In my reading of relevant literature, the three major themes — mid-career, teachers, and the context of the NSW DoE — were confirmed as being of importance to the investigation of the study’s research question. These three core areas of focus are visually represented in Figure 2. Further, minor themes were also identified from literature, as shown in Figure 2, and these were grouped to reflect their connection with the major themes. Each of the three major and their related minor themes, are expanded and explored in detail as the chapter unfolds.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework

Note: Figure 2 based on and expanded from Lusty (2013, p. 90).

2.2.1 Mid-career

This section reviews the literature on mid-career, as illustrated in Figure 3, drawn from the Conceptual Framework.
2.2.1.1 What is mid-career?

Mid-career has been defined in terms of age (Bassett 1996; Rush, Peacock & Milkovich 1980), tenure in a position (Morrow & McElroy 1987), duration in an occupation (Mount 1984) and time in the workforce (Gould 1979; Hall & Mansfield 1975). Using age solely as the definition of mid-career is problematic, due to inconsistency between authors (Williams & Fox 1995) and variables such as the length of training or the entry age into an occupation. For the purposes of my study, it is more appropriate for mid-career to be conceptualised in terms of a period within a specific occupation or career, rather than by age or time in the workforce.

Evidence shows that in Australia teaching is an ageing profession (DEST 2003) and although primary teachers have been teaching for an average of 17 years, approximately 9% have been teaching more than 30 years (McKenzie et al. 2008). For the purposes of this study, mid-career teachers in Australia are defined as those teachers who have been teaching for approximately 8–15 years (DEST 2003; NSW Department of Education & Training 2009). In 2007 Christopher Day and his team (Day et al.), defined six professional life phases of teachers in the United Kingdom and their third phase, Professional life phase 8–15, matches this definition.

2.2.1.2 Career stages

Career stage theory arose from the early work by Carl Jung, who developed the notion of an entire life cycle in his writing ‘The stages of life’ (Jung, C.G. 1971). Unlike Freud, Jung’s focus was on adult development in ‘the second half of life’ (Levinson et al. 1978, p. 4). This idea of adult life phases has been further explored in literature.
As early as 1957 Super proposed four stages of a career – exploration, stabilisation, maintenance and decline (Super 1957) – and variations of this have appeared in subsequent literature (Gould 1979; Morrow & McElroy 1987). Huberman’s career stage research (Huberman 1989a, 1989b) refined these stages, describing seven phases relevant to teachers. He was aware that career development involved layers of complexity, ranging from linear to disparate progression over time; however, he used the phases lens to summarise recurring trends in literature. This and other more recent models specifically relevant to teacher career development, including those of Fessler (1995), Steffy and Wolfe (2001) and Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington and Gu (2007), are discussed later in this chapter.

Focussing on mid-career development, of importance are the stabilisation stage involving the development of one’s identity within a profession, and the maintenance stage, where individuals tend to be established in their career and lifestyle (Williams & Fox 1995). In outlining the career stages, Williams and Fox (1995) indicate that ‘mid-career corresponds to the stabilization stage’ (p.353) although they suggest that there is an overlap with individuals in the early maintenance stage, who should be included in mid-career discussions. Critical to movement across career stages are what Super terms ‘decision points’ (Super 1980, p. 290) that occur variously throughout a career. These ‘reflect encounters with a variety of personal and situational determinants’ (Super 1980, p. 294), making movement between stages a grey area that varies between individuals. Schlossberg’s events-based career transition model highlights the impact life events can have on an individual’s career development (Goodman, Schlossberg & Anderson 2006). In this model, a transition is ‘any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles’ (p. 33). As well as obvious life-changing transitions such as parenthood, more subtle events or non-events, such as the loss of aspirations or failure to be offered anticipated promotion, create anticipated or at times, unanticipated transitions across life and career stages. Although these life-changing events may precipitate developmental adjustments, they also provide opportunity for ‘growth and transformation’ (Goodman, Schlossberg & Anderson 2006, p. 24) and related impacts are moderated by an individual’s ability to evaluate and cope with change in their life and career. The interplay over time of variables such as age, gender, personality, personal motivation, levels of satisfaction,
life events and the influences of work and non-work environments, impact on individuals throughout their careers contributing to the blurring of stages.

Mid-career, by definition, is a feature of all occupations. Individual workers, focussed on career progression, are often unaware that they have reached this stage and it is not until they move beyond the mid-point that they take time to reflect on their career path. Knowing what mid-career looks and being better able to recognising mid-career would empower individuals to evaluate their career to date and make more conscious and informed decisions about their future. Literature related to the characteristics of mid-career workers drawn from various fields, creates an image of what is known about mid-career workers and contributes to a wider understanding of issues impacting on their lives. As discussed in my earlier publication (Lusty 2013), this is best articulated by Williams and Fox (1995).

Williams and Fox (1995) argue that mid-career professionals can be characterised by both psychological and biological maturity, peak career performance, well-developed professional networks and job stability. Typically, mid-career professionals have overall job satisfaction, adequate avenues for advancement, considerable knowledge, and often they have developed substantial professional reputation. Nevertheless, professionals at this stage in their lives start putting higher value on non-work activities, such as family and lifestyle (Williams & Fox 1995). Some enter a mid-life crisis period, having become more aware of their own mortality and unachieved goals. They become more focussed on changing relationships with others and there is an increasing divergence between work and non-work activities, often giving rise to frustration and stress (Williams & Fox 1995). Levinson et al. (1978) refer to this period as mid-life transition which, when characterised by turmoil and disruption, is a mid-life crisis. Christopher Day and the VITAE (Variations in Teachers’ Work, Lives and Effectiveness) research team found that mid-career teachers faced ‘additional tensions in managing change in both their professional and personal lives’ (Day et al. 2007, p. 82). A more recent study, building on this earlier work (Kington, Reed & Sammons, 2014) confirmed that despite mid-career teachers reporting high levels of motivation and job satisfaction, ‘external demands on their time such as partners, children and other family commitments’ (Kington, Reed & Sammons 2014, p. 551) had a negative impact on their feelings of personal well-being. In the context of work life, this period
becomes a turning point for many mid-career workers where they suddenly find themselves faced with divided interests and issues of motivation in the workplace. Some mid-career workers recognise these periods of transition and change as being decision points in their careers, whilst others do not. It is not uncommon for mid-career workers to be so immersed in their professional and personal lives that they fail to take the time to reflect, reassess and consider future options. For mid-career workers, how decisions are made, or in some cases not made, at these decision points throughout their working lives is important, as such decisions can have lasting consequences for the future.

The research of Auster (2001) extends the image of mid-career through her gender specific work on professional women in mid-career. Mid-career can be a particularly difficult time for professional women for whom ‘work/life trade-offs and the struggle to juggle the needs of children and high performance expectations collide’ (Auster 2001, p. 720). Research by Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) indicates that women struggle with these trade-offs more so than men. Their research shows that by comparison, the percentage of women who believe trade-offs between career and family are necessary, is more than double that of men. It is clear that ‘gender is a major factor when it comes to trade-offs’ (Freidman & Greenhaus 2000, p. 35). For women, mid-career is often when ‘women feel the effects of gender biases and barriers to advancement’ (Auster 2001, p. 320). While men working in female dominated professions are fast-tracked towards the glass escalator, seamlessly moving upwards, many women begin to experience the glass ceiling, encountering an invisible barrier to career promotion (Maume 1999; Murrell & James 2001; Schneer & Reitman 1994; Schuck & Liddle 2004; Still 1997; Williams 1992). O’Neil and Bilmoria (2005) note that at the mid-career phase in women’s career development, career progression has often stalled at the middle management level, producing a bleak work environment for many mid-career women.

Despite greater organisational awareness and a rapid change in conceptualisations about careers over the last three decades (Bendl & Schmidt 2010) as well as an increase in gender equity legislation (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 2012), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports that this inequitable situation remains a reality (OECD...
In terms of career advancement women ‘still earn less than men . . . and find it harder to reach the top of the career ladder’ (OECD 2013a, p. 103). The issue of gender imbalance at mid-career is more specifically addressed in the context of this study, the NSW DoE, later in this chapter (p. 46).

2.2.1.3 Mid-career plateau

A career plateau is defined as the point in a career where the likelihood of further promotion is relatively low (Ference, Stoner & Warren 1977). The term ‘career plateau’ and related terms such as ‘deadwood’ have a negative tone suggesting failure. However there is nothing inherently negative about the concept of a career plateau, (Ference Stoner & Warren 1977) which is experienced by the majority of workers during their career. Career plateauing can be the result of either organisational factors, such as the narrowing of the promotions pyramid, or personal factors, such as individual performance in their current role. The term ‘career plateau’ should be seen as a descriptor of current circumstance rather than a descriptor of personal characteristics. Despite lack of opportunity, many mid-career workers have the ability and desire to perform roles at a higher level. It is important to understand that many mid-career workers are ‘solid citizens’, a term coined by Ference, Stoner and Warren (1977) to describe the majority of experienced and effective workers in organisations. Opportunities for professional development and challenging work should continue to be provided to ensure these workers remain effective (Ference, Stoner & Warren 1977). In the absence of appropriate support, there is evidence of reduced job satisfaction, a higher risk of psychological burnout, stronger intentions to leave the organisation and lower commitment to work (Slocum et al. 1985). It again becomes evident that the ability or lack of ability of an organisation to facilitate opportunities for targeted support can result in either positive or negative outcomes. For example, mentoring programs can play an important role in improving individual performance (Normore & Loughry 2006), which can ultimately benefit both the individual and the organisation. David Zweig (2014b) advises managers such as school executives, to recognise and reward invisible employees ensuring their work is intrinsically interesting. ‘The payoff’, Zweig (2014b) says, ‘goes beyond retaining them: [the] organisation’s culture will be infused with their ethics and excellence’ (p. 99).
2.2.1.4 Mid-career motivations and concerns

Motivations

Work motivation theories can be viewed as a subgroup of general motivation theories such as those related to incentive, drive, need and cognition (Petri & Govern 2013). Such theories focus on work-related behaviours and provide explanation for variations in attitude and engagement amongst workers. There are many theories under the umbrella of work motivation theories ranging from need hierarchy theories to expectancy-valence, equity and goal-setting theories (Petri & Govern 2013). The classic theories of Maslow (1943); Vroom (1964); Bandura (2001; Wood & Bandura 1989); Hertzberg (Miner 2006); and McClelland, Atkinson, Clark and Lowell (1953), among others, provide underpinning concepts in this area (Miner 2006; Mitchell & Daniels 2003). However literature related to the field of motivation is extremely vast and thus in the context of this study, developing an understanding of what motivates workers, particularly in mid-career, contributes to our image of what mid-career looks like and remains my focus.

In an organisational and work context, motivation is important because ‘motivation produces’ (Ryan & Deci 2000, p. 69). Motivation is directly related to intention and action. Personal motivation influences critical career decision making or, in some cases, lack of decision making, and explains behaviour that often is not commensurate with a person’s ability (London 1983). In the context of career motivation, London (1983) proposed a three-domain model, applicable to many occupations, consisting of career identity, career insight and career resilience. Career identity is related to the degree of convergence between career and identity; career insight connects self-perception to career goals; and career resilience refers to the ability to overcome, or be vulnerable to, career disruption (London 1983). The interplay of these domains with other variables in the work environment, contribute to career motivation and associated critical decision making.

In their synthesis of literature, Williams and Fox (Williams & Fox 1995) outline and discuss several issues of mid-career motivation. They allude to the difference between mid-career workers who view their work as a ‘job’ as opposed to a ‘career’, which is profound. They refer to job-oriented workers whose motivation is linked to rewards such as financial benefits, who tend to be self-serving and less productive, resulting in
greater stress, job dissatisfaction and burnout. In contrast, career-oriented workers, who perceive their career as part of a life plan, are motivated more by intrinsic rewards and their desire to achieve professional and personal goals. A critical factor in understanding the mid-career worker who has reached a stage of peak performance is the desire to apply and develop professional skills in the workplace (Williams & Fox 1995).

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of motivation (Ryan & Deci 2000) is a useful construct for explaining how motivation varies between individuals as well as for individuals across time and environments. Underpinning SDT is the difference between autonomous motivation, involving volition and choice and being typically intrinsic, and controlled motivation, involving external regulation and a sense of pressure, generally extrinsic (Gagné & Deci 2005). By identifying distinct types of motivation and their consequences for learning, performance, personal experience and well-being (Ryan & Deci 2000), as well as determining how each type of motivation is sustained or thwarted, SDT presents a self-determination continuum. This ranges from amotivation, completely lacking in determination, across four types of extrinsic motivation, which are to varying degrees externally controlled, to intrinsic motivation, which is self-determined (Gagné & Deci 2005). Ryan and Deci (2000) link the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs – competence, autonomy and relatedness — to feelings of well-being. Gagné and Ryan (2005) further argue that work climates that promote the satisfaction of these three needs leads to improved employee motivation characterised by autonomous motivation, a fusion of intrinsic motivation with the full internalisation of extrinsic motivation, ultimately resulting in increased work outcomes and employee well-being. The ability of organisations to facilitate autonomously supportive work environments can be instrumental in re-energising mid-career workers. Without organisational support, personal motivation is harder to maintain and may result in a mid-career worker shifting their focus from work to family or other issues. In turn, this can lead to a career plateau point (Ference, Stoner & Warren 1977), which has consequences for both the mid-career professional and the organisation.

It is known that supporting employees’ workplace autonomy is related to sustained motivation and increased productivity (Baard, Deci & Ryan 2004). Stone, Deci and Ryan (2009) provide six underpinning principles based on SDT that managers and their
organisations can implement to maximise the performance of staff. These practical guidelines range from basic strategies such as asking open questions and actively listening to employee perspectives, to purposefully minimising coercive controls such as rewards or comparisons with others, while developing talent, shared knowledge and competence. In an educational setting, Eyal and Roth (2011) have shown a direct link between teacher motivation and principal leadership styles. Transformational leadership, whereby vision is articulated and teachers are empowered, is associated with teachers’ autonomous motivation. Autonomously motivated teachers view teaching as interesting, meaningful and important. These teachers are less likely to suffer exhaustion and are more likely to tolerate occasional frustrations in the workplace (Eyal & Roth 2011). Schools that provide teachers with an autonomy-supportive working environment create conditions that promote confidence, improved performance and productivity. This is especially important for mid-career teachers, whose experienced and knowledge, gained over more than a decade, is an often under-recognised resource. The provision of an environment that promotes autonomous motivation and productive relationships, allows mid-career teachers to strengthen their knowledge, build their confidence, and make significant contributions to organisational success through their strong performance and consistent productivity.

**Concerns**

Studies specifically related to the problems and concerns of workers at mid-career are limited. Until recently, such research has largely centred on the issues and concerns of early or later career workers, yet as life expectancy lengthens with a subsequent lengthening of individuals’ work lives, time spent at mid-career is becoming longer and more significant. Mid-career workers bridge the gap between Generation X (born roughly between 1961 and 1981) on one side and Baby Boomers (born between 1945 and 1964) on the other (Saunders 2007). They account for an increasing percentage of the workforce, yet are under-researched and are generally misunderstood. Morison, Erickson and Dychtwald (2006) note that while mid-career employees ‘should be at the peak of their productivity, [they] are the most disaffected segment of the workforce’ (p.79). On one hand mid-career ‘can be a time of frustration, confusion and alienation, but also a time of discovery, new direction and fresh beginnings’ (p. 80). Finding a satisfying balance between work, family and other aspects of everyday life is becoming an important issue for workers at mid-career.
Early research by Rosen and Jerdee (1990) identified career plateaus, discussed earlier in this chapter, and skills obsolescence as issues of concern for mid-career workers. They attribute these problems ‘to a loss of motivation on the part of mid-career and older workers, to the absence of organisational career management systems, and to rapid changes in job duties’ (p. 59). In a more recent article, Morison, Erickson and Dychtwald (2006) build on this work and outline seven common sources of concern experienced by mid-career workers. These include career bottleneck, work/life tension, lengthening horizon, skill obsolescence, disillusionment with employers, burnout and career disappointment. Saunders (2007) adds under-stimulation, lack of advancement opportunities and the need for greater challenge in the workplace to the list. Three key concerns are of particular importance for mid-career workers: skill obsolescence, burnout and work/life tensions.

Rosen and Jerdee (1990) and Morison, Erickson and Dychtwald (2006) identified skills obsolescence as a major concern for mid-career workers. The Model of Skills Obsolescence outlined by Fossum et al. (1986) suggested that skills obsolescence is directly related to the development of incongruence between personal and job factors over time. The emergence of new technologies and changing organisational goals and organisational structures contribute to changing job requirements. The way individuals respond to change and whether or not they continue to improve their personal knowledge, skills and abilities in alignment with changing job requirements, contributes to the obsolescence process. Some mid-career workers ‘struggle to adjust to new ways of working’ (Morison, Erickson & Dychtwald 2006, p. 81), relying on diligence over time as a foundation for promotion, when what they really need to do is to upgrade their skills. Although it has been widely suggested in the past that skills obsolescence is related to age, Rosen and Jerdee (1976) established that support and retraining was more frequently provided for younger workers and a decline in the skills of mid-career and older workers could be the result of managerial decisions where fewer opportunities for professional development were provided for them. Furthermore Morison, Erickson and Dychtwald (2006) confirm that this is often still the case. In contrast, Weinberg (2002) has suggested that new technologies can complement existing skills. His research demonstrated that experienced workers are primary adopters of new technologies, thereby supplementing their skills and enhancing their contribution to organisational knowledge. A recurring dilemma for many mid-career workers, who understand that
developing their skills would improve their chances for professional advancement, is their limited time and money due to increasing responsibilities related to their personal lives. Without organisational support, they put further education and training on hold believing that other opportunities will be presented in the future.

At the same time, some mid-career workers become prone to burnout. Burnout is ‘a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and is defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy’ (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter 2001). The term was first introduced in literature by Bradley (1969, cited in Schaufeli & Buunk 1996) and was conceptually developed soon after by Freudenberger (1974). Sources of burnout are varied and include job characteristics such as workload, role conflict, and lack of support from supervisors (Kyriacou 1987; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter 2001; Schaufeli & Buunk 1996; Timperley & Robinson 2000), as well as occupational characteristics such as ‘the emotional challenges of working intensively with other people in either a caregiving or teaching role’ (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter 2001, p. 408).

Although burnout can occur at any stage of an individual’s career, it is more likely to occur at the mid-career point or beyond, due to the impact of stressors over time. The effects of prolonged burnout are significant both for the individual and their organisation. Burnout has been linked to impaired job performance (Spickard, Gabbe & Christensen 2002) resulting in lower productivity and reduced effectiveness at work. Burnout has also been linked to reduced job satisfaction as well as job commitment (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter 2001). The associated impact of poor performance and constant negativity on colleagues can cause a gradual deterioration of workplace relationships, which in turn has a negative impact on workplace culture. Interestingly, the three dimensions of burnout are not equally distributed across different professions. Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998, cited in Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter 2001) conducted a comparative study across five occupational sectors — teaching, social services, medicine, mental health and law enforcement — which found that of these, teaching was characterised by the highest level of exhaustion.

High levels of exhaustion may lead to an increase in work/life tension, especially at mid-career when the two major domains of work and home (Clark 2000) compete for
the individual’s time and attention (Auster 2001; Day & Gu 2010). Marks and MacDermid (1996) refer to the seminal work of Goode (1960), who developed the holistic notion of role strain, which Goode (1960) defined as ‘the felt difficulty of fulfilling role obligations’ (p. 483) when an ‘individual’s total role obligations are over-demanding’ (p. 485). The conflicting demands and interactions required of an individual across multiple roles, contribute to the rise of tensions. Marks and MacDermid (1996) linked full engagement in the performance of every role in an individual’s total role system to positive balance, and conversely, negative role balance was seen as being the tendency to be fully disengaged in the performance of every role. Although a simplistic explanation, in reality it is when a good balance is not achieved that further tensions arise.

The concept of good balance was identified as a major theme arising from a review of six key conceptualisations of work/life balance undertaken by Kalliath and Brough (2008). They identified the notion that good balance is not dependent upon the idea of equality; rather it is linked to the notion that work/life balance changes over time relative to the salience of specific life events experienced. Their definition that ‘work/life balance is the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual’s current life-priorities’ (Kalliath & Brough 2008, p. 326) recognises that effective balance promotes positive growth across both domains of work and non-work. While it is known that work/life priorities vary in importance at different career stages (Darcy et al. 2012), the intensification of conflicting demands across domains at mid-career may give rise to added tensions should the provision of appropriate support be unavailable. Parkes and Langford (2008) found that an organisational climate that included the management of workloads to reduce stress, the provision of flexible work arrangements and supportive supervisors, is significantly related to a positive work/life balance.

2.2.2 Teachers

Literature related to teachers’ work and their lives is extensive, being too voluminous to present here. In order to inform this specific study of mid-career teachers, the following literature covering the fields of teacher motivations and concerns, career cycles, locus of control, the concept of mid-career crisis, teacher identity and teacher satisfaction,
contribute background knowledge to frame our understanding of mid-career teachers and their lives. This is illustrated in Figure 4, drawn from the Conceptual Framework.

![Conceptual Framework](image)

**Figure 4: Literature on teachers**

### 2.2.2.1 Mid-career teacher motivations and concerns

*Motivations*

Research related to teacher motivation at different career stages is relatively limited. However, recent research into what attracts and motivates prospective teachers’ choice of teaching as a career (Day et al. 2007; Kyriacou & Coulthard 2000; Kyriacou, Hultgren & Stephens 1999; OECD 2005; Pop & Turner 2009; Thomson & McIntyre 2013; Thomson Turner & Nietfeld 2012; Watt & Richardson 2007, 2008) is beginning to shed light on key aspects of teacher motivation. Following the lead of Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000), several recent studies (Lusty 2013; Pop & Turner 2009; Saban 2003; Thomson & McIntyre 2013) have classified teachers’ motivations into three areas: altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for teaching.

Altruistic motivation, also known as prosocial motivation, refers to the selfless desire to help other people. In the context of these studies, altruistic motivations relate to both viewing teaching as worthwhile occupation and having the desire to see students succeed, thereby making a positive contribution to society (Kyriacou & Coulthard 2000). Intrinsic motivation refers to being interested in and gaining enjoyment from the work itself (Gagné & Deci 2005; Ryan & Deci 2000), expressed here as interest in the actual activity of teaching students, utilising personal knowledge and expertise.
Extrinsic motivation, the desire to obtain external outcomes or rewards for task completion (Grant 2008; Ryan & Deci 2000) relates, in the teaching context, to the perceived benefits of the occupation such as social status, reasonable pay and working conditions, including more generous holidays than other occupations (Kyriacou & Coulthard 2000).

It is too simplistic however, to view each of these three areas of motivations as existing in isolation or as being mutually exclusive. Covington and Müller (2001) explore the proposition that an individual can have both intrinsic and extrinsic tendencies, with one being more dominant at a given time than the other. This model suggests a continuum with intrinsic motivation at one end and extrinsic at the other, whereby the individual moves from point to point along the continuum depending on the situation. Yet this remains a ‘bipolar or unidimensional model of motivation’ (p. 163). More realistically, current research (Covington & Müller 2001; Thomson, Turner & Nietfeld 2012; Vanden Berghe et al. 2014) indicates that individuals can be variously motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, that blend and coexist effectively. In my earlier Delphi study (Lusty 2013), participants were asked to rank, in order of importance, sixteen key statements relating to their motivations for teaching ranging across the three domains of motivation: altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Their ability to rank all statements indicates that all three sources of motivation coexisted and were relevant to them to differing degrees.

Research relating to teachers at mid-career is an emerging area of inquiry. The longitudinal study of teachers in the United Kingdom undertaken by Day and Gu (2010) and their colleagues (Day et al. 2007) from Nottingham University has provided a rich source of data spanning seven years relating to the six teacher career stages identified. Their professional life phase 8–15 years teaching experience correlates closely with the operational definition of mid-career in the Australian context as developed for this study, being teachers who have been teaching for approximately 8–15 years. This extensive study found that within the 8–15 years phase two distinct groups of teachers were identified on the basis of their motivation and commitment (Day & Gu 2010). Teachers in the first and largest group, comprising 76% of teachers in the 8–15 years phase, were characterised by sustained engagement. The remaining 24% of the group were characterised by detachment and/or loss of motivation. Day and Gu (2010)
conclude that although during this mid-career phase of professional life work/life tensions are likely to be increasingly significant, the majority of mid-career teachers continued to be ‘highly committed and motivated’ (p. 86).

The Delphi study (Lusty 2013) corroborates that in the Australian context: mid-career teachers remain strongly motivated for altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. The evidence revealed that across both the personal and professional domains surveyed, the highest rankings were attributed to statements of an altruistic nature. A high level of consensus was also gained for statements of an intrinsic nature, indicating that commitment and motivation continue to be sustained in mid-career. Although fewer statements related to extrinsic motivators, job security and maintaining a healthy work-life balance emerged as common themes. This is consistent with what we know from literature in the field (Day & Gu 2007, 2010, OECD 2005, Williams & Fox 1995), indicating that ‘mid-career is a time when greater focus is, of necessity, afforded to family and lifestyle concerns’ (Lusty 2013, p. 97).

**Concerns**

Studies relating to the problems and concerns of teachers in the workplace are surprisingly scarce. Early research relating to beginning teachers provides an insight into enduring issues faced by teachers entering the workforce. Synthesising ‘fairly extensive correspondence’ from young teachers in England over a ten year period (Phillips 1932, p. 228), Phillips reported their concerns as arising from a combination of factors related to personal and professional concerns. Personal tensions appeared to be intensified by the demands of professional life. This in combination with problems related to class management, lack of resources, difficulties experienced in relationships with head teachers, older colleagues and parents, as well as adjusting to the social context of the school community, all contributed to feelings of dissatisfaction and concern. Similar observations of the concerns raised by pre-service and beginning teachers have been variously reported over time (Dropkin & Taylor 1963; Gavish & Friedman 2010; Hargreaves 2005; Hong 2012; Rust 1994; Sikes, Measor & Woods 1985; Thompson 1963), yet there remains a general gap in literature relating specifically to work-related concerns of teachers during mid-career.
The emerging body of literature generated from the study undertaken by Day, Gu and their team (Day & Gu 2009, 2010; Day et al. 2007; Day et al. 2006; Gu & Day 2007) and other related literature (Dinham 1995; Dinham & Scott 1996; Lusty 2013) mirrors many aspects of the concerns expressed by Phillips (1932) so many years ago. Day and Gu (2010) refer to the dilemma that ‘growing commitments at home and more professional demands at work’ (p. 87) creates for teachers in mid-career. A significant percentage of teachers at mid-career in both the sustained engagement group and the group characterised by detachment/loss of motivation were negatively affected by work/life tensions. Critical factors influencing whether or not these mid-career teachers sustained a positive outlook resulting in continued commitment and personal well-being included support from school leaders, staff collegiality, a good rapport with students and access to appropriate professional learning opportunities.

The Delphi study (Lusty 2013), found that the majority of concerns mid-career teachers faced were of an extrinsic nature, relating to external factors ‘not inherent in the work itself’ (Kyriacou & Coulthard 2000, p. 117). Other concerns related to teachers themselves and their ability to deliver quality outcomes for students, were also found. Overall, the leading concerns identified in the Delphi study (Lusty 2013), related to the themes of increasing workload, the pace of change and time management, all of which are interconnected. Although originating from the impact of ongoing change in education, these identified concerns vary from individual to individual indicating that the differentiating factors are linked to the personal and professional contexts of each individual. Similarly, the outcomes of the VITAE research project suggest that teacher effectiveness is related to a combination of influences from the individual’s personal, professional and situated (work-related) domains (Day et al. 2007).

Earlier studies of teacher satisfaction within the Australian context (Dinham 1995, 2000; Dinham & Scott 1996; Scott, Dinham & Brooks 1999) provide insights into factors that contribute to both the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of Australian teachers. Using the framework outlined by Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000), the sources of satisfaction identified can be classified as being largely related to altruistic and intrinsic factors. Sources of dissatisfaction, however, are context-specific and can be seen as mainly linked to extrinsic factors. Overall, teacher satisfaction is linked to the task of teaching, recognition of teachers’ work and student and teacher success, whereas
dissatisfaction arises from contextual, non-teaching factors including administrative and system demands (Dinham 1995). The impact of such extrinsic factors would be more likely to affect teachers at mid-career or later because as Dinham (1995) noted, less experienced teachers were very classroom centred whereas more experienced teachers focussed on their school wide roles. By mid-career, many teachers have added school wide responsibilities, either because they hold or are aspiring to gain substantive leadership positions, or because they choose to take on teacher leadership roles related to aspects of teaching and learning related to areas of personal interest and expertise (Gigante & Firestone 2008).

The issue of an ever-increasing workload is a concern shared by many mid-career teachers (Lusty 2013). There is extensive foundational literature related to the intensification of teachers’ work over time, both internationally (for example: Apple 1986; Ballet & Kelchtermans 2008, 2009; Hargreaves 1994; Moore et al. 2002; Timperley & Robinson 2000), and in the Australian context (Durbridge 1991; Easthope & Easthope 2000). Intensification, defined by Hargreaves (1994) as an ‘escalation of pressures, expectations and controls concerning what teachers do’ (p. 108), is characterised by persistent feelings of a lack of time, a chronic sense of work overload, increased administrative tasks, negative effects on the quality of teaching and the diversification of teacher expertise (Apple 1986, Hargreaves 1994, Ballet et al 2006). Easthope and Easthope (2000) show that the intensification of teachers’ workload contributed to added complexity in the workplace. Although Hargreaves indicates these changes are externally driven, Timperley and Robinson (2000) propose that intensification is related to how teachers organise their work and claim that ‘teachers not only suffer from workload problems but also create them’ (p.47). Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008, 2009) show that intensification results from both external pressures, and also from teachers’ self-imposed standards for ensuring the quality of their teaching is not compromised. Teachers’ ongoing commitment to their professional ideology of caring about positive outcomes for students (Easthope & Easthope 2000) contributes to the development of ‘contingent pragmatism’ (Moore et al. 2002, p. 554), whereby they implement required innovations without replacing existing practices, thus adding to their own workload. Many teachers at mid-career experience a critical transition phase in terms of their commitment levels (Day & Gu 2010) resulting from
the intensification and increased complexity of their work, creating further work/life tensions, which has been found to be a significant concern at mid-career (Lusty 2013).

In the climate of continuous innovation and change in education (Ballet & Kelchtermans 2008; Day & Gu 2010; Hargreaves 1994; Moore et al. 2002), it has become apparent that the role of teachers is pivotal to the success of the change implementation process. Hargreaves points out that ‘teachers can adopt, adapt, resist or circumvent [changes] as they arise’ (Hargreaves 1994, p. 6) and therefore the concerns of teachers need to be addressed at every stage of the adoption process. Fuller’s concerns-based approach to teacher development (Conway & Clark 2003; Fuller 1969; Fuller & Brown 1975) has been adapted over time, and using this framework as a base, teacher concerns can be classified as: self-concerns, task/situation concerns; and impact concerns (Conway & Clark 2003; van den Berg 2002). Different concerns are expressed by teachers at different stages of the innovation process (van den Berg & Ros 1999). Failure to recognise and address teacher concerns slows the change process and impacts negatively on teacher confidence and feelings of competence in implementing change (van den Berg 2002). Variations in individual teachers’ cognitive and emotional capacities to manage concerns at different career stages can be mediated through the targeted provision of appropriate support (Day & Gu 2010). Results from the VITAE study (Day & Gu 2010) demonstrate that support from school leaders and collegial peers, as well as access to continuing professional development opportunities, are contributing factors in sustaining mid-career teachers’ sense of commitment and resilience in changing times.

