

**Doctor in Education (EdD)**

**UCL Institute of Education**

**Mapping Professional Identities of Dance Teachers across Time,  
Space and Practice: towards a model of professional  
identity formation.**

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I, Michelle Marie Groves, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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## Reflective Statement

### **Personal and professional motivations for undertaking the EdD programme**

In reflecting on why I decided to undertake EdD studies, I am reminded of two events which I experienced in 2010. The first of these events was attendance at a conference held by Youth Dance England (YDE), *A Shared Vision for the Future*, which coincided with publication of *The Dance Review. A Report to Government on Dance Education and Youth Dance in England* (Hall, 2007). As *The Dance Review* outlined a ten year vision for developing dance for young people in and beyond schools, one of the aims of the YDE conference was to bring together an array of dance professionals to discuss how the ten year vision might be delivered.

In one of the conference sessions, dance teachers who taught a range of dance *genres* across a range of dance contexts met to consider how they might contribute to bringing the ten year vision into actualisation. Rather than a positive discussion, what emanated from the meeting was, to put it bluntly, a 'handbags at dawn' moment where different groups of dance teachers accused other groups of dance teachers of 'stealing business' from their dance schools, or being so 'elitist' that they were doing more harm than good in championing the profile of dance education and teaching. Naively I had always thought of dance teachers as being a relatively homogenous community of practitioners. This experience of warring dance teachers led me to become curious as to how dance teachers perceived themselves as dance teachers, and how they saw themselves as being 'the same' as well as 'different' from other dance teachers.

The second event which motivated me to undertake EdD studies was an annual appraisal with the then Director of Education at the Royal Academy of Dance. During the appraisal, I was encouraged to think about how I might be able to contribute to raising the status of dance teaching. At that point in time, little research had been undertaken in relation to dance teacher education within a UK context. Despite many Higher Education Institutions (HEI) having dance departments, research from these departments tended to focus on dance as an art form rather than dance as education. As I saw myself as a dance teacher *educator* as opposed

to a *dance* teacher educator, I felt more connected to dance as situated within the wider field of education as opposed to dance positioned as an arts discipline. This being the case, I was drawn to undertaking studies through a HEI which had a strong multi-disciplinary education focus in order to explore dance teacher education from a broader base of education. Moreover, I was motivated to seek ways in which I could contribute to raising awareness and the status of dance teaching to a wider audience by enhancing my professional standing with a more academic profile. Thus, I commenced my EdD studies in 2011.

### **Connecting my EdD journey**

While my practices as a dance teacher educator have been routinely informed by an intrinsic interest in philosophical (for example, Carr, 2003; Peters, 1973), sociological (for example, Apple, 2004/1979; Dewey, 2018/1900) and theoretical aspects of education and teacher education (for example, Moore, 2010; Bruner 1960), I had always considered myself to be more of a practitioner as opposed to a researcher or, more precisely, a practitioner-researcher. However, I had found myself having to re-examine my professional identity against comments from some dance teachers and academics within my professional network; the former who thought of me as being 'so academic', whilst the latter often describing me as 'just a dance teacher'. Through undertaking the EdD programme, I began to reconstruct my professional identity from a dance teacher practitioner to a dance teacher research-practitioner which consolidated my belief in the importance of dance teacher education being informed through research rather than dance teacher education being a product of experiential knowledge alone.

The taught modules of the EdD programme provided me with a sound basis on which to develop as a researcher-practitioner. In *Foundations of Professionalism*, I was re-introduced to a topic which I had studied as part of the MA in Higher and Professional Education (IoE, 2006-2008). I have always been interested in how concepts of professionalism and professionalization were played out in the 'real' world and, in particular, how aspects of these concepts were manipulated to inform discourses on what it was to be 'a professional'. In relation to dance, I had often pondered why those operating within the field of dance referred to 'professional

dancers' (to differentiate individuals who have/had paid careers as dancers from individuals who dance for recreational/social purposes) but not 'professional dance teachers', a differentiation which is equally valid. As a result of *Foundations of Professionalism*, I have included aspects of professionalism into some of the lectures I deliver to trainee dance teachers, and in CPD sessions delivered to established teachers, as a means for instigating a more reflexive interrogation of what it means to be a dance teacher.

Having achieved a BSc (Hons) in Psychology, *Methods of Enquiry 1 and 2* (MOE1/MOE2) prompted me to re-think my knowledge and understanding of research methods and the application of those methods in undertaking small-scale research projects. While I felt I was relatively familiar with principles of research methodologies and designs, I had not applied these principles to educational settings. Thus, through undertaking MOE1 and MOE2, I became more attuned to using research methods and designs within the context of education.

The thread between MOE1, MOE2, the Institution Focused Study (IFS) and this final thesis is the exploration of how dance teachers, collectively as well as individually, perceive their roles, responsibilities and professional identities as dance teachers. While EdD students were informed that the focus of each of these modules could be discrete, I decided to keep with the theme of dance teacher identity in MOE1, MOE2 and the IFS as I felt that the products of these modules would provide a more holistic foundation for the final thesis.

Drawing on MOE1, where I devised a small-scale research project to explore some of the realities and representations which shape perceptions of 'good teaching', in MOE2 I investigated how professional identities of dance teachers in secondary schools changed over time by interviewing a newly qualified dance teacher, a dance teacher with five years' experience and a dance teacher with more than 10 years' experience. One of the outcomes of this investigation was the potential impact of time in shaping values, beliefs, attitudes and practices in relation to professional identity formation.

For the IFS, I investigated how ballet teachers (N=8) perceived themselves as being the 'same as' as well as being 'different' to other ballet teachers (and inevitably to dance teachers of other dance *genres*) by exploring their practices and the influence of different contexts (spaces) in which they taught. An outcome of this investigation was the identification of factors which impact a sense of belonging to a particular group of practitioners (for example, shared normative expectations in the learning and teaching of ballet) juxtaposed against a sense of uniqueness and individuality, all of which informed their professional identities.

Lines of enquiry from these three research projects provided the basis of this thesis which explores in greater depth professional identity formation of dance teachers across time (MOE2), space and practice (MOE1, MOE2, IFS). To capture the diversity of dance teachers as a community of practitioners, the final thesis was extended to include 12 dance teachers who taught a range of dance *genres* (ballet, contemporary, tap dance, musical theatre and inclusive dance) across private, public and community contexts. From the outset I was conscious of how the outcomes of the investigation might contribute to the education and training of dance teachers regardless of the dance *genre* taught or the learning and teaching context. In my belief that dance teachers benefit in a multiplicity of ways through engaging in discursive dialogue with other dance professionals, I devised a model of professional identities as a tool to support such dialogues, but more specifically as a means for dance teachers to develop greater knowledge and understanding of the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of their professional identities. This model of professional identities of dance teachers is, therefore, my contribution to the dance teaching profession.

### **Contribution of EdD studies on my personal and professional development**

Undertaking the EdD has contributed to my personal and professional development in a number of ways. I have realised that I have only been able to scratch the surface of investigating professional identity formation, a subject area which continues to hold my interest. Looking forward, I am encouraged to seek out opportunities to collaborate with others who are involved in professional education and training contexts outside that of dance to explore the influences and impact of

professional identities from interdisciplinary perspectives. In doing so, I believe that a more eclectic understanding of professional identity formation in professional education and training contexts would be possible which, in turn, could inform the education and training of professional education teachers.

From a more practical perspective, I feel that the criticality of my thinking has become more refined as a result of implementing formative and summative feedback received on EdD submissions, as well as engaging in tutorial discussions with tutors and supervisors. I have become more aware of the need to be more explicit in the articulation of my intrinsic knowledge and understanding of dance and dance education and training to audiences unfamiliar with these areas. This requirement has developed a more attuned approach in how I prepare and present conference papers and presentations to dance professionals as well as other education professionals. I now feel more confident in presenting the outcomes of my EdD research to a broader audience.

A personal achievement (which might also be conceived as a professional achievement) is the development of my time management skills in terms of writing to deadlines rather than spending endless hours 'incubating' ideas with no tangible outcomes. This development has served me well in my 'day job' which increasingly involves writing reports and position papers for a range of stakeholders.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of my engagement with the EdD programme, is my sense of being better informed in my quest of becoming an advocate of dance teaching and for dance teachers. As mentioned, very little has been written about dance teacher education and training. To address this oversight, I would hope to disseminate the outcomes of my EdD studies through presenting at conferences and submitting articles to peer-reviewed journals such as *Research in Dance Education*, *Journal of Dance Education* and *Journal of Teacher Education*. In addition, I would be interested in bringing together individuals who are researching dance teacher education to form a special interest group with a view to producing a publication similar to *Professional Knowledge in Music Teacher Education* (Georgii-Hemming et

*al.*, 2016). Such a publication would, I believe, serve as a useful research in the education and training of current and future generations of dance teachers.

## Abstract

This investigation explores ways in which dance teachers perceive and articulate their professional identities. The product of this exploration is a model of professional identities of dance teachers which will serve as a framework through which dance teachers and educators of dance teachers can engage in discursive dialogues about what it means to be a dance teacher. To date, no such model is in existence. This investigation proposes that such a model would support initial and on-going professional development, with a view of empowering dance teachers to operate in increasingly diverse dance teaching landscapes.

In adopting an interpretive stance, 12 dance teachers from three different dance contexts across six different dance *genres* were interviewed. Semi-structured interview questions were framed by aspects of time, space and practice as a means of identifying different trajectories of professional identity formation. Analysis of the interviews resulted in the identification of four dance teacher professional identity types: Passive Idealist, Passive Materialist, Active Idealist and Active Materialist. The combination of different professional identity types enabled professional identity profiles for each participant to be created.

The investigation concludes that the model of professional identities of dance teachers emanating from this investigation may also be useful for others wishing to explore and/or research professional identity formation in other fields of professional training/education.

## Impact Statement

It is envisaged that research outcomes of this thesis will provide an additional perspective to current thinking surrounding professional identity formation through the identification of factors which may be influential in how professional practitioners perceive, manage and negotiate their professional identities. In bringing these factors together, a model of professional identities of dance teachers has been created. In addition to providing a tool for dance teachers and dance teacher educators to engage in discursive dialogue as to what it means to be a dance teacher, it is proposed that the model could also provide a starting point for those involved in other professional education and training contexts in exploring the influence of professional identity formation on individuals and communities of practitioners within their areas of practice.

An issue identified in this thesis is the reluctance of dance teachers to articulate openly barriers to their practices as dance teachers, and acknowledging the impact of these barriers to on-going professional development and career opportunities. It is proposed that dance teachers and the educators of dance teachers would benefit from a tool which would support the exploration of factors which impact professional identity formation and, in turn, on one's practices as a dance teacher. To date, no such tool is in existence. In devising a model which supports the exploration of professional identity formation, dance teachers and educators of dance teachers would have access to a framework which supports discursive dialogues which could inform individual needs analysis in initial training, annual appraisals, and continuing professional development of established dance teachers. While the model of professional identity formation presented in this thesis relates specifically to dance teachers, the principles underpinning the model could be reconfigured to meet the specificity of different professional practice contexts.

From a methodological perspective, outcomes of this investigation provide additional insight into how professional identities can be seen to be fluid rather than set, and the potential for individuals to be active in determining professional identity formation as opposed to the primacy of structures which shape fields of practice. Unlike other

models which characterise learning or personality 'types', the model of professional identities of dance teachers identifies convergences as well as divergences between individuals identified as demonstrating characteristics of a particular professional identity type. Such 'in type' differentiation is seen as a key contribution to a more nuanced understanding of professional identities.

To disseminate the potential impact of the outcomes of this thesis, it is proposed that elements of the investigation could be worked into articles for peer-reviewed journals and for presentations at dance and/or education conferences. Feedback from these mediums would provide opportunities for further development of the model of professional identities of dance teachers as well as adaptations of the model to meet requirements of other professional education and training contexts. In addition, implementation of the model of professional identities of dance teachers could be shared with professional dance organisations with a view of the model being incorporated into dance teacher education.

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## **Chapter 1: Perceptions and Negotiations of Professional Identity: challenges and opportunities encountered by dance teachers**

### **1. Setting the scene**

The investigation which follows is close to my personal and professional being. I have been involved in dance in one way or another for over fifty years, first as a child who took dance classes as a recreational pursuit, followed by professional training in ballet, a professional career as a dancer and, for many years, an educator of dance teachers. Memories of my early dance training recall how dance teachers seemed very different to my regular school teachers. Dance teachers revealed *personae* which both fascinated and intrigued me. Their knowledge and understanding of dance as an art form set alight my imagination, which was extended further by their teaching of dance, which was as much an education as it was about training. Moreover, I felt privileged to be part of a dance community where legacies of an art form were passed on from one generation to the next, linking the present with the past. The influence of these dance teachers on my personal development was not limited to providing an exacting dance training; my dance teachers shaped core personal characteristics such as resilience, tenacity and an intrinsic curiosity, all of which have had a bearing on the development of my professional identity as a dance educator.

As a dance student, I viewed dance teachers as having total control over everything they encountered. It was not until I myself began to teach dance that it became apparent that it was usual, but not always evident, for dance teachers to respond to new experiences and circumstances which challenged their thinking and practices with varying degrees of uncertainty. Such uncertainties were often fuelled by anxieties over their professional standing and expertise as dance teachers being questioned and open to judgement. Rather than openly articulating these feelings of uncertainty to others within the dance teaching community, it appeared that dance teachers preferred to keep these thoughts private and for internal contemplation.

I believe that one reason for dance teachers being reluctant to make their internal voices 'heard' is the absence of a dialogical framework or 'roadmap' which identified the processes through which professional identities of dance teachers are formed –

a framework through which inner thoughts and actual experiences can be reflected upon, understood, communicated and acted upon. As an educator of dance teachers, I believe that such discursive engagement would help establish an informed understanding of how professional identities of dance teachers are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed which, in turn, would support dance teachers who find themselves working in an increasingly complex landscape of dance teaching. My interest in researching how dance teachers perceive, articulate and negotiate their professional identities is, therefore, rooted in a desire to devise a model of professional identity formation through which dance teachers can begin to understand their professional identities as dance teachers, alongside developing the skills and abilities to engage effectively with transitions across multiple teaching contexts and different dance *genres*. If such a framework had been in existence when I began my career as a dance teacher, I believe it would have served as a useful tool in understanding and negotiating some of the more challenging experiences I encountered.

## **2. Negotiating my professional identity as a practitioner-researcher**

During the 1980s, I made the transition from professional dancer to dance teacher. My early ventures into dance teaching were quite conservative, in as much as I taught ballet and contemporary dance within vocational and private dance schools. In the eyes of the dance teaching profession I was seen as a 'ballet teacher' who could teach contemporary dance if required. Over time, I was offered opportunities to teach dance in a wider range of contexts. One example of this migration into new contexts occurred in the early 1980s when I was asked to teach a series of dance workshops at an all-boys comprehensive school in Newham, East London. I accepted the offer with some trepidation. I had never taught dance to a group of students who had not come to dance classes of their own volition, let alone teach a class of 20 or more male students. After my first class, it became obvious that I would not only need to adapt my teaching for a different type of learner, but that I would also need to diversify the type of dance I taught. Ballet for boys in the 1980s was not 'the done thing', and certainly not for young men of Newham. Thus, I began to explore different types of dance which were not in my immediate *repertoire*, so that what I was teaching to the boys had a greater connection to their own

expectations and experiences of what it was to dance. While at first I did not feel entirely comfortable teaching a dance *genre* (in this case, a form of Northern Soul) outside the codified dance techniques of ballet and contemporary dance with which I was most familiar, over time I began to see how my skill set as a ballet teacher was, in fact, quite expansive. By reflecting on my knowledge and understanding of the principles of dance and dance teaching more broadly, I became more confident in my ability to move out of my comfort zone in order to deliver a wider range of dance *genres* to a wider range of students. Through this newly discovered confidence, I was on the way of transiting from a 'ballet teacher' to a 'dance teacher'.

Throughout the transition from ballet teacher to dance teacher, I found myself in a place full of contradiction. On the one hand I was confident that I had the skills to teach a range of dance *genres* in a stimulating and meaningful manner; on the other hand, being thrust into environments never before experienced meant that I began questioning what I needed to do to make that transition successful. There were no direct answers to my inner contemplations, no textbooks which would guide me through the journey, and few dance teachers whom had experienced similar transitions to consult. In short, I was left to my own devices to engage with a range of thoughts which challenged long-held views, values and beliefs as to what it was to be a dance teacher. Moreover, while the concept of professional identity was not at the forefront of my thinking, I was becoming increasingly aware that my identity as a dance teacher was far from fixed.

With over thirty five years' experience as a dance teacher teaching across a range of dance *genres* and contexts, I now find myself as Director of Education and Training at the Royal Academy of Dance. A key aspect of my work involves working with dance teachers who are in training, and the continued professional development of established dance teachers. Over time, I have noted an increasing undercurrent of uncertainty as dance teachers contemplate 'crossing borders' and entering into 'the unknown'; a reminder of the position I found myself in the 1980s. Over the last decade or so, opportunities to diversify as a dance teacher are much more evident and, it could be argued, much more essential if one is to have a long-lasting career. While some current day dance teachers view opportunities to explore new territories as a pathway to new possibilities, for others it can be experienced as a state of

disorientation – dance teaching practices which were routine become challenged, and new ‘alien’ dance teaching approaches begin to emerge. In tandem with perceptions of opportunity or risk, I have observed a shift in how both trainee and established dance teachers perceive themselves as dance teachers and, in turn, develop not one but several professional identities. While some dance teachers continue to see their roles as trainers of dance techniques, more recent comers to the profession embrace ideals of dance as a holistic education of the whole being; an education of the physical, social and emotional aspects of what it is to be human. These differing ideals challenge the notion of what it is to be a dance teacher.

One of my roles as a dance educator is to understand, and help others to understand, some of the uncertainties which dance teachers may encounter in an increasingly diverse dance teaching landscape, and to guide them towards possible resolutions. In a sense, through my engagement in the training and education of dance teachers, I am also negotiating my own professional identity as I mediate the problems and opportunities of others with my own experiences. This investigation, therefore, draws on my personal investment as a dance educator and as a means for challenging my own values, beliefs and attitudes as to what it is to be a dance teacher. In doing so, I hope that I will be better positioned to make a meaningful contribution to the dance teaching profession.

### **3. Dance teacher education and training**

#### *3.1 Transitions in dance teaching*

Dance teacher education and transitions into dance teaching are informed by numerous factors, for example, an individual’s dance training and/or performance experience, the dance *genre* taught, or the context within which dance teaching takes place. Traditionally, transitions into the teaching of western theatre-based dance *genres*, such as ballet, tap and modern jazz, followed a ‘mentor/mentee’ route, whereby dance students or professional dancers commenced their teaching careers by assisting established dance. Learning about the *how* and *what* of teaching a particular dance *genre* was developed ‘on the job’, with mentees modelling their practices on those of their mentors. Over time, mentees would take on more responsibilities until a point when they would replace mentors, start their own dance school business, or establish themselves as freelance dance teachers.

In response to concerns that the mentor/mentee route did not always produce high quality dance teachers, professional membership bodies such as the Royal Academy of Dance and Imperial Society of Teachers of Dance established dance teaching qualifications in order to assess and maintain standards of dance teaching in private contexts. While teaching dance in private dance contexts is not regulated by government bodies, nor is it mandatory for dance teachers in private contexts to hold dance teaching qualifications, the majority of dance teachers operating in private dance contexts will have completed specialised programmes of study leading to dance teaching qualifications.

For dance teaching in public contexts, such as secondary schools and Further Education (FE) colleges, the typical route for dance teachers is through completing an undergraduate dance degree followed by a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) specialising in dance. It is, however, possible for dance teachers in FE to have followed pathways into dance teaching through a mentor/mentee model.

Dance teachers in higher education will typically be dance degree graduates who have been practitioners (for example, dancers or choreographers), or have made the transition into higher education from teaching dance in other contexts. As well as teaching dance techniques, higher education dance teachers may also teach other practice-based modules such as choreography.

Compared to dance teachers in private and public contexts, the trajectory for becoming a contemporary or street dance teacher is generally less formal. Practitioners of contemporary dance will have received training for a (potential) performance career by taking dance classes in contemporary dance. For street dance practitioners, training for a performance career can be through taking street dance classes offered in private, public or community contexts, or by self-directed development of their performance practice. Becoming a dance teacher of contemporary or street dance *genres* is more often than not a result of being invited by dance schools, colleges, further/higher education institutions or dance groups to teach dance technique classes to students. Over time, contemporary and street dance practitioners begin to build freelance teaching profiles whilst maintaining their

performance and choreography work. When performance careers come to an end, some contemporary and street dance practitioners will focus solely on teaching dance without having undertaken any formal dance teacher education or qualifications.

There are several routes leading to teaching dance in community contexts. Some community dance teachers will have followed the mentor/mentee route, whilst others will have followed the self-directed path of contemporary and street dance teachers. Dance teachers in private and public contexts may take their teaching practices into community settings. Within the UK, there are a number of degree and professional programmes which focus on community dance practice. These programmes will generally include teaching practice modules and projects.

#### **4. Problematising the unproblematic: a readiness (or not) to embrace the ‘new’**

##### *4.1 The teaching of different dance genres*

Just as the spaces where dance classes take place can vary, so can the teaching of different dance *genres* differ. For teachers of western theatre-based dance *genres*, approaches to teaching generally replicate formats which have been established over time. A ballet class will usually consist of exercises at the *barre* followed by exercises performed in the centre of a dance studio. Similarly, contemporary dance, modern, jazz and tap dance classes will commence with preparatory exercises, gradually building towards more complex movement sequences.

The teaching of western theatre-based dance *genres* is commonly teacher-led, with dance teachers devising and demonstrating exercises to students who will then perform what has been demonstrated. For street dance *genres*, the structure and content of learning and teaching is often less prescribed. While a street dance teacher will orchestrate the sequencing of exercises in much the same way as teachers of western theatre-based dance *genres*, there can be a more collaborative ‘feel’ to the classes, with students often giving suggestions to a teacher in terms of the content of movement sequences, or which movement sequences should be next performed. This being the case, a street dance teacher may be seen to be a

facilitator of dance technique, taking into account suggestions given by students, as opposed to western theatre-based dance *genre* teachers who might be viewed as trainers of dance technique.

When teaching dance in community contexts, approaches to learning and teaching may be viewed as being more explicitly guided by the type of students being taught, and the aims and/or anticipated outcomes of the classes. As such, community dance teachers may alternate between being facilitators of dance technique and trainers of dance technique. For example, a dance teacher teaching contemporary dance in youth club settings, where students participate in dance classes as part of a wide programme of activities, may decide to follow the normative structure and content of contemporary dance classes, but simplify exercises and movement sequences to meet the physical facilities of students. A dance teacher teaching ballet to older learners, as part of a community-based initiative, may adopt a more facilitative teaching role as a result of the different ways through which older learners learn.

#### *4.2 A willingness to adapt?*

In the past, the teaching of dance was generally viewed by those within the profession as being unproblematic, with dance teaching being relatively self-contained and self-regulated. Any 'problems' could be easily resolved without external interference or, in some cases, problems could be completely disregarded with little consequence. Moreover, as the principles of teaching certain dance *genres* have remained relatively constant over time, some groups of dance teachers have experienced a sense of self-created sanctuary in the knowledge that year in year out they could carry on as they always had.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, dance teaching has increasingly come under the spotlight of scrutiny both from within and outside the profession. 'Problems' which previously could be sidelined, for example compliance with various government legislation or evidencing expectations of dance education and training as deemed appropriate by non-dance regulators, had now to be addressed. This 'new' *milieu* has caused some dance teachers to experience a

degree of disorientation, with perceptions of interference from those outside the profession viewed as an attack on self-autonomy.

Such concerns, however, are not universally held across the dance teaching profession; rather, such concerns appear to be dependent on the dance *genre* being taught and the context (public contexts such as secondary and higher education, private contexts such as dance schools run as businesses and community contexts such as youth and after-school dance clubs) within which the dance teaching takes place. From informal conversations I have had with a range of dance teachers, ballet teachers are particularly aware of the heritage of ballet as a performance art and therefore more prone to uphold and follow the normative expectations and practices associated with this dance *genre*. Any questioning of these normative expectations and practices by 'outsiders' is often perceived as an assault on the historical legacies which underpin ballet. In contrast, dance teachers of street dance *genres* (hip-hop, street dance etc.) appear to be more willing to adapt to changing circumstances, environments and populist trends. Street dance teachers often see the potential of crossing boundaries, in terms of operating in different contexts and drawing on different dance *genres*. It would appear, therefore, that some groups of dance teachers are more willing than other groups of dance teachers to envisage change and adaptation as being fundamental to their professional development in order to enable effective engagement in a diverse dance teaching profession. Failure to connect with new opportunities may result in some dance teachers being positioned on the outskirts of the profession. Part of this investigation, therefore, will explore how dance teachers perceive barriers to embracing change, and how those barriers impact on professional identity formation.

#### *4.3 The impact of group identification on professional identity*

For many years, dance teachers rarely ventured beyond teaching dance *genres* which they specialised in, or engaged in dance contexts which were unfamiliar to them. Today's dance teaching landscape has opened up opportunities for dance teachers to diversify in terms of which dance *genres* they teach (a ballet teacher teaching contemporary dance), where they teach (an street dance teacher who would normally teach in community settings teaching within a vocational dance

school), and to whom they teach (a pre-school dance teacher teaching dance to older learners). In the past, dance teachers were more likely than not to operate within ring-fenced boundaries, with little interaction with dance teachers outside those boundaries. Moreover, there was no perceived need to interact with 'other' dance teachers as there appeared to be little benefit in doing so. It could be argued that this 'silo' approach which restricts engagement with dance teachers who are 'different' limits opportunities for developing a more holistic understanding of one's professional identity as a dance teacher. By understanding and appreciating the potential variances in the professional identities of dance teachers, individuals may be better positioned to reconfigure their own professional identities to engage with different expectations of what it is to be a dance teacher of different dance *genres* across different dance contexts.

Despite the diversification of employment opportunities for dance teachers, many dance teachers continue to find reassurance and a professional stability in identifying with the type of dance they taught, for example, "I am a ballet teacher" or "I am a tap teacher", rather than identifying with the wider sphere of dance teaching as a whole. Identification with dance teachers of a specific dance *genre* has meant that a more collaborative identification with a broad professional group, for example, "I am a dance teacher", has been afforded secondary importance compared to identification with dance teachers of a particular dance *genre*. Identifying oneself with a group of contemporary dance teachers, for example, alludes to a sense of understanding of specific knowledge of the dance *genre*, shared values and beliefs. A street dance teacher entering the ballet domain would be viewed with suspicion and possibly a degree of disdain. Thus, while opportunities for diversification may be seen as unproblematic and even empowering to an outsider, for some dance teachers the dilution of affiliation and identification with a particular group of dance teacher as a result of 'others' entering the domain is perceived as a partial erosion of *genre*-specific professional identities. The importance given to affiliation and/or identification with a particular group of dance teachers, or professional bodies which represent dance teachers, when articulating one's professional identity as a dance teacher, is a theme which is touched upon throughout this investigation.