2.2.2.2 Teacher career cycles

Literature related to teachers’ career development recognise that ‘teachers have different attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviours at various points during their career’ (Lynn 2002, p. 179). Fessler (1995) reviewed several models of teacher career stages from the 1970s, including that of Unruh and Turner and Gregorc and Katz, which conceptualised teachers as moving through various differentiated stages in a linear fashion. However he pointed out that these early models were simplistic in their approach, failing to adequately differentiate between mature teachers. Over the next few years other research-based studies, such as that of Ryan, and Ingvarson and Greenway, added
further to the picture of teachers at various career stages, but again, failed to differentiate within the mature teacher group (Fessler 1995).

By the 1980s new conceptualisations emerged where Fessler’s own *Teacher Career Cycle Model* (1995), built on the ideas of Feiman and Floden (1981), proposed a more dynamic model. Fessler’s innovative model, illustrated in Figure 5, identified eight career stages, positioning the career cycle in ‘the context of influences from personal and organisational factors’ (Fessler 1995, p. 179). This model suggests that the teacher’s progress through the career cycle is shaped by his/her response to a variety of environmental conditions. Fessler (1995) contends that as teachers respond to personal and organisational conditions around them, they move in and out of career stages. The variables shown in Figure 5 arising from the individual’s personal environment, may impact on the individual separately or in combination influencing their behaviour in the workplace. Similarly, variables with the organisational environment, also shown in Figure 5, may impact in a range of positive or negative ways, which can subsequently encourage or impede progress. Consequently, throughout their career, each teacher’s career cycle develops in response to a unique set of circumstances that vary in intensity at different life stages. In the light of this, it is important that focussed professional development opportunities are provided at critical points throughout a teacher’s career cycle. However, it is also important for teachers themselves to be self-motivated and seek professional learning opportunities at different transition points, depending upon their individual needs. Lynn (2002) elaborates on the need for teachers across all stages of the career cycle to be provided with relevant professional development and suggests that this should include concern for personal as well as work-related needs. This is especially important for mid-career teachers as ‘frustration occurs during career midpoints’ (Lynn 2002). The need for educational leaders to provide support to assist teachers, especially at mid-career, to realise their potential, is implied.
Figure 5: Dynamics of the Teacher Career Cycle Model


A Life Cycle Model for Career Teachers (Steffy & Wolfe 2001) is a transformational career stage model, which emerged during the 1990s and is perhaps the most valid today. This model proposed six phases — Novice, Apprentice, Professional, Expert, Distinguished, and Emeritus — that reflect a teacher’s acquisition and application of knowledge and skills throughout their career and beyond. The model develops the notion that teacher development, or lack of development, is relative to their engagement with learning in the work environment. ‘The critical factor that enables teachers to propel themselves through the career life-cycle phases, is the reflection–renewal–growth cycle’ (Steffy & Wolfe 2001, p. 18). This reflection–renewal–growth cycle, represented in Figure 6, is an essential aspect of the transformative learning process. Donald Schön (1990) introduced the concept of reflective practice whereby with the assistance of a coach from the profession, a teacher reflects upon their application of knowledge in their own practice. This cyclical process of regular, focussed reflection is pivotal to continued growth throughout a teacher’s career. In its absence, withdrawal and disengagement can result (Steffy & Wolfe 2001). The responsibility for teacher professional growth is in the hands of educational leaders as well as individual teachers themselves. For mid-career and veteran teachers, serving as a coach or mentor can also be a reflective practice. Understanding that reflection stimulates renewal and growth at any stage of the career cycle underpins the notion of a career-long learning journey.
A more recent body of literature relates specifically to teachers identified as second stage teachers, defined by Berg et al. (2005) as having 3–11 years of experience and Kirkpatrick (2007) as having 4–10 years teaching experience. In both studies, some participating teachers could also be considered to be teachers in the early stage of mid-career, defined in this thesis as having 8–15 years teaching experience. Like mid-career teachers, second stage teachers are ‘an important yet infrequently studied subgroup of teachers’ (Kirkpatrick 2007, p. 2). Commonly teachers in this stage have increased self-confidence, have shifted their focus from self to students and demonstrate a greater interest in pedagogical mastery (Eros 2011). Such increased confidence and competence provides second stage teachers with ‘greater flexibility about how to allocate their time and energy’ (Kirkpatrick 2007, p. 2) and they begin to take on responsibilities beyond the classroom as well as investing time in professional learning opportunities. This is corroborated by Berg et al. (2005), who found that in taking on differentiated roles, second stage teachers were motivated by a desire to ‘make a difference beyond their classroom’ (p. 5). A study by Fiarman (2007) of second stage teacher leaders working in district consulting roles for up to three years, found that these teachers wanted to continue as instructional, but not administrative leaders, in their schools at this career stage. An important implication of second stage teachers is the need for school leaders to provide them with stage-specific professional development opportunities (Eros 2011). As teachers with growing experience, second stage teachers are a valuable resource (Eros 2011) with the potential to make a positive contribution for many years to come. By catering for their particular interests, school leaders can
realise and benefit from their hidden potential and minimise the likelihood of them leaving the profession.

2.2.2.3 Locus of control

An interesting study investigating the relationships between Australian teachers’ career stages and locus of control was undertaken by McKormick and Barnett (2008). This empirical study was based on the notion of career stages as discussed by Huberman (1989a). Synthesising previous research and literature, Huberman identified seven career stages: career entry, stabilization, diversification and change, stocktaking and interrogations at mid-career, serenity and affective distance, conservatism, and disengagement. He was aware of the limitations of such a linear model, and cautions others to recognise that no model can adequately represent the professional pathways of teachers as individuals (Huberman 1989a). The linear model assumes continuity and order whereas in reality, each new phase results from the discontinuity of the previous one. The career stage model is, however, useful as a framework for the study of the professional lives of teachers.

Julian Rotter’s (1990) conception of locus of control, the degree to which an individual expects that outcomes are contingent upon their own behaviour or characteristics, has important implications for how teachers perceive their degree of control in the workplace. People with a strong internal locus of control generally believe they have a reasonable ability to control personal outcomes. Conversely, people with weaker locus of control, generally believe that other factors such as chance, luck, other people or environmental factors influence what happens and that they are unable to exert control over the situation (Rotter 1990; Stajkovic & Luthans 2003). Whitaker states that when people recognise their own power to influence the way circumstances develop, they will be more likely ‘to work more creatively and cooperatively to the benefit of both themselves and the organisation as a whole’ (p. 22).

In their study, McKormick and Barnett hypothesised that teachers’ locus of control would be related to their career stage. The assumption that teachers in later career stages (with the exception of mid-career) would have a ‘higher sense of personal control because of increased professional experience, confidence and responsibilities’ (McCormick & Barnett 2008, p. 11) was not strongly confirmed. Results showed
variations of results between individuals and schools. McKormick and Barnett (2008) concluded that improving teachers’ internal locus of control would be beneficial. In light of our knowledge that the progress of teachers through career stages is dynamic, iterative and individual, it is possible that these results could help inform educational leaders about the provision of appropriate support. For example, well-structured mentoring programs at different career transition points could be a successful strategy in assisting teachers to develop a greater sense of personal control in the workplace.

2.2.2.4 Mid-career crisis
Everyone has heard the term ‘mid-career crisis’ but does it really exist in the professional lives of teachers? In most of the literature on teachers’ career cycles, there is a distinct phase that represents teachers at mid-career, ‘corresponding roughly to 12 to 20 years of experience . . . that informants often describe as problematic’ (Huberman 1995). Early career stage models such as Burden’s model (Fessler 1995) fails to differentiate between teachers after their fifth year in the profession referring to all teachers after that as teachers in the mature stage, whereas Gregorc (1973) refers to four stages of teacher development where the third stage, the maturing stage, can be seen as representing the middle of the career. Huberman’s model (1989a) refers to stocktaking and interrogations at mid-career and Fessler’s model (1995) refers to a stage of career frustration.

Steffy and Wolfe’s model (1998, 2001) is less explicit: rather than having a mid-career stage, they contend that teachers must continually experience or initiate a process of reflection and renewal to maintain professional growth throughout their career. Withdrawal results from situations where teachers do not engage in reflective practice and this can happen at any career stage. Consequently, opportunities for collaboration and support should be available throughout the career life cycle.

The more recent work of Christopher Day and his team (Day et al. 2007), conceptualising six professional life phases based on teaching experience, identify two phases covering mid-career, professional life phases 8–15 and 16–23, as being characterised in part by growing tensions and challenges. However they demonstrate that rather than being static, professional life phases are dynamic in nature (Day & Gu 2010; Day et al. 2007). They also found that growth during professional life was not
linear (Day et al. 2007). Unlike Huberman, who found teacher development to be unpredictable, they found it was associated with how varying issues, such as teachers’ ‘sense of efficacy, resilience and how tensions are managed’ (Day et al. 2007, p. 100), impact on teachers at different life phases (Day & Gu 2010; Day et al. 2007).

Literature on mid-career (Huberman 1995; Pillay, Goddard & Wilss 2005; Rosenholtz & Simpson 1990) variously describes teachers at mid-career as experiencing a variety of symptoms that impact on their ability to do their jobs effectively. Each model contributes aspects that often recur in life/career stage literature describing the idea of mid-life crisis. Symptoms such as frustration, disillusionment, feelings of routine, withdrawal, self-doubt, lack of control, managing change in role and identity are evident (Day & Gu 2010; Day et al. 2007; Fessler 1995; Huberman 1989a; McCormick, & Barnett 2008; Steffy & Wolfe 1998). It is a time when teachers reflect on their career to date and some question their career choice, contemplating a complete change (Holmes & Cartwright 1994; Huberman 1995). However, Rosenholtz and Simpson (1990) suggested that feelings of burnout in the mid-career or veteran stage largely suggested the inadequacy of school organisational support to meet the needs of teachers in these stages. Although some teachers may choose to leave the profession, NSW DoE statistics suggest that this is uncommon. At the time this study was conducted, the resignation rate for primary teachers, excluding retirements, in the NSW DoE was 0.6% (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2014b) and not all of these would have been mid-career teachers. More commonly, most teachers move beyond this career midpoint, signalling renewal or in some cases, further stagnation. It has been strongly suggested that professional learning opportunities should be offered to support and develop teachers at all stages in their professional practice (Day, & Sachs 2004; Day et al. 2007; Huberman 1995), although the mid-career stage is clearly crucial. Success is relative to teachers’ willingness to actively engage with opportunities offered.

2.2.2.5 Teacher identity

In a review of literature pertaining to teachers’ professional identity covering the period 1988–2000, a time when research into this topic emerged as a separate research area, Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) identify four features that contribute to an understanding of teachers’ identities. Firstly, ‘professional identity is an ongoing process [emphasis in original] of interpretation and re-interpretation of experience’ (p.
More recently, Kelchtermans (2009) expresses a similar notion where he refers to ‘the dynamic character of self-understanding. It is not a static, fixed identity, but rather the result of an ongoing interactive process of sense-making and construction’ (p. 263). Akkerman and Meijer (2011) agree, stating that ‘identity is not a fixed and stable entity, but rather shifts with time and context’ (p. 309). Mockler (2011) argues that teacher professional identity is ‘formed and re-formed over the course of a career’ (p. 518) and drawing on the outcomes of the VITAE study, Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington and Gu (2007) state, ‘The development of teacher identity is a dynamic process. It occurs over time through continued interaction with others’ (p. 103). In relation to her work on narrative construction of teacher identity, Søreide (2006) notes ‘the flexibility and elasticity in teachers’ identity construction and how narrative identities are constantly shaped, reshaped and adapted . . . in a process of great complexity’ (p. 545). In reference to university teachers, Korhonen and Törmä (2014) also find that ‘the teaching identity construction and professional growth of a teacher are holistic, career-long processes’ (p. 14).

The second feature identified by Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) is that ‘professional identity implies both person and context’ [emphasis in original] (p. 122). More recent research findings confirm and extend this notion. A core message from the VITAE research study (Day & Gu 2010; Day et al. 2007) is that teacher identity ‘is a composite consisting of competing interactions between personal, professional and situational factors’ (Day et al. 2007, p. 106). Mockler (2011) conceptualises the formation of teacher identity over the course of a career in a similar way. She suggests that identity formation is ‘mediated by a complex interplay of personal, professional and political dimensions of teachers’ lives’ (p. 518). Mockler (2011) acknowledges the similarity between her framework and that developed by Day and Kington (2008). The definitions of both domains relating to personal identity are very similar, whereas there are nuanced differences between the other two domains. Mockler’s domain of teachers’ professional context can be more closely compared to Day and Kington’s situated domain and Mockler’s domain of external political environment overlaps with Day and Kington’s domain of professional identity (Day & Kington 2008; Mockler 2011). It is significant that in both models, the three domains of identity are reflexive, interactive and responsive to contextual or situational influences. Buchanan’s study (2015) also
illustrates the complexity of the personal and professional relationship between teachers and the context of their schools and organisational accountabilities.

The third feature of teacher identity identified by Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) refers to ‘teachers’ professional identity consisting of *sub-identities* [emphasis in original], that more or less harmonize’ (p. 122). They clarify this idea by explaining that ‘sub-identities relate to teachers’ different contexts and relationships’ (p. 122). Sub-identities, referred to by Akkerman and Meijer (2011) as multiplicity, is commonly accepted in literature. Sutherland, Howard and Markausaite (2010), for example, refer to the ‘multiple perspectives of a persons’ identity’ (p. 455) and link professional identity with an individual’s interactions with others and their position in society. Multiplicity is particularly evident in the work of Søreide (2006) who shows that teacher identity is multifaceted as teachers constantly construct and identify with multiple identities simultaneously. Teachers ‘edit their narratives according to how they wish to present themselves’ (p. 545) and adapt to different situations and contexts. Day and Kington (2008) suggest that individual teachers’ identities, as a composite of interactions between personal, professional and situational factors, are ‘made up of sub or competing identities’ (p. 11) that vary in dominance depending upon the impact of positive and/or negative influences at any given time. This can, in turn, create tension and challenge the stability of existing identities, which may result in a reassessment and reconstruction of personal perceptions of identity.

*Agency*, the process of teachers being proactive in relation to professional development, is the final feature of teacher identity identified by Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004). Buchanan (2015) develops this theme with a focus on how ‘professional agency is reciprocally related to . . . professional identity’ (p. 704). The actions a teacher takes, based on their construct of their own place within their professional context, are responded to by others. Consequent interactions shape the teacher’s perceptions and shape ongoing identity construction. Smith’s research (2011) related to female teachers’ career decisions, linked the degree of agency with which women approached career management decisions with their self-perceptions. The degree of agency exerted is, for some women, mediated by their own perceptions related to personal agency and therefore, is a key influence in career decision-making. In this way, as reported by Buchanan (2015), ‘agency and identity are intertwined’ (p. 705). Eteläpelto,
Vähäsantanen, Hökkä and Paloniemi (2013) agree, stating: ‘professional agency is closely intertwined with professional subjects’ work-related identities’ (p. 62). Lasky (2005) examined the ‘dynamic interplay between teacher identity, agency and context’ (p. 899) in respect to secondary school teachers’ vulnerability and concluded teacher agency is constrained by personal constructs of identity and context, in this study, reform mandates. Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington and Gu (2007) show that the development of teachers’ agency, either positive or negative, is relative to their interactions within and between their personal, professional and situated contexts. They report a dynamic link between identity, agency, structure, described as external influences, and teacher effectiveness.

Literature relating to teacher professional identity is extensive; however, what is clear from studies over the last fifteen years is that the development of identity is not a linear process (Akkerman & Meijer 2011; Flores & Day 2006). Identity construction is complex and multifaceted, involving interactivity over time and across personal, professional and contextual aspects of an individual’s career. Identity, the way we make sense of ourselves and the image we present to others (Day, & Kington 2008), evolves in the present, is influenced by past experiences as well as future expectations (Kelchtermans 2009). The interplay between teachers’ self-perceptions and their personal agency contributes to their well-being and effectiveness as teachers (Day & Gu 2010).

2.2.2.6 Teacher self-efficacy

An integral aspect of teacher identity is teacher efficacy beliefs. The concept of teacher efficacy originated from research related to reading, published in 1976 by the RAND Corporation (Day et al. 2007; Henson 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy 1998). Through the addition of two items to an existing survey, RAND researchers tested whether ‘teachers believed they could control the reinforcement of their actions’ (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy 1998, p. 202), concluding that there was a strong correlation between teacher efficacy and student achievement (Day et al. 2007). This early RAND-influenced research built on the Rotter (1966) locus of control theory, discussed earlier in this chapter (refer to p. 35). Synthesising emerging definitions of teacher efficacy, Guskey and Passaro (1994) defined teacher efficacy as ‘teachers’ belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn’ (p. 628).
Influentially, a second line of research into teacher efficacy developed, based on the work of Bandura (1977), relating to social cognitive theory. As conceptualised by Bandura (1986, 1997), perceived self-efficacy refers to an individual’s belief in their own capacity to carry out actions required to produce a particular result. Bandura (1997) states, ‘among the mechanisms of agency, none is more central or persuasive than beliefs of personal efficacy’ (p. 2). Efficacy beliefs ‘influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave’ (Bandura 1993). Importantly, self-efficacy beliefs influence whether an individual thinks optimistically in ways that are self-aiding or pessimistically in ways that are self-hindering (Bandura 1997, 2001), ultimately affecting an individual’s level of perseverance, resilience and ability to cope with ongoing challenges. Bandura (1997) outlined the difference between perceived self-efficacy and Rotter’s (1966) concept of locus of control. Beliefs about an individual’s ability to produce certain actions (perceived self-efficacy) are different from beliefs about whether actions affect outcomes (locus of control). Conceptually, locus of control relates to causal relationships between actions and outcomes rather than personal efficacy (Bandura 1997).

Bandura (1997) has shown that individual self-efficacy beliefs influence personal and collective achievement across a diverse range of settings, including education and organisational settings. In the educational context teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs play an important role in the achievement of successful outcomes (Klassen et al. 2009). Friedman and Kass (2002) suggest that teacher self-efficacy is an inter-related, dual concept embracing classroom and organisational efficacy. A wide range of research cited by Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001) and Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2007) has shown a strong correlation between teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and improved student achievement and motivation. This research also provides evidence showing teachers’ efficacy beliefs influence the levels of effort and organisation teachers invest in their teaching, their choice of teaching strategies, the degree of persistence and resilience they display and their goals and aspirations. Of particular relevance in the current climate of educational change, is the influence of teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs on their attitudes to innovation and change (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2007).

More recently conceptualisations of perceived collective teacher efficacy have developed (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy 2004; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2007).
Perceived collective efficacy, a belief about the combined capability of the group to achieve the desired outcome, is interactive and ‘creates an emergent property that is more than the sum of the individual attributes’ (Bandura 1997, pp. 477–478). Increasingly, teachers are expected to work in collaborative teams in schools and an individual’s self-efficacy may be, in part, reliant on the functioning of the team (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2007). Teachers therefore, can hold self-efficacy beliefs as well as perceived collective efficacy beliefs related to the expected or actual performance of the team. Friedman and Kass (2002) refer to the dual concept of teacher efficacy, embracing both classroom and organisational domains, qualifying it as being complex, interrelated and context specific. Goodard and Goodard (2001) report a reciprocal positive relationship between levels of collective efficacy with levels of teacher self-efficacy. This has implications for school-based practice as individual teachers who perceive a high collective capacity work hard to contribute to the expected successful outcome.

For mid-career workers, the development of self and collective efficacy is of particular importance. The development of efficacy beliefs enhances mid-career workers’ ability to manage the ongoing demands and the growing responsibilities of their roles (Bandura 1997). Evidence from the VITAE research project (Day et al. 2007) shows a clear link between teacher efficacy beliefs and professional life phases. The degree of teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs, especially in the early life phases, is critical, especially in relation to their decision to remain teachers (Day et al. 2007). Klassen and Chiu (2011) found a ‘curvilinear relationship’ (p. 116) linking self-efficacy with experience, suggesting self-efficacy beliefs increase until mid-career and then begin to decline in later career stages. Kington, Reed and Sammons (2014) however, who acknowledge the growth of self-efficacy beliefs in mid-career, recognise the complexity and interconnectedness of personal, situated and professional factors which impact on teachers’ well-being at this critical career phase. Like earlier phases, self-efficacy beliefs were consistent with engagement levels, but not attrition levels (Day et al. 2007). Instead, the decisions mid-career teachers face relate to changing aspiration, circumstances and organisational opportunities.

Principal leadership has also been linked to teachers’ self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy 2007). It is known that one of the strongest predictors of teacher
efficacy is supportive organisational communities (Lee, Dedrick & Smith 1991) with a common sense of purpose (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy 2007). The role of the principal is pivotal in creating a collaborative, purposeful working environment (Bandura 1993). Positive school contexts enable the development of individual and collective efficacy, both of which are ‘necessary conditions for good teaching and successful learning’ (Day & Gu 2010, p. 135). The reciprocal link between self and collective efficacy is related to teacher satisfaction and organisational success (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy 2004). In a related study of the self-efficacy beliefs of school leaders, Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) linked positive school leader efficacy, especially collective efficacy, with the deliberate investment in instructional leadership by district leaders. It is clear that, at all levels of teacher interaction, collective efficacy is a key factor in the achievement of organisational goals, improved student outcomes. The provision of organisational conditions enabling individual teachers, staff teams and school leaders to develop self and collective efficacy is essential for future success.

2.2.3 NSW Department of Education (NSW DoE)

This section reviews literature relating to the NSW DoE, as illustrated in Figure 7, drawn from the Conceptual Framework.

![Figure 7: NSW DoE literature](image)

2.2.3.1 What is the NSW DoE?

The NSW DoE is not only ‘the largest provider of public education and training in Australia’ (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2013a, p. 7), it is ‘the largest employer of teachers in the southern hemisphere’ (McCulla & Gereige-Hinson 2005, p. 711). At the time data was collected for this study in 2012, there were more
than 740,000 students enrolled in the 2,223 public schools in NSW. Of relevance to this study, over 440,500 of these students were enrolled across 1,622 primary schools in the state (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2013a). As one of the largest educational organisations in Australia, the NSW DoE employed more than 50,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff, of which over 28,400 FTE were primary teachers (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2013b). In 2012, the school-based priorities of the NSW DoE were quality teaching and leadership, including improving literacy and numeracy for all children in NSW public schools, particularly for disadvantaged students (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012a). In order to support these priorities, professional development in education and training was identified as necessary to increase teachers’ capacities to deliver the required outcomes (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012a). The following literature relating to teacher demographics and professional development within this organisation is presented to provide a framework for understanding the specific organisational context of this study.

### 2.2.3.2 Teacher demographics

At the time data was collected for this study in 2012, 36.7% of NSW DoE primary teachers were aged between 30 and 45 years (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012c). This age range generally aligns to teachers who have been teaching between 8 to 15 years, fitting my operational definition of mid-career teachers in Australia. Although my definition of mid-career teachers is based on the number of years of teaching experience a teacher has, statistics related to NSW DoE teachers’ years of experience are not available, and therefore I am using age as a yardstick. In terms of my sample, 13% of participants were second career teachers, and hence might be expected to be older than their career-stage peers; nevertheless, they do not comprise a large proportion of my sample. While statistics are not available on the proportion of second career teachers, the overall figure is unlikely to be significantly different from that in my sample, which was chosen to be representative. According to NSW DoE statistics, 54.4% of primary teachers permanently employed by the NSW DoE in 2012 were over the age of 45 (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012c). Only 8.9% of primary teachers permanently employed by the NSW DoE were under the age of 30, verifying that beginning and early career teachers were clearly a minority in the NSW DoE primary teaching workforce (NSW Department of Education &
Communities 2012c). Colloquially, the term *baby boomers* is defined as people born between 1945 and 1965 inclusive (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007), which encompasses almost all primary teachers aged 45 and over in 2012. It is expected that the majority of these ‘baby boomers’ will retire by 2017, (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012c). For example, at the time of data collection 85% of separations were due to retirement, trending up from 70% in 2006 (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2014b). It can be predicted that this upward trend of retirements will continue escalating over the next few years. In contrast, it is estimated that many mid-career teachers will continue to teach in NSW DoE primary schools for a further 15 to 20 years until retirement.

It is interesting to note that despite the impending retirement of many of the teachers from the *baby boomers* generation, there is a surplus of general primary teachers, particularly in metropolitan areas, available to fill expected vacancies (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2011). Consequently, this pool of casual primary teachers will help to offset the number of retiring *baby boomers*. There will, however, be a loss of valuable experience with the exodus of baby boomers from the teaching profession; nevertheless, there will be some compensating benefits associated with the influx of younger teachers, who are likely to be more open-minded and willing to take on technological change (Sime & Priestley 2005).

This age-related profile, and predicted changes to the demographics of the primary teaching profession, highlights the importance of mid-career teachers in the NSW DoE. Within the next five years, mid-career teachers will become the most experienced teacher group in NSW DoE primary schools. They will hold many of the key leadership and management positions in the organisation, currently held by a majority of veteran teachers. What is generally understated in literature is an acknowledgement of the wealth of experience successful, mid-career teachers represent. Collectively mid-career teachers will bring considerable benefits to schools but it is also expected that additional resources will be needed to support and update their skills, knowledge and motivation (OECD 2005). It is therefore essential for the motivations and concerns of this group to be explored and that strategies to meet their specific professional needs be addressed.
2.2.3.3 Gender imbalance

At the time this study was undertaken in 2012, NSW DoE statistics reveal that overall, in the NSW DoE teaching workforce, 80.5% of the primary school teachers employed were women and 19.5% were men (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2013a, p. 113). This report shows that at classroom teacher level, the gender balance of classroom teachers was even more predominately feminised, with 83.6% being women and 16.4% men. Further analysis of this report demonstrates however, that in the primary school sector at senior executive level, there is a complete reversal of this balance with 64.7% of Primary Principals Class 1 being male in comparison to 35.3% being female. Figure 8 clearly illustrates this trend towards the disproportionate under-representation of women in senior school-based leadership positions. The proportion of women holding senior executive roles gradually decreases whereas the proportion of men holding these roles significantly increases. Whilst the issue of gender imbalance at mid-career is the point of interest here, deeper investigation into gender imbalance in general is outside the scope of this study, although it would provide an avenue for further research in the future.

![Figure 8: Gender distribution of primary teachers in the NSW DoE, 2012](image)

**Source:** Based on statistics in the NSW DoE 2012 Annual Report (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2013a, p. 113).
2.2.3.4 Professional learning and leadership development

As the largest provider of public education in Australia at the time of this study in 2012, the NSW DoE was, and continues to be, responsible for the provision of the ongoing professional development of over 50,000 FTE teachers in its workforce. As previously stated, more than half of these teachers, over 28,400 FTE teachers, are primary school teachers. The provision of continuing professional development is managed using a variety of strategies including face-to-face and online delivery modes. In 2012 the NSW DoE expanded its online management information system, known as My Pl@Edu, to facilitate easier access to online courses and to provide teachers with a database to register their professional learning activity (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2013a). This provision enables all teachers to record their professional learning history, currently an accreditation requirement.

The Professional Learning Policy (NSW Department of Education & Training 2004) defines professional learning as ‘all training and development opportunities, formal and informal, individual and shared, that provide opportunities for professional discourse, interaction, practice, reflection and analysis’ (p. 4). The policy requires ‘individuals [to] engage in ongoing professional development throughout their career’ (p. 4) and it indicates that responsibility for ‘promoting, planning, implementing and evaluating professional learning in schools’ (p. 4), is shared by the individual, the school and the organisation. Schools are expected to establish a professional learning team and are also required to include a professional learning component within the endorsed school plan. Support is provided at regional and state levels through the provision of policy, resources and training opportunities. At the time this policy was introduced in 2004, a ‘4-year, $144 million program supporting teacher professional learning’ was introduced (McCulla & Gereige-Hinson 2005, p. 711), demonstrating the NSW DoE’s commitment to the provision of professional learning opportunities for its teachers. The Professional Learning Directorate, in place in 2012, played a significant role in the development of state and regional infrastructure enabling the provision of appropriate networks, resources and specific professional development programs for teachers. Following a recent restructure, or realignment of the NSW DoE, this directorate has been replaced with the Learning, High Performance and Accountability Directorate.
Annual funding allocations provided directly to schools are made equably on a per capita basis as tied funding, specifically for professional development expenditure. (NSW Department of Education & Communities n.d.-a). Decisions relating to the use of these funds are made at the school level and are often linked to school priorities as expressed in the school plan (NSW Department of Education & Training 2004). Consequently, despite funding being provided on a per capita basis, in some schools individual teachers may not gain funding approval to access professional learning opportunities beyond these local priorities. At the school level, supplementary funding may be provided from other sources such as specific funding for disadvantaged schools (NSW Department of Education & Communities n.d.-b) or, in more affluent areas, local funding may be allocated for staff professional development following local fundraising initiatives. In the past decade, some schools received additional funding for professional learning through targeted equity programs such as the Priority Action Schools Program and the Country Areas Program (McCulla & Gereige-Hinson 2005). Currently in 2015, the funding schools receive under the Equity Funding Support Package is calculated using the Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) on a socio-economic needs basis (NSW Department of Education & Communities n.d.-b). As the funds are not tied, there is flexibility in the allocation of these supplementary funds. Decisions are made locally and can be used for a range of activities including mentoring, coaching, enquiry-based action learning and staff professional development initiatives (NSW Department of Education & Communities n.d.-b). In practice, access to appropriate funding for individual professional development requests varies across different school locations and is context specific, eroding equity and indirectly, impacting on individual teachers’ career aspirations and access to related opportunities.

The educational landscape in Australia is in a period of rapid change. Reforms resulting in the adoption of a national curriculum and similar changes in the accreditation of teachers using the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2011; n.d.), have resulted in a renewed focus on continuing professional development at all levels of professional practice. In 2012, the NSW DoE provided 700 courses and programs registered with the NSW Institute of Teachers, covering all elements of the professional teaching standards (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2013a). The NSW DoE provides specific
training and support for beginning teachers and teachers at classroom teacher and leadership levels. In particular, in 2012 the NSW DoE reported that:

‘. . . we also developed the online Leadership Learning program aligned to the roles and key accountabilities of principals. The program consists of 50 hours of professional learning in 15 courses, focusing on leadership, management and continuous improvement. The program enables current and aspiring school leaders to take the first steps to further professional accreditation’ (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2013a, p. 37).

There is a wide range of online resources for teachers at all levels, available through the NSW DoE intranet. Beginning teachers are supported through the Strong start, Great teachers program, an online resource designed to support the induction of beginning teachers (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2015e). The Classroom Teacher Program, a professional learning program designed for early career teachers, provides support related to accreditation. (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2015b). Documents accessible online to support classroom teachers include the Guide to team teaching (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2010d), the Guide to examining student work (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2010c), the Guide to classroom observation (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2010a), the Guide to collaborative planning and assessment (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2010b) and the Guide to mentoring (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2006). The purpose of these resources is to support teacher professional learning at the school level, ensuring consistency across the organisation.

In addition to online delivery, other professional learning courses are delivered through face-to-face courses. Professional learning opportunities are provided both onsite and externally depending on the target group (NSW Department of Education & Training 2004). Learning opportunities are provided for school teams as well as individual teachers that cater for a wide range of development needs. For example, the Team Leadership for School Improvement and The NSW DEC Analytical framework for effective leadership and school improvement in literacy and numeracy professional
learning program for school teams, was comprehensive and research based (NSW Department of Education & Training 2010).