#### *4.4 The rise of professionalisation*

While this investigation does not theorise in depth the professionalisation of dance teaching, increased accountability and evidence of compliant practice have led dance teachers to question long-held practices. Many dance teachers feel that they now operate in a field where regulation is in the ascendancy over expert judgement. As a consequence, dance teachers may find themselves re-evaluating their professional identities as dance teachers which may initiate a deconstruction and reconstruction of their professional identities. This idea of professional identities being fluid rather than fixed requires an acknowledgement of the need to change and adapt to the consequences of change. In order to do this, I believe that dance teachers need to be able to engage in discursive dialogue which allows them to be reflexive on how they perceive and understand themselves as dance teachers, to articulate their 'inner voices', and have the confidence to make change if change is deemed to be required. To date, dance teachers have been left to their own devices in terms of making sense of their professional identities and potentialities, leading to a self discovery through trial and error; a self discovery which is sometimes abandoned due to difficulties experienced in engaging in meaningful reflexion. One of the main drivers for this investigation, therefore, is the desire to create a model of professional identities which could aid dance teachers in finding their way through a myriad of thought processes which underpin effective reflection, understanding and action.

### **5. Contextualising the research**

The investigation which follows focuses on how dance teachers perceive themselves as dance teachers and how they articulate those perceptions. The aim of the research, therefore, is to explore how dance teachers (the unit of analysis), who operate in different contexts (private, public and community), and within different dance *genres*, negotiate their perceived professional identities (the object of enquiry) in terms of:

- perceptions of roles, responsibilities and practices of dance teaching as set against normative expectations of the dance and dance teaching professions;

- factors which enable or restrict dance teachers operating across different dance *genres* and in different contexts;
- ways in which dance teachers construct, deconstruct and reconstruct professional identities to engage in and manage a range of contextual situations and opportunities.

The investigation does not detail in depth a history of dance teaching as a profession, primarily because of the dearth of written documentation available. However, the investigation does consider why historical legacies of dance as a performance art form cannot be overlooked entirely in developing an understanding of professional identities of dance teachers.

Drawing on all of these points of enquiry leads to the over-arching research question underpinning the investigation:

- How do dance teachers perceive and negotiate their professional identities over time, space and practice?

This research question will be explored through three sub-questions:

1. What are some of the factors of time, space and practice which influence the formation of professional identities of dance teachers?
2. In what ways do dance *genres* and dance contexts impact on the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of professional identities of dance teachers?
3. How do dance teachers justify their decision-making when (re) examining their professional identities as dance teachers?

The domains of time, space and practice were selected as I believed that these domains would provide a conceptual framework on which to anchor an investigation of professional identities of dance teachers. Professional identities, not only of dance teachers, can be impacted by situations, events and new ways of thinking which evolve over time. Indeed, how one perceives one's professional identity in the early years may be very different to how one perceives one's identities several years

on (Moore, 2012). Thus, I felt by exploring how dance teachers articulated changes to their professional identities over time would provide an insight into how such shifts have impacted on current perceptions.

I considered the domain of space to be of significance in investigating professional identities of dance teachers, in particular, how dance teachers perceived and/or managed multiple identities. Dance 'spaces' have structural characteristics which may inform normative practices and expectations of those practices. I was interested, therefore, to see if there was any impact on a dance teacher's perceptions of professional identity which could be connected in any way with the different types of spaces within which he/she taught.

The third domain of practice was selected as I perceived there to be different threads of understanding as to what is meant by 'practice' within the field of dance and, more specifically, in the field of dance teaching. For me, dance teaching is a form of social practice which is underpinned by aspects of normative practices which can shape values, beliefs and action, in addition to "... notions of authority, responsibility, commitment and entitlement." (Brandom in an interview with Williams, 2013: 375). Dance teachers will recognise different dance *genres* being embedded within different normative expectations and practices (for example, ballet following a codified training focussing on product over process, whilst inclusive dance practice being framed through collaborative learning and teaching approaches which value process over product) which may influence how dance teachers engage with and shape their practices of dance teaching. If the practice of dance teaching is conducted through a pragmatism of normativity, then perceptions of dance teaching practices and perceptions of what it is to be a dance teacher may be framed through a proxy of that normative. In terms of the formation of a dance teacher's professional identity, I felt that by exploring how dance teachers negotiate their practices as set against normative expectations of that practice may provide an additional dimension for understanding the professional identities of dance teachers, particularly in terms of how notions of constraint may lead to aspirations of new possibilities.

In exploring the three sub-questions of the main research question, Chapter 2, *On Being and Becoming a Dance Teacher*, draws upon a literature review which outlines some of the factors which can impact on the formation of personal identities and professional identities of dance teachers. What becomes evident in examining these factors are some of the synergies between the construction and reconstruction of personal and professional identities, and how factors within the domains of time, space and practice can also contribute to identity formation.

Also arising from the literature review is the how perceptions of passive and active agency can influence articulation of professional identities. The dualism of passive and active agency is presented as potentially being key in exploring how dance teachers perceive and articulate their professional identities as dance teachers. The discussion then moves to consideration of how normative expectations and practices of dance as a performance art and dance teaching of a profession can be framed. Drawing on Jack Anderson's (1983) use of the terms materialist and idealist in his exploration of how the identities of dance works are imbued with normative expectations, the discussion examines how the terms materialist and idealist could also be used in looking at factors which may define the professional identities of dance teachers. What is presented here is the proposition that dance teachers may articulate their professional identities through the lens of a materialist positioning, where they see themselves as upholding traditional and normative expectations of what it is to be a dance teacher. Conversely, dance teachers may articulate their professional identities through the lens of an idealist positioning, seeing themselves as innovators in their practices as dance teachers.

It is in Chapter 2 that the co-ordinate plane which forms part of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance teachers is introduced. The construction of the co-ordinate plane is based on the continuums of passive and active agency and materialist and idealist positioning. As the chapter explains, the co-ordinate plane allows for a visual representation of different professional identity types and, as such, is a product of the analysis and synthesis of the messages emerging from a dance teacher's reflective and reflexive processes on how one may perceive oneself as a dance teacher.

Having identified some of the factors which might influence professional identity formation of dance teachers, Chapter 3, ***Methodology and Research Approach***, presents a rationale for the selected methodology and research approaches which underpin the investigation. It is in this chapter that the criteria for participant selection, the range of information required to investigate the research topic, an overview of the research design, and ethical considerations are presented. As indicated in this chapter, the decision to adopt an interpretive stance corresponds with my personal constructivist ontological and epistemological position which has influenced the conceptualisation of this investigation as a whole. This decision, however, was reached after consideration was given to other methodological approaches which might have been applicable. The chapter will, therefore, provide a narrative of the journey I embarked upon in making decisions about the methodological framework.

It is in Chapter 4, ***Connecting the 'stories': examining perceptions of dancer teachers' professional identities*** that the stories of the participants are brought to the fore in order to examine more explicitly how this group of dance teachers perceived and articulated their professional identities. My decision to draw so intently on these stories parallels my belief that what can make qualitative approaches to investigations accessible to a layperson is the connectedness with 'real' people in 'real' worlds (Robson, 2011). Though the 'real' world of dance teachers may not be immediately familiar to those outside the dance teaching profession, the stories emanating from the participants will hopefully provide insights into how dance teachers may perceive their professional identities.

Throughout Chapter 4, reference to the domains of time, space and practice will provide a conceptual framework for bringing together the differing stories of participants. As will be revealed, a number of sub themes (dance *genre*, accountability, power and expectations) are also threaded throughout the participants' stories. These sub themes may be significant in understanding how dance teachers perceive and articulate their professional identities.

Chapter 5, ***Data Synthesis and Analysis***, details the processes through which I synthesised the emerging messages arising from the transcribed conversations, and

analysed the outcomes of the synthesis. Through iterative cycles of data contraction and data clustering (King and Horrocks, 2011; Smith *et al.* 2009) data was analysed horizontally (comparing data across contexts and dance *genres*), and, vertically (comparing data within contexts and dance *genres*). These processes allowed for a degree of interpretative consistency and methodological credibility (as discussed in Chapter 3).

Chapter 6, ***Implementing the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as a means to understanding professional identities***, outlines how the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers could be implemented as a tool in supporting initial and on-going professional development of dance teachers in relation to their professional identities. It is in this chapter that some of the attributes and activities of materialist and idealist positionings and passive and active agency are presented in order to aid an interpreter's categorisation of different professional identity types and the construction of professional identity profiles.

The final chapter brings a more attuned eye to the investigation as a whole. It is in this chapter that consideration will be given as to how the investigation contributes to the field of dance teaching. Methodological accomplishments will also be addressed as well as some thought on how the messages arising from this investigation may provide further insights into theoretical examination of professional identities more broadly. This chapter concludes with a final reflection of how engagement in the various processes of the investigation has informed my own professional development as a dance teacher educator.

## Chapter 2: On Being and Becoming a Dance Teacher

### 1. Introduction and purpose

The aim of this investigation is to examine how dance teachers perceive and articulate their professional identities over time, space and practice and the effect of such perceptions in enabling them to work within and across different dance contexts and dance *genres*. The current dance landscape offers up a multiplicity of opportunities for dance teachers to venture outside their usual environments. To do so, however, it is proposed that dance teachers need to have knowledge and understanding of the processes and potential impacts of the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of professional identities which may influence their professional practices and expectations.

Drawn from a range of literature on identity, this chapter commences with a discussion of some of the factors which can influence personal and professional identity formation and one's sense of agency. Consideration is also given to how perceptions of agency can influence ways in which dance teachers understand and articulate their professional identities. Aspects of professional identity formation and agency will be framed within the domains of time, space and practice. As the discussion evolves, it will become evident that while it may be important to consider each of the domains of time, space and practice as distinct entities, an inevitable blurring of boundaries will give rise to a number of tensions which, while not perhaps being immediately perceptible, may still be influential in the formation and articulation of the professional identities of dance teachers.

Having established how a sense of agency in relation to time, space and practice can influence perceptions of professional identities, the discussion moves to consideration of two concepts which I present as being useful in understanding professional identities of dance teachers. In questioning the nature of a dance work's identity, and in particular how a dance work may be seen to be authentic or otherwise, I draw on an argument put forward by the American dance critic and historian, Jack Anderson (1983). In his thesis, Anderson uses the terms materialist and idealist as a means of distinguishing individuals who feel that the identities of dance works can only be considered as authentic if *constitutive elements* of those

dance works, that is, fundamental elements which cannot be altered or removed, are evident in performances. (Goodman, 1976). Conversely, idealists align to the view that *contingent elements* of dance works (*ibid*), for example, steps, casting, costuming, musical cuts, can be altered without fundamentally changing the identity of a dance work. In relation to professional identities of dance teachers, I will argue that in perceiving and articulating professional identities, dance teachers will align themselves either to a materialist positioning (where individuals perceive that there are constitutive elements of their professional identities as dance teachers which are sacrosanct) or to an idealist positioning (where there are perceived contingent elements of their professional identities which can change and/or be modified without fundamentally altering how they (and others) see themselves as dance teachers).

It is in this chapter that the co-ordinate plane of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers is first presented. From the outset of this investigation, I was of the view that devising a model of professional identities of dance teachers, through which processes of reflection and reflexion would lead to the identification of different professional identity types, would be a useful tool in enabling dance teachers to better understand themselves as dance teachers. Drawing on Robert Nideffer's model of attentional and personal styles used in sports coaching (Nideffer, 1976), I also saw the potential value in presenting different professional identity types in a visual format as a tangible product of a dance teacher's engagement in reflective and reflexive processes.

Based on the proposition that variances in perceptions of active and passive agency and materialist and idealist positionings are key factors in how dance teachers articulate their professional identities, the co-ordinate plane of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers provides a platform through which the variances which underpin different professional identity types can be visually represented. Identification of a professional identity type is derived from an analysis of how dance teachers articulate their perceptions of what it is to be a dance teacher. By identifying and plotting professional identity types onto a co-ordinate plane, dance teachers will have access to a visual tool which allows them to see how their professional identity types are positioned in comparison to professional identity types of others. In doing so, dance teachers may be encouraged to imagine alternative

possibilities of what it is to be a dance teacher. It should be noted, however, that the co-ordinate plane of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers is the product of the processes through which identification of professional identity types is constructed. The processes which lead to the identification of professional identity types are discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

## **2. Personal identity formation**

### *2.1 Generalised and concrete selves*

It is widely recognised that establishing a finite definition of identity, or indeed identification of the array of variables which contribute to identity formation, such as early socialisation, family influences, school experiences and identification with different groups and institutions, is complex and contested (Rich, 2014; Davey, 2013; Burke and Stets, 2009; Jenkins, 2008; Goodson, 2003). However, in examining different perspectives of identity formation, there appear to be two recurring themes: that individuals will be situated within and manage multiple identities, and that articulation of the narratives of multiple identities will be framed by the 'generalised self' (Benhabib 1992) and the 'concrete self' (*ibid*).

The generalised self is one which aligns with the idea that individuals share commonalities in terms of rights and responsibilities, and that these commonalities manifest within perceptions of identities. In terms of a dance teacher's generalised self, concepts of fairness, inclusivity, professionalism and expertise are potential markers against which dance teachers may express their professional identities. Conversely, the concrete self exemplifies distinctiveness from others; that which makes one unique. In terms of dance teachers, expressing perceptions of identities from the generalised self or concrete self provides a window into the internal contemplations of dance teachers when trying to distinguish that which makes them unique as a dance teacher and that which connects them to other dance teachers.

The usefulness of distinguishing these two strands of self is that while generalised and concrete selves are intrinsically entwined, a focus on the generalised self brings to the surface commonalities of identities which are perceived to be shared with others. On the other hand, when asked 'What does being a dance teacher mean to

you?', it could be argued that a narrative which focuses on the concrete self alludes to a dance teacher placing greater importance, either consciously or unconsciously, on being distinct from other dance teachers.

## *2.2 The self as authored identity*

In a similar vein to that of Benhabib, Holland *et al.* (2001) also identify two positions of self; the 'essential self' as being core and stable and the 'socially constructed self' as malleable, subjected to structures and discourses operating in social worlds (2001:27) . Rather than a bi-polarisation of the essential and socially constructed self, Holland *et al.*, argue that interpretations from either position move along a continuum, and are often dependant on the socio-historical positioning of self and the objectification of self, against others (2001: 27). For dance teachers, socio-historical positioning may be articulated through their experiences of being dance students, experiences of being dance teachers, normative expectations of dance *genres*, as well as how the wider dance profession (including other dance teachers) views the roles and responsibilities of dance teachers.

In arguing that identities are socially formed as a result of past, current and future histories Holland *et al.* propose that narratives of identities are self authored through "...the conflictual, continuing dialogic of an inner speech where active identities are continually forming." (2001:169). When individuals reflect on their identities, they begin to shape an inner vision of who they are and who they might become. However, this inner vision is not static as individuals will interpret and reinterpret experiences. Thus, an authored identity is one through which an individual shapes and manipulates perceptions of identity according to contextual (space), situational (practice) and temporal (time) points of reference.

## *2.3 The importance of being personal*

While discussion thus far alludes to the socially constructed nature of professional identities, it would be remiss not to acknowledge how personal identities have the potential to shape professional identities. It is clear that personal identities are often influenced by personalised narratives generated through the telling of life stories (Rich, 2014; Hyland, 2012; Bamberg *et al.* 2011; McAdams, 2011; Jenkins, 2008;

Alsup, 2006; Holland *et al.* 2001, Benhabib 1992). It is through these personalised narratives that an individual begins to connect with one's multiple identities. The integration of experiences across time, space and practice as revealed through autobiographical or authored storytelling can lead to a realisation of core personal characteristics which contribute to the personal self (Rich, 2014; Holland *et al.* 2001) which may, in turn, also inform perceptions of professional identities.

In terms of dance teachers articulating their professional identities, it is proposed that an appreciation of how personal identity can inform professional identity is worthy of consideration, especially if such appreciation recognises the propositions that personal identity is not as stable as one might think, and that tensions may arise when dance teachers look towards their personal values and beliefs when trying to connect with their professional identities (Hyland, 2012: 10).

### **3. Professional identity formation of dance teachers**

#### *3.1 The socially constructed nature of professional identities*

Much of the literature related to teacher development recognises the importance of exploring professional identity formation in order to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of what it is to be a teacher (Carrillo *et al.*, 2015, Davey, 2013, Ballentyne and Grooteboer, 2012; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Alsup, 2006). It is also recognised that there is an intricate interplay between personal identity formation and professional identity formation, combined with issues of class, gender and ethnicity, all of which serve to confound an unambiguous overall understanding of identity (Caza and Creary, 2016; Francis, 2008; Basit *et al.* 2007, Maguire, 2005; Carrington, 2002). From the outset, it should be noted that the focus of this investigation is related primarily to professional identity formation rather than personal identity formation; nor are issues of class, gender or ethnicity explored in any depth. Even so, in order for individuals to gain an understanding and appreciation of the relationship between personal and professional identity formation, it is acknowledged that teachers need to engage in reflective processes (of practice) as well as reflexive (of self) processes which will scaffold expressions of professional identity both internally and externally (Moore, 2012; Graham and Phelps, 2003).

The teaching of dance, and therefore how one may perceive one's professional identity as a dance teacher, shares many commonalities with teaching in other performance arts disciplines such as music and drama (Ballantyne and Zhukov, 2017; Kempe, 2012; Wales, 2009; Burland and Davidson, 2004). Themes such as reflection on being music or drama students, teachers acting as role models and recognition of normative practices and expectations emanating from the wider fields of music and drama as performance arts appear to be significant when describing professional identities. In my informal conversations with dance teachers on how they perceive their professional identities, similar reflections are also apparent.

Unlike music and drama teachers, however, very little is written about how professional identities of dance teachers are formed and subsequently demonstrated. What has been written about the teaching of dance (Amans, 2017; Lowski, 2016; Shrapnell, 2014; Tully, 2011; Gibbons, 2007; Kassing and Jay, 2003) has tended to focus on the *how* (learning and teaching approaches) and the *what* (subject knowledge) of dance teaching rather than exploring the *why* of dance teaching; in other words, an understanding of the dance teacher as self-situated in the processes of the *how* and *why*. An exception to this propensity is a model for holistic dance teacher education as proposed by Andrzejewski (2009) in which the effect of identity on professional orientation is acknowledged but not as central to the model. What is being proposed in this investigation is that dance teacher education should include a model which outlines various possibilities of professional identities that dance teachers may construct which, in turn, will lead to a better understanding of what it is to be a dance teacher in terms of engagement within the field of dance teaching.

#### **4. A sense of agency**

##### *4.1 Active and passive agencies as influences on perceptions of personal and professional identities*

Within the literature on identity formation, issues related to how individuals perceive their personal agency appear to be of significance. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009: 177) provide a useful definition of agency by suggesting that it is the "...empowerment to move ideas forward, to reach goals or even to transform the

context.” This definition alludes to agency being active, whereby individuals feel that they are able to influence situations and practices through self-directed action. However, there will be situations when individuals feel that there are barriers which prevent the enactment of active agency, resulting in perceptions of one being a passive ‘actor’. It is important to recognise that there is a flow between one’s perceptions of being an active or passive agent, which may influence how one perceives his/her identity at any given time. Structures within societies, such as political and educational systems, may influence how individuals perceive their active or passive agencies across different contexts and in different situations. Such situations and contexts are not static entities, but are shaped and evolve within and across time. Thus, at any given point in time, individuals may perceive themselves as being active or passive agents in influencing their identities.

In recognition that delineating the relationships between personal identity and agency and professional identity and agency can be problematic Hyland (2014) and Beijaard *et al.* (2004) suggest that professional identity is inextricably linked to agency through “... the active pursuit of professional development and learning in accordance with a teacher’s goal.” In relation to the teaching profession, it has been argued that one’s sense of agency is a crucial element of a teacher’s professional identity which allows individuals to enact professional judgements and practices within contexts which are sometimes highly prescriptive and restrictive (Priestley *et al.* 2016; Danielewicz, 2001).

#### *4.2 Beyond a dance teacher’s control? Perceptions of factors which influence passive or active agency*

Within the teaching of dance, the significance afforded to active or passive agency can be variable, and is often dependent on the extent to which dance teachers value autonomy and self-direction. For some dance teachers, past experiences of being a dance student, especially if the teaching has been predominately teacher-led, may lead to little importance being given to the embodiment of personal agency.

Dance teachers will have undergone a lengthy period of training as a dance student, quite often lasting ten years or more. During this training, students are exposed to a range of learning and teaching experiences. At times, the teaching approach will be

authoritarian, particularly in the training of ballet, where a dance teacher is seen as the 'master' and a dance student as the 'apprentice' (Buckroyd, 2000; Fay, 1997). This relationship exudes a power inequality where the more knowledgeable 'master' is not to be questioned, with instructions to be followed even when those instructions appear contrary to personal goals or aspirations. In such situations, a dance student may feel restricted in actioning active agency. Rather than being empowered to make decisions on how best to move forward with his/her training, a dance student could be seen as a passive partner in the learning and teaching relationship. These early experiences, and the perceptions of these experiences, can be long lasting and transfer to the transition from dance student to dance teacher. The experience of power inequality may be accepted as normative behaviour, and thus be replicated in a dance teacher's own teaching approaches and formation of professional identity.

On becoming a dance teacher, individuals may also experience similar master/apprentice relationships, where more experienced dance teachers are to be revered and not interrogated. Instead of engaging in an open peer relationship, where knowledge, understanding and expertise is questioned and debated in a supportive fashion, novice dance teachers may find themselves having to imitate and replicate the behaviour of more expert dance teachers. This situation is described by Stinson (2010: 137) with the suggestion that dance teachers are "... more comfortable to reflect privately than to engage in discourse with others who hold different values and try to convince us we are wrong." Such situations could be interpreted as dance teachers constructing a sense of active agency as they are internally reflecting on who they are as dance teachers, but exhibiting passive agency tendencies within communities of other dance teachers.

The majority of dance teachers operating in private dance contexts will be affiliated through membership with one or more Dance Awarding Organisations (for example, the Royal Academy of Dance). As members of Dance Awarding Organisations (DAOs), dance teachers may perceive a degree of active agency through being able to vote on how a DAO operates, in other words, being able to have an 'active voice' in determining how an institution is organised and its rules and regulations. In contrast, some dance teachers affiliated with DAOs may perceive themselves as passive agents despite having voting rights, particularly if decisions of the voting

majority do not align with their personal values, beliefs or attitudes. For example, if a DAO decided that there should be an upper age limit on students presenting for dance examinations, this decision may be contrary to a dance teacher's belief that dance examinations should be inclusive and therefore free of age restrictions. Further, if the views and beliefs of a dance teacher do not conform with the views and beliefs of the majority of dance teachers affiliated with a DAO or its directorship, a sense of disempowerment may prevail leading to perceptions of being a passive agent within an institution's hierarchy.

For dance teachers operating in community dance contexts, affiliation to institutions may be less prevalent as the majority will operate as peripatetic dance teachers, thus leading to possible perceptions of community dance teachers having greater choice (active agency) in their practices as dance teachers. While institutional structures may be less intrusive on their perceptions of professional identities, community dance teachers may feel that their active agency is unduly determined by how communities of other dance teachers perceive what it is to be a community dance teacher. Dance teachers who do not teach in community settings may perceive community dance teachers as not being 'real dance teachers' as they do not have to conform with institutional structures. The interplay between institutional structures and the values and beliefs of different communities of dance teachers can, therefore, influence how one perceives oneself as a passive or active agent.

#### *4.3 The influence of accountability and compliance on perceptions of passive and active agency*

Deriving from social systems and institutions, measures of accountability and compliance which materialise over time, seeping into dance spaces and practices, may also sway perceptions of one's passive or active agency. Consideration of accountability and compliance is imbued within notions of power structures and power relationships (Deem *et al.*, 2008; Ball, 2003, Archer, 1995; Giddens, 1984). While the magnitude of power relationships, such as the omnipresent authority of professional membership and regulatory bodies, may vary over time, the extent to which dance teachers perceive their ability to manage their practices within certain

dance contexts may be constrained according to the dominance of such power relationships. While not overtly integral to structures of power, internal and external expectations expressed by communities of practitioners may also influence expectations of acceptable learning and teaching approaches and outcomes within certain dance contexts. Dance teachers, therefore, may perceive a sense of disempowerment or, in other words, passive agency, when deciding on *what* to teach and *how* to teach it in order that they are seen to be adhering to professional expectations.

Having considered how personal identity and agency can inform perceptions of professional identity, the section which follows examines how factors within the domains of time, space and practice can also shape perceptions of professional identities and enactment of agency.

## **5. The impact of time, space and practice on perceptions of professional identity and agency**

### *5.1 Professional identities and agency of dance teachers across time*

Before exploring further how professional identities and perceptions of agency are shaped over time, it is helpful to frame the domain of time within the context of this investigation. When considering the concept of time in relation to human experience, rather than perceiving 'time' we in fact perceive events that occur 'in time' (Le Poidevin, 2015). Most commonly, we think of time on a continuum of a past, present and future, with a view that events which have happened in the 'past' can influence those that are experienced in the present and potentially those in the future. When considering past experiences, however, one perceives the 'past' in the present in the form of episodic memories. These episodic memories are interpreted through a lens of the present, for example, an adult remembering being bullied as a child is doing so through the rationality of being an adult. Similarly, remembering an event or experience of last week will not necessarily exude the same thoughts and emotions as when the event or experience immediately occurred. Thus, when accounting for events in the 'present' and in a potential 'future', it is done so through a lens to the past.

The relevance of such a contemplation of time in relation to the professional identity formation and perceptions of agency as expressed by dance teachers is that while past experiences may well shape perceptions of the present and possibilities for the future, these perceptions are interpretations at a particular 'present' time, interpretations which may not fully reflect that which was experienced at a 'past' point in time. Thus, caution must be exercised in affording objective meaning of past events on current experiences or future possibilities.