Scott (2003) reported that 59% of primary principals in the NSW DoE would retire over the next decade. In response to this expected ‘imminent loss of many effective and experienced principals’ (p. 1), the NSW DoE has, over the past decade, established and maintained a strong focus on leadership development. Scott’s Learning Principals research (2003), commissioned by the NSW DoE (NSW Department of Education & Training 2007), underpinned the development of the School Leadership Capabilities Framework (NSW Department of Education & Training n.d.), widely used by the NSW DoE in its leadership development programs. In 2005 the NSW DoE offered leadership preparation programs for aspiring, newly appointed and experienced school leaders (Eacott 2011). These programs included the Principal Preparation Program, the Highly Effective Leaders Program and Great Leaders, Great Teams, Great Results Program (Eacott, S. 2011), and they continued to be offered in subsequent years, some until the recent reform of the Australian education system and the nation-wide adoption of the national agenda for teacher accreditation.

The NSW DoE has continued to maintain a strong focus on leadership development. In the Sydney region for example, support is provided for aspiring leaders through the Aspire Alliance and for executives other than principals, through the Primary Executive Network (PEN) and the Deputy Principals Network. These groups, coordinated by a regional advisory group, are managed by local committees and provide a range of professional learning activities with a leadership focus (NSW Department of Education 2015c). Principals are also supported through locally based Principal Networks throughout the state. The introduction of state-wide Principal School Leadership (PSLs) contacts, provides support for principals and principal networks (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2015c). The Australian Professional Standards for Principals and the Leadership Profiles (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2015) underpin current leadership development initiatives, replacing the previously used School Leadership Capability Framework.

The provision of high quality professional learning is articulated as being important to the department (NSW Department of Education & Training 2004) and the NSW DoE
continues to be ‘committed to improving the status of the teaching profession’ (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2015a, p. 41) and providing ongoing support for the development of teaching staff at ‘every stage of the teacher career cycle’ (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2015a, p. 8). It is clear that within the NSW DoE, a range of identified opportunities for quality professional learning, including leadership development, are available for beginning teachers, classroom teachers, aspiring leaders and school leaders. Although many of these opportunities are accessible by mid-career teachers, the needs of mid-career teachers are neither identified nor specifically acknowledged. Knowing that at the time of the data collection in 2012 36.7% of primary teachers in the NSW DoE could be classed as mid-career teachers, with only 8.9% FTE primary teachers classed as beginning or early career teachers, there is an obvious gap in recognition of mid-career teachers and their particular needs. The specific identification of mid-career teachers and their needs would enable the NSW DoE to plan professional learning and leadership initiatives more effectively, targeting this substantial group of invisibles (Zweig 2014a), whose work is critical to the success of NSW DoE schools.

2.3 Conclusion

The conceptual framework underpinning this study is three-fold, covering the domains of mid-career, teachers’ professional lives and the NSW DoE workplace. This literature review confirms that mid-career is an inconsistently researched field and teachers at mid-career are under-researched. Internationally, this topic is emerging as one aspect of more recent research focussing on the lives of teachers and their work at different stages of their careers (Day et al. 2007; Kington, Reed & Sammons 2014; Konstantinides–Vladimirou 2013; Oplatka 2004; Oplatka & Tako 2009; Watson & Hatton 2002). The Delphi study (Lusty 2013) is the only empirical research currently available relating specifically to mid-career teachers in the Australian context and has provided foundational knowledge in this field of study.

A number of common themes pertinent to workers at mid-career can be found in literature over the past twenty-five years. These are encapsulated by Evans (1989) who states, ‘At mid-career all professionals, including teachers, are prone to de-motivation (boredom, loss of enthusiasm, diminished job interest) and a levelling off of performance’ (p. 11). In some ways this is a natural progression through the career
cycle, where growth is reduced and attitudes shift due to changing life concerns. Other issues, such as a shift of focus from work to family life, a perception of reduced career opportunity, diminished recognition and a growing sense of isolation (Evans 1989) increase mid-career teachers’ exposure to feelings of stress, which has implications for teachers’ professional development, well-being and satisfaction. Using a linear model, Evans (1989) suggests that mid-career professionals can be classified along a continuum into four types ranging from key members who remain engaged and are self-renewing to deadwood, whose growth stagnates. Various constructive suggestions to help revitalise mid-career teachers follow; however, the central implication is that in the majority of cases there is a gradual decline in motivation and teacher effectiveness at mid-career.

More recent literature, while not dismissing observations such as Evans’ (1989), recognises the growing complexity of the current VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) educational environment (Shields 2013). Based on empirical studies, notably the VITAE longitudinal study undertaken in the United Kingdom by Day, Gu and colleagues (Day & Gu 2010; Day et al. 2007), this literature provides a glimpse into the professional lives of teachers. Emerging from this research, Day and his colleagues identify six professional life phases with the third phase, 8–15 years of experience, corresponding to the definition of mid-career used in this dissertation. Through a conceptualisation of the interconnection between the personal, professional and situated domains defined in their work, Day and his team conclude that with appropriate support, work-life tensions at mid-career can be mitigated. They demonstrate a connection between commitment, well-being and teacher effectiveness. How teachers at mid-career respond to the growing demands of their personal lives and professional work, positions them ‘at a crossroads of commitment’ (p. 101). The Delphi study (Lusty 2013) confirms that, despite tensions and concerns, the majority of mid-career teachers remain committed throughout their careers and that their knowledge and expertise is extensive. Changes in teacher demographics, notably the impending retirement of many veteran teachers in the near future, highlight the urgency with which the needs of mid-career teachers must be addressed.

The conceptual framework underpinning this research study, arranged around three core areas of focus — mid-career, teachers and the NSW DoE workplace — is deceptively simple. Visually and conceptually this framework provides a clear picture of the three
foundational aspects of this study, scaffolding the various contributing bodies of literature into a manageable whole. What is not immediately obvious are the complexities and interconnectedness of the three core areas and their associated sub-themes. In reality, relevant bodies of literature do not stand alone, fitting neatly into their boxes as shown in the conceptual diagram. Rather they are loosely coupled, in a manner that is both distinctive and responsive (Orton & Weick 1990).

Collectively each domain contributes specifically to our broad understanding of the lives of mid-career teachers working within the NSW DoE setting. The elaborate network of interconnections linking what is known (conceptualisations of mid-career) to who mid-career teachers are (motivations, identity, careers and lives) and to what they do (the NSW DoE workplace) is equally dependent upon individual mid-career teachers themselves and the interplay between these individuals and their organisations. The three areas of focus presented in this literature review provide depth and context to this study, situating our knowledge of mid-career teachers in what is known. It also provides glimpses of the gaps in current knowledge, preparing the way for this doctoral study to investigate mid-career teachers specifically in an Australian context. In this new era of professionalism and change in Australian education, it is timely that the work and contributions mid-career teachers make to positive student outcomes be recognised and maximised by school leaders and their organisations.
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The review of literature in Chapter 2 has illuminated the development of a three-pronged conceptual framework indicating strong links between the professional lives of teachers in mid-career and their particular workplace contexts, in the case of this study, the NSW DoE. This literature has indicated that although much has been written about mid-career in general, surprisingly little has been written about teachers in mid-career. The little that has been written provides a small glimpse of the lives of mid-career teachers suggesting that contrary to popular belief, mid-career teachers are no more or less likely to be experiencing a mid-career crisis than any other career professional (Day et al. 2007; Hargreaves 2005; Lusty 2013). In addition, my personal experience as a career teacher, including 15 years as a teaching executive, has led me to question the assumption that teachers in mid-career or later are likely to be less motivated than younger teachers. These personal observations, combined with the lack of literature addressing this issue, contributed to the development of my overarching research question. This chapter discusses the underpinning theoretical framework as well as the resultant methodology and research design used.

3.2 Theoretical framework

As researchers, what we know, or what we think we know, is influenced by our own notion of the nature of knowledge. The relationship between the researcher, the research and the audience is a complex one which is inextricably linked by theoretical conceptualisations. Understanding the lens through which we as researchers view the world informs us as researchers, influences the methodologies we use, and clarifies our approach for the audience. Our response as researchers to the underlying question of whether or not reality exists outside of human experience shapes our thinking and subsequent approach to and engagement with the research process. Although a complex discussion, if we envisage theoretical viewpoints placed along a continuum, put simply there are two differing viewpoints: one objectivism, the other, constructivism (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007). Unlike empiricists who believe that one reality exists and it is the researcher’s job to uncover that reality (Mertens 2005), I am aligned to the constructivist perspective, seeing reality as socially constructed (Mertens 2005) and
ever-changing. This belief underpins my research, which is a naturalistic study with an evaluative framework.

There is a wide range of what Punch (2006) terms perspectives, that others might term metatheories or paradigms that can inform research. In fact, Sikes (2006) states that ‘theory is essential and inescapable’ (p. 43). The perspective or paradigm in which the researcher situates their research informs and drives the research, even when not consciously considered. The constructivist paradigm, also called the naturalistic, hermeneutic, or interpretive paradigm (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007; Guba & Lincoln 1989; Patton 2002), explicitly addresses the ontological, epistemological and methodological questions that arise from my research into the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers. Although the term constructivist paradigm (Mertens 2005), is commonly seen in texts on this subject my preference is for the term naturalistic paradigm (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Patton 2002) as it more succinctly encapsulates my educational viewpoint. Fundamentally constructivist in essence, the naturalistic viewpoint is characterised by concern for the individual (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007; Guba & Lincoln 2005) with the aim of understanding human experience in situ.

Unlike scientific researchers, for whom most research revolves around physical objects and phenomena, social research focuses on human interaction within natural settings. The naturalistic viewpoint, as described in Appendix 1, offers a better ‘fit’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985) for human-based research, which is complex and subjective. It is important to understand that naturalistic inquiry is defined at the level of paradigm, not at the level of method (Lincoln & Guba 1985). In their seminal work, Naturalistic Inquiry, Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline three mandatory requirements (pp. 251–252) and five axioms (pp. 37–38) forming a ‘synergistic set’ (p. 251), which, when adopted, collectively identify the naturalistic paradigm. As a researcher, I have positioned myself under the umbrella of naturalistic inquiry knowing that the three mandatory requirements and the five fundamental tenets are an appropriate ‘fit’ for my research project (p. 229).

As well as the three mandatory requirements, Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline one further requirement that, although optional, is considered to be ‘highly desirable’ (p. 251). Agostinho (2005) developed a table for the three mandatory requirements that
could be used as a checklist or template by researchers employing naturalistic inquiry to ensure compliance with the paradigm’s requirements’ (p. 18). Accordingly, Table 1, based on and expanded from this template, outlines all four requirements and demonstrates how this study aligns with Lincoln and Guba’s mandatory and optional requirements.

Table 1: Naturalistic inquiry paradigm: The four requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Illustrative quote (Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985)</th>
<th>Evidence from this study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requirement 1 – Mandatory</td>
<td>‘. . . the inquirer adopt[s] the stance suggested by the axioms of the naturalistic paradigm. These axioms from a synergistic set, and must be adopted as a set. Mix-and-match strategies are not allowed, nor are accommodations and compromises’ (p. 251).</td>
<td>Compliance with this requirement is outlined in the Table 2 below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement 2 – Mandatory</td>
<td>‘. . . the inquirer commit[s] him or herself to the development of a level of skill appropriate to a human instrument and sufficiently high to ward off criticism on the grounds of instrumental inadequacy’ (p. 252).</td>
<td>As a researcher, I have been committed to the development of appropriate, high-level skills throughout this project. I have demonstrated awareness of the need to ensure credibility by controlling any possible personal subjectivity through the use of triangulation, regular peer debriefing and the use of a personal reflective journal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement 3 – Mandatory</td>
<td>‘. . . prior to implementation, the inquirer has made a serious effort to develop an initial design statement’ (p. 250).</td>
<td>The research design and proposal was presented to and approved by UOW Faculty of Education, UOW Human Research Ethics Committee and the NSW DoE State Education Research Approvals Process, prior to the commencement of the research project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement 4 – Optional, but highly desirable</td>
<td>‘. . . the inquirer engage[s] in prior ethnography to provide both a springboard and a benchmark for the more formal study to follow’ (p. 252).</td>
<td>I had previously undertaken a Delphi study of the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools (Lusty 2013).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Table adapted from Agostinho (2005).

At an ontological level, the belief that there are multiple, socially constructed realities (Axiom 1 Table 2), arises from the view that as each individual perceives the world differently, reality is relative to the way in which each individual envisions it. Furthermore, these individual constructions of reality continually change over time in
response to social interaction. Our role as researchers is to reconstruct these perceptions and to establish consensus (Agostinho 2005).

At an epistemological level, the relationship between the researcher and research participants is interdependent (Axiom 2 Table 2). In the words of Lincoln and Guba (1985), ‘the inquirer and “object” of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable’ (p. 37). The researcher, in a relationship with participants, brings his or her values that provide a lens for framing understanding of the situation and setting being researched. Acknowledgement of this relationship and the related assumptions inherent in any viewpoint are addressed by employing reflective practices throughout the research process.

Axiom 3 (Table 2) addresses the issue of generalisation in naturalistic research. Put simply, ‘The only generalisation is: There is no generalisation’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 110). In essence, naturalistic inquiry aims to use ‘thick description’, a term first coined by Gilbert Ryle (1971, p. 474) and developed by Clifford Geertz (1973), to create knowledge in the form of a working hypothesis (Cronbach 1975) that describes the specific case (Lincoln & Guba 1985). In some situations, a working hypothesis may be transferable to another similar context. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to this as ‘transferability’ (p. 124), which is enabled by sufficient congruence between different contexts.

Naturalistic inquiry is distinguished by the concept of mutual simultaneous shaping as an alternative approach to the possibility of causal links (Axiom 4 Table 2). Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to ‘native activity’ (p. 155), a state of mutual and continual interaction between all elements in a situation. They explain that as all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, ‘it is impossible to distinguish causes and effects’ (p. 38). Mutual shaping, arising from the interaction between all elements involved, is synergistic, ‘circumstance relative’ (Nurmi cited in Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 152) and inherently complex (Nurmi 1974).

Critical to the four axioms described above is Axiom 5 (Table 2), concerned with the role of values in inquiry (axiology). Unlike positivists who claim that inquiry is value-free and can therefore be conducted using objective methodology, naturalistic inquiry is, by its very nature, value-bound. Inquiry is influenced by the values of the
researcher as well as their choices of paradigm, substantive theories, methodological decisions and context (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Optimally however, all sources of influence need to be congruent or value-resonant.

As a naturalistic researcher, the issue of reflexivity is pivotal in terms of the ultimate credibility and trustworthiness of my research. As discussed above, it is inevitable that the researcher carries personal assumptions, values and presuppositions. However, if explicitly stated, the effect can be minimised through reflective practices. Reflective practice requires reflection (demonstrated by the use of a reflexive journal) about the implications of a researcher’s methods, values, biases and assumptions about knowledge generation. Awareness and recognition of reflexivity in research does not negate the implicit impact of the researcher in research, but it does acknowledge and clarify the implications and significance of the researcher’s decisions, choices and interpretation (Bryman 2001).
Table 2: Naturalistic inquiry paradigm: Evidence of the five axioms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Axiom</th>
<th>Illustrative quote</th>
<th>Evidence from this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Axiom 1:</strong> The nature of reality: Realities are multiple, constructed and holistic.</td>
<td>‘...naturalistic ontology suggests that realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts...’ (p. 39).</td>
<td>Data was collected from participants in their workplace settings that were context-rich and authentic. The criteria used to discuss the rigour of this study are based on a constructivist (naturalistic) ontology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Axiom 2:</strong> The relationship of the knower to the known: Knower and known are interactive and inseparable.</td>
<td>‘The inquirer and the ‘object’ of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable’ (p. 37).</td>
<td>The simple act of asking participants questions impacts on participants’ thinking and their perceived reality. My interactions with participants were by definition, interactive. I acknowledged my influence whenever possible. The criteria used to discuss the rigour of this study are based on a constructivist (naturalistic) epistemology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Axiom 3:</strong> The possibility of generalisation: Only time and content bound working hypotheses (idiographic statements) are possible.</td>
<td>‘The aim of inquiry is to develop an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of “working hypotheses” that describe the individual case’ (p. 38).</td>
<td>The creation and application of a coding manual underpinned data analysis, from which working hypotheses emerged. These propositions, developed from individual experience, are context specific drawing on what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as a ‘photographic slice of life’ (p. 155). Transferability is enabled by sufficient congruence between different contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Axiom 4:</strong> The possibility of causal links: It is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.</td>
<td>‘All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish cause from effect’ (p. 38).</td>
<td>As a researcher I recognise ‘native activity’ (Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985, p. 155), the interdependence and synergistic relationship of all elements in any given circumstance. I also recognise each situation’s unique patterns of circumstances and unpredictable, dynamic nature, ensuring explanations are based on specific, contextual situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Axiom 5:</strong> The role of values in inquiry: Inquiry is value-bound.</td>
<td>‘Inquiry is value-bound...it is influenced by the values of the inquirer, by the...assumptions underlying both the substantive theory and the methodological paradigm...and by the values that characterize the context in which the inquiry is carried out’ (p. 161).</td>
<td>As a researcher I recognise and accept my moral obligation to ‘take account’ (Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985, p. 173) of values inherent in this study. Explicit statements relating to any perceived personal influence have been noted and all decisions made are clear, transparent and documented. This study demonstrates ‘value-resonance’ (Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985, p. 38) because my chosen paradigm, substantive theories, methodological decisions and study context exhibit congruence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Table adapted from Agostinho (2005, pp. 19–20).
In addition to the four requirements of naturalistic inquiry and the adoption of the five axioms as outlined above, Lincoln and Guba (1985) specify fourteen key characteristics of naturalistic inquiry to ensure operational integrity. These characteristics underpin the paradigm through their logical dependence on the axioms and their coherence and interdependence (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 39). Table 3 briefly outlines all fourteen characteristics and demonstrates how this study complies with these requirements.

**Table 3: Naturalistic inquiry paradigm: The 14 key characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Evidence from this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Natural setting</td>
<td>Participant interviews were held in each participant’s workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Human instrument</td>
<td>I personally conducted all interviews with participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Utilisation of tacit knowledge</td>
<td>I am an experienced professional educator and bring substantial unexpressed knowledge to the role of practitioner researcher. As I personally conducted the interviews, I was able to appreciate nuances such as tone of voice, body language and warmth of the relational interaction. As well, my contextual knowledge of current educational practice in general and my contextual knowledge specific to the NSW DoE were evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Qualitative methods</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews were used, and analysed using qualitative data analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Purposive sampling</td>
<td>Purposive sampling was used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Inductive data analysis</td>
<td>Analysis began with data and relational propositions emerged from the analysis of data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Grounded theory</td>
<td>Themes and theories emerged from analysis of data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Emergent design</td>
<td>Some aspects of the original design of the case evolved and were modified as the project progressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Negotiated outcomes</td>
<td>Member checking was employed to give participants opportunities to provide feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Case study reporting mode</td>
<td>Case study reporting was used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Idiographic interpretation</td>
<td>Data was interpreted ideographically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Tentative application</td>
<td>Emergent theories may be transferable into other setting provided sufficient congruence between settings is evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Focus-determined boundaries</td>
<td>Decisions regarding the choice of participants and their locations emerged over time. However they were within the case boundaries initially established and approved through the university’s ethics approval procedure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Special criteria for trustworthiness</td>
<td>The trustworthiness of this study has been established using recognised criteria relating to the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of this research project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Based on Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 39–43).*
Chapter 3

3.3 Trustworthiness in this study

Theory plays a practical role in research by providing a conceptual framework for analysis and reflexivity (Ball 2006). Unlike rationalistic inquiry, which has a longer tradition of methodological tools used to establish rigour through conceptions of validity, reliability and objectivity, naturalistic researchers establish credibility through the use of methodological tools more suited to the theoretical foundations of this style of inquiry. For almost two decades, analogous processes have been developed based on the conceptualisations of Guba and Lincoln in various publications (1981; Guba 1987; 1999; Lincoln 1995; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Lincoln & Guba 1986). Criteria for trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry have been developed to parallel the conventional criteria for rigour in rationalistic research. These criteria respond to the four common concerns researchers usually address related to truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (Guba 1981; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Lincoln & Guba 1986). In naturalistic inquiry, the terms credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, originally developed by Guba (1981), are widely accepted as analogous to the conventional terms of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity respectively.

Techniques to establish trustworthiness have been developed for each of the four domains of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Strategies to enhance credibility include prolonged and substantial engagement in situ, persistent observation, peer debriefing, triangulation, negative case analysis, referential adequacy of materials, and member checking (refer to Appendix 2 for detailed descriptions). Transferability is established through the use of purposive sampling and thick description (1973) implying rich, detailed accounts of the case or cases. Dependability and confirmability are established through auditing processes used to confirm the researcher has acted appropriately throughout the research process and that the findings are adequately grounded in data (Guba & Lincoln 1989; Lincoln & Guba 1985). Practicing reflexivity through the use of a reflexive journal is also recommended (Guba 1981).

It is interesting to note that over the last three decades there has been continuing discussion related to rigour in qualitative research and the terminology applied (Guba & Lincoln 1989; Krefting 1991; Lincoln & Guba 1986; Morse et al. 2002; Onwuegbuzie
& Leech 2007; Sandelowski 1986; Whittemore, Chase & Mandle 2001). Lincoln and Guba (1989) also developed an alternative notion of trustworthiness, authenticity, where the criteria are more holistic and ‘are native to interpretivism’ (Lincoln & Guba 2013, p. 105). The five criteria: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tacit authenticity, concern issues such as fairness, understanding and empowerment. In the context of this study, ensuring that the outcome fairly represents the different viewpoints of mid-career teachers and that educative authenticity prevails, that is, the research helps all teachers appreciate the perspective of their mid-career colleagues in the workplace, is crucial (Bryman 2001). Whilst I have chosen to use the Lincoln and Guba model explicitly (1985), as a researcher I am committed to being proactive and taking responsibility for ensuring the rigour of this study at every stage of the research process (Morse et al. 2002). Table 4 below, based on Lincoln and Guba (1985; 1986), Guba (1981) and Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993), outlines the techniques used in this study to establish trustworthiness.
Table 4: Techniques used to establish trustworthiness in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Evidence from this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Prolonged engagement       | • I have worked for the NSW DoE for over 30 years and am very familiar with the work environment and culture. This contributed to the goodwill afforded by participants to me.  
  • Participant interviews, held onsite at each participant’s work place, were  
    semi-structured, allowing adequate time to develop a positive rapport with participants and obtain a wide scope of data. |
| Persistent observation     | • Not applicable in this study.                                                                                                                                 |
| Peer debriefing            | • Prior to beginning the research project, I presented my research proposal to academic peers at UOW. This is a rigorous process ensuring the proposed project is well-designed, especially in terms of ethical and methodological considerations.  
  • I participated in a small, informal peer support group consisting of three doctoral students who met periodically to discuss their work. Debriefing conversations were held during which each person answered searching questions about their work. This process aimed ‘to keep the inquirer honest’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 308).  
  • Throughout the research project, I discussed the project with my doctoral supervisors and responded appropriately to their feedback.  
  • Conference presentations related to my work provided me with opportunities to discuss relevant aspects of my research with peers in the wider educational community. |
| Triangulation              | • As a single researcher using one data collection mode, semi-structured interviews, credibility was enhanced through the rigorous data analysis procedures that I developed.  
  My use of a detailed coding manual in conjunction with the web-based analysis tool,  
  Dedoose, ensured that emergent themes were triangulated in data. |
| Negative case analysis     | • Following the development of the Typology (Chapter 4) and Leadership Framework (Chapter 5), data were actively re-examined to seek ‘negative cases’ that might contradict or lie outside the typology and leadership framework. No instances of negative cases were found. |
| Referential adequacy       | • While referential adequacy testing is desirable, it is not essential (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Due to the limited amount of data, and the limited resources of a sole doctoral researcher, referential adequacy was not used in this study. However, data from the pilot study could be used in a referential adequacy test, if required. |
| Member checking            | • Member checking was employed at several points during the study. Participants provided feedback on the accuracy of transcription and the clarity of their statements. They also had the opportunity to read the cameo portrayals of their career stories to ensure the researcher’s interpretation was acceptable. |
| Purposive sampling         | • Participants in this study were purposefully chosen to represent mid-career teachers as defined in the operational definition as having 8–15 years teaching experience, as well as representing a wide range of workplace settings and professional experience. |
| Thick description          | • I ensured data collected was detailed and complete, maximising its usefulness for analysis. This included accurate, verbatim transcripts of interviews as suggested by Becker (1977). |
| Audit trail                | • I maintained records throughout the research project based on the six audit trail categories originally proposed by Halpern (Halpern 1983, cited in Lincoln & Guba 1985): raw data, data reduction and analysis, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, materials related to intentions and disposition, and instrument development. This ensured audit requirements could be met should a formal audit be implemented. Using backward mapping, links between research design, processes, raw data and research outcomes can be clearly established. |
| Reflexive journal          | • I maintained an online reflexive journal from the beginning of the research project on my private, password-protected website (http://midcareerteachers.info/). As a part-time doctoral student, entries were made as needed during periods of research activity over a five year period. This journal recorded personal self-reflection as well as methodological decisions. I shared this with my doctoral supervisors. |
3.4 Methodology

3.4.1 Qualitative method

This research project is a qualitative study involving ‘an interpretive, naturalist approach’ (Mertens 2005, p. 229). Its empirical nature ‘based on the direct experience’ (Punch 2009) of the research participants builds on the emergent themes identified in the author’s earlier Delphi study (Lusty 2013). The Delphi study concluded that:

. . . mid-career teachers are highly professional and remain motivated over time. They have a strong sense of vocation and the delivery of quality outcomes for students is still their primary motivator. Their main concerns are issues that impact on the achievement of good teaching and optimal outcomes for students. School leaders play a pivotal role in providing an environment that supports teachers in their professional work. In so doing, they need to recognise teachers as individuals whose career paths are not linear and for whom different strategies will be relevant at different points in their careers (p. 102).

3.4.2 Case study

In contrast to the Delphi study, this research uses case study as the underpinning research strategy (Punch 2005). Over the past three decades there has been ongoing discussion and debate relating to the robustness of case study as a research method (Miles 1979; Simons 1996; Yin 1981). However the application of case study as a research strategy is now ‘widely accepted as a research approach’ (Simons 2009, p. 13) and its methodology is well-supported in literature (Guba & Lincoln 1994; Miles & Huberman 1994; Simons 2009; Stake 1995; Yin 2009). It has been defined with different nuances by different authors (Simons 2009). For Yin (2009), case studies are empirical inquiries into real-life, contemporary phenomena in which multiple sources of evidence can be used. Guba and Lincoln (1985) state ‘the case study is primarily an interpretive instrument for an idiographic construal of what was found’ (p. 189). Simons (2009) defines case study as ‘an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project . . . in a “real life” context’ (p. 21). One of the hallmarks of case study research is the capacity to develop rich and vivid descriptions of events relevant to the case (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007),
which this research project aimed to do. A naturalistic study with an emic perspective (Lincoln & Guba 1985), this study aimed to further enhance our knowledge of the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools, using case study its primary research strategy.

3.4.3 Re-statement of the research question

The overarching research question being asked is: *What are the motivations and concerns experienced by mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools?* In keeping with the emergent nature of naturalistic inquiry research design (Table 3, p. 60) data collected early in the study suggested that school leadership appeared to be a predominant theme linked to the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in the NSW DoE workplace. I felt it was an important theme to investigate and made the decision to include a second question: *How can educational leaders enhance the effectiveness of mid-career teachers on student outcomes?* As the study progressed it became evident that these questions were interconnected and complementary.

3.5 Research design

The design process as illustrated in Figure 9 has been conceptualised and developed specifically to suit this particular study. This research design demonstrates the naturalistic inquiry approach of this study, as elaborated below.

3.5.1 Single case design — ‘Natural’ setting

A single case design was used for this study. The case is a bounded study (Creswell 2009; Miles & Huberman 1994; Punch 2009), concerned with the complexity and context (Bryman 2001; Punch 2009) of the natural setting being investigated (Punch 2009). This case is bounded by Sydney Region⁶, a large metropolitan region of the NSW DoE. I chose this case because it provided me ample opportunity to draw upon a range of participants across a variety of differing school locations, thus maximising the potential richness of the data to be collected.

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⁶ Sydney Region, as it was bounded and defined at the time of the data collection phase of the study in 2012.
Figure 9: Research design for this case study
3.5.2 Human instrument — The researcher

The role of the researcher in naturalistic inquiry is one of human instrument. In fact, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that ‘a contextual inquiry demands a human instrument’ (p. 187). As noted earlier in Table 1, to ensure the researcher is adequately prepared to undertake this role, their commitment to appropriate skill development is considered essential. Ultimately, their capacity to develop rich and vivid descriptions as well as to analyse and synthesise data is dependent upon their skill as a researcher. This skill-set includes the ability to ask good questions, to be an active listener, to be adaptive and flexible, to have a firm grasp of the issues being studied and to be unbiased by preconceived notions (Yin 2009). Table 1 documents my commitment to personal skill development. Throughout the project, I have demonstrated an awareness of the need to ensure credibility by controlling any possible personal subjectivity through the use of triangulation, regular peer debriefing and the use of a personal, reflexive journal. I conducted all interviews with participants personally as the sole researcher for this study.

3.5.3 Tacit knowledge

Fundamental to the researcher’s preparation and skill development is the underlying tacit knowledge they hold. Stake (1978) refers to the work of Michael Polányi who defined tacit knowledge as ‘knowledge gained from experience’ (Stake 1978, p. 5), while Patton (2002) further explains: ‘tacit knowledge is the inner essence of human understanding, what we know but can’t articulate’ (p. 108). This differs from propositional knowledge described as ‘all interpersonal shared statements’ (Myers 2000, ¶7). The research process allows the researcher to build on their tacit knowledge and as a result of shared experience and articulation of findings, tacit knowledge can become an integral part of propositional knowledge (Myers 2000). As a professional educator with over 30 years of full-time teaching and leadership experience, I bring a wealth of tacit knowledge to my role as a practitioner researcher. The inquiry process provides me with an avenue to think about what I may know and explicitly communicate it to others (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

3.5.4 Purposive sampling — The participants

In keeping with the central purpose of naturalistic investigations, gathering enough information to be descriptive in order to ‘give the context its unique flavour’ (Lincoln &
Guba 1985, p. 201), the participants for this study were purposefully chosen (Lincoln & Guba 1985). A small, non-random, purposive, maximal variation sample (Fraenkel & Wallen 2006; Lincoln & Guba 1985) was employed. Maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling aims to maximise the possible range of information available (Lincoln & Guba 1985) and to capture and describe central themes derived from the varied sample group (Patton 2002). The study participants were chosen to represent the group of mid-career teachers being researched, that is, primary school teachers having between 8–15 years teaching experience and who represented a range of different settings and professional experience in NSW DoE primary schools.

Ethics approval for my thesis research project was granted in November 2011\(^7\) (Appendix 3). As required by the NSW DoE State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP), potential participants could not be approached directly until after permission had been obtained to do so from their school principal. In February 2012, the beginning of the NSW school year, I prepared letters for principals (Appendix 4) and emailed 158 NSW DoE primary school principals in Sydney Region requesting their support in recommending potential participants who met the defined criteria as mid-career teachers for my research. I attached an information letter related to the research topic for their interest (Appendix 5). It is interesting to note that within a week I had received 60 replies, attesting to the goodwill afforded by the principals contacted. Eighteen of the principals who replied referred to the fact there were no teachers meeting my operational definition for being a mid-career within the their schools. This anecdotal evidence suggests that schools like these will experience a shortage of experienced staff within the next few years as the veteran teachers leave the workforce. Leadership sustainability will also become an issue needing organisational attention.

Next I prepared letters for potential participants (Appendix 6). I then emailed all the mid-career teachers recommended by principals or who chose to contact me as a result of being given my details by their principal, and invited them to participate in my study. I also attached the information letter. As a result 15 participants were selected and agreed to participate in the study.

\(^7\) Ethics approval numbers: UOW HE11/445 and SERAP 2011228.
3.5.5 Participant diversity

Of the 15 participants, 12 were female and three were male. This is commensurate with NSW DoE workforce statistics at that time which showed that in 2011, the proportion (by percentage) of female primary school teachers in Sydney region was 81.5% while the proportion of male primary school teachers in Sydney Region was 18.5% (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012b). The majority of participants, 12, were aged between 31 and 40 as would be expected given the operational definition of mid-career teachers, that is, having between 8–15 years of teaching experience. The three remaining participants, all female, were aged between 41 and 50, reflecting their later entry into the teaching force. Thirteen participants worked full-time while the remaining two participants who worked on a part-time basis, were female. The substantive positions held by participants revealed that 10 participants were classroom teachers, four participants were Assistant Principals and only one participant was a Principal. However one classroom teacher was relieving in an Assistant Principal role at the time of the study. All participants held a Bachelor degree as would generally be expected, while five participants held postgraduate qualifications. No-one was undertaking further study at the time the data collection was undertaken. The professional settings participants worked in ranged across small, medium and large primary schools as well as mainstream and special educational settings. As well as fitting the required criteria for being mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools, this participant sample clearly reflected diversity of age, gender, qualifications, experience, substantive position and professional setting, providing the potential for the collection of rich and varied data samples.

3.5.6 Saturation

The concept of saturation, ‘the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data’ (Guest, Bunce & Johnson 2006, p. 59) is integral in naturalistic inquiry (Bowen 2008). Although purposive sampling is based on informational, not statistical considerations (Lincoln & Guba 1985), a general guideline to the projected number of participants required to reach ‘theoretical saturation’ (Glaser & Strauss 1967, pp. 61–62) can be an initial requirement in gaining ethics approval. In qualitative research, being unable to provide exact details of every aspect of the research until the study is underway, due to the emergent nature of its design, can be problematic (Cheek 2005). This issue has been addressed by Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), whose
analysis suggest that 6 to 12 interviews are generally sufficient to reach data saturation or informational redundancy (Lincoln & Guba 1985), provided the purposive sample has been carefully selected. Accordingly, as the 15 participants recruited for this research project were purposefully chosen using well-defined criteria, data saturation can be demonstrated (Guest, Bunce & Johnson 2006).

### 3.5.7 Inductive data analysis

Inductive data analysis is ‘a process for “making sense” of field data’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 202). A hallmark of research within the naturalistic paradigm is the view that data are *constructions* stemming from ‘interactions between the inquirer and the data sources’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 332) whereas the analysis process results in what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as *reconstructions*, which by nature are inductive. Inductive analysis moves from examining specific raw units of data towards identifying emergent general patterns (Patton 2002). Unlike the conventional hypothetical-deductive approach, inductive analysis does not work with an a priori theory or pre-defined variables (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Patton 2002). The inductive design of naturalistic inquiry allows the researcher to identify ‘theoretical categories and relational propositions’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 333) that are evident in data sets. Integral to the process of inductive data analysis is the generation of theory: that is, theory that emerges from systematically collected and analysed data (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Patton 2002; Punch 2009). The primary source of evidence for this study was obtained through personal interviews with individual participants. In this study, data analysis was ongoing following transcription of the first interview. A rigorous, cyclical analysis process was undertaken, resulting in the creation and application of a coding manual, which underpins the subsequent theoretical reconstructions of this study.

### 3.6 Data collection and analysis

The following detailed discussion of the data collection and analysis methods used in this study are specifically included to demystify the process of thematic analysis that I employed. The provision of an accurate and transparent account of my approach demonstrates the rigour of this research project (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006), which is not always made public by others (Constas 1992). Diagrammatically, this process is shown in Figure 10 (p. 72) expanding on the *Data collection protocol* and *Inductive data analysis* procedures shown previously in Figure 9 (p. 66).
3.6.1 Data collection — Interviews

In this age of innovative technologies, there is an increasingly wide range of sources that can be used to collect evidence for research projects. However Yin (2009) identifies the six main sources of evidence used in case studies as documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artefacts, and he provides a synopsis of their relative strengths and weaknesses. It is important, therefore, to ensure that the researcher’s choice of evidence and data collection methods are consistent with the methodology, theoretical perspectives and epistemology of their study (Crotty 1998). Accordingly, the research design for this study employed personal interviews as the major source of evidence. Semi-structured life world interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009) with an interview guide approach were designed, enabling a comparison of responses (Patton 1990). Semi-structured life world interviews are defined as interviews ‘with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena’ (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, p. 3). This method is an excellent fit for my study at both theoretical and methodological levels.
Figure 10: Detailed flow diagram of data collection and analysis
3.6.2 Development of the Interview Guide

Punch (2009) summarises several types of interviews as conceptualised by a range of authors and concludes that the terminology introduced by Fontana and Frey (1994) of structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews successfully conveys the importance of the degree of structure as a differentiating factor. My choice of a semi-structured interview approach using an interview guide provided enough structure to ensure consistency of data collected across the participant group whilst allowing for some flexibility to probe for details or discuss issues relevant to the individual participant in greater depth. This interview style suited my purpose well as the interviews were focused yet remained conversational.

The interview guide developed (Appendix 7) used open-ended questions, which were based on the framework of question types for designing interviews suggested by Patton (Patton 2002). As well as providing me with specific areas of focus, it allowed my participants to describe their experiences and understandings across the five areas of questioning: experience and behaviours, opinions and values, feelings, knowledge and sensory. The sixth area of background/demographic questions, were asked via a participant information form (Appendix 8) completed by participants prior to their interview. This provided me with understanding of each participant’s background and personal context as well as ensuring the time available to spend face-to-face with the participants was utilised effectively.

I undertook a pilot interview in January 2012, which provided the opportunity to trial the interview guide, refine my interviewing skills and develop my confidence. This proved to be beneficial. I realised that it required mindfulness and skill by the researcher to guide the interview ensuring that I stayed within the agreed time frame whilst allowing the participant adequate, uninterrupted thinking time when answering questions. An iPhone was used to digitally record the interview. I found this device to be easy to use and unobtrusive. I personally transcribed the pilot interview, which gave me insight into the level of accuracy required when transcribing and allowed me to reflect on both the interview process and the quality and depth of the data provided by the participant. Data from this pilot interview were archived in two formats: the sound recording to capture the nuance of actual speech and the accurate written transcription.
of the interview. These files were kept for future reference should they be needed, such as for referential adequacy testing.

The 15 semi-structured interviews used for data collection in this study were completed over a six-week period in April to May 2012. This short timeframe was made possible by the co-operation and goodwill of the participants who gave their time so generously to suit my schedule. After consultation with the participants, all interviews were held confidentially at each participant’s workplace in a private room. Like the pilot interview, these interviews were digitally recorded using an iPhone. As I am a practitioner researcher and work full time, I used a professional transcription service that guarantees confidentiality and data security to transcribe all 15 interviews. The audio files and written transcripts are stored securely as per ethics requirements. On receipt of the professional transcriptions, I checked them against the relevant audio file making corrections where necessary. The level of accuracy of the professional transcriptions was very high and generally only required minor corrections relating to some specific terms. After the interviews had been transcribed and checked for accuracy, a copy of each transcript was sent to the relevant participant for member checking. All agreed that the transcripts were accurate and acceptable.

### 3.6.3 Data analysis — Coding

Data analysis in this inquiry was framed within the naturalistic paradigm and used an inductive approach. As such, analysing interview data is an iterative, sense-making endeavour (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall & McCulloch 2011; Lincoln & Guba 2013) involving the synthesis of emerging themes and for this study, a coding manual was ultimately developed to enhance the systematic management, analysis and interpretation of the data collected. A detailed reflexive journal was kept throughout this period. The use of the coding manual as a template (Crabtree & Miller 1999) in combination with the reflexive journal ‘provided a clear trail of evidence for the credibility of the study’ (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006, p. 4). In addition, a post-doctoral researcher was employed to verify the trustworthiness of the coding by independently coding a representative sample transcript, using the coding manual I developed. As shown in Appendix 9, significant agreement in the use of individual codes and in the frequency of their use was demonstrated.
Initially during the data collection period, the content of six interview transcripts was carefully examined to begin to identify possible patterns, categories and themes using a thematic approach. Through a process of reading and re-reading the data and comparing data sets from each of these participants, links from data to ideas emerged (Saldaña 2009). In addition to this data-driven approach, I was also able to draw upon literature, including the earlier Delphi study (Lusty 2013), to inform this process. Code categories developed during this first cycle coding stage (Saldaña 2009) were emic in nature, and hence were descriptive (Miles & Huberman 1994; Saldaña 2009; Simons 2009), interpretative (Miles & Huberman 1994), explanatory (Simons 2009) and conceptually meaningful. However the increasing number of code categories emerging prompted the need to re-evaluate the process being used. This resulted in a decision to use a more structured approach through the development of a coding manual (MacQueen et al. 1998).

3.6.4 The coding manual
The coding manual is the set of coding procedures used to reduce the complexity of the raw data. Its development was informed by a continuing cycle of reading and re-reading all interview transcripts, with some initial reference to the outcomes of the Delphi study (Lusty 2013). The a priori knowledge gained from the Delphi study was used only to assist my thinking as, ultimately, the code category definitions arose from the interview data, clearly illustrated in the coding manual. Twenty-five emergent categories are specifically recorded in the final coding manual used during the analysis process. To reflect the essence of the overarching research question, that is, the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers, each code category has sub-categories for both positive and negative instances. By so doing, the initial number of code categories was significantly reduced. In the coding manual, all code categories are defined with a brief description, a more detailed description and a set of specific mapping rules for both positive and negative instances, used to guide the researcher in the application of the code category through denotation. In addition, all categories list actual examples from data, which assisted in my decision-making, by application through association. An example of one category, Collegial relationships, from the coding manual, with its definition, mapping rules and examples from data is provided in Appendix 10. The development of the final version of the coding manual was an intensive, iterative and reflexive process, which underpinned the overall process of
inductive data analysis, which is also iterative and reflexive in nature (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006). The rigour used throughout this process, as documented in my reflexive journal, contributes the trustworthiness or ‘goodness’ (Arminio & Hultgren 2002; Tobin & Begley 2004) of the overall research process.

3.6.5 Using Dedoose: an online tool
Following data collection, it soon became evident that the interviews had provided a large volume of rich data, and I realised that I needed a data management tool to help me manage the data effectively. I chose to use Dedoose (SocioCultural Research Consultants 2014a) a web-based, cross-platform, tool. Dedoose suited my purpose because, unlike some other Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) tools, it was compatible with my own computer’s operating system and being web-based, could be accessed from any location with an internet connection. As a part-time researcher, this allowed me the flexibility to utilise any free time available more effectively.

Dedoose offers several features such as the ability to highlight colour-coded excerpts in the source material (University of Surrey 2012), which I found useful for easier identification of patterns of code application. Another feature of Dedoose is its facility to identify code co-occurrence. ‘Code co-occurrence is defined as the application of two or more codes to a discrete segment of text from a unique respondent’ (Namey et al. 2008). Looking at co-occurrence and their frequencies enables the researcher to identify patterns in the data sets. The frequency that two codes co-occur can be indicative of the degree or strength of the connection between the two themes. Through the use of Dedoose co-occurrence reports, analysis of associations between themes identified in the data was undertaken and the findings are discussed in Chapter 5.

The issue of data security is explicitly addressed by the developers who have implemented extensive industry-standard security measures at all levels designed to protect data used by investigators (SocioCultural Research Consultants 2014c; University of Surrey 2012). It must be mentioned, however, that in May 2014 Dedoose experienced a major system failure resulting in the loss of data and service availability affecting some active accounts. SocioCultural Research Consultants (SCRC) took full responsibility for this failure and subsequently restored and rebuilt many of the affected
accounts. Since then they have also implemented enhanced procedures to further strengthen data security from both the system and user points of view (SocioCultural Research Consultants 2014b). As with any project data (Patton 2002), it is important to understand that when using any online tool researchers have a personal responsibility to be diligent in backing up their own project data in a secure manner. Dedoose has always provided the facility to export and save project data locally, which I did throughout the period I worked on this project. Consequently, had my account been affected by the Dedoose system failure, I would have been able to recreate the complete project from locally saved data. Following the May 2014 crash, SCRC added a simpler, single-click project download facility, making this backup process quicker and easier to use (SocioCultural Research Consultants 2014b). Despite these wider issues, my experience using Dedoose was a positive one as it was accessible, easy to use and provided appropriate functionality for the data management of this qualitative research project.

3.6.6 Units and unitising
In using Dedoose, data units for this study were derived from participant interview transcripts and were therefore participant utterances. Nested within each interview transcript, I found smaller units of particular interest, of necessity being heuristic in nature (Lincoln & Guba 1985). As these specific units were participant utterances, I defined them as being statements about a specific topic or idea. I referred to each topic or idea as the categories of the code. Each unit is encapsulated in a phrase, a sentence or more than one sentence, depending on what the participants say (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Miles & Huberman 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) explain that codes, or using the terminology chosen for this study, code categories, ‘are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study’ (p. 56). At times there may be a blurring of the boundaries of particular data units, because the natural closure of the each participant statement is unique and is usually signalled by both a full stop and the end of the utterances about that specific category. Therefore a degree of licence is afforded to the researcher who needs to determine where the natural closure point is. However as my participant interviews were semi-structured using a pre-determined interview guide, most data units were bounded by the participant’s response to a question related to the category of code being examined. Applying the naturalistic lens to my study necessitated some interactivity.
that is minimised through the application of the coding process defined in the coding manual developed for this study.

3.6.7 Iterative data analysis using the coding manual

The cyclical nature of coding is reflected in the stages of coding and analysis undertaken during this research study. Initial first cycle coding was undertaken prior to my decision to develop the coding manual and I began to use Dedoose as a data management tool. Following the decision to develop a coding manual, the data was intensively re-examined and first cycle coding was again employed. Another benefit of Dedoose was that I was able to easily create a new ‘project’ and import relevant media, participant descriptors and other files previously used so this groundwork was not lost. First cycle coding procedures, involving continuous reading and comparison across data sets, laid the foundation for second cycle coding (Saldaña 2009). This ongoing process required analytic skills including ‘classifying, prioritizing, integrating, synthesizing, abstracting, conceptualizing, and theory building’ (Saldaña 2009, p. 45). The inductive, holistic approach I used resulted in 50 code categories ultimately being identified with 2697 code applications being attributed across the 865 excerpts from the 15 participant interview transcripts. One of the strengths of using Dedoose was the ability to apply tags to specific data excerpts concurrently. Doing this enabled interconnections to be identified, and rather than being a result of researcher indecisiveness (Saldaña 2009), it arose from both the descriptive and inferential meaningfulness of the excerpts (Miles & Huberman 1994). This interconnectedness facilitated development of my key findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5. The complex process of data management and thematic analysis undertaken during this study was iterative, rigorous and documented in my reflexive journal.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical principles and personal ethical practices were maintained throughout this research project. Although this study was a unique event or sui generis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007), ethical guidelines were adhered to and ethical dilemmas were resolved by considering the position of the participants first and providing them with the highest forms of respect and protection available. The principles of non-maleficence (doing no harm) were upheld.
This research project used confidential interviews as a research tool. Participants were volunteers who gave their informed consent (Appendix 11). Following the appropriate national (National Health and Medical Research Council 2007), institutional (University of Wollongong 2008) and organisational (NSW Department of Education & Training 2006b) procedures and guidelines for research ensured the research project was correctly undertaken. Achieving total anonymity in qualitative research is problematic as, clearly, the participants’ identities cannot be hidden from the researcher where face-to-face interviews are used. However confidentiality was offered to interview participants, with the researcher using pseudonyms to reduce the possibility of breaches of privacy. Obtaining approval from the principals of the schools in which the research was undertaken was needed and gained, adding another area where the issue of confidentiality was required. Maintaining a high level of personal, ethical behaviour and ensuring the academic integrity of the research was a personal priority.

As stated earlier, data collected during this project was in the form of audio recordings recorded with the permission of the participants, during personal interviews. All audio recordings were professionally transcribed using a company that guaranteed confidentiality and security. To ensure maximum privacy for participants, as well as researcher access, data is stored electronically in three locations, on my personal computer, on my university’s server and in Dedoose, in each case under password protection and other related institutional security measures. Any data printed from these sources is de-identified and stored securely, separately from any identifiers, and will be kept securely for the required period of five years from the publication of the research. The only people with access to any project data are my supervisors and myself.

At every stage of this research project my personal, ethical behaviour has been guided by formal protocols for ethical conduct. However it is Saldaña (2009), who reminds researchers to ‘always be rigorously ethical with your participants and treat them with respect; rigorously ethical with your data and not ignore or delete those seemingly problematic passages of text; and rigorously ethical with your analysis by maintaining a sense of scholarly integrity and working hard towards the final outcomes’ (p. 29). The integrity of this research project is transparent and public, and ethical considerations have guided my decision-making at every stage of the research process.
CHAPTER 4  TYPOLOGY

4.1 Introduction
Unlike other careers, for which typologies of professional characteristics are available (Dowd & Kaplan 2005; Holland 1996; Whitchurch 2008), no typology specific to mid-career teachers could be located. The data from my research suggest that, far from being a homogeneous group, mid-career teachers can be distinguished by a number of different characteristics, which could be categorised in four main groups. Resulting from these data, I have developed a typology of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools.

The first category consists of participants who are non-permanent employees, working in either part-time or full-time roles, who have been employed on a casual or temporary basis for between 8 and 15 years. They are characterised by their strong desire to achieve permanency and their ongoing concerns related to their job security. Despite this sense of insecurity, they are intrinsically motivated, hard-working teachers firmly focussed on improving student outcomes. They are classed as non-permanent teachers.

The second category consists of participants who are permanent employees and have been working in either part-time or full-time roles as classroom teachers, for between 8 and 15 years. They are characterised by their deep sense of satisfaction with their role as classroom teachers. In all cases they have chosen to remain classroom teachers. They articulated that they have no desire to move into Assistant Principal roles, which are usually held concurrently with, and are additional to, their classroom teaching role. They perceived that doing so would compromise their ability to continue to deliver their current high level of quality teaching practices and/or impact on their work/life balance. These mid-career teachers are classed as classroom teachers.

The third category consists of participants who are permanent employees, have been working in either part-time or full-time roles as classroom teachers for between eight and 15 years and who are actively seeking promotion. They are characterised by their desire to work in leadership roles. They all have experience either working informally as part of the school’s leadership team or formally as relieving Assistant Principals. They are motivated to contribute to school effectiveness as leaders and they believe they
have the skills and experience an executive role demands. These mid-career teachers are classed as *aspiring leaders*.

The fourth category consists of participants who are permanent employees with between eight to 15 years teaching experience, who are working in full-time executive roles. They are highly motivated, experienced teaching Assistant Principals, non-teaching Deputy Principals or teaching or non-teaching Principals or relieving Principals and they are characterised by successfully fulfilling the demands of their various executive roles. Although ambitious, they all demonstrate an acute awareness of their own leadership experience and current capabilities and have articulated career plans based on this knowledge. These mid-career teachers are classed as *substantive leaders*.

A two-dimensional conceptual framework has been developed to codify the *Typology of mid-career teachers* (Table 5: Typology of mid-career teachers). The first dimension consists of the four categories of mid-career teachers already described above: non-permanent teachers, classroom teachers, aspiring leaders, and substantive leaders. The second dimension, identifying attributes, represents four major aspects of teachers’ professional life: aspirations, knowledge, relationships, and leadership. By mapping the four categories of mid-career teachers with the four attributes of mid-career teachers, 16 sets of identifying characteristics for mid-career teachers have been developed.

Identifying characteristics for each set have been mapped to study participants using data collected (Table 6, Table 7, Table 8 and Table 9). Although not every identifying characteristic is necessarily present for each individual, when two or more individuals from one category of mid-career teachers exhibit a characteristic, it has been determined that the particular characteristic can be identified with the relevant typology category. The key, shown below each table, can be used to interpret the tables. A tick indicates the presence of a characteristic for an individual. If a characteristic is absent for an individual, but relevant to that individual’s category, a dash is used. When the characteristic is not applicable (N/A) for that category, the cell is grey.
## Table 5: Typology of mid-career teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifying attributes</th>
<th>Characteristics of non-permanent teachers</th>
<th>Characteristics of classroom teachers</th>
<th>Characteristics of aspiring leaders</th>
<th>Characteristics of substantive leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aspirations</strong></td>
<td>- permanent employment</td>
<td>- excellence in teaching practice</td>
<td>- diverse teaching experiences</td>
<td>- successful leadership and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- job security</td>
<td>- classroom teacher pathway</td>
<td>- leadership of teaching practice</td>
<td>- varied leadership challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- quality teaching practice</td>
<td>- work/life balance</td>
<td>- leadership opportunities</td>
<td>- career progression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- recognition</td>
<td></td>
<td>- executive pathway</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>- limited knowledge of accreditation process</td>
<td>- awareness of accreditation process</td>
<td>- accreditation for self &amp; others</td>
<td>- accreditation for all staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- diverse pedagogical knowledge</td>
<td>- strong curriculum knowledge and expertise</td>
<td>- expert curriculum / pedagogical knowledge</td>
<td>- ‘big picture’ thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- limited professional learning opportunities</td>
<td>- expert pedagogical knowledge</td>
<td>- efficient organisational skills</td>
<td>- application of expert pedagogical knowledge K–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- commitment to personal professional learning</td>
<td>- development of strategic thinking</td>
<td>- efficient management systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- commitment to personal professional learning related to leadership development</td>
<td>- strategic thinking &amp; planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- professional learning for staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td>- close collegial relationships</td>
<td>- productive relationships with all stakeholders within school</td>
<td>- productive relationships within the organisation</td>
<td>- complex relationships within and beyond the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- productive parent–teacher relationships</td>
<td>- communicates effectively within the school community</td>
<td>- sound interpersonal skills</td>
<td>- effective communication with various groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- positive student–teacher relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>- effective communication within and beyond the school</td>
<td>- excellent interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- develops relationships in various locations and roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- respects others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>- leadership of specific programs and/or activities to enhance employment prospects</td>
<td>- leadership of curriculum based projects and programs</td>
<td>- leadership of grade/stage</td>
<td>- accountability for whole school programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- shared leadership - collaborates with colleagues</td>
<td>- leadership of whole school projects and programs</td>
<td>- leadership of projects within and beyond the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- appreciates mentoring</td>
<td>- formal supervision of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- relieves in executive roles</td>
<td>- mentoring of staff both within and outside the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- works with the school executive team</td>
<td>- relieving in higher positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- builds leadership capacity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Mapping of Aspirations characteristics to study participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspirations characteristics</th>
<th>Participant ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-permanent teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>permanent employment</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job security</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality teaching practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recognition</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excellence in teaching</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classroom teacher pathway</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work/life balance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspiring leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diverse teaching experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership of teaching</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>executive pathway</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>successful leadership</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>varied leadership challenges</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>career progression</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: N/A – Not exhibited ✓ Exhibited

Table 7: Mapping of Knowledge characteristics to study participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge characteristics</th>
<th>Participant ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-permanent teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited knowledge of</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accreditation process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diverse pedagogical</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited professional</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awareness of</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accreditation process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strong curriculum</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge and expertise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expert pedagogical</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commitment to personal</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspiring leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accreditation for self &amp;</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expert curriculum /</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pedagogical knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>efficient organisational</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development of strategic</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commitment to personal</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>related to leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accreditation for all</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘big picture’ thinking</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>application of expert</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pedagogical knowledge K-6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>efficient management</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategic thinking &amp;</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional learning for</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: N/A – Not exhibited ✓ Exhibited
### Table 8: Mapping of *Relationships* characteristics to study participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-permanent teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>close collegial relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>productive parent-teacher relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive student-teacher relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>develops relationships in various locations and roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classroom teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>productive relationships with all stakeholders within school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicates effectively within the school community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aspiring leaders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>productive relationships within the organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sound interpersonal skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effective communication within and beyond the school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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**Key:**
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### Table 9: Mapping of *Leadership* characteristics to study participants

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**Key:**
- N/A
- – Not exhibited
- ✓ Exhibited
Of the 15 participants in this study, two (13.3%) were categorised as non-permanent teachers, five (33.3%) were classed as classroom teachers, three (20%) were classed as aspiring leaders, and five (33.3%) were classed as substantive leaders. In reality, teachers’ lives are not static and individual teachers may move between categories at different times during their careers and in response to changing circumstances. Therefore, the typology should only be used as a guide to assist in identifying the category that best represents a teacher’s current circumstance and as a tool for comparison at any given point in time. However the four case profiles that follow provide examples typifying each category. All four teachers articulate their personal aspirations and professional motivations and in so doing, highlight their contribution to student outcomes.

4.2 **Profile 1: Susan — Non-permanent teacher**

Susan is a mid-career teacher who has been teaching in a temporary capacity for a little over 12 years. Unlike some other teachers with the same number of years of teaching experience, Susan is a little older, having changed careers after seven years in a different field. At that time, she worked mainly in the area of training and recruitment, which provided her with a range of transferable skills. Having friends working in education, Susan was encouraged to move into teaching. She returned to university, completed a Diploma of Education, and after graduation, started teaching in a temporary capacity in the South West Sydney region. Over the past 12 years, she has gained broad experience, teaching in several different regions of the greater Sydney area across a range of government, Catholic and independent schools in a variety of teaching roles. She has been teaching in her current school in a temporary capacity for over five years and although highly motivated and experienced, she states, ‘I’m a little bit frustrated, I must say. I am really seeking some permanency, and that is my goal at the moment’.

Susan’s teaching experiences have been varied. In her current school, she job shares in a classroom teaching role two days per week. In addition to this, she teaches in a specialist capacity as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher K–6, as well as providing Relief from Face-to-Face (RFF) across a range of classes. These roles require her to be highly prepared, flexible and willing to communicate with diverse team members across the school. She enjoys the challenges these roles present and believes the students benefits from having two teachers. She says:
I am quite enjoying the job share. If you get that good mix where you know the other teaching partner quite well, I think you complement each other. Because one teacher will come in at the start of the week, the other teacher will come in at the end of the week, and you’ve got that energy, that reserve. I think in a way, the children are pushed quite hard in that setting because you’ve got two teachers on board with that.

Communication is of prime importance in her various roles. Susan communicates effectively with her supervisor who ‘is quite open and direct in her communication’. She is supportive and Susan is given the ‘opportunity to voice a concern or a feeling about something’ when the need arises. Susan also communicates closely with her shared teaching partner, using email and SMS texts as well as meeting on site after hours. Prior to parent-teacher interviews, they met on site on the weekend so they could ensure they both knew ‘where we were – if we were both on the same page, and what we would like to get across at the interviews to the parents’. This level of commitment was like a double-edged sword. Although it alleviated a lot of stress, it had an associated impact on personal time and family life.

Susan works collaboratively in all her roles. She recognises that teaching is ‘very much a people-centred role. . . . It’s relationship building. So I’m very fortunate that I do have a good network of friends in this school, and some other areas that I’ve worked at, so particularly for support teachers, that you can go to for advice. Or that they were happy to come into the room and team teach’. As an ESL teacher, she develops caring and supportive relationships with parents and establishes good rapport with her students. She gains immense satisfaction from seeing ESL students and their families succeed. She says:

I often see that [success] sometimes with ESL [students] because they come on so rapidly, and they can often overtake the other children in the class. That’s just truly wonderful. That does make it that so much worthwhile. I think — I really do feel that I am playing a part here in the community, in helping these people that are newly arrived from other countries, to get on their feet. To give them those everyday basic skills, which is a platform for them to go on and build further upon. Frequently, they’ll come back from high school and they’ll seek
you out. It’s just really — it’s lovely. It’s amazing. So, often ESL is a good area to be in, because you do get quite a lot of those successes.

Each year, Susan has been re-employed in a temporary capacity. Although this suited her during the early years of child-rearing, she has become increasingly frustrated over time. She understands that the onus is on the individual to apply for positions and she acknowledges that merit-based selection is a good thing, yet despite getting to interview on several occasions, she has been unable to gain a permanent teaching appointment. She says:

I know I do a good job, and I’m sure I’ve got the criteria and the skills that are required. But — and I get very close at times. I get to interview stage and miss out, and I do find that really frustrating. It does affect your self-esteem. You go back two or three steps and you think — well pick yourself up and you think, well what to do next?

She has been proactive in developing new skills to enhance her teaching as well as her employability but having a further 15 to 20 years left in her working life, she has not ruled out another career change in the future.

In line with the description provided by Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) Susan is motivated by a combination of altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. These include her desire to help children succeed:

I’m driven by the kids that really want to learn at school, that are trying very hard every day, and that you need to be here to keep progressing them, taking them that step further.

The related desire to improve the quality of her teaching practice:

I think as a teacher, I’m constantly evaluating what I do in the classroom, to ensure that I’m trying to get these children progressing along.

And her desire for financial security for her family:
Well to be really honest with you, what motivates you, what gets you out of bed particularly in winter, is I have two children, who are at independent schools. I realise how important their education is, and I want to support them in whatever ways I can, financially and also with my time and that. That drives me a lot, for my family’s benefit.

Susan expressed some frustration due to the limitations being a non-permanent teacher posed. A Catch-22 situation was evident whereby the provision of professional development opportunities for her was limited, yet the need to upgrade her knowledge and skills was essential in the effort to gain permanency. She stated that:

. . . it’s all based on your being a permanent staff member . . . why spend this amount of money, if this person is going to move on or will not be with us? So it’s always permanent staff that have preference over even long term casuals. Then it works its way down to casuals again. [But] because I'm trying to get permanency, I'm often exploring what courses are on offer.

This situation was compounded by Susan’s limited knowledge of the national accreditation processes being trialled at the time. She said:

I’ve only heard it from a colleague who works at a school out in [another area]. She mentioned it to me, because it came up in her school. . . . We’ve been kept in the dark about it, and it’s something that we’re going to need to be on top of.

Despite being a non-permanent teacher, Susan felt the need for recognition as a valued member of staff. Having worked in various different locations, she was able to compare the way the Teacher Assessment Review Schedule (TARS) was implemented. The difference ‘was dramatic’. In a nearby school a formal interview was held between the teacher and their supervisor. ‘It did put you under the spotlight for a little while, so you did feel a little bit of that tension. But I think you got a lot more out of the process’. In her current much larger school, the process was written and involved recording her professional learning and handing in a spreadsheet to her supervisor. Susan felt it was:
a bit lackadaisical . . . I appreciate that they don’t have a lot of one on one time, to sit with you and go through it. . . . [But] you walked away and you thought, well a lot of work has been covered for the year, but is it being recognised and valued? So by not having that face-to-face interaction with someone to just quickly talk through it, you felt like the process was devalued.

Despite these limitations, Susan is pragmatic. She is focussed on the positive contributions she makes in her various roles across the school as a classroom, ESL and RFF teacher. Ultimately, she says:

. . . it’s how you feel on the inside. You feel you’ve got a contribution to make that you’ve got to keep going, and you do your best to keep yourself healthy and up to date with everything. But it’s that not giving up. That you know, hang in there, you can make a difference and move forward. I don’t like the idea of treading water, and feeling that my time is up. So I’ll avoid that at any cost.

After 12 years of teaching in non-permanent roles, Susan’s dilemma is that with permanency seeming elusive, she is questioning whether it is ‘something that I want to hang in there, and try and attain? Or again, take education and shift direction again’.