Regardless of the caution expressed above, the influence of time in the enactment of a dance teacher's personal agency, and in the formation of professional identity, appears to be framed by experiences of the past being interpreted in the present, and perceptions of the present shaping future possibilities. Personal agency in dance training and teaching can be seen therefore, as being restricted by deeply-embedded normative expectations and legacies of practice which serve to shape the profession and the contexts within which professional practices occur, in other words, histories of the past can have an enduring influence on the present and future. Nevertheless, as dance teachers become more assured of their professional standing, it is proposed that it is more likely that they will gain greater confidence in becoming active rather than passive agents. In doing so, dance teachers will be better positioned to transform the contexts within which they operate and achieve personal and professional goals.

### *5.2 Moving in and between spaces: the potential for adapting professional identities.*

For the purpose of this investigation, the domain of space is defined as spheres of activity within which dance teaching takes place. Within these spheres, a range of practices and interactions operate, shaped by 'rules' and normative expectations which characterise and distinguish particular spheres.

Within dance teaching, the space of dance contexts can be further differentiated by the following:

- **private dance contexts** which encompass private dance schools and some vocational training centres which operate as private businesses;

- **public dance contexts** which encompass compulsory (Primary and Secondary) education, post-compulsory (Further and Higher) education and some vocational training schools which attract government funding;
- **community dance contexts** which encompass dance activities which operate within the community, for example leisure centres, youth clubs, residential homes and community centres. A broader definition would also include random dance activities which take place in urban environments such as streets, parks and other public spaces.

To a greater or lesser extent, dance contexts are shaped by the dance *genres* taught in these spaces. Some dance *genres* are engrained with historical and cultural legacies which shape normative practices and therefore influence perceptions of ‘appropriate’ dance contexts within which a dance *genre* should be taught. In principle, any dance *genre* can be taught and performed in any of the three main dance contexts, for example, ballet (which is usually associated with private dance contexts) can be delivered in community dance contexts. Nonetheless, historical structures, which define the rules and resources involved in the production and reproduction of dance practice, can have an omnipresent bearing on how individuals perceive the nature of a dance context and presumptions of what to expect of dance teachers operating in a particular dance context.

In reviewing historical accounts of different dance *genres* (Seibert, 2016; Guarino and Oliver, 2015; Rajakumar, 2012; Gogerly, 2011; Homans, 2010; Anderson, 1992; Crisp and Clarke, 1981), it becomes evident that historical and cultural legacies which underpin some dance *genres* are more pervasive in certain dance contexts in comparison to others. For example, the structure of a ballet class, commencing with exercises at a *barre* before coming into the centre of the studio to perform *ports de bras*, *adage* and *allegro*, is the same format today as it was for ballet students over 100 years ago. For many ballet students and teachers, it would be unthinkable to change the structure of a ballet class, or not to conclude a class with a *révérence*. In contrast to ballet, street dance, which came to the fore in the 1980s as individuals ‘took dance to the street’ (Rajakumar, 2012; Gogerly, 2011), is in many ways the antithesis of highly structured theatre dance *genres* such as ballet and contemporary dance. Street dancers embraced novelty and innovation, actively seeking to be

different to other dancers each time a dance move was performed. In comparison to other dance *genres*, there was a much more democratised approach in the practice of street dance, with a dancer becoming ‘the teacher’ and the teacher becoming ‘a dancer’ in a seemingly seamless transition. This freedom of passage and practice was, it could be argued, facilitated by the unconstrained physical space where street dance took place, along with a freedom in how the *genre* was practised.

In terms of professional identity and the enactment of agency, the nature of dance contexts, and the dance *genres* taught within those contexts, have the potential to impact perceptions of what it means to be a dance teacher. Dance teachers may perceive their professional identities as being influenced by normative expectations as framed by different dance contexts and different dance *genres*. Some dance teachers may be content with aligning their professional identities against normative expectations. For other dance teachers, alignment against normative expectations may be perceived as restricting possibilities for the enactment of active agency in shaping their professional identities and, indeed, their practices as dance teachers.

### *5.3 Contextualising patterns of practice in relation to professional identity formation*

The practices of dance teaching can be framed by the *what* of teaching (for example, the dance techniques of different dance *genres*) and the *how* of teaching (for example, the implementation of different learning and teaching strategies). Over time, patterns of practice became replicated and engrained into what is expected of dance teachers, leading ultimately to what is considered to be ‘best practice’.

Expectations of practice are not only confined to those within the dance teaching profession. As participation in dance becomes increasingly popular, the ‘consumers’ of dance, in other words, dance students, also begin to construct expectations related to the learning of different dance *genres* (the *what*), as well as *how* dance teachers of different dance *genres* would teach a *genre*. For example, a common perception of ballet teachers, still prevalent today, is that they are slightly aloof, positioning themselves above the students they teach; thus, replicating a master/apprentice model. A ballet teacher who is perceived to be overly familiar with his or her students may not meet the expectations of ballet students and/or the expectations of the wider field of dance practice. In contrast, special needs dance

teachers, who commonly practise in community dance contexts, are often perceived to be more in-tune with their students through a more democratised approach to learning and teaching. While the expertise of ballet teachers and special needs dance teachers is key to meaningful learning and teaching experiences, the manner in which they engage with students through their practices may also be influential in professional identity formation and perceptions of agency.

#### *5.4 The continual rise of accountability and compliance in the practice of dance teaching*

Over the past decade, and in parallel to other education and training contexts, dance teaching has been subjected to greater accountability and metrics of performativity – attracting more dance students to a business, higher examination achievement, league table positions, and employment of graduating students. As a result, dance teachers may find themselves disorientated in terms of personally-perceived values, beliefs and attitudes of how practice should be shaped, in comparison to how regulatory agencies or professional membership organisations define effective dance teaching. In terms of compliant practice, all dance teachers in the UK, regardless of the dance context or dance *genre* taught, are now expected to adhere to a range of government legislation such as the Equality Act (Parliament of the United Kingdom, 2010) and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (Parliament of the United Kingdom, 2006) through demonstration of the tenets of such legislation in their practice of dance teaching. In addition, professional teacher/dance teacher membership organisations, such as the National College of Teaching and Leadership and the Royal Academy of Dance, issue codes of professional practice, with the expectation that all members will demonstrate practice which complies with pre-determined criteria in order to retain professional membership. In terms of professional identity formation, today's dance teachers find themselves having to demonstrate practice which satisfies expectations of the wider dance profession as well as external regulatory agencies.

The degree to which accountability and compliance drives practice, and consequently shapes professional identity formation, may be determined by the context within which the practice takes place. A dance teacher working within a

secondary school context will embrace and engage with the individuality and uniqueness of a student, as articulated in England's Department of Education's 2013 Teachers' Standards, where a teacher must "Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of *all* [my italics] pupils" (Teachers' Standard 5). Thus, a secondary school dance teacher will draw on differentiated teaching approaches and strategies to construct personalised learning experiences for individual students. Failing to do so would deem the teaching as unsatisfactory or in need of improvement. Professional identity, therefore, particularly in terms of being recognised as an 'Outstanding' dance teacher in public dance contexts, is entwined with being compliant with external regulatory expectations of practice. In order to ensure compliance with expectations, the practice of secondary school dance teachers will be assessed by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). Tensions may arise when such judgements made by Ofsted Inspectors are incommensurate with an individual's personal values, beliefs and attitudes towards what it is to be an effective dance teacher. Such tensions may lead to an externally-driven reconfiguration of practice and possibly a reconstruction of professional identity.

In contrast to a secondary school dance teacher, a ballet teacher within a vocational training school setting will be working within a set of predetermined and often historically embedded criteria of expectations which all students, regardless of ability, are required to achieve – in short, working towards a singular 'ideal' which is fundamental to professional dance performance. Ballet teachers within such contexts who spend too much time nurturing and guiding students towards their individual potentials could stand accused by the wider dance profession of mollycoddling students and not preparing them for the harshness of a professional dance career. While some vocational dance schools operate with relative autonomy, there are, however, an increasing number of vocational dance schools in England in receipt of Government funding and therefore subject to Ofsted inspections. An Ofsted Inspector watching a ballet class within a publicly funded vocational dance school would expect to observe evidence of differentiated and personalised learning, an expectation not universally advocated by the wider dance profession. This scenario exemplifies potential tensions that vocational dance teachers may face in

negotiating their practice; on the one hand, adhering to expectations of professional training where autocratic learning and teaching approaches are integral to dance as a discipline, as set against student-centred approaches favoured by external regulatory authorities which lie outside the dance domain.

The scenarios outlined above raise two questions in terms of how practice can influence perceptions of professional identity and a sense of agency; firstly, the extent to which dance teachers can be self-determining in how they engage with practice and secondly, how professional identity may be influenced, willingly or otherwise, by factors which impact practice. Both these questions typify the dualism of active and passive agency in the practice of dance teaching and subsequently the construction of professional identity.

Drawing on some of the lines of enquiry in the above discussion, it is evident that within the domains of time, space and practice there are factors which may influence ways in which dance teachers perceive and articulate their professional identities both to themselves as well as others. Aligned to these perceptions is recognition that dance teachers may see themselves as active agents in determining their professional identities, or indeed see themselves as passive agents. Some dance teachers may be quite content, and find contentment, in perceiving themselves as passive agents. For others, not being able to enact active agency may be seen as problematic, especially if they hold aspirations of being innovators of dance education and teaching.

## **6. Materialist and idealist positions of professional identities of dance teachers**

### *6.1 Identities of dance works from materialist and idealist positionings*

Before examining how the terms materialist and idealist could be used in the examination of professional identities of dance teachers, it is worth considering how these terms came into the lexicon of dance and, subsequently, into the consciousness of those involved in the study of dance and dance education.

Over the years, authors of dance criticism have contemplated how the identities of dance works are defined and understood. (Brooks and Meglin, 2013; Bunker, Pakes

and, Rowell, 2013; McFee, 2011; Copeland and Cohen, 1983; Anderson, 1983). Consideration of the dualism of tradition and innovation in understanding the tenets of a dance work's identity is often alluded to, albeit expressed in different ways. In *Idealists, Materialists and the Thirty-Two Fouettés*, Anderson (1983) questions how one might identify the identity of a dance work through the lenses of tradition and innovation. However, rather than referring to individuals adopting traditional or innovative perspectives, Anderson uses the terms *materialist* and *idealist* to differentiate differing positions.

Anderson's thesis was written at a time when commentators within the field of dance criticism were focussing on the thorny issue of 'authentic' reproductions of dance works. Drawing primarily on *repertoire* within the classical ballet canon, Anderson proposed that the perceived success (or otherwise) of restaged dance works was often framed by a materialist (traditional) positioning or an idealist (innovative) positioning. Anderson proposed that a materialist positioning in the conceptualisation of a dance work's identity and/or authenticity is predicated by constitutive elements of the work (for example, original choreography, libretto, musical score) being maintained, regardless of how long ago the dance work was first created. In doing so, dance directors and performers are seen to be paying respectful homage to the historical legacies of that dance work, even though some of those legacies may be thought of as 'old hat' and outdated by present-day audiences. Conversely, individuals who align to an idealist positioning in the staging of a dance work champion identification of contingent elements (aspects of a dance work which are deemed to be changeable without deviating from a dance work's identity) which can be reconfigured or radically altered, thus pushing at the boundaries of a dance work's identity by bringing forth fresh, contemporary and meaningful interpretations.

For an outsider looking in, the significance of a materialist or idealist positioning when considering the identity and authenticity of a dance work may be deemed insignificant. After all, does it really matter if a dance work is significantly different to how it has been performed in years gone past? When dance works have been in existence for several decades (or, in the case of the classical ballet canon, several centuries), many spectators will come to expect constitutive elements of a dance

work to be ever present. For example, in *Swan Lake* (Petipa and Ivanov, 1895), the thirty two *fouetté pirouettes* which the ballerina performs in Act III, are seen to be sacred to the ballet's identity, authenticity and integrity. For balletomanes, it would be unthinkable for the thirty two *fouetté pirouettes* to be cut, or replaced with an alternative step of virtuosity.

Such expectations are not restricted to ballet productions. For example, Robert North's *Troy Game* (1974), a dance work within the contemporary dance canon, is performed by an all male cast in celebration of masculine virtuosity. Changing the all male cast to an all female cast would not only alter the dance work's narrative identity but may leave some audiences feeling short changed when the expectation of watching an all male cast perform is not met.

Both of the examples outlined above are couched within a materialist positioning, where expressions of the authenticity, integrity and identity of a dance work are embedded within normative expectations of how a particular dance work should appear. However, and as can be seen in Matthew Bourne's production of *Swan Lake* (1995), dance works are sometimes radically reworked which will excite individuals who identify with idealist positionings, whilst disappointing individuals who are wedded to traditional productions. For idealists, such reworkings are often seen as being innovative, cutting edge and, more importantly for some, necessary in order to preserve the continuity and interest in dance as a performance art. Conversely, individuals who identify with materialist positionings may experience a sense of unease and openly voice objection when viewing reworked 'classics' which they feel are desecrations of tradition. This (dis)connection between tradition and innovation which underpins materialist and idealist positionings can also be observed when dance teachers talk about being dance teachers.

## 6.2 *Dance teachers as materialists or idealists*

Anderson's use of the terms materialists and idealists in expressing traditionalist or innovative positionings when considering the authentic integrity of dance works can also transfer to the depiction of the professional identities of dance teachers, those who identify themselves strongly with traditional values, practices and expectations of dance teaching, and those who are more entrepreneurial in their outlook by

engaging in innovative practices and experiences which fall outside the mainstream. As has been discussed in this chapter, there is a plethora of normative expectations derived from a range of sources which not only shape certain dance *genres* but also the teaching of those dance *genres*. Moreover, the contexts within which different dance *genres* are taught are also shaped by normative expectations which can impact on a dancer teacher's practices. If orientation towards or away from normative expectations of dance teaching, as depicted in different dance contexts and dance *genres*, is influential in how one defines oneself as a dance teacher, and thereby in the construction and articulation of professional identities, then identifying then orientation of dance teachers along a materialist/idealist continuum may be helpful.

### *6.3 Strengths and limitations of Anderson's concepts of materialists and idealists in relation to professional identities of dance teachers*

Whilst Anderson's identification and use of the terms materialists and idealists are helpful in differentiating alignment with traditional or innovative viewpoints when considering the identities of dance works and, potentially, the professional identities of dance teachers, it would be deceptive to assume that individuals are wholly materialist or idealist in their thinking and, consequently, in their positioning. One representation of Anderson's narrative is a polarisation of positioning, where one is either in the materialist camp or the idealist camp. In practice, materialist/idealist categorisation is situated along a continuum where positioning along that continuum is influenced by factors of time, space and practice. For example, when experienced dance teacher reflects on their careers as a dance teachers, an articulation of their professional identities at that point in time may be framed by materialist narratives as a result of strong identification with other, more experienced, dance teachers acting as role models. Reflecting on the present, the same dance teachers may articulate more idealist positionings as a result of greater confidence in challenging and changing normative expectations in their practices.

As well as issues of time, the contexts where dance teaching takes place may also be influential in how dance teachers align themselves with materialist or idealist positionings. Dance teachers who teach across a range of dance contexts my

recount materialist as well as idealist positionings depending on which context is being considered as some contexts will be less constrained by normative expectations whilst other contexts will have structures which discourage innovative practices. These two examples of how dance teachers may express perceptions of professional identities in relation to materialist or idealist positioning illustrate the fluidity of such positionings. Such fluidity of positioning would need to be considered when identifying dance teacher professional identity types.

By his own account, Anderson does not use the terms materialists and idealists in the same way in which the terms are used in Philosophy or Theology (1983: 410). Anderson also recognises that there are contested assumptions, advantages and disadvantages in categorising individuals as being materialists or idealists (*ibid*: 414); for example, is being a materialist preferable to being an idealist? Debates which emerge from differing perspectives suggest that the creation of a finite portrayal of a materialist or idealist is potentially problematic. To this last point, it could be argued that Anderson's depiction of materialists and idealists in relation to discussions of the integrity of dance works does not readily transfer to an examination of professional identities of dance teachers. However, if it is read that materialists align to the premise that dance works should adhere to what has come to be expected of a dance work, and that idealists are more open to innovative change which contradicts and challenges normative expectations, then it could be argued that the tenets of materialist and idealist positioning as used within the context of dance criticism could also be valid in identifying professional identity types of dance teachers.

## **7. The potential of passive and active agency and materialist and idealist positioning as continua for exploring professional identities of dance teachers**

Throughout this chapter, a range of factors which can influence identity formation have been presented. In turn, these factors have been discussed in relation to the potential influence on the construction, reconstruction and articulation of professional identities of dance teachers. Of these factors, passive and active agency and materialist and idealist positionings begin to emerge as potentially significant dualisms which could form the framework of a model of professional identities of dance teachers. From my own experience as a dance teacher, and in drawing on

informal conversations with other dance teachers, what has often emerged is the significance many dance teachers place on being able (or not) to be in charge of the shaping and progression their careers as dance teachers; in other words, the enactment of personal agency. Linked to perceptions of agency is a sense of compliance (or not) with normative expectations which underpin dance teaching and dance as a performance art more broadly. Being seen as an upholder of tradition (materialist positioning) or an innovator of practice (idealist positioning) can, for some teachers, bring about internal dilemmas which may impact perceptions of identity.

As suggested, passive and active agency and materialist and idealist positionings operate along continua. The extent to which dance teachers articulate their professional identities as enactments of passive or active agency, or alignment to materialist or idealist positionings, are subject to factors shaped by time, space and practice. While acknowledging that there is a multiplicity of factors which inform professional identities of dance teachers, I propose that by examining perceptions of passive and active agency, materialist and idealist positioning, along with other factors related to time, space and practice which are also relevant in influencing professional identities of dance teacher will also become apparent.

## **8. Devising a framework for the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers**

### *8.1 Principles which underpin the framework of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers*

Having identified the continua of passive and active agency and materialist and idealist positioning as being potentially significant in exploring professional identities of dance teachers, I intend to use these two continua to form the framework for a model of dance teacher identities which will be referred to as the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers. The MIPA acronym has been derived from the terms materialist and idealist positioning and passive and active agency. The conceptualisation of the framework is predicated on the interplay between that which may influence perceptions of passive or active agency, and the extent to which dance teachers conform (or not) to normative values and practices to determine materialist or idealist positioning. Together, these aspects provide the

structure of the co-ordinate plane of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers. The intention of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers co-ordinate plane is to provide a visual representation of how professional identity types of dance teachers can be plotted as a product of the processes undertaken to explore professional identities of dance teachers (Chapter 6 refers).

### 8.2 The MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers.co-ordinate plane

By bringing together the continua of passive and active agency and materialist and idealist positioning, a co-ordinate plane to provide is proposed [Figure 1].

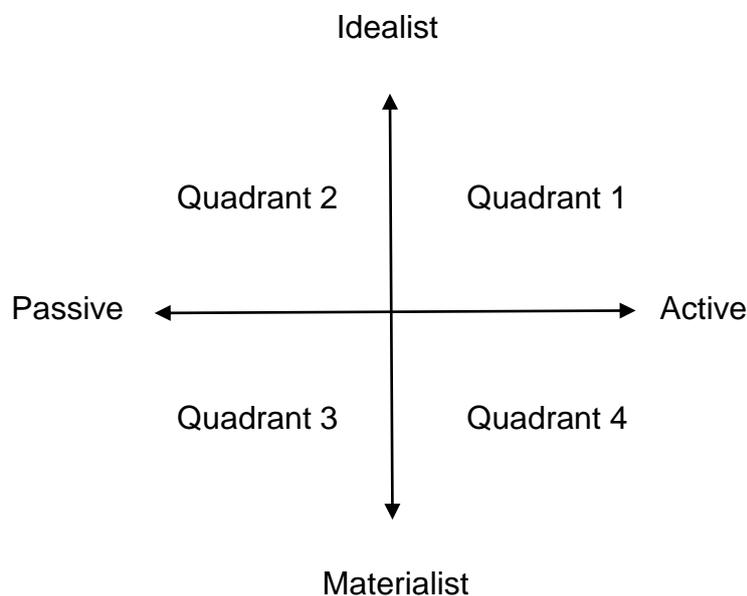


Figure 1: Co-ordinate plane for passive/active agency and materialist/idealist positioning

With passive/active agency acting as the x-axis, and materialist/idealist as the y-axis, the co-ordinate plane is sub-divided into four categories of dance teacher identity: Quadrant 1 Active Idealist Dance Teacher, Quadrant 2 Passive Idealist Teacher, Quadrant 3 Passive Materialist Teacher and Quadrant 4 Active Materialist Teacher. Through the analysis of semi-structured interview responses (Chapters 4 and 5 refer) it will be possible to identify dance teachers as falling into one of the four categories. In doing so, dance teachers will be able to begin to relate their professional identity type with dance teachers who share commonalities as well as differences in terms of professional identity. Thus, through the processes described in Chapter 6, it is envisaged that the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance

Teachers will enable dance teachers to imagine the possibility of other professional identity types which may aid transitions across dance contexts and dance *genres*. Moreover, it is proposed that the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as a whole will provide a tool for dance teachers to better understand factors which influence who they are as dance teachers which will, in turn, provide roadmaps for supporting discussions across communities of dance teachers in an attempt to bring about a more holistic understanding and appreciation of the diversity of dance teachers.

### *8.3 Acknowledging the relationship between passive and active agency and materialist and idealist positioning*

While not directly related to the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers co-ordinate plane, it is worth reflecting from the outset on the potential relationships between passive/active agency and materialist/idealist positioning. At first glance, it could be concluded that these two dualisms are one and the same thing. If dance teachers position themselves as upholders of traditional practices and expectations, it could be argued that in doing so they are demonstrating active agency; that is, consciously deciding to advocate traditional practices. Alternatively, it could be argued that such an alliance to materialist positioning is an example of passive agency as dance teachers may feel that they have no choice but to uphold historical legacies and to demonstrate these legacies in their practices. It is important, therefore, to delineate the distinction between passive and active agency in relationship to materialist and idealist positioning.

For the purposes of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers, dance teachers who align themselves to a materialist position will generally consider themselves to be predominately a specialist in a single dance *genre* within one dance context. Materialist dance teachers will tend to look inwards on their dance *genre* specialism in order to maintain the expected practices of that *genre*. Materialist dance teachers can still be seen to demonstrate passive or active action within a community of like-minded dance teachers, but the action takes place within more confined boundaries or *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1993) – what I refer to as *habitus*

natives. Moreover, it is proposed that materialist dance teachers will define themselves as a 'ballet teacher' or a 'hip hop' teacher rather than a dance teacher.

At the other end of the continuum, idealist dance teachers will demonstrate a willingness to draw on or engage in a number of different dance *genres* and different dance contexts – as a *habitus* traveller. While some idealist dance teachers will demonstrate aspects of active agency as they decide to move in and out of different dance *genres* and dance contexts, some idealist dance teachers may find themselves in the position as passive agents as a result of external factors beyond their control, for example, a change in management, corporate strategy or ownership of a business. Perceived relationships between passive/active agency and materialist/idealist position may be significant in the analysis of how dance teachers articulate their professional identities and subsequently identifying professional identity types.

## **9. Unravelling the tangle of professional identity formation**

This chapter has highlighted some of the tensions as well as possibilities which dance teachers may encounter when reflecting upon and articulating what it is to be a dance teacher. The writings of Benhabib (1992) and Holland *et al.* (2001) provide useful insights in understanding how personal identities are constructed and reconstructed, particularly in terms of how individuals look to themselves as being unique and to others as being the same. In examining how personal identities are formed, it is clear that aspects of time, space and practice are drawn upon to 'author' one's personal identity.

Just as an individual's perception of personal self is influenced by aspects of time, space and practice I have argued that factors of time, space and practice within the wider fields of dance as a performance art and dance teaching as a profession will also influence how dance teachers perceive and articulate their professional identities. Tensions may arise when aspects of one's personal identity are perceived as not in alignment with one's professional identity. For some dance teachers, this misalignment with personal and professional selves is often kept within their inner contemplations rather than shared in open dialogue with others. This being the case, some dance teachers may feel unsure or who they are as dance teachers, as

they have never had to openly express their inner thoughts, or they may feel frustrated that they have identified barriers which prevent them from becoming who they wish to be as dance teachers.

Woven into potential states of such disequilibrium is how individuals perceive their personal agencies as being active or passive. Outlined in this chapter are some of the barriers within the field of dance teaching which may be perceived by some dance teachers as limiting their enactment of active agency. Alternatively, some dance teachers may find comfort in remaining passive in their enactment of agency as, in doing so, situations of conflict such as being reprimanded by other dance teachers or DAOs are averted. Regardless of the pros and cons of perceiving oneself as an active or passive agent, I have proposed that perceptions of agency are key in understanding how dance teachers understand themselves as dance teachers.

In addition to perceptions of agency as influential in how dance teachers perceive and articulate their professional identities, I have also outlined how alignment (or not) with normative expectations of what it is to be a dance teacher may shape how dance teachers perceive and articulate their professional identities. Rather than using the terms 'traditionalist' and 'innovator', I have adopted Anderson's terms of materialist and idealist as I felt that these terms provide a link between dance teaching as a profession and the study of dance as an art form. Moreover, I believe that the ways in which Anderson has used the terms materialist and idealist in examining the different positions individuals take in perceiving the identities of dance works has a synergy with how dance teachers perceive their professional identities as dance teachers. Dance teachers who adopt a materialist positioning may view themselves as upholders of traditional practices and expectations which not only underpin dance as a performance art but also dance teaching as a profession. Conversely, dance teachers who align with idealist positions may see pushing the boundaries of normative expectations and practices as being integral to their professional identities. For some, idealist positioning will be seen as innovative and exciting; for others it may be viewed as being dangerously coercive.

In the introduction to this chapter, I revealed that one of the drivers which influenced this investigation was my desire to create a model of professional identities of dance teachers. My personal and professional intuition led me to believe that the creation of such a model would help dance teachers to better understand who they are as dance teachers through connecting with factors which have shaped their perceptions of their professional identities. I also hoped that through engaging in reflective and reflexive processes that dance teachers would begin to feel more empowered in re-imagining and reconstructing alternative professional identities to meet new professional opportunities. While acknowledging the benefits of engaging in reflective and reflexive practices, I also wanted to devise a visual representation of professional identity types as a tangible product of those processes. The co-ordinate plane of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers provides that tangible product by positioning professional identity types within the continua of passive and active agency and materialist and idealist positioning.

Having identified passive and active agency along with materialist and idealist positionings as potentially influential in how dance teachers perceive and articulate their professional identities over time, space and practice, the next chapter outlines the methodologies and research approaches I employed in exploring three questions which I believe provide a framework for revealing insights into the professional identities of dance teachers.

## Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Approach

### 1. Introduction and purpose

As stated in Chapter 2, the aim of this investigation is to examine how dance teachers perceive, articulate and negotiate their professional identities over time, space and practice, and the effect of that negotiation in enabling them to work across different dance contexts and dance *genres*. Chapter 2 also introduced the co-ordinate plane of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers constructed by the continuums of passive and active agency, and materialist and idealist positioning. The co-ordinate plane provides a template on which different professional identities can be plotted. Professional identity types arise from a synthesis and analysis of conversations with dance teachers which are discussed further in Chapters 4 through to 6. It is through the conversations with dance teachers that factors of time, space and practice, which may impact on perceptions of professional identities, begin to emerge and inform how dance teachers articulate their professional identities.

As a dance educator who devises teacher education programmes and continuing professional development courses for new and established dance teachers, I believe that a holistic understanding of professional identity formation will support dance teachers in responding to emerging challenges and opportunities that they may encounter throughout their professional careers. In order to investigate what these challenges and opportunities might be, and how dance teachers might perceive and address barriers to new possibilities, this investigation seeks to address three questions:

- In what ways do dance *genres* and dance contexts impact on the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of professional identities of dance teachers?
- What are some of the factors of time, space and practice which influence the formation of professional identities of dance teachers?

- To what extent do dance teachers exercise their personal agency in decision-making when examining their professional identities as dance teachers?

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to present the investigation's methodological approach in exploring these questions through providing:

- a) a rationale for the selected methodology;
- b) identification of participant selection;
- c) consideration of the information required to investigate the research questions;
- d) an overview of the research design, and;
- e) ethical considerations.

## **2. Adopting an interpretivist stance: a rationale for the selected methodology**

### *2.1 Selection of a qualitative research design*

Given the intention of the three research questions, I decided to adopt a qualitative research approach to explore how dance teachers perceived their professional identities. The underlying rationale for this decision was that I was interested in bringing to the surface some of the values, beliefs and attitudes of dance teachers in relation to their understanding of professional identity formation, and how understanding of such identities shaped decision making in their practices as dance teachers.

Adopting a qualitative stance also corresponds with my personal constructivist ontological and epistemological position which has influenced the conceptualisation of this investigation. From an ontological perspective, I am of the view that a 'reality' of professional identity perceptions cannot be reduced to a single perspective but is constructed in a multiplicity of ways, and influenced by a multiplicity of factors; in short; individuals shape and reshape realities, and interpretations of those realities, depending on their constructed experiences which ebb and flow across time, space and practice (Coe *et.al.*, 2017; Hammersley, 2012; Cousins, 2009; Bloomberg and Vople, 2008). This sentiment is succinctly described by Fraser (2004:181) in

suggesting that when exploring the values, beliefs and attitudes of individuals there is always a 'plurality of truths' to be considered. Thus, from an epistemological understanding, existence of realities is constructed and interpreted by individuals rather than being directly observed and measured (Coe *et al.* 2017).

It is worth noting here that while this investigation adopts an interpretivist stance, there remain normative aspects in terms of how certain constructs are understood. For example, how characteristics of dance *genres* are perceived by dance teachers is mediated through commonly-held understanding or, perhaps more accurately, perceptions of that understanding, as to the constitutive factors which differentiate one dance *genre* from another. This understanding of *genre* characteristics filters through to perceptions of how dance classes of a particular dance *genre* are structured, the relationships between dance teachers and students when working with a particular dance *genre*, and the intended outcomes of participating in the learning and teaching of one or more dance *genres*.

In determining a methodological stance to underpin this investigation, consideration was given to the value and usefulness of adopting a mixed-method approach which would have potentially provided a 'measurable' dimension to the analysis of findings (Creswell, 2009). However, I concluded that the concept of data (in this case, perceptions of dancer teachers' views of their professional identity formation) being 'measurable' through employing a quantitative data collection tool, such as a survey, might not necessarily follow as one's perceptions of any phenomenon are inherently subjective and therefore not easily 'measurable'. Thus, while it was clear that the nature of the investigation lent itself to an interpretative approach, I pondered the extent to which the insights I was hoping to extrapolate could be revealed by a predominantly qualitative methodology<sup>1</sup>

Having toyed with the pros and cons of qualitative versus mixed-methods frameworks for a considerable amount of time, I decided to heed the advice of Cousin (2009; 2), in that researchers should not "...let the tail wag the dog..." when deciding upon a research method. In doing so, I took the position that adopting a

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<sup>1</sup> It is recognised that there are elements of quantification in qualitative approaches, for example, identifying the number of times a phrase, idea or understanding emerges across interview data.

mixed-methods approach would not necessarily add anything further to the interrogation of the research questions which could not be derived from a qualitative stance alone (Ritchie, *et al.* 2014).

During this period of backward and forward contemplation, I was further comforted by the words of Stake (1995 as cited in Cousin, 2009: 2) who wrote: “Good research is not about good methods as much as it is about good thinking.” Whilst it is recognised that it is crucial to adopt appropriate research methods, I also believe that it is important for research outcomes to address the ‘so what?’ factor. This being the case, my decision to adopt a primarily qualitative design resonated with my desire to make the outcomes of this investigation meaningful to dance teachers and dance teacher educators. In my experience, dance teachers and dance teacher educators tend to be persuaded by words rather than numbers. If this investigation was to be used as a catalyst for dance teachers to meaningfully engage in developing knowledge and understanding of professional identity formation then it needed to do so through dialogue rather than numerical data sets, graphs and percentages.

It has been well documented that the beliefs, understanding and experiences of a researcher often direct and form the act of researching (Blaikie, N. 2010; Creswell, 2009; Silverman, 2006; Crotty, 1998) as well as influence the plan of action (Moriarty, 2011). Evidence of both these views was apparent in much of my decision-making throughout this phase of the investigation. I acknowledged that no research is entirely value-free and sought means through which I would be able to uncover intrinsic bias. One way in which I addressed this conundrum was to speak to colleagues who were not involved in the research *per se* but were experienced in engaging with dance teachers. In doing so, my own beliefs were set against the views of others through an exchange of dialogue which made me contemplate why I thought the way I did, if my thoughts were personal to me and my own experiences, or if my beliefs were shared across others who had had similar experiences. Throughout the decision-making processes I constantly found myself asking “What if?” both of myself and of the professional contexts within which dance teachers operate. Knowledge of how my own beliefs might impact on the decision-making

process enabled me to adopt a reflexive stance in deciding why to accept some ideas and reject others.

## *2.2 Through a hermeneutic process: influences towards a research method*

Having settled on a qualitative approach, attention then focused on identifying a qualitative strategy (Creswell, 2009) to frame the research design. Grounded theory, narrative inquiry, phenomenological research, case studies and ethnographic approaches (Arthur *et al.* 2012; Robson, 2011; Cousin, 2009; Creswell, 2009; Punch, 2009) were considered before being rejected as none of these strategies appeared to be wholly appropriate for the type of information I was hoping to uncover.

According to Creswell (2006), non-constructivist grounded theory approaches aim to develop theories to explain process and action through 'top down' layers of analysis of participant interview data. For this investigation, I was not interested in producing a theory of professional identity formation which could be empirically verified; instead, I wanted to focus on uncovering factors related to professional experiences and actions of dance teachers which might be influential in the formation of their professional identities. Aligned to this focus, was a curiosity regarding how dance teachers (or more specifically, the participants of this investigation) articulated their perceptions of the impact of their experiences and actions on their professional identity formation. The unit of analysis for this investigation was, therefore, on individuals (dance teachers) rather than process which is a hallmark feature of grounded theory.

In a similar vein, I did not consider narrative inquiry, case studies or ethnographic approaches entirely appropriate as I was not looking to explore the life experiences of individuals as stand-alone accounts, nor was the intention to investigate a specific event or a particular culture. However, in rejecting these three approaches I was aware that there may be areas of focal crossover in whatever approach I adopted as, through the process of interview, participants would recount their professional life experiences unique to themselves yet possibly with a degree of similarity when compared to other dance teachers.

In reviewing the possible research strategies which could potentially be adopted for this investigation, it became increasingly apparent that settling on a specific research

strategy was perhaps less important than understanding my 'research self' as "...neutral excavator of experiences..." (Cousin, 2009: 188). These contemplations presented me with several hermeneutic dilemmas as, having been a dance teacher, I would not be coming to the investigation with a 'blank slate'. Potentially, I will have had similar experiences as those of the participants in this investigation. Thus, unlike a 'neutral excavator', I would be engaging in a 'hermeneutic circle' (Smith *et al.* 2009) in which I would be drawing on my own experiences and perceptions whilst facilitating the thought processes of the participants. This researcher neutrality predicament is also highlighted by other commentators (Cousin, 2009; Larsson and Holmström, 2007; Åskerlin, 2005) who suggest that researchers who attempt to adopt a 'neutral excavator' role are inevitably challenged by efforts to put to one side their own experiences and perceptions. Rather than viewing such a prospect as a drawback, I viewed my 'insider' position as being a potentially advantageous dimension which would enable me to a) construction questions in the semi-structured interview schedule which I felt would support interviewees in revealing their internal 'authored selves' to another, and b) choreograph the delivery of the interviews as conversational partnerships where the interviewer acted as facilitator through shared dialogical questioning by both the interviewer and the interviewee (Yates *et al.*, 2012).

### **3. Participant selection**

A purposeful sampling process was employed to identify participants for this investigation. Purposeful sampling is commonly employed by researchers when investigating phenomena within their profession; that is, when researchers have 'insider' knowledge, or when the focus of the investigation requires participants to have expertise and/or experience in certain areas (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008). As my position of Director of Education and Training for the Royal Academy of Dance brings me into contact with a wide range of dance teachers from within and outside the organisation, I also employed a snowball sampling strategy whereby I asked colleagues to refer dance teachers from within their networks who met the selection criteria.

The selection criteria for participation in this investigation were quite broad:

- To be a dance teacher with a dance *genre* specialism
- To work predominately in one dance context

Characteristics such as the number of years as a dance teacher, ethnicity and gender were not determinants of participation as the research questions were purposively framed to be neutral in terms of these variables. However, in order to provide a sense of the gender mix of the participant for this investigation, I decided to give gender-aligned pseudonyms for each of the participants (Table 1 refers)

Through my professional knowledge of the dance teacher population, I recognised that increasingly dance teachers have experience in teaching a range of *genres* across a range of contexts. Nonetheless, most dance teachers will consider themselves to be specialists of a specific dance *genre* and will spend most of their time teaching in a single dance context. These two factors (dance *genre* specialism and regular teaching context) were used to focus participants' thoughts during the interview stage of the investigation.

In total, 12 dance teachers in England were selected. Table 1 indicates the context and dance *genre* of the participants. The table also makes reference to the pseudonyms given to each of the participants.

Participants 1-4 taught within public contexts. Ida and Belinda taught in secondary schools, with Gary and Liam teaching in higher education institutions. Peter, Isabelle, Eliza and Anne all taught in private dance studios, with Helen, Grace, Sue and Alvita delivering community dance classes and initiatives across a number of different locations. Of the 12 participants, nine were female and three were male, with 11 identifying as White British and one participant identifying as Black British.

<b>Context</b>	<b>Genre</b>
Public	
Participant 1 Ida	Contemporary
Participant 2 Belinda	Contemporary
Participant 3 Gary	Ballet
Participant 4 Liam	Contemporary
Private	
Participant 5 Peter	Ballet
Participant 6 Isabelle	Ballet
Participant 7 Eliza	Tap
Participant 8 Anne	Modern Jazz
Community	
Participant 9 Helen	Musical Theatre
Participant 10 Grace	Inclusive Dance
Participant 11 Sue	Ballet
Participant 12 Alvida	Contemporary

Table 1: Dance *genres* and contexts of participants

#### **4. Identifying the information required to conduct the investigation**

In order to reveal how the selected participants perceived their professional identities, and the potential impact these perceptions might have on current and potential career possibilities, I was conscious of the need to have a clear focus on the type of information I was looking to gather; thus, I devised the following bullet-list guide as a starting point for devising potential questions for the semi-structured interviews:

- Perceptions of agency in influencing and/or shaping professional identity formation (in relation to research sub-questions 1 and 2);
- Compliance with normative expectations related to the positionality of dance teaching within and outside the profession (in relation to research sub-questions 1 and 2);
- Articulation of opportunities and barriers which shape professional identity formation (in relation to research sub-question 3).

Noted here is how the bullet-list guide relates to the concepts of agency and positionality which underpin theoretical perspectives of identity formation presented in Chapter 2. Identity formation can be seen to be informed by transformative acts (acting, or not, on personal agency – Archer, 2003; Holland *et al.* 2001; Benhabib, 1992) and relational comparisons, (complying, or not, with expectations of self, others and professional fields – Wenger, 1998; Bourdieu 1993), all of which is situated within a time-space continuum (Giddens, 1984).

Concepts of agency and positionality as themes which inform professional identity formation are not, however, a result of value-free artefacts of particular theoretical perspectives; instead, these themes have been identified as possible influences of professional identity formation as experienced by myself as a dance teacher. In identifying the information required to respond to the research questions, I was aware of some of the biases of my experiential being which might shroud the gathering and interpretation of the information. With this realisation, I found the metaphor of the researcher (or interviewer) as a ‘traveller’ (Kvale, 2011) useful in reminding me that whilst I would be interpreting the narratives of others to produce new knowledge I would also be deconstructing and reconstructing my own values, beliefs and experiences. This pragmatic standpoint is indicative of a postmodernist approach to interpretative qualitative research (Creswell, 2009).

## **5. Overview of implementing the research design**

Identifying what needed to be implemented in conducting the research required for this investigation went through a series of stages:

1. Review of literature related to identity formation (including professional identity formation);
2. Identification of potential participants and approaching each through face-to-face meetings and/or email exchanges. Each potential participant received an invitation to participate in the research via email. The invitation outlined the purpose of the investigation and how each participant would be involved (Appendix 1);
3. Confirmation of interview dates/times. The majority of interviews were conducted face-to-face (N=9) while some were conducted via Skype (N=3). Ahead of the interview proper, participants completed consent forms (Appendix 2) stating that they understood their involvement as interviewees;
4. Creation of a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix 3). Each interview lasted between 45 – 60 minutes and was recorded on a Dictaphone;
5. Transcription and analysis of the interviews within and between groups of interviewees.

## **6. Identifying a data collection tool**

### *6.1 Selection of a data collection tool*

A semi-structured interview was selected as the sole qualitative method of data collection. This data collection tool was decided upon as it was felt that it would be the most appropriate in eliciting responses which would address the research questions. Semi-structured interviews are commonly used as a data collection tool in qualitative research (Mears, 2017; Punch, 2014/2009; Yeo *et al.*, 2014; Robson, 2011; Kvale, 2011; Creswell, 2009; Cousin, 2009; Mason, 2002) as these can provide deep level and nuanced data which is often bereft in quantitative surveys or questionnaires (Mason, 2002).

The decision to use a semi-structured interview as the tool for gathering information also aligns to my personal beliefs as an 'insider' researcher. Firstly, I consider knowledge of professional identity formation of dance teachers, and therefore 'evidence' of that knowledge, to be "... contextual, situational and interactional..."

(Mason, 2002: 66). Moreover, for the purposes of this investigation I was interested in how participants articulated their perceptions of a range of experiences as dance teachers which were meaningful to them, and how they justified their actions as a result of those experiences. This position is in opposition to describing and/or commenting on certain events (Punch, 2014; Yeo *et al.*, 2014; Cousin, 2009; Mason, 2002) which would be aligned more towards a phenomenological approach. In short, I was interested in revealing aspects of the person rather than aspects of an event. Secondly, as an 'insider' researcher I was aware of my own role in the investigative process; that of being an active participant reflecting upon and challenging my own understanding and perceptions in the interpretation of the research 'problem' and narratives of others (Blaikie, 2010; Mason, 2002). This position aligns itself with that of qualitative researchers who use interviews as a data collection tool. In doing so, researchers find themselves engaging in a double (during and post the interview stage), if not triple (pre, during and post the interview stage), hermeneutic process which challenges pre-understandings ahead of transformed interpretations and post-understandings. (Blaikie, 2010; Alvesson. and Sköldbberg ,2000).

## *6.2 Reflecting on potential limitations of semi-structured interviews*

Notwithstanding the positive aspects of employing a semi-structured interview, I was also conscious of some of the potential limitations of a semi-structured interview as a means of data collection in terms of methodological and interpretive credibility (validity) and dependability (reliability) (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008). After thinking about the impact of these two aspects on the integrity of the outcomes of the investigation, I concluded that what would be gained in terms of validity in implementing a semi-structured interview (which presupposes that the interview questions address the research questions) outweighed any losses in terms of reliability, that is, the stories told by participants one day may be very different if told on another day. To address my concerns regarding reliability in relation to the accuracy of information, transcribed interviews were given to participants so that they could amend or omit any of the dialogue as recorded in the interview. None of the participants amended the transcripts significantly, with any amendments received relating to misspellings.

While I was reasonably assured that using a semi-structured interview would enable me to access the information needed to conduct the investigation, I was concerned that not triangulating the results from this data collection tool with other data sources would impact the investigation's validity and reliability. Being aware that methodological concepts of validity and reliability do not sit easily within an interpretative approach, I looked towards how the investigation would address methodological credibility. (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008). The concept of methodological credibility is underpinned by establishing that the outcomes of an investigation are plausible. Such plausibility is not evidenced by triangulation of data or inter-rater reliability of others each coding interview transcripts (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014). Instead, it has been suggested that methodological credibility can only be determined by the researcher, participants of the investigation, and the intended audience for which the investigation has been purposed. (Patton, 1999).

In reviewing some of the literature which addresses methodological credibility (Coe *et al.*, 2017; Arthur, *et al.*, 2012; Robson, 2011; King and Horrocks, 2011; Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008, Patton, 1999), it became evident that for the outcomes of this investigation to be seen to hold methodological credibility that I would need to ensure that I checked for consistency in how participants articulated their professional identities, and to be aware of commonalities and outliers emerging from the analysis of interview transcripts, in other words, comparing perspectives of participants who have had differing experiences of being dance teachers. In doing so, however, I would need to be aware that it was unlikely that what would emerge was a single, consistent picture. Instead, I would need to be attuned to understanding why there were differences, and the circumstances which led to those differences. Adopting a consistent approach in identifying patterns as expressed by the different participants would contribute to the overall credibility of the emerging messages of the investigation. Moreover, as well as establishing my credibility as an insider researcher, for example how my personal and professional knowledge of being a dance teacher may affect my interpretation of emerging message either positively or negatively (Patton, 1999), I would need to be prepared to return to my synthesis and analysis of the data time and time again to be satisfied that the concepts, categories, emerging messages, and interpretations of those emerging messages, not only

made sense but also reflected the nature of professional identities of dance teachers.

In reflecting on these multiple challenges, I decided to keep a written journal as an *aide memoire* to record my 'inner voice' interpretations of information revealed during the interview stage and in the analysis of the transcripts. In doing so, I was hoping that the written journal would provide a tangible record of my own thinking and decision-making processes to aid my analytical appraisal of the outcomes.

As much of the literature on qualitative research (for example, Coe *et al.*, 2017; Robson, 2011; Creswell, 2009, Cousin, 2007) alludes to the sometimes ring-fenced nature of qualitative research investigations, reliability through volume is rarely achieved. Instead, it has been suggested that the dependability of a qualitative investigation is situated in terms of researchers being alert to "... the findings [being] consistent and dependable with the data collected." (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008: 86). In taking on this viewpoint, I was aware that I would need to be alert to inconsistencies as evidenced through the interview narratives and to account for these inconsistencies in my analysis of the overall outcomes.

In addition to issues of credibility and dependability of data emanating from semi-structured interviews, I was also aware of potential 'participant reactivity' (Maxwell, 1996 as cited in Bloomberg and Volpe. 2008: 87), in other words, how participant responses might be influenced by my position as a professional colleague turned researcher/interviewer. While the effect of interpersonal dynamics in any interview situation has the potential to influence responses, I felt that my position as an 'insider' may in fact work in my favour as participants might feel reassured that their views would be understood by someone with shared experiences, and therefore be more open in articulating their perceptions. This view was predicated by my many years of 'getting to know' the mindsets of dance teachers, many of whom are often reluctant to engage in discourse with others outside of the profession. In order to address concerns of participant reactivity, I spent some time ahead of commencing the interviews proper by explaining to participants that I was adopting the role of researcher and, as such, that they should respond to my questions as if they were being asked by an 'interested other' rather than an 'invested other'.

## **7. The interview schedule and process**

### *7.1 Outcome of the pilot interview stage*

Ahead of conducting the interviews proper, I trialled one pilot interview to assess the extent to which the questions would elicit the type of information required to address the research questions, and to observe ‘in action’ how participants might engage with the interview questions. Post the pilot interview, I discussed with the interviewee (an experienced dance teacher and dance teacher educator) the clarity of the questions and whether or not the questions might be better framed. Feedback from the interviewee, in addition to further reading related to the literature review (Chapter 2) and on interviewing techniques (Kvale, 2011; King and Horrocks. 2011; Mason, 2002) led to amendments to the wording of the interview questions and addition of potential ‘prompt’ questions.

### *7.2 Interview Process*

The interview process commenced with asking participants to provide some background information in relation to their dance teaching careers. Rather than requiring participants to complete a Participant Background Information (PBI) form ahead of the interviews proper, as was the case for my Institution-Focused Study (IFS) *A Sense of Belonging? Exploring Individual and Collective Identities of Ballet Teachers* (2015), I decided to ask participants to provide this information *in situ* as 1) past experience suggested that dance teachers were reluctant to complete PBI forms in advance, and 2) I felt that the background information questions would serve as an ‘ice-breaker’ to the interview process. The interviews took place between October – December 2017, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim by myself. Ahead of the data analysis stage, participants were given the opportunity to read the transcripts of his/her interview and make amendments.

## **8. Ethical Considerations**

### *8.1 Obtaining ethical consent and ethical deliberation*

This investigation adhered to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2014) and *Good Practice in*

*Educational Research Writing* (2003). As the research methodologies for this investigation, and the approaches for gathering information from participants, did not depart from my IFS *A Sense of Belonging? Exploring Individual and Collective Identities of Ballet Teachers*, ethical approval in 2010 from (what was then) the Institute of Education followed through to this investigation. I also received ethical approval for this investigation from the Royal Academy of Dance Research Ethics Committee (2012).

Before signing a consent form, participants were asked if they had any questions relating to the purpose of the study or how the interview data would be used. Participants were reminded that they were not obliged to respond to any questions which they felt uncomfortable answering and were assured of anonymity in that their names and places of work would not be revealed. Participants were also reminded that they could withdraw from the interview at any stage. At the end of the interview, participants were asked if they had any further questions and informed that they would receive a written transcript of the interview which they could amend if required.

All recordings were password-protected on the recording device. Transcriptions were loaded to a USB stick which was encrypted.

In addition to the BERA guidelines, other ethical considerations were taken into account. The importance of ethical deliberation should not be restricted to the methodological aspects of a research activity; instead, ethics should run throughout the entire research process (Webster *et.al.*, 2014; Mason 2002). While codes of ethical practice are important, adherence to these guidelines is only one part of engaged ethical conduct (Hammersley, 2017; Oancea, 2014; Cousin, 2009; Mason, 2002). 'Good ethics' can facilitate 'good research' through informed decisions regarding epistemic, procedural and technical aspects of an investigation; that is, how well an investigation adheres to theoretical, philosophical and application aspects of best practice (Oancea, 2014; Cousin 2009). However, there are also situated considerations to be made: How will the outcomes of the research be beneficial (and to whom)? How will the research activity impact on participants during and post the data collection phase? (Hammersley, 2017; Oancea 2014). Throughout this investigation I found myself returning to these questions, not only in

terms of my own decision-making but also in terms of me questioning how the outcomes of the investigation might challenge commonly-held beliefs on what it is to be a dance teacher.

### *8.2 The interplay between informed consent and positions of power*

Whilst obtaining informed consent from participants ensures, to a certain extent, that guidelines for ethical research are addressed, there are additional circumstances which are not always discussed in codes of conduct which insider researchers need to be aware of. Insider researchers, that is, researchers who undertake research in their own institutions, or with participants within their professional fields of practice, may bring with them positions of power which may impact the extent to which informed consent is truly free from coercion or feelings of entrapment (Malone, 2003). Participants may feel obliged to agree to take part in research studies undertaken by their peers, even if these peers do not have direct line management responsibilities of participants, or connection with their everyday functioning as professionals. While such situations may not immediately be seen as problematic, the idea of 'peer pressure' may be as insidious as perceived coercion by one who holds a managerial or professional position of power.

Researchers ('inside' or otherwise) may be perceived by participants to be in positions of power by virtue of 'knowing' about research, and the academic nomenclature of conducting research. If a participant perceives a researcher to be more 'knowledgeable', this may result in participants being reticent in giving responses to interview questions for fear of appearing foolish or, after the event, feeling anxious about how their responses will be viewed by the more 'knowledgeable' other. Moreover, while letters seeking informed consent will state that participants are free to withdraw at any point of the research process, some participants may be reluctant to do so, even if they so wished, for fear of unknown consequences (for example, reputational damage) if they did decide to withdraw from the research.

The questions outlined above gave rise to me thinking about my potential position of power, both as an interviewer and an insider researcher. While I did not have any direct line management responsibilities of the participants, nor did I have any direct

relationships with their day-to-day work as dance teachers, the dance world is relatively small and connected. Being aware of the variables of power relationships which may arise in requesting participants to take part in the research, and in being interviewed by me, I thought about strategies which I might be able to adopt to ameliorate any disparities related to positions of power. In conducting the interviews, I had handwritten on my sheet of interview questions reminders to ask participants during the course of the interviews if they were happy to continue. I also wrote myself reminders that if I observed participants struggling with responses to my questions that I should reiterate that the conversations were confidential and would not be shared outside the confines of the interview room. I was also aware that my non-verbal communication signs may signal expressions of surprise, impatience or derision, each of which might be associated with one in a position of power exerting authority over one in a position of less authority. The extent to which I was successful in addressing perceptions of power differentials was, I believe, evidenced in the manner in which participants positively and openly engaged in the interview process.

### **9. Towards uncovering how dance teachers perceive their professional identities across time, space and practice and in relation to passive and active agency and materialist and idealist positioning**

This chapter has provided an overview of the epistemic, procedural and technical considerations and applications which have informed the methodological stance and research approach underpinning this investigation. In addition, justifications for why certain decisions were taken have been outlined in order for others to gain a sense of my journey during this process. In devising and implementing what I hope to be a suitable methodological framework, I have come to appreciate how this phase of a research project extends beyond recognising and embedding best methodological practice and expectations of that practice. As an insider researcher, I encountered many instances during this phase when I had to consult, ponder and reconstruct my initial thinking, knowledge and understanding, all of which has led me to a more attuned appreciation of what it is to be an insider researcher within the research process.

Through establishing a methodological approach which underpins this investigation, the next chapter presents extracts from the conversations between myself and the selected participants to uncover insights into how dance teachers perceived and articulated their professional identities in relation to factors of time, space and practice, passive and active agency, and materialist and idealist positioning. It is envisaged that extracts from these conversations will reveal information and themes which, when synthesised and analysed in Chapter 5, will form the basis for shaping the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers.

## **Chapter 4: Connecting the ‘stories’: examining perceptions of dancer teachers’ professional identities**

### **1. Introduction and purpose**

This chapter presents extracts from the ‘stories’ told by participants during the interview stage of the investigation. The term ‘stories’ is used here purposively, as it became increasingly evident during the interview stage, and in transcribing the conversations into written transcripts, that participants were not merely responding to questions asked by myself; instead, they were providing ‘authored’ narratives drawn from their experiences and perceptions of being dance teachers

Through the telling of their stories, what began to emerge is how factors which informed perceptions of their professional identities were being articulated through the domains of time, space and practice. In hearing their stories, I listened very carefully to how the participants articulated their sense of agency, as well as how teaching different dance *genres* in different contexts aligned to materialist and/or idealist positionings. I was also struck by how the various narratives situated professional identities in the personal and social, the individual (“*I am a [dance] teacher*”) and collective (“*I am a [dance] teacher*”), as well as aspects of change and continuity. On the surface, these latter characteristics may appear to be somewhat contradictory – how can something be stable and yet evolving? Questioning of such incongruities is perhaps indicative of the complexity in understanding the multiplicity of convergent as well as divergent factors which inform the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of professional identities.

As well as factors related to passive and active agency, and materialist and idealist positionings, themes of identification with other dance teachers, the expectations of how certain dance *genres* should be taught, and challenges presented by drivers within and outside the profession for greater accountability were weaved into the story-telling. It was during the interview stage that I began to realise that other sub themes such as identification, power and accountability may also be significant factors when reflecting on professional identities of dance teachers.

The structure of the chapter is in two parts. First, I will present extracts from the conversations with participants teaching in public contexts (Ida, Belinda, Gary and Liam), followed by participants teaching in the private sector (Peter, Isabelle, Eliza and Anne) and finally from the conversations with participants teaching in community contexts (Helen, Grace, Sue and Alvita). It is envisaged that presenting extracts from the conversations will enable readers to gain insight into how each of the participants perceived and articulated aspects of their professional identities as dance teachers. The second part of this chapter will consider sub themes which began to emerge from the story-telling of being a dance teacher. In addition to factors related to passive and active agency, and materialist an idealist positioning, these sub themes may become significant in understanding how dance teachers perceive and articulate their professional identities.

## **2. Participant stories of being dance teachers**

### *2.1 Perceptions and experiences of being a dance teacher in public contexts*

For this investigation, four dance teachers who taught dance in public contexts were interviewed. The following section presents a snapshot of the conversations which allude to how these dance teachers perceived and articulated their professional identities.

Ida had been teaching dance in a secondary school for three years. In talking about why she became a dance teacher, Ida took some time reflecting on the question before responding:

So, I was asked this [question] in my interview for my PGCE course as well, and I remember my response was something along the lines of well, I am a dance teacher. **(Ida)**

Ida's hesitation in responding to the question of why she became a dance teacher is perhaps indicative of how some dance teachers may struggle with delineating their 'personal selves' from their 'professional selves' as dance teachers. In Chapter 2, it was suggested that there was an intricate interplay between personal identity formation and professional identity formation. My initial interpretation of Ida's articulation of her professional identity was that she perceived an intrinsic connection between her professional identity and perceptions of her personal self.

As our conversation progressed, it became apparent that Ida was sometimes challenged when situations arose in her teaching of dance which did not align comfortably with characteristics which she associated with her personal identity. When considering her practices as a dance teacher, Ida expressed some frustration in that she felt her active agency was, at times, restricted by having to adhere to external expectations:

I find teaching in secondary schools quite constrictive. The more courses you go on to find ways of teaching a syllabus, the more you begin to realise that there's a hidden curriculum which you are expected to follow. It's like you know what you want to do but you have half an eye on what you are expected to do. **(Ida)**

While recognising some of the constraints of working in a secondary school context, Ida also articulated clear personal values and beliefs in her teaching of contemporary dance techniques. To this end, it appeared that Ida was actively exploring ways of embedding her values and beliefs within her teaching of dance classes, whilst also being seen to adhere to external expectations. In outlining her career progression as a dance teacher, it was clear that, over time, Ida had drawn on her active agency in making career choices. Ida spoke about how she saw the potential for teaching in different contexts, and to extend her teaching *repertoire* beyond that of contemporary dance techniques. As a result of her training as a dance student, Ida expressed the importance she placed on upholding expectations of how different dance *genres* should be taught rather than challenging conventions. To this end, Ida was positioning her professional identity towards the materialist end of the materialist/idealist spectrum.

Like Ida, Belinda has taught dance in a secondary school context for just over three years. Belinda also expressed frustration with some of the structures and expectations within secondary school contexts, particularly in relation to her being able to enact her active agency:

Exam pressure is one of the biggest barriers to teaching dance in secondary schools. You could have all of these wonderful ideas of things you want to teach, but if it doesn't quite fit within the timescale of the year, or it doesn't quite fit within the specification that you are teaching, you have to leave all your great ideas to one side. That can be frustrating. **(Belinda)**

External accountability requirements also appeared to impact on Belinda's practice as a dance teacher. While these accountability requirements gave rise to frustration and an inner turmoil, Belinda appeared to be somewhat accepting of the situation:

I was teaching 45 minute dance lessons and it became almost impossible to demonstrate progress, to teach them literacy, to show I was teaching them numeracy. But this was what was expected. **(Belinda)**

Despite such resignation, Belinda also articulated ways in which she exercised active agency through her approaches to shaping her practice (valuing process over product) and her career progression. Belinda spoke positively about potential opportunities to take her teaching into different contexts and to teach different dance *genres*, despite not having prior experience of either. This perceived eagerness appeared to be rooted in her articulation of personal identity characteristics (for example, competitiveness) rather than through identification of transferrable knowledge, understanding and skills developed through her teaching of contemporary dance. Belinda did not express a desire to challenge expectations which shaped contemporary dance as a dance *genre*, nor in the teaching of that *genre*. Instead, Belinda emphasised the importance of technique and knowledge of the subject from a materialist perspective.

In contrast to Ida and Belinda, Gary taught ballet on a dance degree programme in higher education for the past three years. Gary had previously trained as a ballet student at a vocational ballet school, and had a career as a professional dancer before making the transition to dance teaching. Interestingly, Gary had previously taught dance in a secondary school context for about two years as a qualified secondary school teacher before making the transition to higher education.

In talking about being a dance teacher, it was clear that Gary's articulation of what it was to be a dance teacher was influenced, in part, by his experiences as a ballet student and professional dancer. Alignment to some of the legacies of ballet practices was articulated by Gary as he described his approaches to teaching ballet:

... based on my own experience from the XX School [a highly regarded vocational ballet school], I say to my students things that my teachers said that I have remembered. **(Gary)**

In listening to Gary, I was struck by how normative expectations of ballet as a dance *genre*, and the expectations of teaching ballet, had influenced Gary's perceptions of his professional identity as a dance teacher. Nonetheless, it appeared that, over time, Gary had begun to move away from such rigorous adherence to historical legacies associated with ballet. However, as alluded to in Chapter 2, when dance teachers are seen to disregard historical expectations of practice, a perception of ill-discipline may prevail. Gary expressed such a perception as being a potential obstacle as he considered how other ballet teachers might view him as a ballet teacher:

Ballet does have quite a tight mindset in terms of what a ballet teacher looks like and acts and behaves and what they wear. I don't wear ballet shoes when I teach and I think some of them [other ballet teachers] can misconstrue that with not having a high expectation...but I have super high expectations. **(Gary)**

Notwithstanding historical legacies and expectations associated with ballet as a dance *genre*, Gary noted a change in approaches to teaching ballet which aligned to his personal values and beliefs:

When I went back to watch at the XX School [a highly regarded vocational ballet school] last year there was a lot more dialogue between the teacher and the student that wasn't there when I was at the school, which is quite interesting to see. I think they are trying to embrace more reflection from what I briefly saw there, which is what I'm trying to do more of in my teaching. **(Gary)**

During our conversation, it appeared that Gary was becoming more confident in expressing the importance of valuing inclusivity, facilitation and empowerment of students through forging more democratic relationships between teachers and students. I became increasingly aware that Gary was beginning to reflect on the significance of these concepts in his teaching of ballet. As Gary reflected on his practices, he identified how his approaches had evolved over time, and noted that his practices did not always align with views of how ballet should be taught. Gary also articulated that teaching ballet within a higher education context afforded greater opportunities for him to enact active agency which he felt empowered him as a dance teacher.

In reflecting on Gary's story, I noted what was akin to a narrative of two halves. On the one hand, Gary's professional identity as a dance teacher was being expressed through the lens of a materialist positioning as he articulated the value he placed in adhering to normative expectations. On the other hand, Gary was also negotiating a proxy of those normative expectations by enacting active agency in making changes to his teaching of ballet and challenging the expectations of others. What also struck me was Gary's apparent reluctance to consider his potential to teach a dance *genre* other than ballet, though he would have had to do so when he taught dance in secondary schools. It seemed that Gary held in high regard the specialist knowledge requirements of teaching particular dance *genres*, without which dance teachers would experience "...psychological tension..." (Gary) if they were to venture into teaching different *genres* and/or contexts.

Like Gary, Liam had made the transition from teaching dance in a secondary school to higher education where he taught contemporary dance. Throughout the conversation, Liam made reference to how teaching within higher education provided him with greater freedom as a dance teacher, allowing him to demonstrate his belief that dance teaching should facilitate transformative thinking as well as transformative practice. Much of Liam's reflection on his teaching of contemporary dance within higher education appeared to be informed by his experiences of teaching dance in secondary schools, which he perceived to be much more restrictive:

In secondary schools you're teaching to specifications, with examples being prescribed about what you must do, these are the choreographers you must study, these are the set studies. You have to make sure you do certain things whether you want to or not just so you can tick the boxes in case someone walks in. It's not like that in HE. **(Liam)**

While articulating a somewhat materialist standpoint in terms of aligning his teaching practices to the expectations of contemporary dance as a dance *genre*, exemplars which evidenced active or passive agency did not appear to significantly inform Liam's story. However, in terms of what he wanted to achieve as a dance teacher, and in imagining his future career trajectory, Liam expressed aspirations which I

interpreted as envisaging his active agency, as opposed to acting on his potential active agency. I sensed that Liam was in a phase of reconstruction of his professional identity as he reflected on his past experiences in internally contemplating new possibilities as a result of greater freedom as a dance teacher in higher education.

In considering the stories of Ida, Belinda, Guy and Liam, it seemed that there was an array of structures within public contexts which impacted on how dance teachers were able to engage with active agency. Managerial structures within secondary school contexts appeared to require greater compliance with externally imposed accountability, while higher education contexts, being less restrictive and prescribed, allowed for exploration of one's professional identity without having "...half an eye on what you are expected to do." (Ida). All four participants expressed the importance of acknowledging normative expectations which shaped the teaching of a dance *genre*, even when a dance *genre* (for example, contemporary dance) may be viewed by some as being more idealist in its *raison d'être*. While Ida and Belinda did not explicitly talk about power relationships being barriers to their practices as dance teachers, I did sense, particularly during my conversation with Belinda, that there were elements of hierarchical power constructs within public contexts which impacted on how Ida and Belinda perceived their agencies.

## *2.2 Perceptions and experiences of being a dance teacher in private contexts*

Along similar lines as the participants who taught dance with the public sector, four dance teachers who taught in private dance contexts were interviewed. This group of participants consisted of Peter and Isabelle, both of whom taught ballet, Eliza who taught tap dance and Anne who taught modern jazz.

Peter had been teaching ballet at various private dance schools for over 10 years. A standout feature of Peter's story was his active engagement in developing his practice and professional development as a dance teacher. Like Gary, Peter acknowledged the historical legacies which informed the teaching of ballet. In our conversation, however, Peter was quite forward in citing examples where he actively

challenged expectations which underpinned the teaching ballet, culminating in the following declaration:

It's almost like ballet teachers have just accepted certain traditions. We just do it and do it and do it. But having read a lot in dance science I'm thinking "Well, actually, why do we do this to ourselves, putting pressure on our knees doing *pliés* at the start?" If anyone questions me now on why I might put *pliés* halfway through the *barre*, I know I could back it up. **(Peter)**

I interpreted Peter's questioning of expectations which shaped the teaching of ballet as a reflective product of his personal values and beliefs being negotiated against the dominance of normative expectations. Peter appeared to be aligning his professional identity with perceptions of personal self against stereotypical expectations of ballet teachers. This being the case, I perceived Peter's articulation of his professional identity as a dance teacher being mapped against an idealist positioning.

Like Ida and Belinda's experiences of teaching dance in public contexts, Peter revealed a degree of frustration in trying to enact active agency against a background of compliance. Peter was a member of a professional membership organisation which used a code of professional conduct to regulate its teaching membership. In reflecting on how professional membership organisations exert control over dance teachers, Peter expressed the following view:

From my experience, most dance teachers see membership organisations as the be all and end all, whichever organisation they're affiliated with. There's almost a feeling of indoctrination and whatever an organisation says that's the way it needs to be done, otherwise you'll get in trouble. That makes it difficult for teachers like me who want to bring myself into my teaching and not be a clone. **(Peter)**

While Peter recognised that professional membership organisations had a strong influence on dance teachers, he did not appear to be fearful of challenging authority in order to instigate change as to how he, or others, perceived his professional standing as a dance teacher.

Given my initial perception of Peter being proactive in developing his career beyond the teaching ballet in private dance schools, I was curious to hear how he would

respond to the possibility of teaching a dance *genre* which was not currently in his *repertoire*:

If I was asked to teach ballroom I'd have to do a whole load of research, watch a lot of videos, do a whole load of reading. Because I'd be outside my comfort zone I'd have to question my level of comfortableness in teaching ballroom and be confident that I'd get the end product right. I'm guessing that ballroom students would have certain expectations on what should be taught and how it should be taught. **(Peter)**

Despite Peter's professional identity narrative being framed by a proactive attitude in seeking out new opportunities and challenging normative expectations, my curiosity was further piqued as to why Peter would feel uncomfortable in teaching a different dance *genre* in a context other than a private dance school. What emerged was Peter's perception that dance teachers should have specialist knowledge, understanding and skills in the teaching of a particular dance *genre*. Moreover, Paul felt that dance teachers had a moral and professional responsibilities to meet the expectations of students learning a particular dance *genre* in a particular dance context. This being the case I was also curious to see if other participants in this investigation held the same views.

Isabelle had been teaching ballet for over 15 years, and was the head of her own private dance school. Throughout our conversation, Isabelle consistently referred to her teaching as being intrinsic to her personal self. For Isabelle, personal values and beliefs were fundamental to her practice, as was constant reflection on the *how* and *what* of teaching. In articulating the potential influence of historical legacies and traditions of ballet on her professional identity, and how these legacies and traditions were passed from one generation to the next, Isabelle noted the following:

I suppose the net that you stand on as a ballet teacher comes from your first teacher and the teachers before them. It's woven around you as you've grown up. You stand by those traditions and you bring them with you. **(Isabelle)**

It was clear to me that Isabelle was a passionate upholder of ballet's historical legacies and traditions, and that these aspects were important in how she shaped her professional identity as a dance teacher. As I listened to Isabelle, I began to think back to my earlier conversations with Gary (also from a ballet background),

and Ida who, in framing their professional identities as ballet and contemporary dance teachers, were also drawn to normative expectations based on historical legacies. What began to emerge, quite unexpectedly, was how allegiance to historical legacies and traditions might not only be restricted to ballet as a dance *genre* but could also extend to other dance *genres* and potentially other dance contexts.

While Isabelle appeared to place importance on the past in reflecting on herself as a dance teacher, she also appeared to be attuned to present day expectations which she drew upon in articulating her professional identity. Like Peter, Isabelle was also a member of a professional membership organisation which appeared to be very influential in how she perceived herself as a dance teacher:

Membership organisations provide your framework, your training, your method. Hopefully those organisations are getting it right, they're continuing to raise the bar and they're continuing to maintain standards. So it's important for your credibility to make sure you're doing what's expected. Sure, your own dance teachers are influential, but it's the membership organisations which give you the status. **(Isabelle)**

It was interesting to note that Isabelle had commented on the *status* of being a dance teacher, and how she felt that such status was aligned to adherence to the expectations of professional membership organisations. Unlike Peter, who perceived adherence to such expectations as potentially limiting his active agency, it appeared that for Isabelle, aligning one's professional identity with an external authoritative body supported her active agency by encouraging her to aspire to high standards. Given Peter and Isabelle's different views on the influence of professional organisations on professional identities, I began to sense that dance teachers who taught the same dance *genre* in the same context could interpret similar experiences in very different ways. In reflecting on how different professional identity types (for example, a Passive Materialist or Active Materialist) would be revealed through implementation of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers, I began to realise that dance teachers within the same professional identity type could hold very different perceptions of their professional identities as dance teachers.

When I asked Isabelle about her thoughts on teaching a different dance *genre* in a different context, her response was direct and uncompromising:

I absolutely do not want to teach ballet in a secondary school. I like being a teacher in a private setting because the children that I teach have chosen to be there. I find it difficult to teach in an environment where somebody doesn't want to be there. That's not what I'm good at and that doesn't play to my strengths, so I'd avoid it at all cost. **(Isabelle)**

I was not totally surprised by Isabelle's response, given that during our conversation Isabelle regularly made reference to aspects of her professional identity which appeared to place her as a materialist upholder of the traditions of ballet. I did, however, begin to wonder if Isabelle's insistence that she did not want to extend her practices as a ballet teacher into different contexts was, in fact, a self-imposed restriction predicated by fear and uncertainty.

Eliza had taught tap dance for several years in various private dance schools. Having had similar dance training experiences as Ida, Eliza expressed that being a dance teacher was intrinsic to her personal self. As such, it appeared that at times Eliza struggled in trying to differentiate aspects of her personal self from those of her professional self. During our conversation, Eliza talked about how various interests outside of dance teaching were becoming more important to her personal self. Eliza felt that, quite unexpectedly, these other interests allowed her to reflect with greater insight on what it was to be a dance teacher, and therefore on her professional identity.

Eliza had previously taught ballet but, over time, found that teaching this dance *genre* was restricting her intrinsic desire to bring more creativity into her teaching practice:

As a tap teacher, what's really important to me is creativity and inspiration, and not being limited by syllabus. When I was teaching ballet for other teachers, there was an expectation that I would teach to enter kids for exams. I don't have that pressure as a tap teacher so I can be more creative. **(Eliza)**

Rather than continually feeling frustrated by the restrictions she perceived in the teaching of ballet, and in meeting the expectations of others, Eliza decided to make

the transition from ballet teacher to tap dance teacher. I interpreted Eliza's transition from one dance *genre* to another as evidence of her active agency, and as an attempt to align constructs of her personal identity with those of her professional identity. During our conversation, Eliza became quite animated when she spoke about looking to other tap dance teachers who were challenging normative expectations of teaching tap dance. It appeared to me that Eliza was proactively assimilating innovative practices into her teaching which she admitted caused "... the eyebrows of other dance teachers to be raised...". I sensed that Eliza's decision to move from teaching ballet to teaching tap dance had provided her with the impetus to envisage and enact idealist possibilities in her professional identity as a dance teacher.

Anne had taught modern jazz in a "...village community dance school..." for over 10 years. Of all of the participants who taught dance in the private context, I found Anne to articulate the greatest degree of passive agency, perhaps as a result of Anne positioning her dance teaching as a hobby rather than a vocation. Moreover, as our conversation progressed, it became clear that Anne looked to other modern jazz teachers in guiding her understanding of how modern jazz should be taught rather than initiating and acting upon her own ideas. Anne expressed frustration in having to comply with external expectations, for example, parental expectations that their children should automatically be entered for dance examinations:

We've run this school as we wanted it to run, accepting any child however good or bad. We always say, "You don't have to do exams; it's up to you," but they all want to. At no point do we ever want a child to fail, that's not what they're here for, but they all want to do exams. We've had the odd, difficult conversation with parents where we've said "This is what we're doing and if it doesn't suit you, you'll need to go elsewhere." **(Anne)**

As I listened to Anne, I found myself thinking back to my conversation with Eliza who had also identified similar frustrations with having to teach to examination syllabi and enter students for examinations. However, unlike Eliza, Anne appeared to be resigned to her situation as a dance teacher rather than proactively challenging (and ultimately transforming) normative expectations.

In speaking with dance teachers outside of the scope of this investigation, it appeared that many private dance context teachers operated their dance schools as businesses and, as such, were content with providing a 'service' which was consumer-led. Over time, the expectation that students in private dance schools would be entered for dance examinations had become a normative expectation. For Anne, her professional identity as a dance teacher within a private dance context was clearly informed by an aspiration to make dance as inclusive as possible, as opposed to providing a service to consumers. In this sense, Anne was expressing an idealist positioning by cognitively, rather than actively, challenging expectations from within and outside of the field of dance teaching. This being the case, Anne's idealist aspirations appeared to be strongly tempered by a pull towards a materialist positioning as a result of adhering to external expectations.

In reflecting on my conversations with Peter, Isabelle, Eliza and Anne against conversations with the participants who taught dance in public contexts, I began to detect similar yet contextually different opportunities and barriers to agency. I was also beginning to sense that, regardless of the context within ballet, contemporary, tap or modern jazz dance *genres* were taught, the characteristics which identified and informed the teaching of those dance *genres*, made it difficult for some dance teachers to proactively engage with idealist aspirations.

### *2.3 Perceptions and experiences of being a dance teacher in community contexts*

This section presents extracts from my conversations with participants who taught dance in community contexts. Helen taught musical theatre, Grace taught inclusive dance, Sue taught adult ballet and Alvita taught contemporary dance.

Like Ida and Eliza, Helen was introduced to dance as a student in a private dance school. When asked why she became a dance teacher, Helen talked about the influence of her early experiences as a dance student:

My mum has a ballet school back home, and so at first I was dragged along to ballet. I think everybody kind of rebels against what their parents do, so I never thought that being a dance teacher would be me. But then I started to enjoy the bits of teaching I did ... so yeah, I guess my passion for

teaching has come from my mum and being involved in dance as a kid. That sort of stayed with me. **(Helen)**

For Helen, it appeared that the idea of becoming a dance teacher was at first masked by not wanting to follow in her mother's footsteps, yet at the same time the possibility of becoming a dance teacher was being surreptitiously nurtured through her engagement in ballet classes. Helen's response to why she became a dance teacher aligned to the proposition that when individuals engage in dance for many years, and often from an early age, their experiences of dance become part of their wider socialisation. However, as indicated by Rich (2014) and Goodson (2003), while personal identities can be shaped by early experiences of socialisation, the influence of such socialisation, and the impact on professional identities, may not become evident until some time afterwards. Indeed, as Helen began to reflect further on her dance teacher self, she appeared to be attempting to align a perceived disconnect between her personal identity of the past with her professional identity as a dance teacher in the present.

As Helen continued to reflect on her career as a dance teacher, it was clear that she had demonstrated activity agency, not only in terms of deciding to teach a range of different dance *genres* but also in taking her teaching into different dance contexts. Helen expressed a pride in what she had achieved as a community dance teacher, and that her transitions from private to public to community contexts had been self-directed. As our conversation progressed, what began to emerge were Helen's idealist aspirations to challenge stereotypes of who should teach dance and who should practice dance. Not being content with merely envisaging change, Helen was proactively instigating change and challenging normative expectations and practices.

Having taught dance in community contexts for several years, Helen voiced frustration about the increased accountability being required in a context which is perceived by some as being less restrictive:

When I worked in [secondary] school, all the paperwork that comes with that was really hard work. I came into community dance to have a break from all that. But when I was teaching for a community project run by a council the administration side was just as difficult as in school. I had to keep on at students to fill in forms when all they wanted to do was dance. I was even

expected to produce a career plan for one student who was in her 80s! [laughs] **(Helen)**

When I probed Helen on how she was dealing with such frustrations, it was clear that rather than feeling her professional values and beliefs were being compromised, she was actively seeking out opportunities to teach dance in other community settings which did not involve onerous accountability. The emerging impression of Helen's professional identity as a dance teacher was one which was shaped by active agency and idealist positioning.

Grace had been a community dance teacher for over 10 years. She had taught a range of dance *genres*, but was currently focussing on teaching inclusive dance classes for individuals with a range of physical, cognitive and emotional needs. For Grace, her professional identity as a dance teacher appeared to be very much aligned with her personal values and beliefs that dance should facilitate creative engagement and empower individuals:

I guess I have two passions in life. One of them is to enhance the life of others, to help other people basically fulfil themselves as humans... make sense of their lives. Dance is my other passion. I think you've got to have really strong integrity, your own personal integrity, and values. **(Grace)**

Throughout my conversation with Grace, what struck me was her ability to articulate her inner thoughts without much prompting, and with informed clarity and insight. I took this ability as a result of Grace having taken time to reflect on her professional identity as a dance teacher throughout her career. I should, therefore, not have been surprised at Grace's response when I asked her to tell me about herself as a dance teacher:

I don't really see myself as a dance teacher. The quick win if I'm meeting somebody is to say that I'm a dance teacher. If they look like they were going to engage with me for a couple of minutes, I might take them on a little bit of a journey to educate them on what I do as a dance *artiste*. As a dance *artiste* I don't 'teach' dance; I help students along their own individual journeys, whatever those may be, through the medium of dance. **(Grace)**

I remember that it was at this point in our conversation that I found myself pausing to reflect on what Grace had just articulated. My impression of those who taught dance in community contexts was a sense of collegiality, which might be expressed as “I am a [dance] *teacher*.” In seeing herself as a dance *artiste* rather than a dance teacher, I began to wonder if Grace’s perceptions of her professional identity as being beyond that of a dance teacher were in some way facilitated by the context within which she taught.