Susan’s profile typifies non-permanent mid-career teachers. In my typology, there are four identifying attributes for each category of mid-career teachers: aspirations, knowledge, relationships and leadership. The typical aspirations of a non-permanent mid-career teacher are characterised by permanent employment, job security, quality teaching practice and recognition. This can be seen in Susan’s story where her primary goal is to gain a permanent teaching appointment with its related job security. Beyond that, like other teachers, she aspires to be recognised as an excellent teacher who demonstrates quality teaching practices in her daily work. She is motivated by her desire to contribute to her students’ ongoing progress and success.

The second identifying attribute of non-permanent teachers, knowledge, is typified by a disparity between diverse pedagogical knowledge and the availability of ongoing professional development opportunities as well as knowledge of accreditation processes. This is evident from Susan’s experience, where her diverse pedagogical
knowledge is underpinned by twelve years of experience in a variety of teaching and specialist roles. She is keen to upgrade her skills and knowledge to enhance her employment prospects, but is frustrated by the more limited professional development opportunities available to casual staff and by her lack of knowledge of the new accreditation process for teachers.

The third identifying attribute of non-permanent teachers, relationships, is typified by an ability to develop and maintain productive relationships with staff, parents and students in various settings. This can be seen in Susan’s account, as she displays well-developed interpersonal skills and has established positive and productive relationships in the various locations in which she works. Susan’s shared and specialist teaching roles have demanded the ability to work collaboratively with a range of other teaching staff. She has developed positive relationships with the many students she teaches across the school and also maintains supportive and respectful relationships with their parents.

The final attribute of non-permanent teachers, leadership, is typified by a willingness to lead specific programs and or activities within the school. Susan has shown she is an experienced and skilled teacher who is willing to lead programs and upgrade her qualifications in order to gain permanency. However this has proved to be complicated by both her limited access to funding for specific professional development courses and the constant changes in her location and teaching role from year to year.

Using my Typology of mid-career teachers (Table 5, p. 82) as a guide, it can be seen that Susan is very typical of non-permanent mid-career teachers. Overall, Susan is becoming increasingly aware of the ongoing strain caused by her lack of permanency and the related impact it has on her personal and family life. She is approaching a crossroad in her career and is consciously considering future career options. After 12 years of non-permanent employment as a teacher, she is now seriously questioning whether she should persist with teaching or whether she should consider a further career change.

4.3 Profile 2: Victoria — Classroom teacher
Victoria is a mid-career teacher who has been teaching in a full-time, permanent capacity for ten years. She had always wanted to be a teacher and went straight from
high school to university, completing a four-year bachelor degree in education. Having done well, she became a targeted graduate and was appointed to a permanent classroom teaching position in Sydney with the NSW Department of Education immediately after graduation. At one point in her career, prior to being interviewed for this study, Victoria went through a phase of discontent that resulted in her taking two years' leave without pay. She says:

In that time I did a couple of other jobs and then I started doing casual teaching again in the area I was living in. That made me think I do really love this, because it’s challenging and every day is different . . . so I realised that it really was for me.

Returning to teaching revitalised, Victoria resumed her role as a classroom teacher. Although she acknowledges the current uncertainty and the pace of change in education, she is now fully committed to teaching and says, ‘It is a concern staying in the profession, but I would definitely like to stay in teaching until I retire’.

Victoria’s main focus is classroom teaching. Her goal is to be an effective teacher and provide engaging learning experiences for her students. She defines success as being ‘the times when you’ve either made a breakthrough with a student that you’ve been trying really hard to help, or you see a really great change in a child’s behaviour that you’ve been struggling with’. She spent time in her holidays researching behaviour management strategies to use for a particularly challenging student in her class, which resulted in improved behaviour. She felt the time spent was justified because that knowledge could ‘transfer that over to other children’. She is well organised, plans her lessons thoroughly and utilises a variety of resources in her teaching practice. She says:

I do think the comforting part is that I think I have gotten better and that it [teaching] is getting easier. So every year I’m a bit more organised and have all my folders and my resources more at my fingertips.

Over the previous year, in addition to her normal teaching position, she had been working in a relieving Assistant Principal role. She says:
I did enjoy that, but that for me at the time, it was just too much . . . I felt as though my class teaching really took a back seat and I wasn’t doing it properly, because I just didn’t have the time to put into programming really well and planning really fun activities with lots of good resources. At the moment I’m quite happy with just doing class teaching and having a couple of extra roles. I think I am getting the opportunities that I want at the moment.

A developing awareness of the need to find an appropriate balance between work and home life has been a contributing factor in Victoria’s decision not to seek promotion. She says:

I generally take one thing home. I’ve become realistic about that because I used to take a whole pile and the pile would just sit there: it was too overwhelming. So if I just say I’m going to look at my assessment folder and collate results, or just one thing each night, I seem to be able to get through that.

However it is increasingly clear that even this creates conflict with her partner. She said:

He has expressed that he doesn’t like the fact that when we are both home together and if we’re sitting in the lounge I’ll always pull out some work and put it on my lap. When we first started seeing each other it was always I would cuddle him or have a chat to him and now I’m even creeping into that quality time with us together to do things.

However, even when she consciously decided to ‘have a total night off’ by:

. . . 7:30 I just started feeling so guilty that I hadn’t done anything for school, so I was constantly thinking what did I bring home in my bag, and should I just go and check it to make sure it’s not really urgent, it’s going to affect my day tomorrow.

She concluded that ‘it is a job that’s just on your mind 24/7 unfortunately’. In an effort to ease this tension she has tried to maintain ‘the habit of being here before 8:00 and
leaving just after 4:00. So that seems to be just giving me enough time at the moment to do things’.

At the time of interview, Victoria had a developing awareness of accreditation processes for teachers. Having seen ‘New Scheme Teachers’ go through the existing process, she was concerned that the national accreditation processes soon to be introduced were ‘just going to be an extra pressure on already very time-poor teachers’. She recognised however that ‘there may be valuable parts to it’. She explained:

I think the reflection is valuable, I do think that that’s important because . . . when I first came out I probably didn’t have enough opportunities to reflect on what I was doing. If I was doing something badly I just continued doing it until I saw somebody else do it in a different way.

Consequently she retained an open mind towards accreditation as she admitted that she didn’t ‘know enough about it’.

After a decade of teaching, Victoria said, ‘I’ve settled into being a teacher and feeling confident about it now’. She has developed strong areas of expertise in both curriculum knowledge and teaching pedagogy. She says, ‘I do love English . . . so whenever we’re doing anything to do with literacy I think that I probably do that well. I get the kids engaged and I enjoy it’. She is supported by regular professional development opportunities offered by the school. For instance, ‘We’ve just done the “Focus On Reading” within our school . . . We’ve just heard a whole new bunch of comprehension strategies and fantastic literacy strategies that I’ve been implementing’. She is committed to ongoing personal professional learning. She says, ‘I did go through a phase a couple of years ago, before I started doing the executive thing, where I went to lots and lots of in-services and TPLs, and I learnt a lot in that time. It was almost overload’. However she likes the personal challenge of extending her knowledge and skills. For instance, after moving from K-2 to primary teaching, she commented that ‘I’ve been training soccer. It’s so far out of my comfort zone . . . it’s probably a good thing for my personal development and professional development to do that’.
One of the challenges of the school in which Victoria works is its high multicultural population. The area has ‘a very mixed multicultural community and a high percentage of Arabic-background children’. Victoria says she has ‘found it actually really interesting getting to know more about other cultures’. She is aware of the barriers cultural difference can cause and during her time at the school she has thought about issues such as the way she dresses in summer and the impact on her relationships with parents that this might have. She says, ‘That’s something you probably wouldn’t think about if you were teaching in [another location]’. Working in the relieving executive role provided Victoria with invaluable experience. She commented:

There have been a couple of times recently in the last two years, especially in the executive role, that I’ve realised how diplomatic you need to be . . . that’s been a big learning curve for me, to really be careful about the way I word things to parents.

As a result of these experiences, Victoria has been able to develop positive and productive relationships within the parent community.

Her relationships with other staff members are equally productive. After the relatively recent appointment of a new Principal and Assistant Principal, Victoria says, ‘At the moment there seems to be this dynamic thing happening in our school, where everything is getting an overhaul and everyone’s being consulted about it’. Communication is two-way and she feels that her opinions are heard and valued. Victoria leads programs and works collaboratively with her colleagues. She recognises that ‘It makes a huge difference if you can share the load’ and she says her leadership experience taught her ‘to consult people before making decisions’.

Using my Typology of mid-career teachers (Table 5 p. 82) as a guide, Victoria’s profile typifies the four identifying attributes of classroom teachers: aspirations, knowledge, relationships and leadership. The typical aspirations of a classroom teacher are characterised by excellence in teaching practice, a classroom teacher career pathway and the desire to maintain a satisfying work/life balance. This can be seen in Victoria’s case where she has consciously chosen, after some relieving executive experience, a classroom-based career pathway at this point in her career. Both her desire to maintain
a high level of excellence in her classroom teaching practice and her desire to ensure her work commitments are suitably balanced to allow her personal relationships to flourish unhindered, contributed to this decision. Victoria is intrinsically motivated by the satisfaction she derives from both working with children and seeing them succeed.

The second identifying attribute of classroom teachers, knowledge, is typified by strong curriculum knowledge and expertise, expert pedagogical knowledge, commitment to personal professional learning and an awareness of accreditation processes. After a decade of classroom teaching, Victoria has confidently demonstrated strong knowledge in key curriculum areas such as literacy. Her effectiveness as a classroom teacher is enhanced by the application of her extensive pedagogical knowledge and her ongoing engagement in a range of relevant professional development courses. Her recent leadership experience has enhanced her awareness of existing accreditation processes as well as the possible benefits of proposed changes at national level.

The third identifying attribute of classroom teachers, relationships, is typified by the ability to develop productive relationships with all stakeholders within the school and the ability to communicate effectively within the school. This is demonstrated by the way in which Victoria explored cultural difference, modifying her dress and behaviour in response to cultural norms. Through her respectful and understanding approach towards parents, she has been able to establish and maintain productive relationships. The staff culture of collaboration and open communication has enabled Victoria to develop strong and positive relationships with the individuals and teams in her workplace. Her positive relationships with students are marked by her genuine care and concern for their well-being.

The final attribute of classroom teachers, leadership, is typified by leadership of curriculum-based projects and programs and shared leadership, indicated by the ability to work collaboratively. Victoria demonstrated her leadership ability through her role as relieving Assistant Principal and her leadership of her stage team. In this role, she developed a culture of collaboration where staff supported each other by regularly sharing programs and related resources. Her successful leadership was acknowledged by the Principal, who actively encouraged Victoria to consider seeking promotion. However due to the demands of her classroom teaching role and the extra time
preparing an application might take, Victoria chose not to pursue promotion at this point.

Using my Typology of mid-career teachers as a guide, it can be seen that Victoria is typical of the classroom teacher category. She is an experienced and committed teacher whose main focus remains quality teaching and the achievement of positive outcomes for students. Victoria is content in her current position and is conscious of maintaining a suitable balance between her work commitments and her personal life. Consistent with my typology being developed as a tool to assist in identifying the category that best represents a teacher’s current circumstance, Victoria has not ruled out career advancement in the future. She says:

I have no desire to move. I wouldn’t mind staying class teaching for say the next five or 10 years, because I haven’t had a family or anything yet. I’m a bit of a late bloomer in that way: I’m not married yet. So I would like that to happen over the next five to 10 years, then I would look at maybe doing executive after that.

4.4 Profile 3: Emma — Aspiring leader

Emma is a mid-career teacher with 12 years teaching experience. Originally from the United Kingdom (UK), she taught in English schools for five years and has taught in Australian schools for the last seven years. She gained her Bachelor of Education degree at Cambridge University and after moving to Australia she gained her Teachers’ Certificate with the NSW Department of Education and was subsequently accredited at Professional Competence through the NSW Institute of Teachers. She had ‘always wanted to be a primary teacher’ and when her husband was transferred to Australia, she was not unduly concerned because she realised that ‘teaching being what it is, it’s fairly portable’. It didn’t take her long to gain employment in Australia. ‘Initially it was casual work, then temporary work and now I’ve got a permanent position’. Both Emma and her husband have become Australian citizens and plan to stay here for the foreseeable future.
Emma has worked in the same location in inner western Sydney for the past six years. She appreciates that although gaining permanency ‘took time’, her experience has been providential. She says:

I was fortunate in that my home position was never reliant on my working so I was happy to work in local schools that I could get to easily. I wasn’t desperate for a permanent position. When the position came up it was great that I was able to apply for that within the school and maintain the consistency that I’d built up. But for me permanency wasn’t a big issue. I was quite happy working. I had many one-year blocks prior to that and I was happy with that, although you always get that end of year anxiety. Will they keep me on next year? Fortunately it worked for me that way.

The consistency of working in a single location allowed Emma to establish herself quickly in both professional and social contexts. Her varied teaching experience spanning two countries and their educational systems added to the professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan 2012) she brought to her role. Finding her prior knowledge and skills to be transferable, Emma utilised them, taking on the leadership of Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) in her new school, one of the six curriculum Key Learning Areas. She said:

I was always a geography specialist so I’m quite excited by the new curriculum because we can go back to geography. That was what my degree specialised in so I’ve always pursued that. In the UK I was a geography coordinator and here I’m chair of the HSIE committee.

She is also responsible for the organisation of the school’s Student Representative Council (SRC), a K-6 program, which she leads during her lunchtime.

Early in her career Emma gained executive leadership experience, starting her on an executive pathway. She explained:

When I was in the UK I started doing some acting positions. We have a position in the UK called SENCO, which is Special Needs Coordinator, which is
non-class based. I did a maternity cover for that. I also did a maternity cover for key Stage One coordinator, which is a similar position to Assistant Principal.

She was realistic about her current situation saying, ‘So had I stayed in the UK I would have moved I think into middle management much sooner’. At first her focus was on making sure she was ‘confident with the syllabus’ and the ‘slight differences in Australia’. Later, when an Assistant Principal position came up at her school she chose not to pursue it. She said, ‘When that job came up I just thought it wasn’t the right time’. After working in Australia for five years, she began to think more seriously about executive roles again. She said:

We recently had the Kindergarten Assistant Principal job come up . . . So I did decide to go for that because . . . the job criteria were specifically infants experience and other things that I was quite confident in. I didn’t get it because I haven’t had experience as relieving Assistant Principal recently.

However Emma found the Principal to be ‘very supportive’ and as a result of this experience she attends ‘the executive meetings as part of preparation for hopefully moving into an Assistant Principal position down the track’ which was ‘something that was offered by the Principal’. She says, ‘I’m interested in influencing the decision making process and getting involved — I think I’ve got ideas for things’.

Emma is a well-organised teacher who maintains a strong focus on the design and delivery of high quality teaching. She is committed to thorough preparation, arriving early each day and staying until she has done what she feels is ‘essential for the next day’. A combination of time and experience underpins her knowledge. She says, ‘I think as time’s gone on I’ve become more confident in everything’. As an accredited teacher, she understands the need for maintaining her accreditation through ongoing professional learning and appreciates the support and funding provided by the school for this purpose. She said:

I’ve been fortunate to be on quite a lot of project-based professional developments. I did the ‘Kindergarten: A Good First Year’ a few years back and we had a number of teachers that did the ‘Year One: Growing the Gains’
equivalent of quality picture books in literacy teaching and really promoting that. Now I’m involved in another project this year on ‘Planning, Programming and Assessment in the Other KLAs’ it’s called, which is the science in HSIE.

Due to her unique experience, Emma has been in a position to compare the accreditation processes in both countries. She was able to anticipate the introduction of the Australian national accreditation process. She said, ‘I think the whole system is going to end up nationalised at some point. The National Curriculum is just the beginning. They have to then look at national standards for teachers’. Having experienced accreditation as it existed at the time of the interview, Emma believed that in Australia the process needed to be streamlined. She commented, ‘I feel that you’re reporting things for the Department, reporting things for the Institute, and it really should just be in one place. You shouldn’t have to duplicate that work’. Her experience enabled Emma to both understand and support other teachers going through the process.

Over the course of her career, Emma had honed her ability to develop positive and productive relationships with colleagues, parents and students. She understands that sound interpersonal relationship played an important role in the way she interacted with others to achieve a happy, productive and caring work environment. She explained:

I think a big factor is relationships with other staff that you work with . . . A number of staff came up for retirement and the replacements for those have been younger staff — I guess as a mid-career teacher I don’t know if I can classify myself in that anymore — who get on very well on a friendship level. I think that helps to motivate you. You do things because you like people, not necessarily because you have to do this. I think if people encourage each other and help each other along, it keeps you enjoying it.

Similarly, in dealing with parents she observed:

A lot of it’s about how you deal with parents and deal with problems and deal with issues. I think apart from one thing in my first year out, I’ve never actually had a disagreement with a parent or confrontation. So I think I make a point of engaging with them on a daily basis, and in infants that’s easy to do because
you’re out there on the playground. I think they appreciate that and see that you put the time in for their kids, so they’re very supportive of what you do in the classroom. They like to know what’s going on and if you keep them in the loop they’re on your side.

Consistency of teacher judgement is highly valued when dealing with students. Emma explains:

I think most of the staff are very good in their interactions with students. I think we’ve got a very calm and reflective approach within the school. We follow restorative practices and we’ve had a big push on consistency of language throughout K to 6. Particularly in Stage One we all follow the same behaviour management process . . . so that there is consistency in the way that people are addressing issues and engaging with students.

As an aspiring leader, Emma articulated her personal strengths as being a combination of her interpersonal skills and her ability to think strategically. She said:

I think that I have good relationships with other people. I think that I would be able to work well with people. I think I have good organisation and foresight in terms of thinking what’s going on? What do we need to be thinking about next? Where do we need to go?

She valued planning time spent with her colleagues and worked collaboratively with her stage team. She says:

Time where we can all sit down and plan together . . . [is] something that we’ve pushed for to be built into professional development days . . . I’m fortunate that Stage One is a very team-based group where people do share what they’re doing and work together and decisions get made and things happen.

Emma also engaged in professional social networking beyond the school through online forums such as Yammer and the NSW DoE’s own platform, Maang. She said, ‘I think it’s a great springboard for ideas, for resources, for suggestions, for seeing what other
people are doing’. In this way she was able to collaborate with other teaching professionals and transfer new ideas into her own school setting.

Emma’s profile typifies the aspiring leader group as described in my *Typology of mid-career teachers* (Table 5). Examples of the four identifying attributes of aspiring leaders: aspirations, knowledge, relationships and leadership are clearly evident in her story. The typical aspirations of aspiring leaders are characterised by diverse teaching experience, leadership of teaching practice, leadership opportunities and preference for an executive career pathway. These aspirations are present in Emma’s profile. Her 12 years of teaching experience spans two countries and educational systems. Prior to her arrival in Australia, Emma had already experienced leadership opportunities relieving in two executive roles, one as a Special Needs Coordinator and the other as a Key Stage One coordinator. These experiences underpinned her interest in an executive-focussed career pathway. After a five-year period of familiarisation and acculturation in Australian schools, she has renewed her interest in promotion. Supported by her Principal, Emma has been provided with the opportunity to lead whole school projects and she works closely with the executive leadership team. She appreciates these opportunities and is motivated to achieve future success.

The second identifying attribute of aspiring leaders, knowledge, is typified by knowledge of accreditation processes for both self and others, expert curriculum/pedagogical knowledge, efficient organisational skills, development of strategic thinking and a commitment to personal professional learning related to leadership development. Stemming from Emma’s diverse experience and particular circumstances, the depth of her organisational skills, curriculum and pedagogical knowledge and her understanding of accreditation processes are clearly linked. The management structures created by the Principal to support leadership development and professional learning have exposed Emma to opportunities to develop her personal leadership capabilities as described in the NSW DoE School Leadership Capability Framework (NSW Department of Education & Training n.d.).

The third identifying attribute of aspiring leaders, relationships, is typified by the ability to develop productive relationships within the organisation, sound interpersonal skills, and communicating effectively within and beyond the school. Arising from her
reflective practice, Emma displays well-developed interpersonal skills in her wide-ranging interactions with others. ‘Once you’ve been teaching a few years’, she said, ‘you’re naturally reflective every day’. She understands that developing productive relationship requires an investment in personal time and goodwill. She commented, ‘I think you have to make time to interact with adults’. Emma’s leadership aspirations are enhanced by her ability to communicate effectively in both internal and external settings and her willingness to collaborate with others.

The data collected during this study suggest that aspects of leadership typifying aspiring leaders are increasingly demanding. As indicated in my typology, their experiences include a combination of leadership activities involving the leadership of grade/stage teams, the leadership of whole school programs or projects, relieving experiences in executive roles, working collaboratively with the executive team and both formal and informal mentoring activities. Despite her career being interrupted by immigrating to Australia, Emma’s leadership experiences are rich and diverse. Her aspiration for leadership developed over time as a result of the experiences and opportunities that became available, rather than as a result of a specific career plan. However she hopes to become an Assistant Principal at some time in the future. She said, ‘I’m not desperate for it, I’m not in a rush to do it. [But] I think it would be good for me’.

Using my Typology of mid-career teachers (Table 5, p. 82) as a guide, it can be seen that Emma is typical of the aspiring leader group. She is a committed career teacher who believes she will be able to have a positive impact on whole school management and improve the quality of teaching and learning in the future. She enjoys the flexibility and diversity of teaching and looks forward to the challenges of a future leadership position. She says, ‘I know that if you take on Assistant Principal you’re taking on a lot of other work as well’, but as she plans to stay in Australia, she ‘will try and get a promotion’ when the opportunity arises. Meanwhile she is focussed on maximising her opportunities by developing her knowledge and skills through ongoing professional learning and diverse teaching experiences.

4.5 Profile 4: Peter — Substantive leader

Peter is a mid-career teacher who has been teaching for 13 years. He began his teaching career as a casual teacher in a large suburban school and it was not long before he
gained a permanent teaching position there. At the time of the interview he had recently taken up a new position as Principal of a medium sized school located in the southern area of Sydney. Prior to his current appointment, Peter had progressively held executive positions as a teaching Assistant Principal and a non-teaching Deputy Principal in other large schools. During these years he had married and by the time of the interview, he had young children. Not only had his rise to Principal been relatively fast, he also valued the work/life balance a teaching career provided. He says:

[The] point where I could’ve possibly turned outside teaching was the point where we started having a family . . . my time was more flexible and I felt that being in the teaching service, I was able to spend more time with my kids, particularly during the holiday time, and that supported my wife too, giving her some help at home. That’s why I prefer teaching.

Peter developed a career plan early in his career and he had a clear vision for career advancement. He had the benefit of advice from several critical friends, who mentored him at key decision points in his career. He says, ‘My career progression is one thing that's kept me going . . . I did look at the role of principal and it’s something that I’ve always wanted to be . . . [but] I never thought I’d be this young and get here’. Having over 25 years left in his working life, his aspirations are ongoing. Peter says, ‘I’ve said to people, well this Kindergarten group that comes through, I’d like to see them finish Year Six. That would be a cycle of seven years . . . So I see myself as being here, before moving on to a larger school’.

As a new principal, Peter has expressed his main focus as being the educational leadership of his school. He has extensive experience in middle management roles and said, ‘I’m trying to concentrate more on the educational leadership rather than on the buildings and [assets]’. This position requires him to develop a more global view of the school and he says, ‘A lot of the work I do is a bit more strategic and it needs more thinking time’. Motivated by the various challenges related to leadership, Peter aims to invest his time into developing productive relationships and building a positive school culture. He says:
My biggest motivation is quality teaching and great teachers and great lessons happening in classrooms, but it’s really about the school culture, of people feeling as they belong . . . everybody should feel as though they are part of the school and part of that culture.

Peter’s excellent interpersonal skills, refined while working in his prior executive positions, were important in his success. He says:

I found going to a new school is so professionally refreshing that you have to build your credibility again with people. You have to build all of that trust and I’d done a similar thing with a similar sort of staff at [my previous school].

Prior to his current appointment, Peter had had the opportunity to relieve in the principal’s role. He says:

When I became the Relieving Principal at [my previous school], I knew the staff and I knew the office staff and so I felt supported so that I could learn the role. Coming here I guess my biggest challenge is getting to know people.

Consequently he has invested his energy into building relationships with staff, students and community members. He spends time in the staffroom during breaks, he visits classrooms and he ensures he is visible and approachable in the playground and at the bus stop after school.

Peter understands that effective communication is vitally important. One of the first initiatives he undertook was the purchase and implementation of an integrated computer software package, which delivered cloud-based management products including an online calendar, designed to enhance communication both within and beyond the school. He understood the link between his leadership of teaching and learning and the implementation of efficient management systems. The combination of these systems with the school website and his use of email allowed him to maintain a high focus on effective communication with all stakeholders.

Earlier in his career, encouraged by his principal, Peter had the opportunity to participate in the Executive Leadership Development Program (ELDP). He described it
as the most enlightening professional learning he had ever had and that it ‘really was the light bulb moment when I thought I really want to head further into my career’. Having benefited from this experience, later in his career Peter went on to become a facilitator for the state-wide program, mentoring other aspiring leaders. He is committed to continuing in this role and said it is a ‘great experience to work with other executives’. He is also keen to develop the leadership capacity of his own staff and he provides opportunities for aspiring leaders to lead projects within the school.

Peter has a clear focus on the provision of support and professional development for his teaching staff. Supervision of teaching staff is formal, but collaborative. The annual review process is a two-way process involving professional conversations between teaching teams as well as the teacher and their supervisor. The process is designed to acknowledge achievements and provide support when needed. Peter values his staff and knows that positive relationships underpin the development of a collaborative and productive culture. With many experiences to draw on, Peter hopes to implement change. He says:

Coming into this role, being a young principal, I sort of see myself as bringing something along that’s happening with other schools . . . There were a lot of current things happening at [my previous school] and I hope to bring some of those things to [this school].

In his role of principal, Peter is typical of the substantive leader group, as described in my Typology of mid-career teachers (Table 5, p. 82). Characteristic markers indicating the presence of the four identifying attributes of substantive leaders: aspirations, knowledge, relationships and leadership, can be found in his narrative. Peter’s history of successful leadership and management in his various substantive and relieving executive roles prior to his current appointment are typical of the aspirations of substantive leaders. His aspirations were clearly articulated in a career plan developed after only three years of teaching. On the achievement of becoming a principal at an earlier age than expected, Peter adjusted his plan to accommodate future career progression.
Using my typology as a guide, it can be seen that most of the markers characterising knowledge typical of substantive leaders are evident in Peter’s narrative. Through his experience in his previous executive positions as an Assistant Principal, Deputy Principal and Relieving Principal, all in very large schools, he was able to develop a global view of the school or big picture thinking. He demonstrated his ability for strategic thinking and planning by implementing efficient management systems in these schools. Other markers typifying the knowledge of substantive leaders including the application of expert pedagogical knowledge across the school and the facilitation of professional learning for staff are also evident. Although knowledge of accreditation procedures for staff was not specifically mentioned in Peter’s interview, this knowledge can be assumed, as supervision of the accreditation process is a principal’s responsibility as described in Leading and Managing (NSW Department of Education & Training 2000), a statement of the key accountabilities for principals in NSW DoE schools.

The third identifying attribute of substantive leaders, relationships, is typified by the ability to develop and maintain complex relationships within and beyond the school, evidence of effective communication with various groups, excellent interpersonal skills and the presence of respect for others. All these markers are evident in Peter’s narrative. His multiple executive leadership roles and the diverse professional experience they provided, combined with underpinning professional learning related to leadership and the ongoing support from respected mentors, contributed to Peter’s development. His outstanding interpersonal skills and his ability to communicate and relate effectively to others were underpinned by his respect for other people and his ability to reflect on his own performance and relationships. He commented:

From my own reflection, when I was thinking about how things are going, I think of the School Leadership Capabilities Framework and I think of that strategic part of it and that’s the time when I shut my door. For most of my day my door is open but there are times when I just need to not answer the phone, shut the door, be strategic and have some time for reflection.

The final attribute of substantive leaders, leadership, has six identifying characteristics. The increase in markers for this mid-career group is not surprising as by definition,
substantive leaders are mid-career teachers who are working in full-time executive roles. Substantive leaders are accountable for whole school programs, lead or facilitate the leadership of projects within and beyond the school, undertake the formal supervision of staff, undertake mentoring of staff both within and outside the school, accept opportunities to relieve in higher positions and implement strategies to build the leadership capacity of others. It can be seen in Peter’s narrative, that he has demonstrated these leadership characteristics in his executive roles. Peter has acknowledged that his step-by-step career progression and the support provided by mentors over time, prepared him for his current leadership role. He says:

[My principal] was a great mentor and I had two years shadowing him as non-teaching Deputy. Every decision that he would make, we would talk about. . . I had that two years just absolute very close relationship where I could make the decisions but I could also confer with somebody if this was the right way to go. That was a very supportive relationship so that really helped.

### 4.6 Conclusion

The Typology of *mid-career teachers* presented in this chapter provides a new way to differentiate teachers in the mid-career stage of professional life. The four case profiles described above are illustrative of the four categories defined in the typology. Mid-career teachers, that is teachers who have been teaching for between eight and 15 years, are a diverse group and it is the combination of characteristics outlined in the typology that provides a new way to distinguish between mid-career teachers. My research data show that many factors influence the aspirations, knowledge, relationships and leadership experiences of teachers in mid-career. However by using my typology to identify teachers in each group, school leaders can better understand their situation, allowing them to maximise the contribution of mid-career teachers as well as tailor resources to suit their current needs. Mid-career teachers are a valuable resource and with half their career still ahead of them, it is imperative that they are recognised and encouraged no matter which career pathway they choose to take.
CHAPTER 5  LEADERSHIP

5.1 Introduction
This chapter explores the relationships between leadership and other code categories. Drawing on positive, negative and co-occurrence data sets, an image emerges of the centrality of leadership through its interconnections with other code categories. This perspective provides an insight into issues that contribute to the motivations and the concerns of mid-career teachers in their professional contexts. A framework for school leaders has been developed to support school leaders to maximise the potential of mid-career teachers in their schools. In so doing, mid-career teachers are enabled to make a positive contribution to student outcomes through their preferred career pathway, which may be either classroom teacher based or an executive pathway.

5.2 The centrality of leadership
Analysis of code co-occurrence of positive data sets reveals that leadership is a major theme in this study. The mind-map illustrating the centrality of leadership (Figure 11, p. 109) shows that leadership is directly connected to 21 of the other 24 positive code categories used in this study. In Figure 11, the numbers on the lines connecting leadership to the other categories indicate the number of instances of positive code category co-occurrence: that is, the number of times a participant utterance was coded to both categories. The strength of the relationship between each code category and the leadership category is indicated visually on the mind map by its proximity to the category of leadership. The closer the proximity, the greater is the connection between these categories. Three categories — stress, job security and parental and community expectations — are shown separately as no instances of co-occurrence with leadership-positive were identified.

As can be seen in Figure 11: Centrality of leadership mind map, the co-occurrence data indicates five categories that are most strongly related to leadership: supportive principals and executive teams, professional development opportunities, career opportunities, collegial relationships and communication. This chapter examines each of these five major categories and explores their connection to leadership. Recognising the strong links between leadership and these five code categories is pivotal in
understanding the importance of effective leadership in both supporting and maximising the potential of mid-career teachers in our schools.

Figure 11: Centrality of leadership mind map

5.3 Supportive principals and executive teams
Analysis of positive co-occurrence data indicates that the category with the strongest connection with leadership is supportive principals and executive teams. On reflection this might seem obvious, but it is the way in which leaders behave and the opportunities they provide that is of importance in relation to their impact on the lives of mid-career teachers. Through analysis of all data sets, that is positive, negative and co-occurrence data sets, it can be seen that the impact on mid-career teachers of many of the decisions and behaviours of principals and executive team members can be grouped according to an identified category using the Typology of mid-career teachers presented in Chapter 4.

Elizabeth, a non-permanent teacher, relates how her decision to resign earlier in her career was partly due to poor advice from the principal. She says:
Well, I gave up my permanency after I had my first daughter, which I do regret now because I realise how hard it is to get back into the system. I did that because I fell pregnant in between and I hadn’t been employed for a year. I got bad advice from my principal and I just chose to leave.

That decision has had a significant impact on her career. After almost 15 years of teaching, more than 10 as a non-permanent teacher, she says:

I plan to keep teaching. I don’t have an intention to move to another field. Changing classes and stages and that within a school is enough for me . . . my plan at the moment is to get a permanent job.

For mid-career teachers classified as classroom teachers, having the support of the principal and executive team was important. Belinda says:

I've got a great supervisor who has very high expectations of her students as well as her staff. But then she comes to the meeting with everything organised, you know where you stand, and you know you're getting a lot back from her as well. So it's really good, you feel like you're learning a lot as well as being able to support your students.

Another classroom teacher, Paula, expressed similar feelings:

... this boss, often, will say to us, one to one — he'll say to me thank you for that, you did a great job. That's really important because he's doing it just to tell me, not to show everyone else that he's saying thank you, in appreciation. That's really important to get that one on one acknowledgement and appreciation.

Analysis of the co-occurrence data set of leadership and the co-occurrence data set of supportive principals and executive teams, shows that all participant excerpts except three were made by participants classified as being in the substantive leader group and two of the remaining three were made by aspiring leaders. These participants spoke about how support provided by their principals and executive teams was of benefit to them and, in many cases, contributed to their career progression. One participant, Gail, commented, ‘the principal is opening doors for me’ while another participant, Felicity,
said, ‘because you’re relieving AP and if you want to go further with it, I [the principal] suggest you do this course’. As a result, they were motivated to provide similar support for their own staff as illustrated by John who reflected, ‘I think I’m quite proactive in encouraging my team to access those opportunities’. Some of the helpful behaviours supportive principals and executive team members had in common included: identifying the need for and providing opportunities for appropriate professional development, one-to-one mentoring including career planning advice, and the provision of opportunities to work in a variety of leadership roles leading to career progression. The interrelationship between these categories is evident in the co-occurrence data set. Figure 12 indicates the strengths of links between supportive principals and executive teams and leadership, career opportunities, professional development opportunities, collegial relationships, mutual trust and respect between colleagues and mentoring and support.

**Figure 12: Supportive principals mind map**

Figure 13 indicates that mentoring and support is not only closely linked to supportive principals and executive teams but is also clearly linked to career opportunities and leadership. By examining these links it becomes increasingly evident that a school leader’s ability to provide appropriate mentoring and support can have a positive impact on mid-career teachers’ satisfaction and achievement.
5.4 Mentoring and support

Analysis of positive, negative and co-occurrence data sets indicates that the presence or absence of mentoring and support from principals and executive team members at key career decision points can have a significant impact on the lives of mid-career teachers. This is illustrated in the contrasting stories of John and Kristy, both of whom are experienced Assistant Principals and, using my typology as a guide, can be classed as substantive leaders. In John’s case, the impact was positive. He says, ‘I was really fortunate to have good mentoring’. However, for Kristy the lack of mentoring and support has become problematic. She feels she needs ‘some guidance’ to help her progress in her career.

At the time of the interview, John had been teaching for eight and a half years. The first two and half years were spent in the Northern Territory, the last six with the NSW DoE. The early experience in the Northern Territory provided John with a range of diverse teaching experiences including teaching in pre-school and K-12 indigenous settings. Although not a formally trained musician, John says:

I became the music teacher because once they figured out I could play and I got a lot of connections with the community and then we got some funding and we bought all the instruments. We set up a music room. I became the full time K to 12 music teacher.
This resulted in formal recognition of music as a teaching code and on his return to Sydney he quickly gained a permanent position as a classroom teacher through the direct merit selection process. He was appointed to a large primary school in the western suburbs of Sydney and from the beginning he was well supported by the principal and the executive team. John relates:

I had a really good relationship with my APs and the Deputy and the Principal — all of them — all the way through and particularly the Deputy Principal who was there while I was there was a real mentor to me.

It didn’t take him long to take advantage of this and seek advice. He says:

Early on in the piece I sounded him out about what do I do to look towards promotion . . . He said just get your thing that you’re really good at and just get a whole lot of runs on the board. Your thing would be music. So, I took that advice and I got involved with the district performing arts festival . . . organising committee. So that got me looking out of just the four walls of the class room and the fence of the school and looking at district level stuff and how that all worked and getting to know people around there.

The mentoring relationship with the Deputy Principal continued in a productive way. John explains:

Then he also pushed me into doing a teacher professional leadership development course for aspiring APs. He mentored me through that course and then when a relieving position came up, I put in an EOI and got it. Then I was co-ordinating the Learning Support Team out there, which was such a big staff that that’s actually a full time AP role is Learning Support Team co-ordinator. Then from there, I got this job.

Still only 33 years of age, John continues to be aspirational. He has considered his future and says, ‘I’d like to keep moving up the ladder, whether it’s to DP or Principal a bit further down the track’. However at present he is content gaining leadership experience in his current position. He says, ‘I’m very aware at the moment that I
wouldn’t be ready. I really feel like I’m still learning a lot in this role and growing into this role’.

Like John, Kristy is an experienced Assistant Principal at a large primary school in south-east Sydney. At the time of the interview, she had been teaching for 10 years. After four years of teaching, Kristy was offered a relieving Assistant Principal role, which she held for four and a half years. This opportunity provided her with the underpinning experience necessary to enable her to apply for an Assistant Principal position, which she gained through merit selection. She was then appointed as an Assistant Principal at her current school and has worked in this role for one and a half years. Overall, she has six years of executive experience.

Unlike John who was aspirational from early in his career, Kristy didn’t have any specific career aspirations. She says:

I never had any intentions of building my career or being an Assistant Principal. I fell into it because I was picked up, I was asked to relieve and then because I did take on some of that responsibility and enjoyed it, that's kind of why I then saw it through and kept on taking that knowledge and just growing and growing.

Kristy now recognises that a career plan would be a good idea and she said, ‘My principal did say I should have one. Actually, my Deputy Principal said I should have one [too]’. However without mentoring and support, she doesn’t know how to go about it. Kristy explains:

I do feel it’s too hard so I’m sort of sitting and I just plateau. I have the Assistant Principal role where I’m providing that knowledge to the rest of the school, I’m being delegated jobs from the principal and the DP but nothing is happening at an Assistant Principal level. . . For me to move to the next level, I feel that I need some guidance on how to do that because I don’t know where the next level is and how you get there. . . I have not got a mentor or guide that says this is what you should do to get to this point.
Kristy is a highly motivated, hard-working teaching Assistant Principal who is successful in both her teaching and executive roles. However she is becoming increasingly frustrated by her limited knowledge related to career progression. She elaborates:

There is minimal movement in this career: you’re stuck. You’re a teacher, Assistant Principal, a Deputy, there is no — I don’t feel there’s leeway in the career and if there is leeway I’m unaware of how to get that, to move, what do you do?

She has even considered the possibility of career change in the future. Kristy explains:

It’s gone nowhere other than me going on seek.com looking for *Educational Development Manager*. Only because the staff at this school have told me you should be a consultant, you should be doing this.

Kristy is at a crossroad in her career. She says, ‘I love what I do, I love the results that I get at the end of the year, the things that we put into place and the outcomes to see children learn, it’s just a gift’. In her role as an Assistant Principal she mentors the beginning teachers in her school and she believes that teachers would benefit from mentoring at other stages in their careers. She comments, ‘You’re basically on your own from there [being a beginning teacher] unless you’ve got a really good principal as a mentor or someone as a mentor’. Despite having considered alternative career options, Kristy remains professionally motivated as an educator. She elaborates:

The students and the community, they’re my biggest motivators. . . I actually enjoy in-servicing other teachers and seeing them put it [programs] into place and me doing the demonstration lessons. . . My biggest motivator would have to be . . . the change that I’ve made within schools. I think that huge, especially when it’s whole school.

Kristy concludes that ‘a supportive work environment’ and collegiality is important. She says, ‘I’ve got very good colleagues at [this school] and they get you through’.
5.5 Professional development opportunities

The co-occurrence data set of leadership and professional development opportunities is firmly linked and, overall, professional development was a strong theme identified in this study. Data, as illustrated in Figure 14, suggests that principal and executive leadership is a critical factor in the provision of professional development opportunities for mid-career teachers and is a key contributing factor to mid-career teachers’ feelings of satisfaction. The strategic thinking and related decisions that these school leaders make determine the manner in which they manage the provision of professional development in their schools. As seen previously in Susan’s profile (Chapter 4, pp. 85–90) the equitable provision of funding for, and access to, professional development across all staff is an issue. In Susan’s case, access to professional development opportunities was limited due to her non-permanent status. Elizabeth, a non-permanent teacher who had been teaching in her current school for three years, was confronted with a similar situation and explained that whereas permanent staff members received Accelerated Literacy training, she didn’t.

She said:

I didn’t [receive training]. The others did, the permanent staff did and everyone in the school has but I haven’t been . . . They’re very supportive and I’m not expected to do it but I feel like I would feel pressure from the parents if I didn’t do it . . . I’ve got all the programmes and everyone’s given me everything and I’m doing it in my own way. I’m definitively not doing it to the book like they are, but I mean, they say it’s a learning process anyway — and definitely I would have benefited from the training, yeah.
In contrast, James, a substantive leader in a neighbouring school, discussed the change in their school’s approach. He related:

There’s been quite a change in philosophy over that [the provision of funding for professional development]. We were one of those schools that didn’t necessarily put as much money into casuals as permanent staff. Not that we ever excluded them but maybe not gave them as much of an opportunity. The problem with us now is that we’ve only got six permanent full time staff on our rolls. Everyone else is part time or casual . . . It is about if you need the ‘Best Start Kindergarten’, well your staff must be trained. So you have to do it regardless of who’s on there. So that’s been a bit of a good thing and that’s been really helpful for accreditation with the institute.

In some schools, professional development opportunities were strictly aligned to the school’s strategic targets as expressed in their management plan, while in others this was not a limiting factor. Gail, an Assistant Principal, commented that professional development funding was directly linked to school targets. She said, ‘We’ve only just got enough money to cater for what’s in our school plan’. Whereas in other schools, Emma, an aspiring leader, said there is a ‘very open approach to professional development’ and Zoë, a classroom teacher, indicated that you can ‘choose what you want’. A common limiting factor expressed by participants was the availability of
funding, which sometimes resulted in classroom teachers being ‘declined on professional development’ [Kristy]. Belinda, a classroom teacher, described the model adopted in her school as being ‘quite good’. This school’s model for professional development was a blend of personal choice and professional development aligned to school targets. She says, ‘We’re choosing actually. With our staff development days, that’s assigned’. In addition, the previous year a survey was undertaken asking teachers what courses they wanted to do. She relates, ‘If I applied for one of those, I think you pretty much were accepted that you got in to that . . . as long as you applied within the certain amount of time’. This model, a balance between personal choice and professional development linked to school needs, delivers outcomes that benefit both the individual teachers and the school community as a whole, generally engendering feelings of teacher satisfaction.

The principal’s ability to think strategically and see ‘the big picture’ can have powerful consequences. When a principal can think globally and look beyond the direct benefit for their own school situation, their decisions can have life-long and career defining impact on mid-career teachers. It can be seen that when principals encourage and support teachers to do courses they want to do, long term benefits to both the individual teachers and the organisation can result. This is evident from Amanda’s story. Even in high school, Amanda had ‘always planned to do Special Ed rather than primary teaching’ and from the start she ‘went into primary teaching with the intention of getting into Special Ed’. She relates that after only two years of teaching:

The Principal actually put me forward for the Special Ed cadetship. So I went and did that, and that’s how I got into Special Ed basically, very, very quickly . . . So once I’d achieved that, I was happy. That’s what I wanted to do and that’s where I wanted to be. So that’s when I went overseas.

Amanda spent the next six years in London. It might appear that by going overseas, the financial investment in Amanda’s training and her resulting expertise could be considered a loss to the organisation. However the system in London had ‘a very, very good Special Ed provision’ and the experience she gained there added to the depth of her knowledge. Since her return from London, Amanda has worked as a specialist teacher in a K–12 special school setting. She says, ‘I actually really love my job and
working with the kids that we work with in this school. [You] wouldn't do it for any other reason. You couldn’t do it if you didn’t love the job’. Overall, Amanda has been teaching for 15 years. She can be classified as a mid-career teacher who has chosen a classroom teacher career pathway. She says:

I really don’t have ambition to get into any executive role. I mean I just — I teach because I love teaching. I honestly think that to take on the executive role, I couldn’t work any harder than I am now. I don’t know how I’d be able to do it.

Amanda plans to continue teaching in Special Education for the foreseeable future. In the long term, the decision by Amanda’s principal to support her application for the Special Education cadetship and the NSW DoE’s investment in her training has benefited both Amanda and the organisation.

5.6 Career opportunities

Amanda’s story is one of several that illustrate the pivotal role principals can play in the provision of opportunities that can enhance career progression and/or teacher satisfaction. Lisa’s story is another example. Like Amanda, Lisa had ‘always wanted to be a teacher’ and after completing her four-year primary education degree at Sydney University, she was appointed to her current school as a targeted graduate. Lisa has been a teacher for 14 years and she says, ‘I’ve stayed here because I’m happy’. At the time of the interview she was working a reduced load of three days a week part-time after the birth of her first child. Although it might be argued that staying at the same school could be a disadvantage, Lisa explained:

I’ve worked under four different Principals, acting or permanent and I’ve worked across the board from K to 6 and I’ve done Reading Recovery. I’m a two year trained Reading Recovery teacher. So . . . I feel I’ve done rather well just being where I’m happy.

Importantly, Lisa’s current principal thought strategically and valued her professional potential. She was able to look beyond the immediate needs of the school and provide career opportunities that would benefit Lisa in the longer term. Lisa said:
When I was pregnant my boss still sent me to the Aspire Leadership course, and I really valued that she did that because it meant that she hadn’t just pigeonholed [me] and gone, ‘Well, you’re going to have a baby now. You’re off the radar for the next five years or however long it’s going to take you to get back fulltime’.

The principal also helped Lisa to gain onsite leadership experience. Lisa said:

Even though I’m Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, when I stuck my hand up and said I’d really like to still be the maths person, she was fine with that and encouraged it and said no, that’s great. I still — I get given projects to do and things like that and I’m organising the Olympathon at the school this year.

As an aspiring leader, Lisa understood the importance of these experiences in terms of future career progression. She commented:

I think those are things that you put in your resume when you are going for Assistant Principal and it would be really easy for her to say, ‘Oh look, you know what, you’re only here three days a week, how about we give one of the young teachers a go?’ She could easily have done that. But she knows I can handle it, which I think is important.

For Lisa, having a principal who appreciates that she is ‘a committed teacher, very committed’ is important. She feels valued knowing that her aspirations for future career progression are being actively supported even while she is working part-time.

Even for mid-career teachers who can be considered substantive leaders, the role the principal plays in the provision of opportunities that can enhance continued career progression should not be underestimated. This is exemplified by James’s experience. At the time James was appointed an Executive Teacher, a position that later became Assistant Principal in the NSW DoE, he had only been teaching three years. After completing his teaching degree, he was fortunate to be chosen as a targeted graduate, ensuring full-time employment. Initially he worked in a large primary school in south-western Sydney. He believed his decision to become a teacher ‘was a good fit’ and he says, ‘In my third year I applied for an executive teacher job and I got it. So I
was the youngest exec in the Sydney Region so that was a bit exciting’. He worked at his new school for two years, but when the student enrolment numbers dropped ‘dramatically’ he was moved to his current school. He viewed this positively saying, ‘I’ve had the opportunity of [working in] three different schools in three different regions of Sydney, which a lot of people don’t have’. Each principal James has worked with in his executive role has made specific contributions to his leadership development. He explained:

Working with the boss of my last school, he knew that I was green and a junior and he really wanted to build me up to be a really good leader. He used to give me opportunities to go and sit in the office and learn Oasis with the office staff. Here's the annual school report, you go and have a crack at it; [he] really gave me open slather on a lot of things to just have a go at it.

On his arrival at his current school the principal at the time was ‘very much into professional learning’ and supported him during that period by providing the opportunity to attend ‘some amazing professional learning courses’. The principal’s ability to think and act strategically by providing James with the opportunity to work as a non-teaching Assistant Principal enriched his professional experience and kept him motivated. He relates:

I was off-class — Assistant Principal — two years ago, which was something different. I was craving something different. I was getting a bit bored and stale. So that gave me an insight into a deputy’s role a little bit. Absolutely in the future I want to be a deputy. I want to be a principal. I would even do a stint in regional office, or I’d even do a stint in district office.

James’s current principal has continued to support the development of his leadership knowledge and skills through the provision of specific professional development opportunities related to leadership. James explained, ‘We’re just about to start Team Leadership for School Improvement and I’m really excited about that because it’s my love of collaborative work with leadership’. Team Leadership for School Improvement K–12 is a team-based professional learning program related to whole school planning and is designed to assist participants to ‘develop greater leadership capacity for guiding
and managing results-focussed whole school improvement’ (NSW Department of Education & Training 2010). James has worked in an executive role for ten of his 13 years of teaching. He acknowledges that the challenges provided by his principals have had a positive impact on his career and as a result he has ‘grown as a leader’.

**Figure 15: Career opportunities mind map**

### 5.7 Collegial relationships

Analysis of positive and negative data sets for collegial relationships suggested collegial relationships are a significant factor impacting on the working lives of mid-career teachers. When viewed in light of the co-occurrence between collegial relationships and leadership, collegial relationships emerged as one of the five major themes identified in this study. Collegial relationships, the professional working relationships participants develop with colleagues, are characterised by trust, respect and a commitment to working towards a common purpose. Participants from all four categories defined in my typology recognise the importance of positive collegial relationships and value opportunities to work collaboratively with colleagues. Susan, a non-permanent teacher, explains:

We’re very lucky. We’ve always had a planning day, one day each term, devoted to pulling the teachers off class. Getting together with resources, looking up what we’re going to teach for next term. But also reassessing and
evaluating what we’ve done in the past, and how we can improve it. So we’re supported in that way.

She states that the shift towards working collaboratively in stage teams is school-wide. She says, ‘I think it’s been with us probably the last five years, and definitely from the top-down. The management would like to work along those lines and it’s encouraged’.

Classroom teachers appreciate the time and effort saved by collaborative work practices. Paula comments, ‘I think what helps a lot [is] being a big school, we share the workload’. Victoria, another classroom teacher, mirrored this view. She relates, ‘Everyone shares resources . . . That makes a massive difference’. It is not uncommon for classroom teachers to spend their own time working collaboratively. For example Belinda, also a classroom teacher, comments that despite the formal provision of time for collaborative planning, teachers are ‘always spending recesses and lunches planning together’.

Lisa, an aspiring leader, knows from personal experience that supportive collegial relationships are important. She says:

I like helping the younger teachers now. I do it regularly . . . because somebody did that for me when I started and I valued it . . . I’d like to do that as an Assistant Principal.

Emma, also an aspiring leader, agrees. She says:

I think a big factor is relationships with other staff that you work with . . . You do things because you like people, not necessarily because you have to do it. I think if people encourage each other and help each other along, it keeps you enjoying it [teaching].

As an aspiring leader, Emma reflects on her personal qualities. She says, ‘I think that I have good relationships with other people. I think that I would be able to work well with people’. Emma’s awareness of the need to develop and maintain positive collegial relationships is important in terms of her future leadership success.
Participants identified as substantive leaders recognise the need for positive collegial relationships and collaborative working practices. They understand the strategic implications and benefits to their school organisations of implementing strategies to facilitate effective collaborative practices at all levels within their schools. John, a substantive leader, comments:

You talk the language of collaboration, but actually getting the time to make it happen is difficult. I think we do have staff members that are quite naturally collaborative . . . It’s quite a collaborative environment here. So as an AP, that’s good, because you don’t have to rebuild that culture — it’s happening.

James, also a substantive leader, describes the collaborative culture in his school and the positive response of the new principal. He says:

We’ve just got the new principal . . . He’s come from a much smaller school. So he’s quite impressed at how collaborative we are — I have to go back to that because it’s a huge part of our school — how collaborative we are and how our teams really function. So that’s been a really big positive.

School-based strategies to help facilitate collaboration include time provisions on staff development days and regular staff and stage meetings. John elaborates:

We definitely collaboratively program. So that’s built into our staff development days and our stage meetings. People are very generous to share resources and swap ideas . . . There’s a real kind of openness to new ideas and that’s fantastic as a leader in a school, to be able to bring a new idea in and people might question it and discuss it, but there’s not really a lot of sense from the staff of, well I don't want to do it that way.

This structure is evident in other schools where collaborative practices have been strategically fostered. When asked by the researcher, ‘Do you get much time for collaborative planning or that sort of thing?’ Felicity, an aspiring leader, said:

Yeah, we do. We have a staff meeting every Tuesday morning, but then we also have afternoon Thursday meeting. Alternate weeks we’ll have a whole school
get together on a Thursday afternoon. Then the off week will be a stage planning meeting, where we get together and we do moderation or work out assessments and things like that. Staff development days — the one last week for Term 2, we did a fair bit of that as well, looking at smart data and things like that.

It is increasingly evident that positive collegial relationships, often identified by collaborative work practices, are key features of a productive working environment. Figure 16 illustrates the strong links between collegial relationships and leadership, supportive principals and executive teams and a positive school culture. The interrelationships between these code categories support the proposition that the conditions for effective leadership are complex and interconnected.

![Collegial relationships mind map](image)

**Figure 16: Collegial relationships mind map**

### 5.8 Communication

As illustrated in Figure 11: Centrality of leadership mind map, analysis of positive co-occurrence data indicates that communication is one of the five code categories most strongly associated to leadership. In the context of this study, communication refers to
the interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information between people and can be verbal, written or online. In this context, communication may be between participants and their colleagues, or parents and community members, or students or other related professionals. Essentially, communication underpins all interactions between people and as a result is also strongly connected to the code categories of collegial relationships between colleagues, relationships with parents and community members and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These interrelationships are illustrated in Figure 17.

![Communication mind map](image)

**Figure 17: Communication mind map**

It is clear from positive, negative and co-occurrence data sets that effective communication is an integral aspect of effective leadership. Elizabeth, a non-permanent teacher, says, ‘Our principal’s fantastic in communicating and giving everyone their say and telling us everything that’s going on’. Despite being a non-permanent teacher, she explains that you ‘wouldn’t know that I’m not permanent: I’m just included in everything’. She elaborates:

She’s [the principal] very willing to let us know what’s going on, so she’s really good with the communication. I don’t feel like we don’t know what’s going on. Anything that she needs us to discuss she’ll tell the supervisors at our meetings and they’ll let us know. Yeah, the supervisors are great.

Effective communication in the school is not only achieved through well-established meeting procedures and a distributed leadership style but also through the principal’s interpersonal skills. Elizabeth relates that the annual teacher assessment sign-off
involved a combination of stage meetings and a face-to-face professional conversation with the principal. Rather than feeling daunted by this process, she explains that it is ‘an opportunity to say things and to get feedback’ and that the process is ‘really good’.

Belinda, a classroom teacher, sees communication as an essential aspect of a teacher’s role. She says, ‘So I think communication, being able to talk to the parents and communicate with them. With colleagues as well, sharing resources, planning together, all that sort of thing has to go hand in hand’. Structures to support effective communication in Belinda’s school include weekly whole staff meetings, access to term timetables and information on the school website. She also refers to video conferencing as ‘a great way of being able to share resources and talk to other teachers’ and she agrees that where ‘there’s two or three other teachers teaching the same grade, you do it face to face’.

Gail, an Assistant Principal who can be classed as a substantive leader, is passionate about effective communication with parents. She has looked at alternative ways to keep busy parents informed about teaching and learning in the school. She has utilised technology to try to create new links with parents. She says:

Something I’m trying to get the staff to just do, it’s something simple, it’s just to put photos up of lessons. I’m trying to encourage them that it doesn’t have to be this grand lesson to take photos of. Just take photos . . . Put it on the blog. That communicates to parents that we teach every day, every moment . . . Let’s show them what we do and better communicate with them.

Gail says:

I’ve tried to think outside the box as far as the blogs go, the way we can communicate with them. Everyone’s on the internet these days. If they have to check something on there, they can just see it quickly.

In this way Gail hopes to ‘strengthen the connection between the home and the school’.

In his role of Principal, Peter demonstrates a clear understanding of the need to communicate with all stakeholders effectively. He consciously developed strategies to
improve communication in through verbal, written and online methods. As seen in his profile (Chapter 4, pp. 103–108), Peter actively developed relationships with students, staff and parents. He understood that ‘investing a lot of time in relationship building’ was important. His implementation of technological solutions to improve access to information systems enhanced his ability to respond quickly to the issues or concerns of parents in a planned and informed manner. He says:

Technology plays a big role in getting my job done because that communication is coming before nine o’clock. So I’ve got the heads up that there are issues on the boil, often through email . . . [so] I know the things that are going to face me during the day.

By implementing electronic systems and protocol guidelines, Peter aimed to improve communication with all stakeholders, enhancing understanding and contributing to the development of a more collaborative culture. Peter’s capacity to communicate effectively and build positive relationships augments his effectiveness as a school leader.

5.9 Framework for school leaders
The data examined in this chapter indicates that leadership, as an activity, is strongly connected to five code categories: supportive principals and executive teams, professional development opportunities, career opportunities, collegial relationships and communication. Although each code category was discussed separately to enhance clarity, it is evident that these categories do not stand alone — rather they are closely connected and reflect the complexity of teachers’ working environments. Figure 18 illustrates the centrality of leadership in the working lives of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools. School leaders have a responsibility to maximise the potential of mid-career teachers by creating working environments that recognises the varying needs of mid-career teachers and provide conditions to enhance their professional commitment and personal achievements. By this career stage, the preferred pathway of mid-career teachers may be either classroom-focussed or an executive pathway. In reality however, preferred pathways are not static and mid-career teachers may move from one to the other and back again depending on the balance between their professional and personal priorities at different points in their lives. The
VITAE research project conducted in the United Kingdom by Christopher Day and his team confirms that the interplay between an individual’s personal, situated and professional domains contributes to or affects their sense of effectiveness (Day et al. 2007).

Figure 18: Centrality of leadership

Using the data from this study, a Framework for school leaders (Table 10) has been developed to help clarify specific knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and actions effective school leaders appear to employ to create favourable environments, which support and enhance the potential of mid-career teachers. Emerging from the data four core domains were identified, each with a range of specific elements, which inform our understanding of what school leaders may know and do to maximise their effectiveness. The four core domains shown in Table 10 are professional development opportunities, career opportunities, collegial relationships and communication. The analysis and distillation of the study data, as summarised in Table 10, suggest that it is the way in which school leaders think and act strategically, embedding these four domains into their daily practice that enables them to facilitate the development of a cohesive school environment. The data suggests that conditions can be created to support the integration
of the range of specific elements that when loosely coupled, provide optimal conditions to support mid-career teachers through effective leadership practices. Many of the elements are interrelated and it is the interplay between these connections and each individual that provides the connecting fibres and varying pathways that collectively contribute to the development of a positive school culture, characterised by effective leadership practices. These conditions change and develop over time. The synergy created by this evolution of optimal conditions propels school communities into productive, learning communities where mid-career teachers remain motivated, challenged and engaged in their work. School leaders have both the opportunity and responsibility to invest in the future by providing mid-career teachers with the most favourable conditions for their professional and personal development. In this way, effective school leaders can support mid-career teachers who are committed to enhancing student outcomes through quality teaching or their leadership aspirations. An investment in the development of mid-career teachers is an investment in the future sustainability of the teaching profession.
Table 10: Framework for school leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supportive principals and executive teams</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Provide professional development (PD) opportunities for all staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Support career progression</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop positive collegial relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Communicate effectively</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PD opportunities</th>
<th>Career opportunities</th>
<th>Collegial relationships</th>
<th>Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Provide equality of PD opportunities for all staff including non-permanent</td>
<td>• Facilitate leadership opportunities at all levels</td>
<td>• Treat permanent / non-permanent staff with equity</td>
<td>• Communicate clearly with all stakeholders: students, staff, parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strategically link PD to school targets in management plan</td>
<td>• Provide relieving executive positions</td>
<td>• Invest time in building positive relationships</td>
<td>• Consult regularly with all stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allow individuals own choice PD</td>
<td>• Support teacher leadership of projects and curriculum areas</td>
<td>• Focus on teacher well-being</td>
<td>• Communicate decision-making processes to all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage teams to access PD opportunities</td>
<td>• Provide project and team leadership opportunities for aspiring leaders</td>
<td>• Ensure visibility to staff, students and parents</td>
<td>• Demonstrate a willingness to listen to all stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide opportunities for executive development courses</td>
<td>• Support access to leadership opportunities at area/regional levels</td>
<td>• Maintain a focus on educational leadership</td>
<td>• Exercise well-developed conflict resolution skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide PD related to specialised opportunities</td>
<td>• Provide opportunities for permanent employment</td>
<td>• Build trust and credibility</td>
<td>• Disseminate information in a timely manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promote PD related to long-term career opportunities</td>
<td>• Facilitate mentoring opportunities at all career stages</td>
<td>• Respect staff at all career stages</td>
<td>• Provide management structures to support effective communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support postgraduate study opportunities</td>
<td>• Support ongoing career planning</td>
<td>• Support staff in practical ways (program planning, resources, time)</td>
<td>• Establish meeting protocols for each forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Support online learning</td>
<td>• Support development of management skills</td>
<td>• Maintain high expectations</td>
<td>• Provide performance feedback to staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Support leadership of committees beyond the school</td>
<td>• Facilitate accreditation for all staff including non-permanent</td>
<td>• Provide time for collaborative work practices</td>
<td>• Utilise email effectively</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Encourage opportunities for teacher satisfaction (in chosen area of teaching/leadership)</td>
<td>• Build a culture of collaboration and teamwork</td>
<td>• Use school website to inform school community</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provide support for staff on both professional and personal levels</td>
<td>• Provide mentoring for younger teachers</td>
<td>• Use technology to promote the school</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop shared vision for student achievement</td>
<td>• Understand the career stage of individual staff members</td>
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6.1 Introduction
The Typology of mid-career teachers and the Framework for school leaders as explicated in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 respectively are individually discrete yet closely connected, being outcomes from the analysis of data collected in this study. It became evident to me that these frameworks were complementary and could be integrated to create a simplified, practical tool for use in professional practice. This chapter therefore, combines these two frameworks culminating in the development of the Mid-career leadership tool as shown in Table 11. The purpose of the Mid-career leadership tool is to provide a practical tool that school leaders can use to enhance their personal awareness of the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers. It is argued that the application of this tool should assist school leaders to appropriately differentiate their leadership practices in relation to mid-career teachers as a ‘one size fits all’ strategy will not effectively meet the needs of such a heterogeneous group.

This tool assists school leaders to see previously invisible, mid-career teachers, empowering them to differentiate their professional practice. The application of the Mid-career leadership tool prompts school leaders to initiate focussed conversations specific to individual mid-career teachers, taking into consideration their current career phase and/or preferred career pathway. Knowing this allows school leaders to provide timely and relevant support if needed, as well as giving them the ability target specific career opportunities for individual mid-career teachers on their staff. Recognising the motivations, concerns, knowledge and aspirations of mid-career teachers provides school leaders with a more accurate picture of the existing and potential knowledge, skills and personal contributions mid-career teachers have and make to organisational success.