Like Helen, Grace also commented on some of the changes within community dance contexts which were beginning to emerge, and which she felt were restricting enactment of her active agency:

We're in a world where you have to fit in a box and if you don't then you're screwed. We're in a world where there's just so many people trying to get such little money and that's the problem. People who are making the decisions about how the money is spent in this country don't really care. It's all based on relationships, on who you know. If you're in the club, it's great. If you're not in the club then it sucks. **(Grace)**

In this example of limited funding for community dance projects, Grace not only expressed dissatisfaction with the situation but also how the situation had impacted on her professional identity in terms of being able to enact active agency. Later in the conversation, Grace commented on how she had become more “political” in her views of how community dance provision was funded. It appeared that despite what I perceived to be Grace’s current state of professional identity disequilibrium; she was in the process of reconstructing her professional identity through an evolving political lens.

When I asked Grace if she identified with any particular groups within or outside of community dance contexts, she paused for a moment before articulating the following observation:

There are certain teachers that XX [a dance organisation] obviously love. These teachers are the ones they always get to run their training courses by default, and I don't necessarily think that they're the best teachers. It leads me to look at myself as a dance teacher working in the community more

closely and question what I am doing, what I am giving. If these teachers are being held up as being what you should be aspiring to then I have to question my own practices. **(Grace)**

I sensed that for Grace, being presented with teacher role models who did not embrace her ethos of teaching dance in community contexts had initiated a further moment of disequilibrium in the validation of her personal and professional identities. It seemed to me that this disequilibrium had led Grace to question the values and beliefs which underpinned her personal and professional identities against the values, beliefs and practices which were being presented by others as normative expectations. Grace also revealed that while she felt slightly unsettled by her contemplations, such reflection did lead to a self-justification that what she was doing as a community dance teacher was commensurate with how she thought community dance should be experienced.

Sue had been teaching dance for over 10 years. At the start of her career as a dance teacher, Sue headed her own dance school in the private sector and taught a range of different dance *genres*. Over the last three years, Sue had focussed on teaching ballet to adult learners over the age of 55. In describing her experiences of making the transition from teaching dance in a private dance context to teaching adult ballet classes in community contexts, Sue expressed feelings of empowerment by not having to comply with overbearing accountability as dictated by professional membership bodies. Moreover, Sue felt that by working in community contexts she had gained confidence to "...break the rules..." and openly challenge assumptions about how ballet should be taught.

I was curious to know how Sue thought other ballet teachers viewed her teaching of ballet to older learners, who might be deemed atypical ballet students:

When I speak to my ballet teacher friends and I say, "I'm off to teach my oldies", there's almost a sense of, "Oh poor you... but then you're going to come and do your real teaching afterward in your ballet school [laughs]." **(Sue)**

While Sue appeared to take such comments with good grace, I was interested in probing her a little more to see if she really thought that other dance teachers considered dance in community contexts, and consequently dance teachers who

taught in community contexts, to be the poor relations. Reflecting on her training as a ballet teacher, Sue articulated the following observation:

I think the word community dance was not as prestigious to me. Although it was never talked about negatively, there was a tone of voice or a facial expression, "Oh, community dance." To me, it was definitely the poor relation but it's the one I now find most fulfilment from, actually. **(Sue)**

Unlike Isabelle, who had firmly situated herself in teaching ballet within private contexts, Sue had envisaged possibilities which challenged normative expectations of who should be taught ballet and the contexts where the learning and teaching of ballet could take place. Sue revealed that even as a dance student she never felt that she 'fitted in'. I wondered if Sue's perception of being on the periphery of normative expectations as a dance student had made her transition to teaching ballet in a different context and to atypical groups of students a less daunting prospect.

Alvita had been teaching dance for over 20 years. She started her dance journey as a student at a vocational contemporary dance school in London before becoming a professional contemporary dancer. Her career as a professional contemporary dancer took her to the United States where she was exposed to different practices and positionings of the learning and teaching of contemporary dance. On her return to England, Alvita focussed her teaching of contemporary dance in community settings.

When I asked Alvita how she would describe herself as a dance teacher, she took a few minutes to reflect on the question before responding:

It's about being inclusive... to get people to understand how to use their bodies. You read a lot in the press about the importance of engaging your mind as well as your body. Looking at that whole person that's in front of me is really important to me. That's how I would want to be seen. **(Alvita)**

Given Alvita's background, I was not particularly surprised that her response to my question identified aspects of her professional identity which reflected some of the

principles which I perceived to be inherent in teaching dance in community contexts. I was, however, curious to discover if Alvita's teaching of contemporary dance in community contexts differed to the approaches she might take if she was teaching contemporary dance in private or public contexts:

When I began teaching, I took advice from XX [a dance teacher]. It was my first foray into teaching Graham technique and within that there was an expectation of tradition, the roots of it all, even down to your dress code. You were expected to have a kind of *etiquette*. I absorbed that very quickly early on and it's always stayed with me. **(Alvita)**

Unlike all of the other participants in this investigation, Alvita had no formal dance teacher training. It seemed to me that as well as drawing on personal values and beliefs in shaping her professional identity as a dance teacher, she also looked to other dance teachers who taught contemporary dance as role models and guides. In doing so, traditions of the contemporary dance style (Graham technique) which Alvita taught also influenced her approaches and expectations of teaching contemporary dance.

Of the three groups of dance teachers interviewed for this investigation, I found that it was my conversations with the participants who taught in community contexts which most challenged my knowledge, understanding and perceptions of what it was to be a dance teacher. In reflecting on my conversations with all of the participants, I became increasingly confident that passive and active agency, as well as materialist and idealist positioning, were valid constructs for the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers. I was, however, also aware that a number of sub themes had begun to emerge from the various stories told by the participants. The next section of this chapter will consider the potential significance of those sub themes on how dance teachers may perceive and articulate their professional identities.

### **3. Emerging sub themes of accountability, identification, power and expectations**

In my conversations with the participants of this investigation, a number of sub themes began to emerge which appeared to shape their perceptions and articulation of passive and active agency and materialist and idealist positioning. Several participants (Ida, Belinda, Helen and Grace) spoke about the burden of increased accountability and compliance which they felt were restricting their enactment of active agency. Gary, Isabelle, Anne and Alvita spoke about how identification with other dance teachers or professional bodies provided points of validation of their professional identities. Peter, Grace and Sue found identification with others to be at odds with how they perceived their professional identities. These differing perspectives of identification with others may intimate the extent to which dance teachers perceive their professional identities from a materialist or idealist positioning.

Binding the sub themes of accountability and identification are issues related to power relationships and conformity to expectations. Just as there are boundary overlaps between the domains of time, space and practice, it appeared that there may be a similar fluidity in how power relationships and conformity to expectations are woven into perceptions of accountability and identification. In considering the sub themes of accountability and identification, issues related to power relationships and expectations may also be revealed.

#### *3.1 Accountability and compliance: a 'gift' or a barrier to transforming professional identities?*

From the conversations with participants in this investigation, it appeared that increased accountability might be perceived by dance teachers as a 'gift' in acknowledgement of an individual's level of professionalism through compliance with regulation, coupled with raising the status of (dance) teaching as a profession (Robson, 2006; Sachs, 2003). In contrast, some dance teachers may view increased accountability as a barrier to realising their active agencies and autonomous determination of constructing professional identities. In this

investigation, participants articulated a variety of perceptions with regards to the impact of accountability measures on their professional identity formations. For Ida, Belinda and Liam, experiences of teaching dance in secondary schools appeared to lead to perceptions of accountability and regulatory compliance as barriers rather than 'gifts' to their practices. Compliance with expectations which aligned to measures of accountability was seen to restrict the way in which these participants wanted to bring more of themselves into their teaching. Liam's move to a higher education brought a greater sense of active agency through having more control over the *how*, *what* and, to a certain extent, the *why* of dance teaching. Having greater autonomy as a dance teacher in higher education appeared to allow Liam's professional identity to transform in ways which were better aligned with his values and beliefs as to what it is to be a dance teacher. In contrast, Ida appeared to be struggling with managing expectations of adhering to a 'hidden curriculum' which was perceived to be in opposition of what she wanted to achieve in her practice. Throughout my conversation with Ida, there was almost a sense of acceptance that accountability and compliance was part and parcel of teaching dance in public contexts.

Weaved into Belinda's articulation of the impact of accountability in informing her professional identity as a dance teacher were suggestions that as well as accountability measures being barriers to her active agency, the omnipresence of managerial structures also challenged her preferred practices as a dance teacher. Expectations of teachers as set by senior managers are often predicated by positions of power. In reflecting on my conversation with Belinda, it was interesting to note rather than talking about such power relationships as barriers to her active agency, she instead focussed on accountability and compliance expectations as the source of her frustrations. It was almost as if Belinda was accepting of the power relationships embedded within her secondary school, and therefore shifted her focus to how to shape her practices as a dance teacher within the parameters of accountability and compliance, rather than challenging the managerial structures which set the expectations of compliance to accountability.

A rather surprising revelation about how accountability might be perceived came from Isabelle. From informal discussions with dance teachers outside the scope of

this investigation, mention of codes of conduct or compliancy with government regulations had often been met with lengthy accounts of how their autonomy as dance teachers was being eroded. For Isabelle, however, there appeared to be a perception that adhering to codes of conduct as issued by professional membership organisations was a mark of professionalism which should be valued both within and outside of the profession. Rather than perceiving professional membership organisations yielding draconian power, it appeared that Isabelle was quite accepting of such power relationships, and even found a degree of reassurance that a 'more knowledgeable other' was calling the shots.

From the conversations with Ida, Belinda, Liam and Isabelle, what had begun to emerge was an impression that dance teachers may perceive compliancy to accountability measures, and the impact of such compliancy on their professional identities, quite differently. While dance teachers working within a single dance context may find ways of addressing issues of conflict between compliancy, regulations and autonomous practice, transitions from a less regulated space to one which is more greatly imbued with accountability expectations may reveal tensions not previously experienced. In order to counter dissonance which might be experienced as one transitions from one space to another, dance teachers may need to develop strategies which support reflexive resilience; that is, the ability to reflect on the consequences of one's perceptions of experience and action in order to instigate change if change is required. If the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers was to be implemented as part of one's continuing professional development, it may be that identifying strategies for the development of reflexive resilience would be helpful for those dance teachers needing to adapt to different levels of accountability and compliance as operated in different contexts.

Participants in this investigation who taught dance in spaces which they considered to be highly regulated appeared to perceive other dance contexts as offering more freedom to dance teachers in terms of the *how* and *what* of teaching. In particular, there appeared to be a perception that dance teachers in community contexts were more empowered to enact active agency, as these spaces were perceived as being less restrictive in terms of accountability. These perceptions, however, did not appear to have resonance with the experiences of the participants who taught dance

in community contexts. While Sue noted that she felt more empowered as a dance teacher working in community contexts, Helen, Grace and Alvita, who also taught dance in community settings, noted increased accountability within these spaces, giving rise to feelings of discontentment. In reflecting on how dance teachers in one dance context perceived the freedom or restrictions afforded to dance teachers in a different dance context, I began to see how moving from one dance context to a different context may present surprises which could destabilise one's perception of his/her professional identity.

In reflecting on all of the conversations with participants, it appeared that accountability and compliance was part of the fabric of all spaces within which the learning and teaching of dance takes place. Based on the experiences as expressed by the participants, it could be surmised that dance teachers who had in the past flourished in environments which allowed for greater self-direction of practice may be experiencing a period of re-evaluating their professional identities as a means of assimilation and adaptation to new normative expectations. Though these dance teachers may well be engaging with 'inner conversations' on how to deal with emerging tensions, the opportunity to speak openly with other dance teachers who are experiencing, or had experienced, similar apprehensions may provide them with an insight of how to instigate change and/or address emerging conflicts. The extent to which this engagement with others is productive may be predicated by how dance teachers view their professional identities as being shaped by the individual or as a product of the collective. This line of thought will be considered further in the next section.

### *3.2 Professional identity as a product of identification*

As noted in Chapter 1, formation of professional identities, and how a dance teacher's perception of professional identity could be articulated, may be informed through association with communities of dance teachers, in tandem with relationships which underpin allegiances and identification to certain groups and sub-groups of dance teachers (Hyland, 2012; Danielewicz, 2001, Wenger, 1998). Whilst each of these reference points alludes to identification with the collective, several unexpected points of divergence which challenged the primacy of the collective began to emerge as I listened to the participants' stories.

In reflecting on my conversations with the participants, I was struck by how many of the participants acknowledged their experiences as dance students as being key in shaping their current perceptions of their professional identities as dance teachers. What also began to unfold was a strong connection with their personal selves when identifying as dance teachers. This observation of participants placing significance on looking inwardly when considering their professional identities was something of a revelation to me. While Gary and Isabelle alluded to their professional identities being connected to characteristics of ballet as dance *genre*, and Anne and Alvita looked to other modern jazz or contemporary dance teachers to inform their practices, other participants appeared to look firstly to their personal selves when articulating what it was to be a dance teacher. What was not so immediately evident was *how* participants connected with themselves as individuals. What did begin to emerge was a strong impression that, for some participants, reflecting on professional identity through the concrete self was as potent as reflecting on the generalised self (Benhabib, 1992).

Alongside a connection with the self as a dance teacher, what also emerged from the participants' stories was identification with other dance teachers operating within the same spaces, regardless of the dance *genres* they taught. While such connections did not come as a surprise, what was unexpected was the extent to which each of the participants who taught in community dance contexts spoke about their professional identities through the lens of the collective. Given the diversity of participants and practices within community dance settings, I began to reflect on possible factors which appeared to connect community dance teachers in ways which were not expressed by other participants. Helen, Grace, Sue and Alvita spoke repeatedly about community dance contexts valuing equality, diversity and inclusion. These values also mirrored their ethos of what it was to be a dance teacher. It could be argued that characteristics of certain spaces attract certain types of dance teachers and, therefore, it is these characteristics which connect dance teachers to certain dance contexts. I began to think about how different types of spaces might be more influential in shaping and informing professional identities of dance teachers; a factor which was not, it would seem, immediately recognised by dance

teachers when reflecting on their professional identities. Such a proposition, however, appeared to run contrary to some theories of teacher/professional identification which suggest that teachers/professionals tend to connect their professional identities with their disciplines<sup>2</sup> rather than the spaces within which those disciplines operate (Fanghanel, 2012; Robson, 2006; Henkel, 2000).

While Helen, Grace, Sue and Alvita expressed elements of collegiality with other community dance teachers, what also struck me when listening to their stories were their 'light-bulb' moments when, through identification with other dance teachers in the same space, they began to identify with "I am a [dance] *teacher*" and sometimes beyond. This observation was expressed tellingly by Grace who, rather than being "...pigeon-holed..." as a dance teacher expressed her professional identity through that of being a dance *artiste*. While Grace did not see herself as a dance teacher, she did recognise that others outside the dance teaching profession, and possibly by some within the dance teaching profession, would regard her as a dance teacher. It was perhaps as a result of operating within markedly diverse community dance settings that identification with other (different) dance teachers in the same dance context had prompted identification with being a dance *artiste* as opposed to being a dance teacher. In considering this perception further, what began to transpire was further support for the suggestion that whilst dance teachers may situate their professional identities in comparison to dance teachers as a collective, dance teachers may also find themselves connecting with 'the self' as a unique part of that collective.

### *3.3. Some further thoughts on space and dance genres connecting the individual and the collective*

In Section 3.2 of this chapter, consideration was given to how aspects of space and dance *genres* are woven in to how dance teachers connect their professional identities with being an individual as well as being part of a collective. In addition to these connections with individual and collective identifications, other significant

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<sup>2</sup> In the context of this investigation 'discipline' relates to dance *genres* rather than the discipline of dance more generally

observations of how space and dance *genres* can mediate the individual and the collective, and thus inform perceptions of one's professional identity as a dance teacher, were also beginning to emerge.

For participants operating in highly regulated dance contexts, there appeared to be a perception that formation of their professional identities was sometimes disproportionately skewed by collective expectations of normative values and practices which were either embedded within the spaces of their dance teaching practices, or in the dance *genres* being taught in those spaces. For Isabelle, this led her to disregard teaching ballet, her specialist dance *genre*, in alternative spaces

The sentiment expressed by Isabelle was perhaps indicative of the perceptions expressed by some of the other participants in that some dance *genres*, and in particular ballet, had greater status through alliance with an art form associated with high culture as opposed to mass culture (Homans, 2010). Though these biases were not explicitly articulated by participants, there appeared to be an almost instinctive understanding and acceptance of the 'suitability' of teaching certain dance *genres* in certain dance contexts and not others. Such understanding, it would seem, emanated from a collective consensus that each dance *genre* had specific characteristics which would a) require dance teachers to have specialist knowledge, understanding and skills in the teaching of a particular dance *genre*, and b) require dance teachers to meet the expectations of students participating in certain contexts. I began to sense that dance teachers might associate harmony within professional identities with the extent to which they consider their knowledge, understanding and skills of teaching a particular dance *genre* in certain contexts aligned with normative expectations of the collective. Such harmony does not emanate solely from reflection on the self as a dance teacher, but also through reflection of how dance teachers may view their professional identities in relation to other dance teachers. Where there is 'collective harmony', the potential for professional identities to embrace a multiplicity of positions may be possible; thus, setting up opportunities for dance teachers to operate in a range of dance contexts teaching a range of dance *genres*. Where there is discord between individual and collective expectations, dance teachers may find themselves deconstructing their professional identities

ahead of a reconstruction of who they are as dance teachers in order to mitigate any short-comings.

#### **4. Conclusion: tribulations and revelations of being a dance teacher**

In this chapter I have outlined some of the ways in which dance teachers articulate their professional identities through the telling of their stories. Threaded throughout these stories are aspects of time, space and practice which can shape perceptions of professional identities. The participants in this investigation revealed converging and diverging perceptions about what it means to be a dance teacher, and how their professional identities as dance teachers were constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed around notions of agency, materialist/idealist positioning, compliance with accountability and identification with the self as an individual and as part of a collective. Aspects of power relationships and managing expectations from within and outside the field of dance teaching also seemed to play a part in how dance teachers perceive and articulate their professional identities.

In the chapter which follows, I will present a more nuanced synthesis and analysis of 'emerging messages' arising from my conversations with the participants in this investigation. The chapter will consider the procedures through which information drawn from the semi-structured interviews (my conversations with participants) was synthesised and arranged into summary sheets which form part of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers process. The chapter will also provide a narrative of some of the dilemmas I encountered during the synthesis and analysis processes, and how I resolved some of those dilemmas. It is in this chapter that I provide a more informed *précis* of the messages emanating from my conversations with the participants.

## **Chapter 5: Data Synthesis and Analysis**

### **1. Introduction and purpose**

In the previous chapter, I presented extracts from my conversations with participants who took part in this investigation as a means of revealing some of the factors which may potentially impact how dance teachers perceive and articulate their professional identities as dance teachers. Moving on from Chapter 4, the focus of the chapter which follows is to describe and scrutinize the processes and procedures undertaken to synthesise and analyse further the emerging messages from those conversations. Noted here is the term 'emerging messages' in preference to 'findings'. This preference is predicated by my view that the term 'findings' alludes to a positivist objectivity which does not sit comfortably with the subjective nature of interpretative methodologies and/or research designs. While some may see this use of terminology as a matter of semantics, I believe that the term 'emerging messages' better represents the on-going hermeneutic process of interpretation and re-interpretation which I experienced when synthesising and analysing the interview transcripts.

The structure of this chapter is shaped by two sections. The first section outlines the processes through which information drawn from the conversations was synthesised and arranged into the summary sheets of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers. Consideration is also given to some of the dilemmas and resolutions which I encountered during the synthesis and analysis processes. The second section provides a more nuanced presentation of the messages emanating from my analysis of synthesised information.

### **2. Synthesising the data**

#### *2.1 Preparing the data*

Having conducted conversations with each of the participants, I began to transcribe the dialogue by repeatedly listening to the conversations in order to produce a written account of each of the conversations. An example of a transcribed conversation is presented in Appendix 4. This process actively situated me 'within' the written text as opposed to engaging with the written text one step removed,

which was my experience when experimenting with NVivo software to synthesise and analyse interview transcripts. In a sense, transcribing the conversations myself was the first phase of the data analysis process, though not all researchers immediately appreciate this to be the case (Bailey, 2008).

In terms of authentic replication of the conversations, that is transcribing the spoken word to the written word, I did not focus specifically on recording lengths of pauses or emotive aspects such as giggles or sighs. However, during the conversations I became increasingly aware of the potential significance of pauses and emotive aspects in terms of how participants were reflecting on and connecting with the questions being asked. In addition, I felt that pauses (as indicated by ellipses) may be indicators of participants critically reflecting on their perceptions, experiences and actions as opposed to giving 'off the cuff' responses.

## *2.2 Organising the data*

Ahead of synthesis of information from the transcribed conversations, consideration was given to the processes through which familiarisation with the data might be achieved. I decided that a systematic approach which looked at clusters of emerging messages would allow me to synthesise the information in a structured manner. The processes which I employed once the conversations had been transcribed are outlined below:

### *Phase 1: First read-through: Time, Space, Practice*

During the first read-through of a transcript, I identified text which directly or indirectly related to the main themes of time, space and practice. Direct reference to these themes was identified by participants explicitly using the terms 'time', 'space' or 'practice' in their dialogue. Indirect text referred to my interpretation of what was being alluded to, for example, "...for me, that was the primary thing, to try and teach the love of the subject, rather than focusing specifically on technique." (Ida). Here, I interpreted Ida making reference to practice without using the word practice.

It was during the first read-through phase that I encountered my first hermeneutic quandary. Interpretation of another's 'story' is inevitably filtered through one's own

experiences and self-interpretation of those experiences (Kvale, 2011; Robson, 2011; Creswell, 2009). This position is, as often argued, even more prevalent when a researcher is an 'insider' to a community of participants (Coe, 2017; Punch, 2014; Arthur *et al.*, 2012; Costley *et al.*, 2010). I found myself beginning to question and re-question the validity of my identification of themes as articulated by participants in case I was misinterpreting thoughts and meaning. For example, were participants actually referring to their practice when they did not make specific reference to practice? Was my interpretation and subsequent completion of unfinished sentences a valid interpretation, or were such interruptions of speech merely indicative of participants reflexively engaging with their 'inner voice'?

*Phase 2: Second read-through: Passive/Active Agency and Materialist/Idealist positioning.*

The purpose of the second read-through was to identify statements related to passive and active agency and materialist and idealist positioning as participants contemplated their professional identities as dance teachers. The number of relevant statements was recorded on a summary sheet (Appendix 5). The statements were counted ahead of being plotted into one of the four quadrants of the co-ordinate plane as shown in Figure 2.

*Phase 3: Third read-through: identification of sub themes: genre, accountability, power and expectations*

The focus of the third read-through of a transcript was to identify articulation of the sub themes of *genre*, accountability, power and expectations which emerged from my conversations with the participants. Once identified, sub theme statements were transferred to a summary sheet (Appendix 6). As with the first read through, some statements clearly related to one sub theme, some statements related to more than one sub theme, and some statements required me to 'dig through' what was being said and how what was being said might be interpreted.

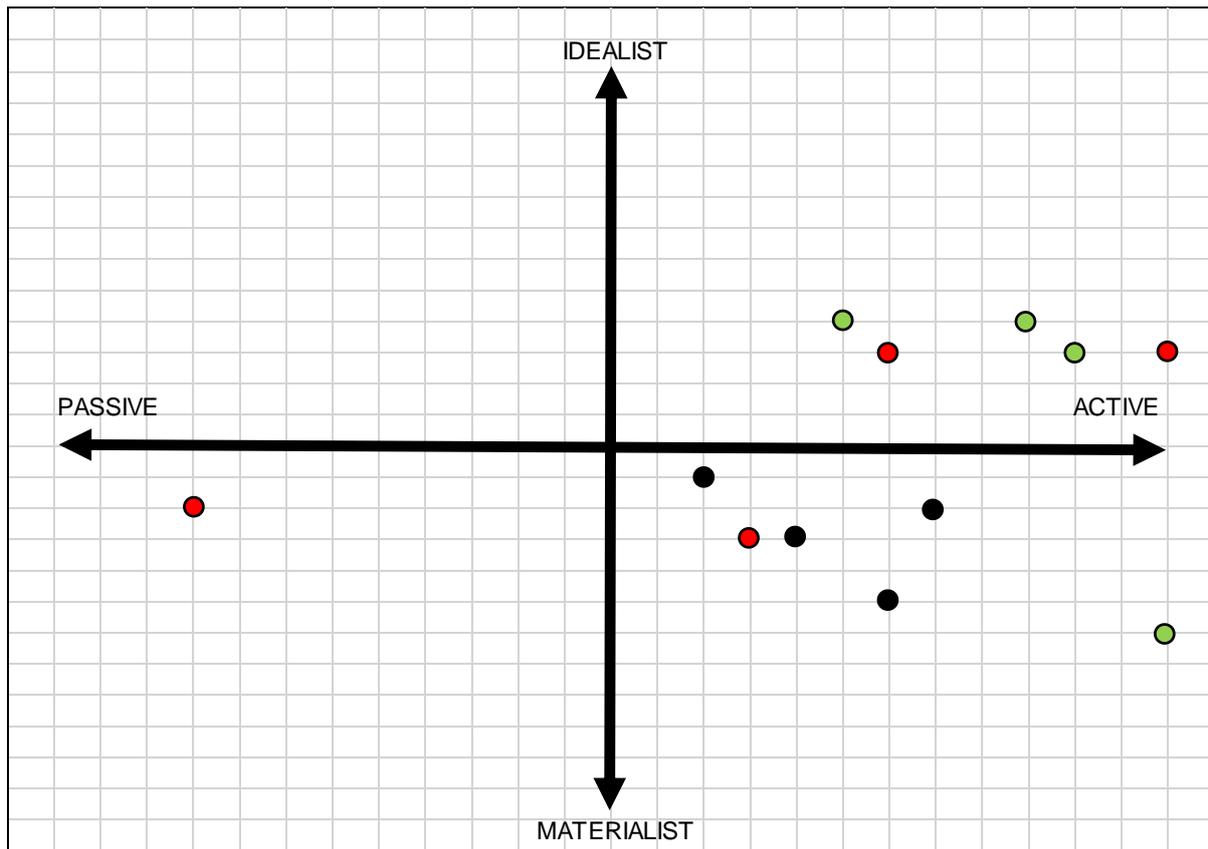


Figure 2. Passive/Active Materialist/Materialist co-ordinate plane (Black = Public, Red = Private, Green = Community contexts).