6.2 Mid-career leadership tool
The Mid-career leadership tool (Table 11) is a two-dimensional framework. The first dimension consists of the four categories of mid-career teachers identified in the Typology of mid-career teachers and the second dimension consists of the four domains linked to leadership as shown in the Framework for school leaders. The intersection of these two dimensions creates 16 groups containing issues to consider and strategies to
<table>
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<th>Framework for school leaders</th>
<th>Typology of mid-career teachers</th>
<th>Non-permanent teachers</th>
<th>Classroom teachers</th>
<th>Aspiring leaders</th>
<th>Substantive leaders</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Professional development</strong></td>
<td>• Facilitate teacher-</td>
<td>• Provide opportunities for permanent employment</td>
<td>• Link to school targets</td>
<td>• Link to school targets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>leadership of projects and curriculum areas</td>
<td>• Facilitate mentoring</td>
<td>• Individual choice</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Facilitate mentoring</td>
<td>• Support on-going career planning</td>
<td>• Specialised opportunities</td>
<td>• Executive development</td>
<td>• Further executive development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Facilitate maintenance of accreditation</td>
<td>• Facilitate mentoring</td>
<td>• Postgraduate study</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Respect career trajectory choices</td>
<td>• Facilitate mentoring</td>
<td>• Include on-line learning</td>
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<td>• Support on-going career planning</td>
<td>• Leadership beyond school</td>
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<td><strong>Career opportunities</strong></td>
<td>• Be inclusive of non-permanent staff</td>
<td>• Focus on individual’s well-being</td>
<td>• Facilitate leadership of school targets</td>
<td>• Facilitate leadership of strategic planning</td>
<td>• Facilitate leadership of strategic planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Invest time in building positive relationship</td>
<td>• Ensure accessibility for classroom teachers</td>
<td>• Provide relieving executive positions</td>
<td>• Provide relieving executive positions at higher level</td>
<td>• Provide relieving executive positions at higher level</td>
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<td>• Focus on individual’s well-being</td>
<td>• Recognise achievements</td>
<td>• Support leadership at area or regional level</td>
<td>• Facilitate mentoring</td>
<td>• Support leadership at area or regional level</td>
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<td>• Ensure visibility with non-permanent staff</td>
<td>• Support work/life balance choices</td>
<td>• Facilitate mentoring</td>
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<td>• Recognise achievements</td>
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<td>• Support work/life balance choices</td>
<td>• Provide time for leadership of projects and curriculum planning &amp; development</td>
<td>• Development of management skills</td>
<td>• Development of management skills</td>
<td>• Further development of management skills</td>
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<td><strong>Collegial relationships</strong></td>
<td>• Initiate conversations about career plans</td>
<td>• Invest time in building positive relationship</td>
<td>• Facilitate progress of accreditation</td>
<td>• Facilitate further accreditation progress</td>
<td>• Facilitate further accreditation progress</td>
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<td>• Take time to listen to non-permanent staff</td>
<td>• Focus on individual’s well-being</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Provide performance feedback</td>
<td>• Ensure regular meetings with aspiring leaders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Use technology for effective communication</td>
<td>• Support management of work/life balance choices</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>• Initiate conversations about career plans</td>
<td>• Provide time and facilitate collaborative development of school targets</td>
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<td>• Take time to listen to classroom teachers</td>
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implement to support mid-career teachers in the workplace. Although not every issue and/or strategy will be relevant to each individual, the key points listed prompt school leaders to reflect on their own policies and practices and identify areas that require improvement. By highlighting these issues and strategies explicitly, mid-career teachers will become increasingly visible, acknowledged and valued.

Underpinning the use of the *Mid-career leadership tool* is a school leader’s ability to identify mid-career teachers and their characteristics. The *Typology of mid-career teachers* can be used to clarify which of the four main categories of mid-career teachers an individual is most similar to. The optimal way for school leaders to begin is to initiate professional dialogue with individual staff members who fall within the group of teachers having 8-15 years of teaching experience. It is only through one-to-one communication that school leaders and their executive teams will be able to build trusting professional relationships (Bryk & Schneider 2003; Cardno 2012; Tschannen-Moran 2001, 2014) with individual mid-career teachers to find out what their motivations, concerns, aspirations and preferred career pathways are at any given time.

Scheduling professional conversations with individual mid-career teachers should not add to the workload of school leaders or their executive teams, as NSW DoE school principals have always been responsible for the performance and development of their staff (NSW Department of Education & Training 2000). In 2015, the NSW DoE implemented a new ‘Performance and Development Framework (PDF) for Principals, Executives and Teachers in NSW Public Schools’ (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2015d). The PDF, based on the Australian Teacher and Performance and Development Framework (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2012), is aligned to current national accreditation requirements, replacing previous processes. Its purpose is stated as supporting ‘the ongoing improvement of student outcomes through the continuous development of a skilled, effective and professional teaching workforce’ (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2015d, p. 1). This is particularly relevant for mid-career teachers, many of whom are at the crossroad of their careers (Day & Gu 2010), negotiating the conflicting demands of work/life challenges while transitioning into new roles and preferred career pathways. Importantly, the biggest change is that the new policy formally requires school leaders to ensure every teacher has an individual Performance Development Plan (PDP), reviewed annually. Creating a PDP involves professional dialogue and collaboration
with colleagues, usually a member of the school’s leadership team, to set professional
goals and identify appropriate professional learning activities to support their
achievement. This professional relationship needs to be based on mutual trust and
respect because it is ongoing throughout the planning, implementation and review
stages of the process. At every stage, close two-way professional dialogue is essential
between school leaders and mid-career teachers as ‘the PDP is a dynamic plan, open to
adjustment and refinement as required in consultation with supervisors’ (NSW
Department of Education & Communities 2015d, p. 6).

The Framework for school leaders, as developed in Chapter 5, provides knowledge to
support school leaders and their executive teams in understanding the motivations and
concerns of mid-career teachers. This framework highlights four domains —
professional development, career opportunities, collegial relationships and
communication — critically linked to leadership. The range of elements listed in the
framework point to key factors articulated by mid-career teachers as being of prime
importance in their professional lives. Knowing what these are and reflecting on their
implications, can prepare school leaders and their executive teams to make informed
decisions related to mid-career teachers on their staff.

The combination of information gained from the Typology of mid-career teachers and
the Framework for school leaders can provide school leaders with a rich source of
knowledge relevant to their management of mid-career teachers. By synthesising of the
two frameworks, the Mid-career leadership tool provides a reference tool for school
leaders to apply in their practice. The NSW DoE PDF discussed above provides school
leaders and their executive teams with information and tools to ‘sustain a positive and
collaborative performance and development culture in the workplace’ (NSW
Department of Education & Communities 2015d, p. 1). The Mid-career leadership tool
adds to these resources by providing a tool specific to the career cycle of mid-career
teachers, clarifying their individual needs and chosen career pathways.
6.3 Application of the mid-career leadership tool

6.3.1 Non-permanent teachers

Of the four categories of mid-career teachers, non-permanent teachers are the least visible. Non-permanent or casual teachers fall into two main groups: those who work regularly in one or more schools and those who work irregularly across a range of schools (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2015d). It was revealed in this study that even regular casu als on temporary engagement contracts were often treated inequitably. One obvious reason for this was related to funding. By definition, non-permanent teachers are transient. Investing in the professional learning and career development of non-permanent teachers can be seen as costly and risky, as they may leave at any time. This study exposed the plight of long-term non-permanent teachers in particular, who were excluded from professional learning courses due to their non-permanent status. However, it is argued that this could be seen as being counter-productive. In the words of Zig Ziglar, ‘The only thing worse than training employees and losing them is to not train them and keep them!’ (Ziglar 2014). Non-permanent teachers are teachers working with students. It is known from research that the quality of teachers and their teaching influences student outcomes (Hattie 2003). Any investment in improving teacher quality is an investment in improving student outcomes. I don’t know any school leader who would not be in favour of that!

The NSW DoE PDF (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2015d) recognises the predicament non-permanent teachers face, especially in relation to professional development. In line with requirements to seek and maintain accreditation, non-permanent teachers are now required to have a PDP like all other teachers. School leaders are responsible for ensuring this is implemented despite obvious management difficulties. For non-permanent teachers working regularly in one or more schools, the PDP should be ‘negotiated with each supervisor, but managed by one designated supervisor’ (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2015d, p. 18). Clearly this will require negotiation between all parties across locations. The situation is even more problematic for non-permanent teachers working irregularly across a range of schools. Their PDP ‘will need to be discussed and negotiated with one or more principals’ (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2015d, p. 18). It is suggested that if needed, further advice can be sought from the NSW DoE and/or the appropriate union. Ultimately the onus is on the individual non-permanent teacher to manage their own
PDP, while seeking support from school leaders. Appropriate and timely support from school leaders and/or their executive teams will be critical in assisting non-permanent teachers in mid-career to maintain accreditation.

The application of the *Mid-career leadership tool* in relation to non-permanent mid-career teachers is very powerful. It exposes inequity and demands ethical leadership through principled decision-making. School leaders and their executive teams are faced with the reality of their responsibilities under the PDF and are prompted to consider the impact of their decisions on individual mid-career teachers. As alluded to earlier, school leaders should ensure they provide non-permanent, mid-career teachers with equitable professional development opportunities. This can be achieved through planning for the equitable allocation of resources in the school’s strategic plan. Allocating adequate funding in the projected budget to support the professional development needs of all teachers, including non-permanent teachers working in the school, guarantees equitable opportunities for all teaching staff. Extending an invitation to non-permanent teachers to participate in professional development opportunities offered to permanent teachers, even if such courses are being delivered on a day they are not in the school, sends a message of inclusion and value to non-permanent teachers, who are then in a position to choose whether to participate or not.

As well as looking globally at the *professional development* needs of all teachers, school leaders should also focus on the needs of individual mid-career teachers and allocate resources to support specific learning. This could include facilitating the enrolment of non-permanent staff in online modules offered by the NSW DoE, which may not otherwise be available to them. The goal-setting phase of the PDP provides an opportunity for school leaders to engage individually with non-permanent, mid-career teachers to find out what their long-term aspirations are. This knowledge enables school leaders to embed suitable opportunities into future planning. At a time when permanent mid-career teachers are often moving forward in their chosen career pathways, non-permanent, mid-career teachers are often stagnating, unable to gain permanency yet wanting security. Supporting their professional development needs enhances their career prospects, enriches their professional knowledge and ensures their current practice is equal to that of permanent teachers, thus maintaining equality of outcomes for students.
Career opportunities are of critical importance for non-permanent, mid-career teachers. It can be a time when non-permanent, mid-career teachers are in a period of transition, often wanting to gain permanency as their primary focus moves from family back to their career pathways. School leaders and their executive teams have the capacity to support the aspirations of their non-permanent, mid-career teaching staff. Just as they do for permanent staff, they can facilitate mentoring by appointing a mentor for them. The benefits of mentoring for both the mentor and the mentee are widely recognised (Allen 2003; Eby et al. 2006; Ehrich 2004; Holloway 2001; Musanti 2004; NSW Department of Education & Training 2006a; OECD 2005; Wanberg, Kammeyer-Mueller & Marchese 2006; Wright & Wright 1987) and include ‘opportunities to build skills and competencies more quickly’ (NSW Department of Education & Training 2006a, p. 4) and increasing a mentee’s ‘potential for career mobility and promotion’ (NSW Department of Education & Training 2006a, p. 4). In the current era of teacher accreditation, supporting non-permanent, mid-career teachers to maintain accreditation is critical to their progression and success.

In terms of collegial relationships, school leaders set the tone of the culture in the workplace (Price 2012). Being inclusive and investing time in building positive relationships underpins leadership success. Research has shown that effective leadership relies on building strong and positive relationships with individuals and teams (Mumford, Campion & Morgeson 2007; NSW Department of Education & Training n.d.). School leaders need to ensure their own visibility and accessibility ((Barnett & McCormick 2004) by welcoming non-permanent teachers and practising an open door policy. Personally developing positive relationships with non-permanent mid-career teachers provides two-way visibility and inclusiveness. Focussing on an individual’s specific context, understanding their work/life issues and respecting their preferred work choices enables school leaders to match opportunities to people and recognise their strengths and potential.

Effective communication, both formal and informal, is essential in building positive rapport with non-permanent, mid-career teachers. Strategies such as implementing formal processes, providing time for mentors and others to meet with non-permanent teachers, and being aware of inclusiveness when communicating with all staff, all contribute to successful outcomes for individual, non-permanent, mid-career teachers as well as the school.
6.3.2 Permanent teachers: Classroom teachers, aspiring leaders and substantive leaders

The Mid-career leadership tool provides a new lens through which school leaders can view their mid-career staff. The Mid-career leadership tool differentiates permanent mid-career teachers into three categories — classroom teachers, aspiring leaders and substantive leaders — in addition to providing key statements across the four leadership domains to prompt thinking in relation to the permanent, mid-career teacher cohort. The tool illuminates the cohort, bringing each group into direct focus. By removing the fuzziness between groups, the needs of permanent, mid-career teachers become visible. New clarity empowers school leaders to see mid-career teachers and to make decisions informed by the empirical evidence arising from this study. It becomes clear that mid-career classroom teachers have distinct aspirations and needs, as do the aspiring and substantive leader groups.

School leaders commonly link funding in the school’s strategic plan for teacher professional development to current and future school targets. This provides all teaching staff with required underpinning knowledge to effectively implement the plan as well as ensuring equity for student outcomes across grades and stages. However what is not acknowledged is the current knowledge, skills and preferred career pathway of individual teachers. The Mid-career leadership tool provides guidance for the differentiation of professional learning to match the current knowledge level and specific needs of individual mid-career teachers.

Providing classroom teachers with curriculum-based professional development opportunities is an ongoing necessity. Identifying areas individual mid-career teachers indicate as being areas of personal focus and facilitating relevant professional learning activities maximises the value of funds expended to both the individuals and the organisation. These preferred areas of focus may relate to areas perceived by individuals as personal deficits or areas of particular expertise they wish to further develop. Knowing individual classroom teachers’ strengths and targeting opportunities for development in their expressed area of expertise, provides mid-career teachers with the personal pedagogical knowledge to equip them to become teacher leaders in their preferred field (Smith et al. 2013; Verloop, Van Driel & Meijer 2001). This builds individual and organisational capacity (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano 2012;
Mangin 2007) by increasing the engagement of individual mid-career teachers while contributing to the development of shared leadership and a collaborative culture in the workplace. Mid-career classroom teachers value ongoing learning and are often motivated to undertake postgraduate study. By supporting these commitments and facilitating further opportunities for mid-career classroom teachers to go on to lead specialist curriculum activities beyond the school, school leaders contribute to teachers’ career satisfaction in their preferred classroom-based, career pathway (Dinham 1995).

The Mid-career leadership tool, providing guidance for school leaders, builds on the professional development strategies relevant to classroom mid-career teachers and provides additional differentiation for mid-career teachers in the aspiring and substantive leader groups. Executive development is a key focus for both these groups, essential for career progression. Including aspiring leaders in professional learning activities undertaken by the leadership team in the school is a powerful way school leaders can support their development. This is particularly important for aspiring leaders because leadership pathway resources available to NSW DoE teachers through the High Performance and Accountability Directorate are targeted at substantive leaders, starting with Assistant Principals (NSW Department of Education 2015a). However, aspiring leaders can access these online resources and should be encouraged to do so by their school leaders. Facilitating participation in networks for aspiring leaders such as the Primary Executive Network’s Aspire Alliance (NSW Department of Education 2015b) requires little effort yet returns positive benefits in terms of the increased knowledge and motivation of aspiring leaders. Encouraging, supporting and facilitating leadership opportunities for aspiring leaders beyond the school can be a turning point in their careers. Such experiences could include working on organising committees for local, regional and state events or conferences, or leading workshops in their field of expertise. Involvement in leadership experiences not available in their home school, allows aspiring leaders to expand their professional network (Petersen & Conway 2011; Stoll 2009) and increase their visibility and reputation with other school leaders in the area.

It is important to recognise that mid-career teachers holding substantive leadership roles require professional development opportunities that continue to support them in their existing roles and prepare them for progression into more senior roles in the future. The
NSW DoE provides specific development programs online to support teachers in executive positions at all levels. The *Mid-career leadership tool* reminds school leaders that further executive development opportunities are essential to ensure mid-career teachers holding executive roles remain motivated. Conferences and courses that suit this need may be offered internally within the NSW DoE or externally. An investment in the professional learning of mid-career executive teachers builds personal and organisational capacity, increases leadership sustainability (Stoll 2009) and contributes to the ongoing motivation and satisfaction of mid-career executive teachers, who have up to half their careers ahead of them.

The ability to appropriately differentiate *career opportunities* relevant to permanent mid-career teachers across the three categories of classroom teacher, aspiring leader and substantive leader, enables school leaders to maximise the effectiveness of the support they provide. The *Mid-career leadership tool* acts as a quick reference tool. Recognising and respecting the preferred career pathway chosen by teachers in mid-career is essential as it allows school leaders to specifically focus on their preferred career development rather than assuming all mid-career teachers will follow a standard trajectory towards promotion. Supporting ongoing career planning and facilitating the maintenance of accreditation are not only expected under the PDF, but enables school leaders to acknowledge the high level contribution that experienced mid-career classroom teachers make to student outcomes and the school’s learning community. The mid-career teachers in this study identified the provision of opportunities to lead special projects and curriculum areas as important. This aligns to research that directly links teacher satisfaction to the core business of teaching (Dinham 1995; Scott, Dinham & Brooks 1999). My Delphi study (Lusty 2013) also confirmed that mid-career teachers were strongly motivated by the ability to influence best teaching practice and the ability to deliver quality teaching and learning experiences.

By differentiating their focus towards supporting executive leadership opportunities, school leaders can augment the career opportunities of aspiring and substantive leaders. Strategies to support aspiring leaders that can be implemented in the school context include providing opportunities to gain experience leading and managing school targets across grades and stages, where mentoring and guidance is available if required. For substantive leaders, experience at the strategic planning level prepares them for the
critical thinking and forward planning required at principal level. Ensuring that school-based opportunities to relieve in higher positions, when the situation arises, are offered to aspiring/substantive leaders can provide an experience that becomes a determining factor in successful career progression. Looking beyond the school, facilitating and supporting leadership initiatives of programs and projects can provide essential experiences needed for future advancement. Proactively supporting substantive leaders in making expressions of interest for relieving positions at higher levels in other locations not only enables the substantive leader to develop their experience base, but creates an opportunity within the school for an aspiring leader to gain relieving experience as well. The Mid-career leadership tool reminds school leaders of key strategies that collectively contribute to the acquisition of underpinning knowledge and skills that enhance the career opportunities of aspiring and substantive leaders.

Critical to success is the school leader’s capacity to develop positive relationships with mid-career teachers across all categories. The Mid-career leadership tool prompts school leaders to focus on the wellbeing of permanent mid-career teachers. Wellbeing does not stand alone — it is interconnected with, and an outcome of the many factors impacting on individuals in their day-to-day working lives. School leaders need to have a heightened awareness of staff wellbeing as ‘while the needs of the school are paramount, having a happy and well-adjusted staff is a significant part of meeting those needs’ (Collins et al. 2009, p. 23). Research conducted by Dinham and Scott (2002) has shown that in Australian schools ‘middle executives’ are at the ‘pressure points’ of change (p. 50). They observe that greater support is needed to reduce such pressure. Putting in place measures to promote staff wellbeing may be purposely developed such as the Wellness Framework for Staff implemented by the principal of St Margaret’s Anglican Girls School in Brisbane, Queensland (Collins et al. 2009) or more informal, where school leaders identify and address potential issues as they arise. By creating a positive school culture where people are valued, nurtured, developed and empowered (Bhindi 1997), school leaders, working in partnership with teachers, can motivate staff and boost individual and collective wellbeing.

Ideally a school leader’s commitment to regularly investing time to build positive relationships with individual mid-career teachers underpins their ability to understand
the complexities of factors contributing to the career choices mid-career teachers make. Such knowledge informs a school leader’s ability to make appropriate and differentiated decisions to support mid-career teachers’ current career aspirations. Professional life is not static. It is variable and responsive to particular circumstances at any given time, influencing career plans that evolve and change throughout professional life. Of particular importance for mid-career teachers pursuing a classroom teaching pathway, is recognition of their high level of professional knowledge and respect for their current career pathway. By supporting and respecting the work/life balance choices mid-career classroom teaches make during this career stage, school leaders contribute to their ability to focus on quality teaching whilst managing the pressures of family life.

Aspiring and substantive leaders, having made the decision to pursue leadership opportunities, can be supported to manage the dual demands of teaching and leadership responsibilities. The provision of time to facilitate collaboration across grade, stage and executive teams can empower aspiring leaders to manage new priorities and develop new skills in a supportive environment. Similarly, the contribution substantive leaders make to strategic thinking and planning can be greatly enhanced through dedicated time to alleviate the stress of managing conflicting teaching and leadership priorities when meeting critical deadlines. School leaders play a decisive role in creating optimal conditions for effective collaboration through the management decision they make.

Integral to successfully maximising the potential of permanent mid-career teachers in their schools is the school leader’s ability to communicate effectively. Taking time to listen to individual teachers and to initiate focussed conversations about current career plans is the starting point for developing genuine and productive interpersonal relationships. This is essential when giving performance feedback. The new PDF (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2015d) is a three-stage process, with Phase 3 being the annual review of a teacher’s performance and development progress and achievement. School leaders are expected to provide ‘explicit, constructive feedback…to inform the next planning cycle’ (p. 7). It is interesting to note that mid-career teachers in this study expressed their desire to receive performance feedback from school leaders, as it was an opportunity to have their individual contribution to organisational success acknowledged. Effective communication enables genuine sharing of professional knowledge and practice between individuals and teams. An
Australian research study undertaken by Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford (2006) highlights the significant contribution school leaders make, particularly in respect to capacity building and teaching and learning. Common characteristics of the principals in their study included behaviours such as ‘honesty and openness, highly developed communication skills . . . empathy with others . . . [and] support of equity’ (p. 371). It is clear that school leaders play a significant role in creating optimal conditions for success.

Many of the suggestions arising from this study as discussed above would contribute to an ideal professional working environment for mid-career teachers. The current reality, however, is that the teaching profession in Australia is undergoing a period of major change requiring the implementation of new national curriculums and professional accreditation procedures for all teachers. The NSW DoE is responding to these innovations with the rapid implementation of new policies and procedures to meet the required national standards and deadlines. Work practices and related funding and resources are undergoing corresponding restructure including a greater focus on the devolution of responsibility and funding to the local level under the Local Schools, Local Decisions (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2014a) reform agenda. In this climate of continuing change, school leaders, faced with widening responsibilities across management as well as leadership domains, have a rapidly increasing workload. This combined with associated decision-making, has significantly increased the complexity of the role of school leaders. It is yet to be seen whether, in this changing and complex educational environment, school leaders will have the brief, personal commitment, time or human and financial resources to focus on best-practice related to mid-career teachers. Any delay by school leaders in recognising the important contribution mid-career teachers make by redirecting a leadership focus on the specific motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in their schools, will continue to prolong the invisibility of mid-career teachers and the contributions they make to organisational success.

The Mid-career leadership tool, developed through a synthesis of the Typology of mid-career teachers and the related Framework for school leaders developed from this research project, is a practical tool designed for implementation in professional practice. It can be used in combination with other tools and strategies available to school leaders.
The strength of the tool is its ability to focus on the motivations and concerns of teachers in mid-career and amplify the specific characteristics of teachers in this heterogeneous group. Like Alice peering through the looking glass, school leaders will be enlightened to see the unique characteristics, needs and aspiration of teachers in mid-career. The *Mid-career leadership tool* will help school leaders to provide appropriately differentiated strategies to support mid-career teachers and thereby enhance the knowledge, skills and effectiveness of mid-career teachers in this transitional phase of their professional lives.
CHAPTER 7  CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction
This study set out to investigate the professional lives of mid-career primary teachers in NSW public schools. Although this group constitutes a large proportion of the NSW DoE teaching workforce (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012c), very little is known about who they are, what their specific needs are, or the extent of their often unrecognised contribution to the workplace. Aligning with Zweig’s (2014b) notion of invisibles, the pivotal work mid-career teachers do in primary schools is often unnoticed or assumed, in a manner that is inconsistent with their significant contribution to organisational success.

The extant literature relevant to this study was examined using a theoretical framework based on three core areas of focus: conceptualisations of mid-career, teachers, and the context of the NSW DoE. This extensive review of literature established that current knowledge of teachers in mid-career is an emerging field, with the work of Day, Gu and their colleagues (Day & Gu 2010; Day et al. 2007) providing the most recent empirical data, relevant to the educational context in the United Kingdom. In contrast, very little is known about mid-career teachers in the Australian context, where the educational system is undergoing a period of significant change. The issue of the ageing workforce (Owen 2006) is reaching a tipping point, particularly in NSW DoE schools, as it is known that by 2017 the majority of late career teachers, constituting over half the teacher workforce, will be leaving the profession. The necessary promotion of many mid-career teachers will be accelerated during this period of transition, ensuring key teaching and leadership roles are filled. It is therefore essential for organisational stability and future sustainability that these mid-career teachers, previously unrecognised, be identified.

It is imperative that more is known about mid-career teachers in order to understand how best to support their development and progression into the many teaching, specialist support and leadership roles becoming available. To fill this critical gap in knowledge, my study has sought to answer the key question, ‘What are the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools?’ In answering this question with a view to contributing to improved practice in the profession, the
subsequent question was also asked, ‘How can educational leaders enhance the effectiveness of mid-career teachers on student outcomes?’ Knowing who mid-career teachers are and what motivates them in their working lives provides underpinning knowledge enabling existing school leaders to support them individually in their development and progression. At an organisational level, answers to these questions will enable senior leaders to support mid-career teachers collectively through the provision of tailored professional development programs, ensuring they are adequately supported during this period requiring rapid professional growth.

This qualitative study has a constructivist philosophy, employing an interpretive, naturalist approach. My case study generated data through interviews with fifteen mid-career teachers. The rigorous data analysis process subsequently undertaken has resulted in three unique outcomes: the development of a Typology of mid-career teachers, a Framework for school leaders and a related Mid-career leadership tool, developed for implementation in professional practice. These outcomes provide school leaders and senior executives with essential knowledge about mid-career teachers, as well as the skills to effectively support mid-career teachers as they move into more complex roles. Ultimately, when implemented in practice, this will augment the potential of mid-career teachers and enhance their effectiveness in the achievement of student outcomes. Finally, limitations of this study will be reviewed and in the light of this, recommendations for future research will be suggested.

7.2 Empirical findings and their implications
The principles of naturalistic inquiry as conceptualised by Lincoln and Guba (1985) underpin the methodological approach employed for this study. Of particular importance to the trustworthiness of the findings was the development and use of a Coding Manual for the iterative data analysis process. As described in Chapter 3, meticulous data analysis protocols were applied, ensuring the credibility of the research. The main empirical findings arising from this study are encapsulated in Chaper 4 — Typology and Chapter 5 — Leadership. These chapters reflect the two research questions respectively. Chapter 4 specifically relates to the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers and Chapter 5 relates to how school leaders can effectively enhance the effectiveness of mid-career teachers on student outcomes. The link between the data
and the two key research outcomes follow, providing answers to these two critical questions.

**Question 1: What are the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools?**

The creation of my Typology of mid-career teachers highlights that rather than being a homogenous group as might at first be assumed, mid-career teachers are a complex, diverse, heterogenous group. Four distinct categories were identified within the mid-career range, clearly distinguished by a number of identifying characteristics across the domains of aspirations, knowledge, relationships and leadership. The rich descriptions of the four case profiles included in Chapter 4 as examplars typifying each of the four categories, demonstrate the clear link between data and interpretation.

The motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers are as diverse and complex as individual teachers themselves. This is not surprising given that my definition of this career stage, 8–15 years teaching experience, spans up to seven years. Identifying attributes in the domain of aspirations includes issues of permanency and job security, quality teaching practices, career pathways and progression, work/life balance and leadership opportunities. In the domain of knowledge factors influencing mid-career teachers’ level of motivation relate to teaching pedagogy, accreditation, professional learning for self and others, management systems and strategic thinking. Equally complex, in the domain of relationships mid-career teachers’ motivations and concerns include relationships with various stakeholders, especially collegial relationships, effective communication, interpersonal skills and respect. Finally motivations and concerns related to leadership cover a range of levels, as well as associated mentoring and support, contribute pieces to our developing image of mid-career teachers. The completed puzzle reveals a picture that verifies the diversity and interconnectedness of factors contributing to the professional motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers.

It is evident from these results that overall, mid-career teachers are driven by a wide range of motivations and a variety of push and pull factors that impact on their professional lives. Knowing this, it is argued that no one-size-fits-all leadership strategy or framework would be useful for everyone. A more differentiated approach is
both desirable and recommended to support mid-career teachers in achieving optimal outcomes for themselves, their students and the organisation. These findings also confirm my earlier research findings (Lusty 2013), which indicated that mid-career teachers maintain a high degree of motivation throughout their careers and that ‘school leaders play a pivotal role in providing an environment that supports teachers in their professional work’ (p. 101).

My *Typology of mid-career teachers* clarifies in detail what we know about the motivations and concerns of individual teachers in the mid-career phase of professional life. Its application in practice will assist mid-career teachers, school leaders and departmental senior executives to more fully understand their particular situations. The future application of the typology as synthesised in the *Mid-career leadership tool*, will provide a research-based framework that can better inform all stakeholders about the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers. The typology will more precisely inform policy development and leadership strategies to ensure that resources intended for mid-career teachers appropriately target their specific needs across all four identified groups, maximising benefits to mid-career teachers, their schools and the organisation.

**Question 2: How can educational leaders enhance the effectiveness of mid-career teachers on student outcomes?**

The motivations, concerns and related development of mid-career teachers are key outcomes of this study. Analysis of data collected, as expanded in Chapter 5, demonstrates the links between leadership and other themes embedded in the data. Illustrated in Figure 11 (p. 109), the strongest themes interconnecting with leadership besides supportive principals and executive teams are professional development opportunities, career opportunities, collegial relationships and communication. Empirical data relating to these categories form the basis of my *Framework for school leaders*, designed to guide school leaders, including members of their executive teams, to understand the four domains pivotal to the motivation of mid-career teachers in the workplace. The range of elements within each domain provide specific pointers to assist school leaders in developing knowledge specific to teachers in mid-career that they can reflect upon when making decisions. Clearly, it would be optimal to use my *Framework for school leaders* in combination with my *Typology of mid-career teachers*. 
teachers. The ability to identify which of the four typology categories represents the general characteristics of a teacher in mid-career will enable a school leader to then recognise which strategy in each of the four domains in the leadership framework are the most appropriate to consider for that teacher. To support school leaders in doing this, my Mid-career leadership tool has been developed. This practical tool, designed for implementation in professional practice, enables school leaders to identify mid-career teachers and appropriately provide differentiated strategies to support their professional growth and development.

The importance of professional development for teachers throughout their careers is widely recognised in literature, both internationally and in the Australian context (Day & Sachs 2004; Dinham, Ingvarson & Kleinhenz 2008; Eros 2011; Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis 2005; Rowe 2004; Voulalas & Sharpe 2005). It is argued that there is a positive correlation, if not a proven causal link, between professional learning and improved student outcomes (Calnin 2006). However literature relating specifically to the professional development needs of teachers in mid-career is limited. In their study of mid-career teachers in NSW public schools, Watson and Hatton (2002) reported that although mid-career teachers valued professional development, many articulated concerns about the lack of suitable opportunities available to them. Ten years later, this doctoral research has confirmed these findings. The Framework for school leaders developed enables school leaders to recognise this issue and it provides practical suggestions specific to the needs of mid-career teachers, which can be implemented to more effectively support their development.