#### *Phase 4: Transferring information to summary sheets*

Once the three phases of reading and collating of data were completed, information was transferred to one of three summary sheets. The first of these summary sheets captured information related to the main themes of time, space and practice (Appendix 7). The second summary sheet (Appendix 6) captured information regarding the sub themes of *genre*, accountability, power identification and expectations. The third summary sheet (Appendix 5) recorded the number of times statements relating to passive and active agency and materialist and idealist positioning were noted. This enabled me to assign participants to one of the four professional identity types as outlined in Phase 2 of the process.

### *Phase 5: Creating a Pen Portrait for each participant*

Having transferred data into the summary sheets, it was then possible to create a Pen Portrait for each of the participants (Appendix 8). These Pen Portraits drew together salient features of the information drawn from the interview data for each participant, thus encapsulating a participant's professional identity type.

While the pen portraits were not shared with the investigation's participants post the interview stage, it is envisaged that in implementing the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers that pen portraits would be shared with dance teachers as a means for initiating further rounds of discursive dialogue and on-going reflexive practice.

## **3. Analysing the data**

### *3.1 Making sense of the data*

Having synthesised the data, the next stage of the process was to make sense of the information gathered. As with the data synthesis stage, I found myself reading, re-reading and checking the products of my interpretative construction of emerging messages in an attempt to ensure interpretative consistency. Having exerted a considerable amount of self-reflective effort during the data synthesis stage, I felt that I had reached a state of increased familiarity with the data; thus, I was more assured that my collation and interpretation of the emerging messages was representative of the participant group as opposed to my own values and beliefs.

### *3.2 The impact of time on professional identity formation*

As suggested in Chapter 2, the concept of time may have some bearing on how dance teachers perceive factors which have shaped and do shape their perceptions of professional identity formation. In terms of time, the following messages emerged:

- Half of the participants (N=6) identified dance teaching as being intrinsically linked to their self identities as a result of many years of engaging in dance; in other words, they had always perceived themselves as dance teachers.

Ida, Belinda, Liam, Peter, Isabelle, Eliza all described how being a dance teacher was intrinsically linked to their self identities. In particular, Ida and Belinda had always seen themselves as dance teachers and not considered other career paths. For others, such as Gary and Anne, becoming dance teachers had evolved over time. It would seem that with time brings greater confidence in understanding oneself as a dance teacher. Belinda commented that, in reflecting back on when she first began to teach, she now felt she had greater confidence as a dance teacher, and was beginning to experiment with new approaches to teaching. For Grace, who had over 10 years experience in teaching dance in community settings, she felt that across the passage of time she was able to actively endorse her values and beliefs in her teaching, regardless of whether or not those values and beliefs were shared by others.

- Some participants (N=2) perceived their professional dance teacher identities being reconfigured as a result of 'stepping out' of the profession before returning to dance teaching.

While many dance teachers will make the transition from dance student to dance teacher immediately, it would appear that a break from dance teaching to explore the world outside of dance could be invaluable in evaluating one's professional identity as a dance teacher. This was certainly the case for Isabelle and Grace who, having taken several years away from dance to explore different career paths, returned to dance teaching with a broader perspective on what it was to be a dance teacher as predicated by 'real world' experiences. It could be suggested that dance teachers who have not known anything apart from teaching dance as a career may struggle to reflect on their professional identities from wider perspectives.

- The majority of participants (N=10) articulated that over time new opportunities as a dance teacher had opened up, be it through transforming practice in relation to developments within a context or dance *genre*, or increased confidence in engaging with new opportunities (for example, teaching in a different context).

The passage of time will inevitably bring about new opportunities, new policy initiatives and what is often presented as new and innovative practices. With this

being the case, dance teachers may find themselves deconstructing and reconstructing their professional identities as they negotiate uncharted realms. Some dance teachers will perceive these 'new' initiatives as opportunities to enhance and expand their practices and experiences which, in turn, may transform their professional identities through evolved affirmations of what it is to be a dance teacher. This was certainly the case for Eliza and Sue, both of whom had made transitions into teaching either a different dance *genre* or teaching in a different dance context.

In contrast, other dance teachers may perceive certain aspects of change to be in opposition to what they believe to be their roles and responsibilities as dance teachers. Such perceptions are not unique to dance teachers and the teaching of dance. Teachers, regardless of the discipline, appear to feel more positive about change when the processes and products of change are harmonised with their values and beliefs, and less positive when change is perceived as an affront to their identities as autonomous professionals (Davey, 2013; Ball, 2003; Kelchtermans, 1996). When the latter occurs, teachers may experience episodes of fragmentation of their professional identities as they attempt to mediate factors which they believe to be core to their personal and professional selves with factors which are perceived to be incompatible with their values and beliefs. This proposition certainly appeared to be the case with Belinda, who was struggling to assimilate expected practices which she did not wholly agree with into her teaching of dance. For Grace, trying to find justification for why some community dance projects received funding while other equally worthy projects were overlooked was leading towards a fragmentation of her professional identity.

- Three participants who taught in community dance contexts (Helen, Grace and Sue) specifically articulated the development of their professional identities in terms of time.

My interpretation of the stories told by Helen, Grace and Sue was that it was the number of years teaching which enabled them to reflect more holistically on their professional identities, rather than their experiences of any constructs within community settings. This interpretation aligned with the findings arising from my

research undertaken for *I'm a good dance teacher because...*” *Perceptions of good dance teaching in public sector contexts* (2012), and *A Sense of Belonging? Exploring Individual and Collective Identities of Ballet Teachers* (2015), where dance teachers with over 10 years teaching experience tended to be able to reflect more deeply and searchingly on their experiences as dance teachers.

### 3.3 *The impact of space on professional identity formation*

The impact of space on professional identity formation appeared to be differentiated by experiences of teaching in one or more contexts, and/or perceptions of what it might be like to teach in a different context. In terms of space, the following messages emerged:

- Constructs within spaces could determine perceived freedoms or restrictions in the development of one’s professional identity, particularly in terms of how certain dance *genres* are considered to be intrinsically associated with different spaces. There also appeared to be a ‘common-sense’ perception within and outside the dance profession of how certain dance *genres* are taught in different spaces (normative expectations).

The suggestion that social constructs within spaces, which often have long histories, established expectations, and more resistance to change (Giddens, 1984), appeared to have a degree of resonance with some of the participants. For Ida and Belinda teaching in public contexts, and Peter and Eliza teaching in private contexts, the prevalence of social constructs, particularly in relation to accountability, appeared to be ubiquitous when reflecting on their professional identities, and in particular activation of their active agencies. Gary, Isabelle and Alvita all commented on how the replication of normative expectations within certain contexts was often the result of adherence to historical legacies and normative expectations of the dance *genres* taught.

- Public and private spaces were perceived to be product-led, with community spaces being perceived as valuing process over product. Despite this observation, participants in private contexts (Peter, Isabelle, Eliza and Anne)

all perceived there to be a degree of freedom in how to teach within a private context, as long as the 'what' (syllabus content) was covered.

- Practices within spaces were often replicated as a result of normative expectations from within the dance teaching profession as to how dance should be delivered within particular spaces. Practice expectations could inform how dance teachers shaped their professional identities as either conforming to or challenging the expectations of dance teacher communities.

Professional identities are subject to change and transformation over the course of an individual's journey as a dance teacher. While some elements of professional identity, particularly those which are connected to core personal constructs or normative expectations of dance as professional practice, would appear to remain relatively stable, it could be seen that stability within spaces, and in how dance *genres* are taught, also present elements of permanence within one's professional identity.

- Certain spaces were perceived to attract certain types of students and certain types of dance teachers. A dance teacher who constructed his/her professional identity solely in relation to the expectations of a particular space may be limiting his/her engagement with different opportunities (teaching in a different context or teaching different types of students).

In my analysis of the stories told by participants, it became evident that there were perceptions from within and outside the dance teaching profession of what was expected when entering and engaging in a particular dance context. For Eliza and Anne, both of whom taught in private dance contexts, the expectation that students would take dance examinations was sometimes a bone of contention, particularly when the ethos of a school was about engaging in the process rather than achievement of an extrinsic product.

While the experiences of Anne, as articulated in Chapter 4, may appear to be an antithesis to the proposition that characteristics of certain spaces support the stability of professional identities, Anne's account did, however, highlight a widely perceived expectation that private dance contexts are more often than not geared towards the

taking of examinations. This being the case, dance teachers working in private dance contexts may find a stabilising reinforcement of their professional identities if they believe that one of their prime responsibilities as dance teachers is to prepare students for examinations and, as a result, be seen within and outside the profession as adhering to normative expectations. Thus, adherence to normative expectations can potentially have a stabilising impact on one's professional identity. When, however, there is a perceived disparity between the values and beliefs of a dance teacher and the expectations of practice within a space, a fragmentation of professional identity may arise. For Anne, her professional identity as a dance teacher within a private dance context was clearly informed by the aspiration of making dance as inclusive as possible, as opposed to dance only being for those with talent. This aspiration, however, may be construed as being at odds with other dance teachers working within private dance contexts. Through engaging with the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers, dance teachers will potentially have a framework through which they are able to interrogate individual aspirations against normative expectations and practices of the collective in order to better understand their professional identities.

- In considering the viewpoints emanating from the wider dance profession and communities of dance teachers, some participants felt that certain spaces were perceived to attract a greater status (for example, vocational dance schools) which had the potential to impact on the perceived status of one's professional identity as a dance teacher.

The extent to which dance teachers feel that their status as dance teachers is valued, and the dance *genre/s* they teach are seen to be worthy, may have some impact on how dance teachers perceive their professional identities as dance teachers. For example, and as highlighted in Chapter 4, Sue sometimes received comments from other ballet teachers which inferred that her teaching of ballet to older learners in community settings wasn't 'really teaching ballet'. While it was clear that Sue was finding her professional identity as a dance teacher being re-invigorated as a result of teaching ballet to older learners outside her private dance school teaching, this might not be the case for all dance teachers. When dance teachers feel that what they are doing as dance teachers is not valued, they may

begin to question whether or not their professional identities really are 'professional', and/or question if dance teaching is the right career for them.

### *3.4 The impact of practice on professional identity formation*

Though expressed in different ways, there appeared to be a consensus of opinion as to how practice should be shaped, and how these practices were linked to aspects of professional identities as dance teachers. In terms of practice, the following messages emerged:

- Personal values and beliefs were often identified as being intrinsic to one's practice, and therefore (arguably) intrinsic to one's professional identity as a dance teacher.

Liam, Peter, Isabelle, Helen, Grace and Alvita all spoke specifically about how they thought their personal values and beliefs were entwined into their practices as dance teachers. In particular, Grace and Alvita spoke about "... getting inside students to really understand them..." (Alvita). Peter also spoke about dance teaching as being altruistic, and that he thought that this specific characteristic was equally relevant when describing 'Peter as a person' as well as 'Peter as a dance teacher'. The views of these participants appear to have resonance with Carr (2003) who situates teaching not as a set of skills but as characteristics which shape teaching as a vocation rather than an occupation. The extent to which dance teachers are able to connect their personal values and beliefs to their practices as dance teachers may be significant in how they perceive and articulate their professional identities.

- Across contexts and dance *genres*, the importance of empowering students through transforming the self through physical and cognitive engagement was highlighted as being important features of practice. The professional identity of being a dance teacher was often perceived as a facilitator of empowerment and self development through the medium of dance.

While other participants touched on aspects of empowering students through their practices, it was Eliza (who taught tap dance in a private context) and Sue (who

taught ballet to older learners in community settings) who were most articulate in emphasising how their practices empowered students. For dance teachers of certain dance *genres*, where there may be expectations that students are 'trained' rather than 'educated', the concept of empowerment may be quite alien and perhaps even a little threatening. If, for example, such dance teachers found themselves teaching in contexts where empowering students was valued, they may struggle to align their 'preferred' way of teaching to practices which challenged their perceived identities as dance teachers.

- Some participants (N=4) stressed the importance of process over product, even in contexts which were driven by achieving results.

Ida, Belinda, Isabelle and Helen all spoke about how, through their practices, they emphasised process over product. However, in contexts where it is expected that students should receive good examination results, dance teachers who value process over product may find themselves mitigating their unease of 'teaching to the test' by finding a balance between process-led practices and product-led practices. Where this balancing act of process and product becomes distorted, some dance teachers may feel that their active agency is compromised.

### *3.5 The impact of dance genre on professional identity formation*

Perceptions regarding the rigidity and status afforded to some dance *genres* in comparison to other dance *genres* appeared to differ between those participants who were 'expert' teachers of a particular dance *genre* and those participants who had some basic knowledge of different dance *genres*. In terms of *genre*, the following messages emerged:

- Personal experience of a dance *genre* informed perceptions of that dance *genre*. These perceptions could also influence how dance teachers of a certain dance *genre* were viewed by other dance teachers which, in comparing the self to others, could challenge one's personal perceptions of his/her professional identity and status as a dance teacher.

- Some dance *genres*, most predominantly ballet and contemporary dance, were seen to be grounded in historical legacies.
- Some dance *genres* were perceived to have more value/status both within the dance teaching profession as well as the wider profession of dance.

Some participants inferred that certain spaces attracted certain types of students and, as a result, certain types of dance teachers. For example, some participants believed that students attracted to ballet classes valued the disciplined and codified structure of the classes, with a ballet teacher taking on the role of 'master' to his or her apprentices. In contrast, it was assumed that students who attended community dance classes would do so as the nature of these classes tended to be more collaborative and democratic, with community dance teachers drawing on the experiences and ideas of the students as much as their own knowledge and expertise as dance teachers. From my analysis of the conversation transcripts, it appeared that the perception of some dance *genres* being more valued than others was being expressed implicitly rather than explicitly. It seemed that when the learning and teaching of a dance *genre* was seen to be more disciplined and authoritarian, that dance *genre*, and the dance teachers of that *genre*, was perceived to have greater status. For dance teachers outside the 'star chamber' of valued status, feelings of resentment and exclusion may impact on their sense of agency.

- By their very nature, dance *genres* have, to a greater or lesser extent, normative expectations which require knowledge and understanding of how a particular dance *genre* is taught.

Normative expectations of different dance *genres* can present barriers to dance teachers who do not have the perceived level of knowledge and understanding of a dance *genre*, but wish to engage with different dance *genres*. This was certainly the case of the majority of participants in this investigation who were less than enthusiastic about the prospect of teaching a dance *genre* outside of their specialist areas. Whilst transitions from a specialist dance *genre* to another dance *genre* are not impossible, visualisation and realisation of such possibilities may need to be guided through conversations with others.

### 3.6 *The impact of identification on professional identity formation*

Identification with particular groups (other dance teachers) or professional organisations (professional membership or dance advocacy organisations) has the potential to inform professional identity formation. In terms of identification, the following messages emerged:

- There was recurring recognition of the influence of training as a student and of former teachers as role models.
- Half of the participants (N=6) referred to identification with ‘the self as teacher’, particularly in terms of synergising personal values and beliefs in shaping professional identity.

Interestingly, it was the same participants who identified dance teaching as being intrinsically linked to their personal identities (3.2 refers) who also articulated ‘the self’ as being a point of reference when identifying themselves as dance teachers. This observation suggests that equal importance should be afforded to dance teachers as individuals as well as dance teachers being part of a collective.

- Identification with other dance teachers across dance *genres* and spaces was cited as a factor when reflecting on one’s professional identity. There was less identification with professional organisations with only three participants acknowledging that they compared their professional identities with expectations of the wider dance community.

Peter and Isabelle, both of whom taught ballet in private contexts and belong to professional membership organisations for dance teachers, spoke about how their professional identities were, in part, informed by what the professional membership organisations expected of its members. For Isabelle, identification with her professional membership organisation affirmed her status as a dance teacher. For Peter, identifying with the expectations of his professional membership organisation resulted in a degree of discontentment as he perceived expectations to be restrictive rather than enabling. While dance teachers may look to professional organisations when reflecting on their professional identities, it appears such sources of

identification are less significant compared to comparisons with other dance teachers.

### *3.7 The impact of power on professional identity formation*

The influence of power relationships in shaping perceptions of professional identity formation for these participants did not appear to be a significant driver. There may be a range of reasons as to why this appeared to be the case. From my personal experience of being a dance professional, I would suggest that one potential reason for the influence of power relationships being perceived as being less significant might be the sense of collegiality which underpins the wider field of dance practice. The following points were, however, recognised:

- Requirements of professional membership organisations could be influential for some teachers in informing their professional identities.
- Power relationships may be influential in spaces which have more than one dance teacher in residence, or where there are hierarchal management structures.
- Community context participants noted greater democratic relationships between students and teachers which supported their perceptions of being facilitative dance teachers.

Despite the apparent 'glossing over' of the influence of power relationships in perceiving one's professional identity as a dance teacher, Belinda's story did express frustration as to how expectations of National Curricula, Teachers' Standards as outlined by Ofsted, and diktats from her school's senior management, were seen as barriers to her ability to deliver content which she felt would best support student achievement and progression. It appeared that Belinda's dissatisfaction with power constructs as imposed by external authorities and managerial hierarchies was leading her towards a fragmentation of her professional identity which was proving to be unsettling to how she perceived herself as a dance teacher.

### 3.8 *The impact of accountability on professional identity formation*

As with power relationships, the impact and/or influence of accountability did not appear to significantly shape professional identities, with the exception being those participants in secondary school contexts. The following points were, however, noted:

- Certain dance *genres*, in particular ballet, have degrees of quasi-accountability stemming from expectations of the wider profession and professional membership bodies.

Gary and Peter, both of whom taught ballet but in different contexts, appeared to have exercised a degree of active agency by questioning long held traditions and normative views, all of which had resulted in changes within their practices. Through introducing revised practices and values into their professional identities, Gary and Peter appeared to have satisfactorily consolidated what may have at first been a fragmentation of identity. For some dance teachers, the thought of challenging normative expectations may be too much to bear. Some dance teachers would prefer to keep any thoughts of rebellion to themselves rather than having their ideas and/or practices challenged (Stinson, 2010); hence, a sense of stability of professional identity prevails. While this state of being is not necessarily problematic, it may prove to be so in the event of new practices and innovations becoming the norm.

- Participants in community contexts noted an increase in accountability and compliancy expectations within these spaces which was impacting on their sense of empowerment as dance teachers.

Helen, Grace and Alvita each spoke about how they had noted increased accountability creeping into community contexts which, as a result, were making them re-evaluate their professional identities. For Sue, however, who was a relatively new teacher to community contexts having previously taught dance in a private context, accountability expectations in her community settings were perceived as less invasive compared to those she had experienced in private contexts. An interpretation of these differing positions is that restrictions to enacting

active agency as a result of compliance with accountability measures may be perceived quite differently depending on past experiences of teaching dance in other contexts.

### *3.9 The impact of expectations on professional identity formation*

There was recognition that external expectations of what it was to be a dance teacher existed. However, it appeared that expectations were determined more by structures within the spaces where the participants taught and dance *genre* being delivered. In terms of expectations, the following messages emerged:

- Participants recognised that expected standards of teaching were often set by professional membership bodies. Rather than solely adhering to the expectations of professional membership bodies, some participants made reference to other groups (other dance teachers or professional dance companies) which they looked towards in identifying expectations of standards.
- Expectations of the wider dance profession sometimes influenced how participants viewed themselves as dance teachers.
- The fluidity of community dance spaces, and the practices which take place in those spaces, had resulted in disparate expectations of what it was to be a community dance teacher, and therefore less assurance of the constituents underpinning professional identities of community dance teachers.

In analysing the conversation transcripts, references to expectations appeared to be embedded within how participants perceived their professional identities evolving over time, the spaces where they taught dance, their practices as dance teachers, and the characteristics which defined different dance *genres*. As a sub theme, it would appear that acknowledgment of expectations in shaping professional identities cannot be easily extrapolated as a standalone factor; instead, expectations of being a dance teacher appear to be intrinsically interlinked within the domains of time, space and practice.

### 3.10 *Passive/Active Agency and Materialist/Idealist Positioning*

As indicated on the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers coordinate plane (Figure 2), Ida, Belinda, Gary, Liam, Isabelle and Alvita indicated an Active Materialist type of professional identity, with Peter. Eliza, Helen, Grace and Sue indicating an Active Idealist type of professional identity. Anne was the only participant who indicated a Passive Materialist type of professional identity.

In terms of professional identity types in relation to different dance *genres*, ballet was separated by two participants (Gary and Isabelle) indicating an Active Materialist type of professional identity, with Peter and Sue indicating an Active Idealist type of professional identity. All participants who taught contemporary dance (Ida, Belinda, Liam and Alvita) indicated an Active Materialist type of professional identity, while Eliza (who taught Tap Dance) revealed an Active Idealist type of professional identity. For inclusive dance, Grace indicated an Active Idealist professional identity type along with Helen (musical theatre) and Sue (ballet). Anne, who taught modern jazz, indicated a Passive Materialist professional identity type. There appeared to be no correlation between professional identity types and the type of dance *genre* taught.

It did, however, appear that participants operating in community contexts were more likely to articulate idealist tendencies, perhaps as a result of greater freedoms afforded to community context dance teachers in terms of less restrictive contextual constructs, less identification with non –community dance professionals and greater choice in how community dance teachers delivered their practices.

Participants who operated in private contexts were more diverse in terms of professional identity type. This observation suggests that despite perceived restrictions in how dance is taught in this context (for example, meeting expectations of the wider dance profession and compliance with professional membership bodies), private context dance teachers will engage with these restrictions through varying degrees of enactment of agency and alignment with materialist/idealist positionings.

For participants teaching in public contexts, it would appear that there may be dominant constructs within this context (greater focus on being accountable and teaching being outcome driven) which restrict the degree of innovative action leading towards idealist positioning.

In terms of dance *genres*, of the 11 participants who taught western theatrical dance *genres*, six participants indicated materialist positionings. Of these six participants, four participants taught contemporary dance (Ida, Belinda, Liam, and Alvita) and two participants (Gary and Isabelle) taught ballet. This outcome was unexpected considering the proposition that historical legacies and traditions embedded within ballet would lead towards materialist positioning, and the perceived innovation and evolution of contemporary dance would lead towards idealist positioning. What is alluded to here is that the materialist or idealist positioning of dance teachers may not be determined solely by compliancy to historical legacies and normative expectations of a particular dance *genre*, but instead shaped by an amalgamation of factors arising from where the teaching of dance takes place (the space), and perceptions of different learning and teaching practices associated with different dance *genres*.

With regards to agency, all but one participant (Anne) demonstrated active agency in how they perceived and determined their professional identities. There does not appear to be a correlation between context or dance *genre* in determining the degree of agency. Thus, it could be argued, how dance teachers actualise agency is rooted within the individual rather than determined wholly by the context within which dance teaching takes place or the type of dance being taught.

#### **4. Making sense of making sense**

This chapter has provided a description of the processes undertaken for the synthesis of data, along with an insight into how I as an 'insider' researcher tackled some of the questions which arose during those processes. Throughout this chapter, I have provided justifications for how certain decisions were arrived at in an attempt to provide readers with a sense of my journey as a researcher. In analysing the data and presenting the outcomes of that analysis, the intention was to connect significant factors of time, space, and practice, alongside sub themes of dance

*genres*, identification, power, accountability and expectations, to provide insight of how dance teachers 'make sense' of their construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of professional identities.

While the domains of time, space and practice provided conceptual scaffolding for the interpretation of the participants' stories, being able to transform those interpretations into materialist and idealist positionings and enactment of passive and active agency allowed for the categorisation of a participant's professional identity. As will be outlined in the next chapter, I propose that such categorisation can act as a starting point for on-going discursive dialogue of what it means to be a dance teacher.

For the participants in this investigation, it would appear that professional identities of dance teachers could be seen to have roots which are linked to the personal self as well as a reflection of normative expectations of dance teaching from within and outside the profession. The impact of various aspects of time, space and practice presents professional identities as having elements of *stability*, *evolution* and *fragmentation*. Thus, through the telling of 'stories', which reveal perceptions of dance teachers' professional identities, a deconstruction and reconstruction of what it is to be a dance teacher occurs, influenced in part by how individuals reflect upon a multiplicity of circumstances and encounters.

This 'giving voice' to dance teachers through discursive dialogue is, I believe, crucial if the dance teaching profession is to meet the needs and challenges of dance teaching in the twenty first century. Key to meeting these challenges is for dance teachers to play active roles in shaping, instigating and engaging with new opportunities and in the creation of innovative practices and initiatives. In order for dance teachers to adopt in proactive stances, they need to feel confident that in expressing their ideas, experiences and aspirations that they do so from a place of informed understanding.

As has been alluded to throughout this investigation, conversations about how dance teachers perceive their roles and responsibilities, in other words, their professional identities, often remains internalised. Some dance teachers may feel threatened by

engaging in external conversations as they may feel that they are opening themselves up to being judged by other dance professionals. In addition, some teachers may feel unsettled by the realisation that aspects of their professional identity, which they considered to be relatively stable, are perhaps more fluid than initially thought.

This situation of keeping one's thoughts to oneself can, I believe, be overcome by careful nurturing and respectfulness of each other's uniqueness. In the after chat post the conversations proper, several participants expressed how much they had enjoyed the conversation, and how it had made them think about and articulate issues which had previously been confined to their inner thoughts:

Have you got any further comments you would like to make?  
**(Interviewer)**

Just thank you. It was really nice to talk to someone about all of this because it's been on my mind. It's been really useful to talk through how I see myself as a dance teacher, so it's been great. I'd love to discuss these things further with you when you have time. **(Eliza)**

Comments such as those expressed by Eliza reinforce my belief that engaging in formal dialogue about one's professional identity with colleagues is an aspect which is under-utilised in a dancer teacher's initial and on-going professional education and development.

In Chapters 1 and 2, it was noted that there was no model or framework in existence which supported dance teachers in developing knowledge and understanding of who they were as dance teachers, or how they might manage change in meeting an increasingly diversified dance teaching landscape. While the need for such a model was initially predicated by a 'professional hunch' I believe that as a result of the stories told by the participants in this investigation, and through the analysis of those stories, that there is support for presenting the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as framework for the categorisation of professional identity types through engagement in discursive dialogue. The ability to categorise professional identity types, coupled with engagement in discursive dialogue will, I propose, enable dance teachers to a) gain a better personal understanding of their professional

identity/identities, b) become self-directed in their professional development and career trajectories and, c) empower and enhance their status as dance teachers through giving them a voice to express their tribulations, revelations and celebrations to audiences within and outside the profession.

In the following chapter, the processes through which the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers could be implemented is presented. Consideration will also be given to each of the stages, as well as identification and potential solutions to some of the hurdles which may be encountered.