Using my typology to differentiate mid-career teachers, school leaders are supported in directly targeting the needs of individual mid-career teachers. Non-permanent mid-career teachers are particularly vulnerable to invisibility (Zweig 2014b), often being double disadvantaged by being non-permanent as well as being excluded from many professional development opportunities afforded to permanent staff. Evidence revealed that this became an ongoing source of frustration and concern, impacting on non-permanent mid-career teachers’ wellbeing and commitment. Application of the Framework for school leaders assists school leaders and their executive teams in recognising the importance of equity in the provision of professional development opportunities to all staff. In the long-term, benefits to individual teachers’ professional
knowledge and wellbeing, which indirectly impacts on positive student outcomes (Cardno 2012), outweighs the short term cost to the organisation.

Arising from their VITAE research, Day and Gu (Day & Gu 2007) articulate the importance of the provision of professional development for teachers during different career phases of their professional lives. In their third professional life phase, 8–15 years, they identify, within their motivated teacher group, mid-career teachers with aspirations for promotion and mid-career teachers choosing to remain classroom teachers. They raise ‘the need to target their differentiated professional learning needs and help enhance their role effectiveness either as managers or classroom teachers’ (p. 436). My thesis research project mirrors these finding, in the Australian context of the NSW DoE. The Framework for school leaders provides a range of generalised suggestions that can guide school leaders in managing professional development across the four categories of mid-career teachers identified. The thoughtful provision of professional development opportunities suitably matched to individual needs will clearly benefit individual mid-career teachers. As important will be the indirect benefits to student outcomes, resulting from the improved knowledge, commitment and effectiveness of the teachers (Day & Gu 2007).

This study has clearly revealed that career opportunities are vitally important to teachers in mid-career. By this time, teachers’ preferred career pathways could have a classroom focus, an executive leadership focus or be transitioning between the two. The Framework for school leaders indicates that for school leaders to be meeting the needs of mid-career teachers, they should be facilitating opportunities for teacher satisfaction in their preferred areas of teaching, leadership or a combination of both. Again, by appropriately identifying from my typology which of the four types of mid-career teachers an individual is most similar to, school leaders can facilitate appropriately targeted career opportunities. These can range from supporting non-permanent teachers’ prospects in gaining accreditation and permanency, to providing leadership opportunities at all levels.

Collegial relationships permeate all aspects of a teacher’s work. It is a paradox to recognise that although teaching is inherently people-centred, it is known in literature that teaching can be a lonely profession, with isolation affecting teachers at all career
stages (Coolahan 2002; Daresh 2004; Farrell 2014; Gonzalez & Stallone Brown 2008; Hargreaves 2000; Meister & Ahrens 2011). It is evident from my study that positive collegial relationships, often identified by collaborative work practices, are key features of a productive working environment. Data confirmed what we intuitively recognise: collegial relationships are directly linked to a positive school culture and effective leadership practices. Connections between this triad are interdependent and complex. The development of a collaborative culture reflecting relational trust contributes to improved staff motivation, morale and commitment (Cardno 2012). In their longitudinal study of data, Hallinger & Heck (2010) have shown a link between collaborative leadership and a growth in student learning, achieved by building academic capacity in a collegial environment.

*Communication* is the final link in the chain of effective leadership. The way in which school leaders communicate provides an active link between school leaders, mid-career teachers and the students they teach. Communication is a two-way process and effective learning communities are marked by consultation, collaboration, trust and respect (Ärlestig 2008; Butler & Schnellert 2012; Guskey 2000; Mitchell & Sackney 2007; Morrell 2003; Terek et al. 2015). Day and Gu (2007) highlight the need for school leaders to understand the variations between teachers both within and across all career stages. Likewise, this research project found that understanding the variations between teachers in mid-career would enable school leaders to better understand their individual contexts, thus informing appropriate and differentiated responses across the mid-career group. Fundamental to this process of knowing, is a genuine willingness to listen to teachers individually and collectively, so that decisions made are authentically informed, inclusive and timely. This research recognises the need to implement management structures to support effective communication so that good two-way communication can be established and sustained over time. The importance of using communication as an active leadership tool cannot be understated. Research by Ärlestig (2008) demonstrates that variations in communication processes utilised by school leaders do affect school outcomes. It is important therefore, for school leaders to develop their personal communication skills and processes in a way that enhances their ability to interact in an authentic manner with individual mid-career teachers.
Through the application of my *Mid-career leadership tool*, school leaders will be prompted to ask relevant questions and initiate focussed conversations specific to each of the four defined categories of mid-career teachers. By so doing, mid-career teachers will reveal themselves. Their motivations, concerns, knowledge, aspirations and preferred career trajectories will become more visible to school leaders, enabling an in-depth picture of individual contexts to be developed. Future decision-making will then be informed by a more accurate appreciation of mid-career teachers and their particular contexts.

### 7.3 Limitations of the study

This study was bounded by time, data range, researcher capacity and organisational context. I was originally motivated to undertake this research project by a desire to contribute to improved professional practice in my own organisational context, the NSW DoE. As I was working full-time and studying part-time, the research project extended over a four year time span. Unpredictably, these years coincided with a period of unprecedented change in the educational situation in Australia nationally, with considerable repercussions for state educational organisations such as the NSW DoE.

As an insider researcher, my situational knowledge seamlessly developed in step with the organisation’s response to change. This unique position also provided me with genuine goodwill from principals, participants and other informants related to this study. The benefits of such trust and openness (Dwyer & Buckle 2009) are acknowledged, with the resultant rich data providing depth to the study. Also acknowledged however, is my role as a credible researcher. Implicit in that role is ethical authenticity and the conscious development of the skill set required to operate effectively as a research instrument (Lincoln & Guba 1985). These qualities and skills have been actively developed, practised and maintained throughout the research project.

The outcomes from this research: the *Typology of mid-career teachers*, the *Framework for school leaders* and the integrated *Mid-career leadership tool* have been generated from the rigorous collection, analysis and synthesis of data. These outcomes fulfil the original purpose of the study, which was to develop a detailed and informative image of the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers within the context of the NSW DoE workplace, in order to inform organisational practice. As a highly contextualised
study, generalisations across other large educational organisations in NSW, in particular the Catholic Education system and the the Independent schools sector, cannot be made.

The combined outcomes of this study are encapsulated in the *Mid-career leadership tool*. Transferability within the NSW DoE context may be possible where both contexts are found to be sufficiently homogeneous. Should the application of the *Mid-career leadership tool* across primary schools in the NSW DoE be successfully verified in the future, potential benefits to teachers in mid-career teachers and their organisations raises cautious optimism.

### 7.4 Recommendations for future research

There is a wide range of potential future research areas arising from my research. Replicating the methodology I used, future researchers could use the same or similar research questions in a variety of contexts including secondary schooling in the NSW DoE; primary and/or secondary schooling in other NSW education systems, such as the Catholic and Independent systems; and state government primary and secondary systems in other Australian states. Researching mid-career female teachers as a group is also an area of interest. Importantly, the apparent dichotomy between the current NSW DoE policy and the reality of current workplace practice remains to be explored.

In the context of NSW DoE secondary schooling, data revealed that 35% of NSW DoE high school teachers fell within the mid-career range in 2012. Like primary mid-career teachers, over 50% of NSW DoE high school teachers can be classed as ‘baby boomers’ and are expected to retire by 2017. Similar to primary mid-career teachers, this will result in high school mid-career teachers being fast-tracked to fill key teaching and leadership roles. It is essential for stability in the secondary schooling context that mid-career teachers be identified and supported in their development during this period of rapid acceleration.

The role gender plays in the workplace has been increasing highlighted in the contemporary political arena both internationally (Krook & O’Brien 2012) and nationally (McCann & Wilson 2014). Gender inequality in the workplace is a national problem reflected in many fields, including education. In the NSW DoE, women outnumber men in both primary and secondary settings. Despite this, as shown earlier
(Chapter 2 p. 46) there is a disproportionate under-representation of women in senior school-based leadership positions.

This inequality is acknowledged by the NSW DoE in their Workforce Diversity Plan 2012-2017 (NSW Department of Education & Communities 2012e). The target set in 2012 to redress this problem was to achieve ‘50% or higher representation of women in senior positions’ by 2017 (p. 4). Although data is not yet publically available to track progress, anecdotal reports suggest that currently many men are being fast-tracked into leadership positions as they become vacant. It is recommended that the question of how women in mid-career can be specifically supported to achieve leadership progression in the NSW DoE be investigated further.

In light of the apparent dichotomy between the current NSW DoE policy and the reality of current workplace practice, it is recommended that the link between the quality of school leadership and mid-career teacher success be further investigated. Understanding the role of school leadership in the development of workplace culture and mid-career teacher performance could provide the link to the achievement of existing policy targets.

Overall, my recommendations for future research include the replication of this study within the NSW DoE as described above for high school teachers as well as women in mid-career. To achieve greater generalisation and confidence in the wider application of the three outcomes of this research, the Typology of mid-career teachers, the Framework for school leaders and the resulting Mid-career leadership tool, replication of the study across educational systems within New South Wales as well as nationally, could be undertaken. At a time when the spotlight is on the rapid progression of mid-career teachers over the next two years, further research would provide the critical evidence needed to appropriately inform future planning strategies across state and national educational organisations.

### 7.5 Conclusion

The combination of my Typology of mid-career teachers and my Framework for school leaders extends extant literature relating to teachers in the Australian context (Dinham 1995, 2000; Dinham & Scott 1998) and across career stages (Day et al. 2007; Liu &
Ramsey 2008) by making explicit who mid-career teachers are, what their current career motivations and concerns are, and what actions and behaviours school leaders need to take to maximise their potential. The *Mid-career leadership tool* developed for NSW DoE school leaders provides a practical mechanism that enables school leaders to identify, assess and understand the unique contexts of mid-career teachers on their staff.

This research study brings to the forefront of education the unique career challenges faced by mid-career teachers. As well, the current and potential contributions of mid-career teachers in NSW DoE primary schools have been highlighted. At this point in their career, mid-career teachers are at the crossroads (Day & Gu 2010), making conscious decisions, often in combination with work/life choices, that will affect their future career trajectories. Some choose a quality teaching pathway, others choose leadership. These pathways are not mutually exclusive or immutable, with many having dual roles or transitioning between the two during this period.

Of importance is the clarity that the three outcomes of this research contribute to future practice. The *Mid-career leadership tool* illuminates the work of mid-career teachers, situating their individual circumstances within a framework based on empirical research. This tool provides school leaders with a lens that intensifies their vision of and for mid-career teachers, allowing them to recognise and value the existing work of mid-career teachers and envision their potential futures. In this way, school leaders can implement strategies that target the specific needs of mid-career teachers in a manner that will maximise their development and contribute to ongoing organisational success. This unique contribution to professional practice is timely. It has been shown that as mid-career teachers progress into the complex array of teaching and leadership roles becoming available due to the ageing workforce over the next few years, mid-career teachers will hold the key to future organisational sustainability. In the context of the NSW DoE it is clear that the future success of mid-career teachers is synonymous with the future success of the organisation for which they work.
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**APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: The naturalistic viewpoint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of approach</th>
<th>Naturalistic Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Ontological viewpoint** | • Multiple, socially constructed realities exist.  
  • Reality is linked to human thought and interpretation.  
  • Reality is ungoverned by natural laws.  
  • Truth statements are informed beliefs relevant to individuals and contexts. |
| **Epistemological viewpoint** | • Multiple realities imply multiple ‘truths’.  
  • Truth is confirmed by well-conducted fieldwork and analysis of data.  
  • Interactivity – researcher cannot be independent of context and own values.  
  • Objectivity is not possible or necessary.  
  • All theories are value-laden. |
| **Methodological viewpoint** | • Field study is fundamental, involving the use of the ‘human instrument’ in natural settings.  
  • Contaminating variables are acknowledged and minimised.  
  • Generates credible, trustworthy, context rich explanations. |

**Note:** Adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1981), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Cambourne (2003), and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007).
## Appendix 2: Descriptions of techniques used to establish trustworthiness in naturalistic studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prolonged engagement</td>
<td>Prolonged engagement is the investment of sufficient time by the researcher to learn the “culture”, to be able to assess for misinformation and to build trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistent observation</td>
<td>Persistent observation is used to identify characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the research questions, focusing on them in detail and thereby providing depth (Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer debriefing</td>
<td>Peer debriefing allows the researcher to test his or her thinking, methods and results with knowledgeable peers (Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation</td>
<td>Triangulation, used to verify interpretations of data, may involve the researcher combining multiple and different sources, research methods and theoretical schemes (Denzin 1971).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative case analysis</td>
<td>Negative case analysis uses study data to review findings in hindsight to test for instances that might contradict the findings, thereby allowing for re-formulation of the findings (Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referential adequacy</td>
<td>Referential adequacy requires putting aside a portion of data that is not used in the initial analysis. Subsequent to the data analysis on the remaining data, and the development of preliminary findings, the archived data are analysed to test the validity of the findings (Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member checking</td>
<td>Member checking involves having study participants review and provide feedback on the data, interpretations and conclusions to confirm the accuracy and intention of the data, and the credibility and validity of the study (Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposive sampling</td>
<td>Purposive sampling is sampling that is purposeful, based on the judgement of the researcher, and is based on informational considerations. It typically focuses on maximal variation to provide details of many specifics that make the context unique (Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick description</td>
<td>Thick description entails rich, detailed accounts that describe behaviours within, and context of, the study. This provides detailed information on which to base judgement about transferability of findings to other times, settings, situations and people (Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit trail</td>
<td>An audit trail is a detailed and transparent description of the steps taken throughout a research project. Halpern (Halpern, 1983, cited in Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985), developed six categories for reporting information for the purpose of an audit trail: raw data, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, materials relating to intentions and dispositions, and instrument development information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive journal</td>
<td>A diary in which the researcher records details, as required, about self, in terms of being a human instrument, and method, including methodological decisions. This process takes place throughout the study (Lincoln &amp; Guba 1985).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Appendix 3: Research approval letters

University of Wollongong Approval letter

APPRAVal LETTER - SERAP
In reply please quote: HE11/445
Further Enquiries Phone: 4221 3386

7 November 2011

Ms Ruth Lusty
13 Epacris Avenue
Caringbah NSW 2229

Dear Ms Lusty

I am pleased to advise that your application has been approved and forwarded to the Department of Education and Training for approval of your SERAP application. This is a worthwhile and well written application.

Ethics Number: HE11/445
Project Title: Career or Crisis: Motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW Department of Education and Communities primary schools

SERAP No: 2011228
Name of Researchers: Ms Ruth Lusty, A/Prof Narottam Bhindi
Approval Date: 4 November 2011
Expiry Date: 3 November 2011

The University of Wollongong/Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District Social Sciences HREC is constituted and functions in accordance with the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. The HREC has reviewed the research proposal for compliance with the National Statement and approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with this document.

A condition of approval by the HREC is the submission of a progress report annually and a final report on completion of your project. The progress report template is available at http://www.uow.edu.au/research/so/ethics/UOW009385.html. This report must be completed, signed by the appropriate Head of School, and returned to the Research Services Office prior to the expiry date.

As evidence of continuing compliance, the Human Research Ethics Committee also requires that researchers immediately report:

• proposed changes to the protocol including changes to investigators involved
• serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants
• unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

Research Services Office University of Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia
Telephone +61 2 4221 3386 Facsimile +61 2 4221 4338
research_services@uow.edu.au www.uow.edu.au/research
Please note that approvals are granted for a twelve month period. Further extension will be considered on receipt of a progress report prior to expiry date.

If you have any queries regarding the HREC review process, please contact the Ethics Unit on phone 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

A/Professor Garry Hoban  
Chair, Social Sciences  
Human Research Ethics Committee  

cc: Professor Narottam Bhindi, nbhindi@uow.edu.au
Dear Mrs Lusty

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in New South Wales government schools entitled Career or Crisis: Motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW Department of Education and Communities primary schools. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may now contact the Principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.

This approval will remain valid until 03-11-2012.

No researchers or research assistants have been screened to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research.

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in New South Wales government schools:

- School Principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the Principal for the specific method of gathering information for the school must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school’s convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the Research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please forward your report marked to Manager, Schooling Research, Department of Education and Training, Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010.

Yours sincerely

Dr Robert Stevens
R/Senior Manager
Student Engagement and Program Evaluation

2 December 2011

Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau NSW Department of Education and Communities
Level 3, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300 Telephone: 02 9244 5619– Fax: 02 9266 8233 – Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au
Appendix 4: Letter for principals

Dear <FirstName>,

My name is Ruth Lusty and I am a doctoral student at the University of Wollongong. In addition, I am an assistant Principal at Oatley Public School.

I am conducting research into the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers, defined as those teachers with between 8 to 15 years teaching experience. I am contacting you as Principal of “<School Name>” to ask for your support of my research by recommending teachers who fit the criterion of mid-career teachers to participate in this research project. I would greatly appreciate your support of my research, which is outlined on the attached information sheet.

In this research project I will be interviewing up to 12 mid-career teachers from a variety of locations in Sydney region, using semi-structured interviews. Data collected from the interviews will be thematically analysed to build a rich, descriptive picture of the working lives of mid-career teachers in NSW DEC primary schools. Each interview should take no more than one hour, for a total commitment to this research of about an hour per participant. Confidentiality will be maintained, as all interview transcripts will be de-identified prior to analysis. Volunteer teachers who participate in this research project are under no obligation and may withdraw at any time without prejudice or penalty.

I would appreciate both your recommendations and your approval to approach staff in your school who meet the criterion of being a mid-career teacher. Given the range of locations from which I am seeking participants, it is likely that I will contact no more than 1 or 2 potential participants from your school.

Please let me know by return email whether you are able to participate in this project by recommending staff to participate. If you have any further questions or comments about this research, please contact me by email on rel682@uowmail.edu.au or by telephone on

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Lusty
rel682@uowmail.edu.au

1 SERAP Number 2011228 / UOW Ethics Number HE11/445
Appendix 5: Information letter

Background Information related to the Research Topic:

Career Crossroads: Motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW Department of Education and Communities primary schools

Researcher: Ruth Lusty – Doctoral student
Supervisors: Associate Professor Narottam Bhindi
           Dr Brian Cambourne

I am currently undertaking a Doctor of Education (EdD) at the University of Wollongong in the field of Educational Leadership. The underlying aim for a professional doctorate, such as the EdD, is to extend the development of professional practice by making a contribution to professional knowledge through research. My research aims to investigate the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW Department of Education and Communities (NSW DEC) primary schools and to develop the concept of mid-career teachers as a professional group. This should provide a basis for the development of recommendations related to their support in the workplace and will help fill the gap in knowledge about the working lives of mid-career teachers in Australia.

Literature related to the motivations and concerns of workers is broad and cross-disciplinary, as is the literature related to the concept of mid-career workers. However, literature related to the nexus of the two, the motivations and concerns of mid-career professionals, specifically mid-career teachers, is minimal. The concept of mid-career is not new and can be found in vocational, business and psychology journals, although it is less frequently referred to in the education sector. Mid-career teachers are crucial for ensuring the sustainability of the teaching profession. Evidence shows that in Australia teaching is an aging profession (DEST 2003) and although primary teachers have been teaching for an average of 17 years, approximately 9% have been teaching more than 30 years (McKenzie, Kos, Walker and Hong 2008). In Australia, mid-career teachers can therefore be conceptualised as teachers who have been teaching for approximately 8 – 15 years. It is estimated that many of these mid-career teachers will continue to teach in NSW DEC primary schools for a further 15 to 20 years until retirement. It is therefore essential for the motivations and concerns of this group to be explored and that strategies to meet their specific professional needs be addressed. Changes in teacher demographics, notably the impending retirement of many veteran teachers in the near future, highlight the urgency with which the needs of mid-career teachers must now be addressed.

My current research will help fill the gap in knowledge about the working lives of mid-career primary school teachers in an Australian context. This study aims to build a rich descriptive picture of the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DEC primary schools. Information gained from this research should provide a better understanding of how to support experienced, mid-career teachers which should result in improved organisational effectiveness, particularly in relation to the core business of schools – improved student outcomes. An investment in the professional growth of mid-career teachers is an investment in future sustainability and success.

Ruth Lusty
Contact Details:
Ruth Lusty
rel682@uowmail.edu.au

Narottam Bhindi
02 4221 5477 (W)
nbhindi@uow.edu.au

Brian Cambourne
bcambrn@uow.edu.au

SERAP Number 2011228
University of Wollongong Ethics Number HE11/445
Appendix 6: Letter for potential participants

Dear <FirstName>,

My name is Ruth Lusty and I am a doctoral student at the University of Wollongong. In addition, I am an Assistant Principal at Oatley Public School.

I am conducting research into the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers, defined as those teachers with between 8 to 15 years teaching experience. You have been referred to me by your principal as a mid-career teacher, who would be capable of contributing to my research study. I would appreciate your assistance with my current research project.

In this research project I will be interviewing up to 12 mid-career teachers from a variety of NSW DEC locations in the Sydney Region, using semi-structured interviews. Data collected from the interviews will be thematically analysed to build a rich, descriptive picture of the working lives of mid-career teachers in NSW DEC primary schools. Each interview should take no more than one hour, for a total commitment to this research of about an hour per participant. Interviews will be conducted at a mutually agreed time and place.

I am contacting you to seek your participation in this research activity. You are under no obligation to participate in this research, and you may withdraw at any time without prejudice or penalty.

Confidentiality will be maintained, as all interview transcripts will be de-identified prior to analysis. While I will know that you are participating in the interviews, I will not reveal your identity to the others, nor will you be identified in any resulting reports or my thesis.

If you are interested in participating, I would be glad if you would contact me on rel682@uowmail.edu.au

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Lusty
rel682@uowmail.edu.au

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1 SERAP Number 2011228 / UOW Ethics Number HE11/445
Appendix 7: Interview guide

Semi-structured Interview Questions related to the Research Topic:

_Career or Crisis: Motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW_  
_Department of Education and Communities primary schools_

**Researcher:** Ruth Lusty – Doctoral student

**Supervisors:** Associate Professor Narottam Bhindi  
Dr Brian Cambourne

**Semi-structured interview questions**

**Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today, and for completing the consent and participant background information forms. As I explained in my email, I’m doing research into the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DEC primary schools. I’m particularly interested in hearing the views of mid-career teachers themselves, relating what their personal and professional motivations and concerns, and the interplay between the two, in their own particular contexts.

This interview will be digitally recorded and I will transcribe the recording. I’d also like to remind you that you are free to withdraw your participation in this research at any time, without adverse consequences to you.

**Before we start, do you have any questions for me?**

**Introduction**

I’ll start with details of the interview record, and then I’d like to ask you some background questions about you and your work.
Interview record

For the record, this is an interview between Ruth Lusty and <interviewee> on <date> at <interview location>

Background

• How did you first get into working in primary teaching?
  o Could you tell me something more about that?
• What keeps you here? (in primary teaching)

Behaviours

As I am researching both your professional and personal motivations and concerns, can you please briefly describe:

• What does your role mainly entail on a day-to-day basis?
• Describe a typical day for you at work. (If I were a fly-on-the-wall, what would I see or hear in your workplace?)
  o Can you give a more detailed description of this?
• Describe a typical day for you at home.
  o Could you tell me something more about that?

Opinions/values

• What do you think helps you to get your job done?
  o In your interactions with other staff?
  o In your interactions with students?
  o In your interactions with parents?
• What do you think makes your work challenging?
  o Can you elaborate on that?
  o Do you have further examples of this?
• How do you think staff in your school support each other?
  o How effective do you think this is?
• How do you think your supervisor or principal supports staff in your school?
  o How effective do you think this is?
  o Can you give me an example?
• What opportunities do you have in your career?
  o Can you elaborate on that?
• What do you think are the pressures on you?
  o Can you explain that further?
• How do you think teachers are viewed by the wider community? As a profession?
  o Can you explain that further?

Feelings

• How do you feel about your teaching?
  o What do you enjoy most about teaching?
  o What makes you feel worst about teaching?
• How do you feel when you have a success with a student?
  o Can you give me a specific example of this?
• How do you feel if you’re not able to help a student as effectively as you would like?
  o Have you experienced this? Can you give me a specific example?
• How do you feel about how other teachers deal with students?
• How do you feel you manage your work and your home life?

Knowledge

• What teacher professional development opportunities do you know of?
  o Can you elaborate on that?
  o What PD have you accessed in the last year or so?
• What accreditation processes do you know about?
  o Can you elaborate on that?

Sensory

• Tell me about a time you’ve seen another teacher handle a difficult situation.
  o What was the situation?
  o What did the teacher do?
  o What were the circumstances?
  o What was the outcome?
• Tell me about a time you’ve seen another teacher have a successful outcome.
  o What was the situation?
  o What did the teacher do?
  o What were the circumstances?
  o What was the outcome?

Wind down

To wrap up, I’d like to ask you some general questions:

• What are your aspirations? Where do you see your career taking you?
• What is the thing you find most difficult about your work?
• And finally, to end on a positive note, what is the thing you enjoy most about your job?

Wrap up

Thank you again for your time and thoughts today. It’s been really interesting hearing your thoughts about your work as a teacher.

As you’ve seen, this interview has been digitally recorded. The next step is for me to transcribe the recording. Once I’ve completed the transcription, I’ll let you know. I’d like to provide you with a copy so that you can review the transcript. How would you like me to send that to you? By email or hardcopy? To what address?

If you have any comments or questions at that time about the interview or the transcript, I’d appreciate your feedback.

And, of course, please remember that you are free to withdraw your participation in this research at any time, without adverse consequences to you. Just let me know.

And finally, before we finish, do you have any questions for me?

Thank you.
Appendix 8: Participant information form

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### University of Wollongong

**Faculty of Education**

**Career Crossroads: Motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DEC primary schools.**

As one of the mid-career teachers willing to participate in this research study, it would be helpful to understand your background and experience in primary education.

Please complete the survey below and return it by email to rel682@uowmail.edu.au

1. What is your gender? (tick one)  
   - male  
   - female

2. What is your age? (tick one)  
   - under 30  
   - 31-40  
   - 41-50  
   - 51-60  
   - 61 and over

3. How long have you worked as a teacher? __________ (years)

4. How long have you worked for the NSW DEC? __________ (years)

5. Have you worked for other educational providers? (tick one)  
   - yes  
   - no

6a. If yes, how many others? ________

6b. For how long in total at other educational providers? ________ (years)

7. What is your current position? _______________  
   If other, please specify: ____________________  
   (e.g. Principal, DP, AP, classroom teacher, other)

8. Is your current position full-time or part-time? (tick one)  
   - full-time  
   - part-time

9. If part-time, for how many days per week? __________

10. What tertiary education qualifications do you hold? (tick as many as apply)

   - Teacher’s College Diploma
   - University Bachelor’s degree
   - Postgraduate certificate
   - Postgraduate diploma
   - Coursework Master’s degree
   - Research Master’s degree
   - Doctoral degree
   - Other (please specify) __________________________

11. Currently studying (please specify) __________________________

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on the email address shown below. When complete, please return this survey by email.

Thank you for your assistance!

Ruth Lusty  
rel682@uowmail.edu.au

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SERAP Number 2011228 / UOW Ethics Number HE11/445
Appendix 9: Coding verification

The result of the coding verification activity undertaken by a post-doctoral researcher indicates a strong degree of trustworthiness in the researcher’s coding processes. The following graph demonstrates significant agreement in both the use of individual codes and in the frequency of their use.

The result shows that 90% of the codes — applied and not applied — were common in both cases, 50% of the codes were used with the same frequency by both researchers, while the frequency of a further 25% was within one instance.
Appendix 10: Coding manual excerpt: Collegial relationships

Category:

Collegial relationships

Subcategories:

Collegial relationships – Positive

Collegial relationships – Negative

Brief Definition: The relationship between work colleagues.

Detailed definition: In the context of this study, collegial relationships refers to the professional working relationships participants develop with colleagues in their workplace. Collegial relationships are characterised by trust, respect and a commitment to working towards a common purpose.

Mapping Criteria: Positive: when a participant refers to staff supporting each other; or refers to a staff sharing programs and resources; or refers to respecting each other’s opinions.

Negative: when a participant refers to other staff members taking or “stealing” programs or resources without asking; or refers to a lack of support from colleagues.

Examples from data:

P3: We do collaborate a lot during the day, in that we are very supportive network of staff. If someone’s having difficulty with a child, often people offer to help out in some way. Either by spending time with that child; taking them out of the classroom, or just — everyone is always offering assistance when we need it.

P9: I think a big factor is relationships with other staff that you work with. In the time that I’ve been at [this school], which is about six years, there’s been a huge shift in terms of staff that are employed at the school. We’ve had a high retirement level. A number of staff came up for retirement and the replacements for those have been younger staff — I guess as a mid-career teacher I don’t know if I can classify myself in that anymore — who get on very well on a friendship level. I think that helps you to
motivate you. You do things because you like people, not necessarily because you have to do this. I think if people encourage each other and help each other along, it keeps you enjoying it.

P9: I’m fortunate that Stage One is a very team-based group where people do share what they’re doing and work together and decisions get made and things happen.

P7: I learnt that working with people is better than enforcing your ideas on them. So they became my barometers. If I threw an idea up and they thought no, this is not the right way or no, it’s going to — they were able to let me know wrong way, wrong decision and I never took that to heart... It was just a matter of okay, they’ve got the knowledge and I’m here trying to make their job easier and that became mutual respect and to that trust.

P13: The staff is really good too. There are really good staff members and we share things. We share programs. I know some people don’t.

P1: Everyone shares resources to the point where, especially this year, people are typing out their programs and then e-mailing them to everyone in the stage. So we’re just basically sharing programs and if we photocopy a really good resource we’ll photocopy it five times and put it in each other's pigeonholes. That makes a massive difference.

P14: She used to come into my room of a morning and take things out of my program because I still leave my program on my desk. I’d open up the program and I think, oh, that’s missing. Usually I’m pretty good at putting things back where they go. Next thing you know, she came and said to me one morning and said, I hope you don’t mind, I’ve gone in and taken out the Sidney Nolan Ned Kelly artwork that you had in the back of your program. So there were little things like that where to me that’s not fair. I’m willing to share my program that’s not a problem, but when you go in and just take it. I don’t think that’s right. That’s like stealing. I just used to think that’s not on. So then I used to hide my program and lock it up and all that sort of thing. That used to really upset me because I sit up at night working, trying to get my program and you just go in and do that. I don’t think that’s right.
Appendix 11: Participant consent form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Career Crossroads: Motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW Department of Education and Communities primary schools.

Researcher: Ruth Lusty – Doctoral student
Supervisors: Associate Professor Narottam Bhindi
Dr Brain Cambourne

I understand that the purpose of this study is to identify the motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DET primary schools.

I understand that my participation in this research will involve completing a background information survey and possibly participating in an interview with the researcher at a time and location to suit my convenience, and which will take up to one hour.

I have had opportunity to ask Ruth Lusty and/or Dr Narottam Bhindi any questions I may have about the research and my participation. I am aware that I can contact Ruth Lusty (02 4221 5477) or her supervisor Dr Narottam Bhindi if I have any concerns about the research.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary. I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my relationship with the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong or the NSW Department of Education and Communities.

If I have any questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the research is or has been conducted I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong on 02 42214457.

I agree that Ruth Lusty has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way.

I understand that the data will be stored securely and then destroyed 5 years from publication of the research, as is required by the AVCC Guidelines.

By signing below I am indicating my consent to participate in the research project as it has been described to me. I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used to describe and disseminate information related to motivations and concerns of mid-career teachers in NSW DEC primary schools.

________________________________________  ____/____/____
Signature (participant)

________________________________________  ____/____/____
Signature (researcher or delegate)

Ruth Lusty (ruth82@uowmail.edu.au) - SERAP Number 2011228 / UOW HE11/445