## **Chapter 6: Implementing the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as a means to understanding of professional identities**

### **1. Introduction and purpose**

In Chapter 1, it was proposed that a model for determining aspects of professional identities of dance teachers should be created in order for dance teachers to better understand themselves as dance teachers and, in doing so, they would be better positioned to take advantage of new and unexplored opportunities presented by a dance teaching landscape which is steadily evolving in terms of space (where dance practice takes place) and practices (how dance is taught and to whom).

It was also proposed that such an exploration of professional identities should start with reflexion on the *why* (being a dance teacher) before reflecting on the *how* (the delivery) and the *what* (the structure and content) of dance teaching. The rationale for this proposition is that by 'starting with the self' dance teachers would begin to create a more holistic understanding of what it was to be a dance teacher, and how this 'professional self' may be informed by the *how* and the *what*. The proposition of 'starting with the self' appears to have a degree of validity. As identified in Chapter 5, several of the participants in this investigation made reference to 'the self' when contemplating and articulating their professional identities as dance teachers.

In the absence of a suitable model for the exploration of professional identities of dance teachers, I have created the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers with the view that the model will provide a framework for dance teachers and dance teacher educators to engage in discursive dialogue through which greater understanding of their professional identities will be achieved. The framework and processes underpinning the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers have been constructed around the enactment of passive and active agency, and materialist and idealist positioning. By identifying, through discursive dialogue, materialist and idealist positioning alongside passive and active agency it is envisaged that a professional identity type and professional identity profile will emerge. Through the implementation of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers it is envisaged that dance teachers will have a tangible reference

point for supporting greater empowerment in the self-direction of professional and career development.

The chapter which follows outlines the processes and procedures for the implementation of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers. While the model could be used at a personal level in guiding individuals towards questions one may ask oneself when engaging in self-reflection, the focus of the chapter is on how the model could be also be used at a collective level, that is, as part of progress reviews, annual appraisals or professional mentoring programmes. It should be noted, however, that the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers is not a conduit to a form of counselling or coaching which would require specialised training. Rather, the intention of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers is to provide a framework to support reflexive engagement as part of the professional development of dance teachers.

The structure of the chapter is in five sections. A brief *précis* of how the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers might support initial teacher education and continuing professional development is considered before presenting an overview of the five stages of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers is provided. Within this overview, consideration is given to how these stages were devised, and the procedural elements associated with each stage. A more in-depth exploration of the implementation of each of the five stages is given in Section 4, culminating in identification of some of the challenges which individuals who engage with the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers might encounter.

## **2. The MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as a tool for dance teacher education**

As outlined in Chapter 1, in my role as Director of Education and Training I come into contact with dance teachers from an array of different contexts who teach a range of different dance *genres*. In my institution, I also oversee the education and training of trainee teachers, as well as the continuing professional development of dance teachers already working within the profession. Over the years, it has become increasingly apparent that simply focussing on pedagogical practices of dance

teaching nearly always disregards dance teachers as agents in the learning and teaching of dance. Moreover, in holding conversations with trainee and established dance teachers, it has become apparent that their understanding of who they are as dance teachers, in other words, their professional identities, was often overlooked both in their initial dance teacher education and continuing development opportunities. With this being the case, and predicated by the proposition that in order to better understand dance teaching dance teachers should reflect on how they perceive and articulate their professional identities, I envisage the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers to be used as a tool to support initial training, education, and continuing professional development of dance teachers.

My vision for the use of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as a tool for dance education is threefold. Firstly, I see the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as a tool which could be implemented in initial teacher education, so that trainee teachers become accustomed to engaging in reflective as well as reflexive thought processes, and sharing those thought process with a more knowledgeable and/or experienced other through discursive dialogue. A more knowledgeable or experienced other could be a tutor, teacher mentor or experienced peer. Secondly, I see the concepts and processes which underpin the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as useful topics upon which continuing professional courses and workshops could be developed, for example, the impact of agency on professional identity formation, or dance teaching as tradition and innovation (which would include discussion of materialist and idealist positionings). A continuing professional development workshop might focus on how to implement the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers for personal use, or in discursive collaboration with other dance teachers. Thirdly, I see the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as a framework which could be used in annual appraisals or target setting meetings in order that the outcomes of these encounters are meaningfully structured with tangible outcomes. Having indicated various potential uses of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers, the following section outlines the five stages of implementing the model.

### **3. The five stages of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers**

#### *3.1 Process as an iterative cycle*

As a result of conducting the investigation, I identified five stages of process to underpin the implementation of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers (*Figure 3 and Table 2 refer*). I was conscious that how individuals engaging in the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers were referred to may have significance. Thus, rather than referring to 'interviewer' and 'participant', terms which are often used in qualitative research which utilise interviews as data collection tools, that I would use the terms 'listener' and 'speaker' in an attempt to conceptually differentiate the discursive dialogue element of the model as being 'conversations between colleagues' as opposed to 'being interviewed', an activity which might be perceived as a more intimidating encounter. The framing of this differentiation could be quite significant in establishing the willingness of dance teachers to engage with the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers.

As indicated in Section 2 of this chapter, a listener could be more knowledgeable or experienced tutor, teacher mentor or experienced peer. Establishing listener/speaker relationships may bring into play power differentials which may impact on the effectiveness of the discursive dialogue process which underpins the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers. Speakers may feel that, by virtue of the listener guiding the conversation, that an imbalance of power is inherent within the process. Moreover, if a listener is in a position of authority, such as a trainee teacher's tutor, mentor or line manager, speakers may be reluctant to reveal their inner conversations for fear of exposing themselves as being incompetent, troublesome or even pretentious. When speakers sense that power differentials are in place, they may be reluctant in giving authentic responses to questions, or keep aspects of their values, beliefs or practices internal for fear of reprisal.

While there is no quick fix solution as to how to banish perceptions of unequal power relationships, there are several strategies which a listener might employ to minimise

perceptions of inequality. Firstly, (and as outlined in the *Instigate* stage of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers process), the listener should take time to reassure the speaker that he/she is the 'owner' of the process, with the listener acting as a facilitator. As with best ethical practice in conducting research, the listener should also reassure the listener that any conversations are confidential and will not to be shared outside the confines of the meeting space. Arranging for the conversation to be conducted in non-intimidating environments, such as a neutral office or meeting space, may also go some way in mitigating power differentials.

While acknowledging that the discursive dialogue element of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers is co-constructed, the processes which I devised to underpin the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers align towards a procedural model to support listeners in guiding the reflexive engagement of speakers. This locus is predicated by the assumption that the model would be used primarily as a tool for dance teacher educators.

Figure 3 outlines the iterative cycle of the five stages of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers.

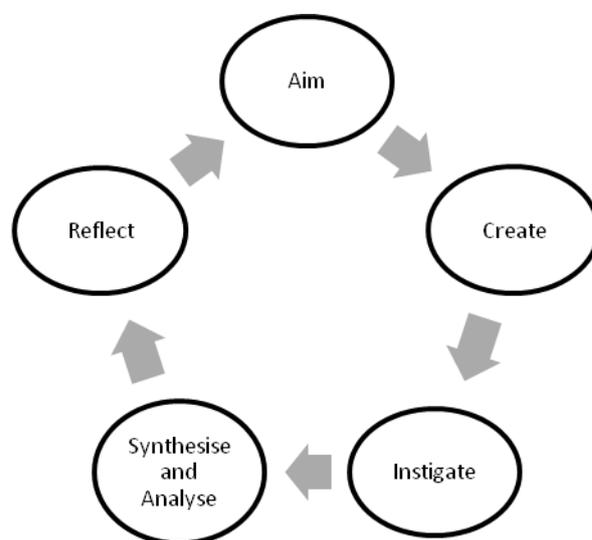


Figure 3: The iterative cycle of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers

The terms which I created for each stage of the iterative cycle provide an 'at a glance' focus for each of the stages. *Aim* refers to beginning the process through which a focus for conversation is established. *Create* refers to the listener

establishing the format of the conversation in terms of devising questions related to the aim, and deciding upon how the conversation will be captured. *Instigate* identifies the stage of the process where the listener and speaker engage in the shared discursive dialogue. *Synthesise and Analyse* identifies the stage at which the listener identifies, collates and makes sense of the emerging messages arising from the conversation. *Reflect* refers to the listener and speaker coming together to reflect on the professional identity type and pen portrait profile which the listener has constructed as a result of his/her interpretations at the *Synthesise and Analyse* stage. It is at the *Reflect* stage that listeners and speakers consider any actions that speakers may wish to contemplate and/or carry forward as means to realising professional aspirations.

### *3.2 An overview of the procedure of process*

Table 2 provides an overview of the actions which take place during each of the five stages. The stages highlighted in blue represent joint contribution, with the stages highlighted in green being those which are led by the listener.

In devising Figure 3 and Table 2, I experimented with different ways in which to combine the two formats into a single diagram in order to capture 'at a glance' connections between process and procedure. However, when I asked colleagues for feedback on the two prototypes of the single diagrams I produced, the feedback received suggested that keeping the information separated in two separate formats was more 'user friendly'. Thus, for the purposes of this investigation I have kept the information in Figure 3 and Table 2 separate, but recognise the potential of developing a single diagrammatic representation once further feedback arising from implementation of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers to a wider audience is gathered.

<p><b>Stage 1: Aim</b></p> <p>Establishing a focus</p>	<p>The listener and speaker decide on which aspects of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers should be explored. The focus of the exploration could be on all four aspects of professional identity (materialist and idealist positioning and passive and active agency) or on fewer aspects, for example, active agency only.</p>
<p><b>Stage 2: Create</b></p> <p>Shaping the format</p>	<p>The listener decides on the format of the conversation, creates questions which will engage the speaker in reflexive thinking and dialogue on the aspects of professional identity agreed upon during Stage 1. The listener decides on how the conversation is to be captured (e.g. audio recordings, <i>aide memoire</i> notes etc.)</p>
<p><b>Stage 3: Instigate</b></p> <p>Engaging in discursive dialogue</p>	<p>The conversation takes place between the listener and the speaker.</p>
<p><b>Stage 4: Synthesise and Analyse</b></p> <p>Discovering a professional identity profile</p>	<p>The listener organises (synthesises) the messages emerging from the conversation by plotting these on one or more of the model's templates. The listener identifies and interprets (analyses) emerging trends to construct a pen portrait of a possible professional identity profile which identifies a professional identity type and the mode of reflexivity most used during the <i>Instigate</i> stage.</p>
<p><b>Stage 5: Reflect</b></p>	<p>The listener and speaker meet to reflect upon the listener's interpretation of the speaker's professional identity type and profile. It is at this stage that the speaker and listener may interrogate further converging or diverging interpretations. The listener and speaker may also explore how some of the interpreted characteristics might support or hinder current and future possibilities for the speaker's professional development, with a view of entering into a further iterative cycles.</p>

Table 2: Procedural overview of the five stages of process.

#### 4. Engaging in the five stages of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers

##### 4.1 Stage 1: establishing the aim

For the purposes of this investigation, I alone decided on the elements of professional identity to be explored (the aim). These elements centred on materialist and idealist positioning and passive and active agency, as these were the factors I had identified as being core elements for the exploration of professional identities of dance teachers. However, as one of the prime purposes of implementing the MIPA

Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers is for the listener to guide a dance teacher's exploration of his/her professional identity, I believe that the starting point of the process should be a joint deliberation between the listener and the speaker as to what the speaker wishes to gain from engaging in the process (for example, deciding on which elements of professional identity as identified in the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers the speaker wishes to focus on). This sharing of possibilities will establish the listener's position as a 'guide' to the speaker's reflexive engagement, and possibly establish a relationship of trust which will support a discursive dialogue at the *Instigate* stage.

#### 4.2 Stage 2: acts of creation

##### 4.2.1 Bringing 'inner thoughts' to the surface

In conceptualising the process to underpin the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers, I found myself becoming more attuned to the questions, and responses to those questions, which were contained within my 'inner voice'. What might the key points be in creating the process? Why might some points be more relevant than others? The product of such contemplation was the written text for this chapter; however, I began to realise that similar processes could also underpin decisions taken by the listener in creating the shape of the conversation which would take place during the *Instigate* stage. The quality of conversations, be it within one's 'inner voice' or with another, is often predicated by the types of questions posed. With this in mind, and in laying the groundwork for engaging in discursive dialogue, considerable thought needs to be given to the structure of the conversation and the types of questions which might best guide the conversation.

In relation to constructing interviews for qualitative research investigations, a recurring theme is the degree of planning required ahead of interviews taking place (Coe *et al.* 2017; Kvale, 2011; Mason, 2002), for example, the form of the interviews (structured, semi-structured or loosely structured), if interview questions are to be framed by themes, topic-based or as a narrative (Mason, 2002:62), how interviews are to be captured (written notes, audio/video recordings), and ensuring ethical compliancy (following research ethics

guidelines and expectations). These principles of preparation also apply to the *Creation* stage of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers.

While the procedure for the *Creation* Stage suggests that it is the listener who decides on the format of the conversation, depending on the situational context in which the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers was to be used, it would also be possible for both the listener and the speaker to co-create the format of the conversation for the *Instigate* stage when meeting to decide upon the *Aim*. For example, the listener and speaker could decide collaboratively that a more open-ended schedule of questions might be more appropriate for the first round of engaging with the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as this would allow for the listener and the speaker to travel together on an uncharted journey, or that making *aide memoire* notes would be sufficient for the depth of analysis required for producing a professional identity type and profile.

#### 4.2.2 *Shaping conversations*

While there may be possibilities for co-creation of the conversation format for the *Instigate* stage, I envisage that for the majority of cases the listener will decide on the format of the conversation. For this investigation I followed a semi-structured interview format as I felt this provided me with a degree of structure whilst at the same time allowing potential for any follow-up of conversational trajectories which strayed from the question schedule. While structured conversation formats using closed-ended questions provide greater consistency across speakers (speakers responding to the same questions without significant deviation), and are generally quicker to administer, I do not believe that these aspects correspond with the *raison d'être* of discursive dialogue; that is, taking both the listener and speaker on a conversational journey (Kvale, 2011). Conversely, while a loosely structured conversation may reveal a plethora of unique insights without impediment, such conversations can be quite time-consuming in a profession which is often time poor.

Regardless of the format of the conversation, in using the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers the listener should have an understanding of potential characteristics of materialist and idealist positioning and passive and active agency. Table 3 outlines some of the attributes and activities of dance teachers related to these characteristics. These attributes and activities may inform the types of questions which might be asked during conversations as a means of revealing potential professional identity types.

<b>Positioning</b>	<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Idealist	Idealists are those dance teachers who consider ways in which normative practices and expectations can be challenged in order for such practices to evolve. Idealists are not afraid to immerse themselves in new experiences or work outside their comfort zones. The starting point for idealist activities is normally drawn from individual motivations rather than collective expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks out new opportunities through teaching different dance <i>genres</i></li> <li>• Looks to engage in different dance contexts bring about innovative practices</li> <li>• Openly challenges normative practices philosophically and/or practically</li> </ul>
Materialist	Materialists are those dance teachers who hold histories and legacies of dance as artistic and professional practice in high esteem. Materialists often see themselves as 'guardians' of tradition to ensure continuity of dance as an art form. The starting point for materialist activities is normally drawn from collective expectations rather than individual motivations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allegiance to activities which promote/underpin specialism within a single dance <i>genre</i></li> <li>• Restricts practice to one dance context</li> <li>• Advocate for adhering to legacies of practice and engagement</li> </ul>
Passive	Dance teachers who exhibit passive agency are often content to follow the lead of others. They tend to be 'rule-led' and do not seek to challenge collective expectations and/or practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engages in thoughts/activities which underpin and/or support normative values and/or activities</li> </ul>
Active	Dance teachers who exhibit active agency often seek out ways to address perceived barriers to their practices. They may act first and consider the consequences afterwards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engages in thoughts/activities which support growth and advancement</li> </ul>

Table 3: Characteristics of Idealist and Materialist positionings and Passive and Active agencies

In addition to selecting an appropriate conversation format, it is for the listener to decide on the number of questions to be asked as part of the conversation process. This decision may be predicated by the planned length of the

conversation and/or the number of planned conversations (for example, a 'one-off' conversation might have more questions whereas a series of planned follow-up conversations may have a reduced question schedule for each conversation.)

#### *4.2.3 Capturing conversations*

Consideration needs to be given to how to capture the conversations. For this investigation, I recorded interviews on a Dictaphone alongside making brief notes on non-verbal aspects of the conversations. I found that by loosely noting non-verbal communications (a shrug of the shoulders, leaning forward to make a point, or a deep sigh) provided me with additional clues during the *Synthesise and Analyse* stage as to which aspects of a participant's professional identity might hold personal importance which, in turn, informed professional identity profile perceptions.

For listeners, the choice of how to capture the conversations may be informed by previous experience of the listener as 'interviewer', but perhaps more significantly by the desired ambience of the conversation the listener wishes to create. In my experience, whilst some dance teachers may at first be a little hesitant about their voices being recorded, this reticence is soon overcome once the conversation progresses. This being the case, I would recommend that listeners make audio recordings of conversations as this allows the listener to repeatedly re-engage with discursive dialogue once the conversation has ended.

Though time-consuming, for this investigation I decided to transcribe interviews into text as I felt, a) transcripts would provide me with a more tangible product from which to synthesise and analyse emerging messages, and b) notating my interpretations of conversations directly against a written text would provide me with a complete picture of the whole. However, if the availability of time is a factor, listeners may decide not to produce full transcripts but instead 'cherry pick' aspects of the conversation which the listener feels would be pertinent to the creation of a professional identity

profile. 'Cherry-picking' aspects of a conversation will potentially result in a more surface-level elucidation of a conversation as opposed to producing transcripts which will provide a more holistic, multi-faceted interpretation.

#### *4.2.4 The potential impact of inferential comprehension*

It is worth mentioning here the influence of inferential comprehension when devising conversation questions. Whilst inferential comprehension is more commonly related to how one combines ideas together in making sense of a text (for example, "The path to the castle was muddy." implies that at some point the path was covered by water), inferential comprehension is often implicit in devising conversation questions. In deciding upon the questions which will frame the conversation, and in the phrasing of those questions, the listener will inevitably draw on his/her comprehension of aspects which point towards materialist or Idealist positioning and passive or active agency. Whilst making decisions underpinned by inferential comprehension is, in itself, not necessarily problematic, a mismatch between what might be assumed by the listener, and the interpretation of intent by the speaker, may only be revealed *in situ* of the conversation. When this mismatch does occur, it may be that the listener will decide to re-phrase the questions or to note any deviations of understanding which could be pursued further in follow-up conversations.

Inferential comprehension also comes into play during the *Synthesise and Analyse* stage of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers, whereby listeners may draw upon inferred understanding in excavating the intention of meaning of speakers' responses. Listeners will need to distinguish literal, interpretative and reflexive 'readings' of emerging messages (Mason, 2002). During the *Synthesise and Analyse* stage, listeners will be drawn to both interpretative and reflexive 'readings' of information, each of which involves a degree of inferential comprehension. In terms of the former, listeners will need to be alert as to how their interpretations of information are inferred through 'insider knowledge' of practice and normative expectations. Sometimes this 'insider knowledge' is

so deeply embedded that it takes a conscious effort to tease out any unconscious inference. In terms of reflexive 'readings', listeners may find themselves delving into their 'ethnographic selves' (Coffey, 1999) and, in doing so, be drawn to contemplating ways in which their values and beliefs are informing interpretations of another's professional identity.

#### *4.3 Stage 3: instigating discursive dialogue - it's good to talk*

Having created the format of the conversation, the next stage is for the listener and speaker to meet. While this stage of the process may, on the surface, appear straightforward, my experiences of conducting the conversations for this investigation revealed some interesting insights into how speakers might view the proposition of engaging in conversations with peers. Despite initial apprehension of being 'interviewed', several participants in this investigation commented post-interview on how much they had valued having the opportunity to speak to someone about how they viewed themselves as dance teachers. These participants also commented on how having focussed conversations was perhaps an element missing from their on-going professional development which tended to concentrate on further development of the *how* and *what* of dance teaching. If the proposition that 'it's good to talk' is taken, creating conditions which will enable speakers to feel comfortable in articulating perceptions and thoughts which may have been confined to their 'inner voices' needs consideration.

For listeners, appreciating their roles should encompass sensitivity towards the needs of speakers (Mason, 2002). This aside, listeners should be aware that they too will experience hermeneutic encounters during the conversation whereby, as a result of another's articulation of what it is to be a dance teacher, they may begin to question their own values, beliefs and understanding of experience and normative practices. Such situations may be slightly unsettling for listeners as they find themselves asking questions of the ethnographic self, whilst at the same time interpreting the dialogue of the speaker. In this investigation, I countered this unease by keeping an *aide memoire* within which I noted directly after the conversation any challenges to my own perceptions as a result of engaging in discursive dialogues.

#### *4.4 Stage 4: making sense of emerging messages through synthesis and analysis*

Stage 4 of the process, where information drawn from conversations is synthesised and analysed, is undoubtedly the most time-consuming phase of the model. As alluded to in Section 4.2.2 of this chapter, dance teachers are often challenged in finding 'free' time, which may be an obstacle for individuals committing to on-going engagement with the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers. Equally, for those who enact the role of listener, the prospect of spending significant time in collating information into meaningful forms may not be appealing. However, the structure of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers is such that it allows listeners to be selective in deciding on the scope of the stages. For example, if time is a limited resource for both listener and speaker, the aim of the process may be to focus on solely one aspect of professional identity which would reduce the amount of time required for the synthesis and analysis of information. Regardless of whole or part usage of the model, the process of the *Synthesise and Analyse* stage outlined below provides a guide in the collation and management of information. This outline is a *précis* of the more detailed descriptions of the synthesis and analysis phases of the investigation presented in Chapter 5:

- *Listen, read, make notes*

Through repetitive listening of a recording and/or reading of a transcript, the listener constructs a bank of notes which draws together recurring themes as well as points of contradiction related to the selected professional identity characteristics.

- *Organising key information*

The listener synthesises key information (aspects or professional identity) by plotting relevant points onto summary sheets (see Appendices 5-7 for examples). Once information has been plotted on one or more of the summary sheets, the listener is able to analyse the information to produce an interpretation of the speaker's professional identity.

- *Presenting key information*

On completion of the *Synthesise and Analyse* processes, information can be presented by a) plotting professional identity type on the co-ordinate plane (as outlined in Chapter 5) and/or producing a pen portrait of the listener's interpretation of the speaker's professional identity (see Appendix 8 for examples).

#### *4.5 Stage 5: Sharing interpretations and reflections of dance teacher professional identities*

Once Stages 1-4 have been completed, the listener should meet with the speaker to share the listener's interpretation of the speaker's professional identity. It is worth recognising that while the listener has been working through Stages 2-4 the speaker may have also spent time reflecting on what was said during the *Instigate* stage. Thus, when the listener and speaker meet to reflect on the listener's interpretation of the speaker's personality type and profile, the speaker may have reconstructed their perceptions as articulated during the *Instigate* stage to create 'new' perceptions and interpretations. Such reconfiguration of perceptions is indicative of the variance of temporal trajectories of professional identity formation, in other words, formation of professional identities does not always follow a steady course but can fluctuate across time according to contextual and situational circumstances. Appreciation that such variances will occur is key in understanding that professional identities are rarely fixed but open to change over time, space, and practices.

Meeting with the speaker to share interpretations provides an opportunity for both parties to engage in further discursive dialogue which, in turn, may instigate another cycle of implementation of the proposed model. If possible, the listener should share with the speaker the summary sheets on which information from the *Instigate* stage has been plotted, and the pen portrait derived from the synthesis and analysis of information, ahead of the *Reflect* stage meeting. In doing so, the speaker will have time to reflect on his/her (re) interpretations ahead of the *Reflect* stage meeting.

It is likely that the conversations of the *Reflect* stage meeting will be less structured than the conversation at the *Instigate* stage. Through a collaborative engagement in

discursive dialogue, perceptions which were revealed in the *Instigate* stage may be explored further. Undoubtedly there will be points of consensus, but what may perhaps be more interesting is where the interpretations of the listener and speaker diverge. Such divergence sets the scene for new interpretations of professional identity to emerge and for further discursive dialogues to take place.

For some speakers, the *Reflect* stage may signal the end of a process. For others, it may be a precursor for repeating the process several times over. Whether an ending or a beginning, I would argue that having engaged with the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers at least once will provide speakers with a roadmap towards reflection and reflexion in support of on-going professional identity formation.

## **5. Challenges to implementing the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers.**

### *5.1 "What will I get out of it?"*

Throughout this chapter I have alluded to some of the challenges which both dance educators and dance teachers may face in the implementation of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers. Perhaps the greatest challenge, however, is persuading dance teachers of the benefits of engaging with the model. As a group of practitioners, dance teachers tend to work in isolation of other dance teachers which, for the most part, is not seen to be intrinsically problematic – in layperson's terms, they just get on with being dance teachers. However, this isolation from others can present challenges, particularly when dance teachers encounter critical incidents which not only challenge who they are as dance teachers (in other words, their professional identities) but also what they do as dance teachers. When faced with moments of disequilibrium, many dance teachers will stoically carry on, adopting the view that such imbalance is part and parcel of the dance teaching profession. For others, however, these moments of disparity are such that they may feel disillusioned with the dance teaching profession, and may consider leaving the profession altogether. Having opportunities to share these thoughts, which are often confined to one's 'inner voice,' could be seen as either a gift or a curse. However, I believe the more dance teachers perceive engagement in

discursive dialogue with their peers or knowledgeable others as a positive encounter, recognising how such dialogues could lead to an empowerment of their professional identities, the less likely they will see such conversations as threatening or a waste of valuable time.

For those dance educators who are charged with delivering initial and on-going education and training of dance teachers, taking the view that to better understand the *how* and *what* of dance teaching starts with an understanding of the *why* of dance teaching may be contrary to the prevailing predilection of teaching being seen as a *repertoire* of skills over teaching as an ability (Carr, 2003). Giving time to engaging in discursive dialogue with trainee and established dance teachers as to what it means to be a dance teacher without a quantifiable outcome may be viewed by some as time not well spent. I would argue, however, that such views are perhaps short-sighted given the propensity within the teaching profession to champion reflective practice as a key skill in a teacher's *repertoire*. Becoming a reflective practitioner (or in the case of this investigation a reflexive dance teacher) is like any other skill; it requires nurturing and support over a period of time. In taking this view, I would argue that time allocated to engaging in one-to-one discussions at regular intervals should be considered an essential part of a long-term project in the empowerment of new and experienced dance teachers through the development of their 'reflexive selves'.

## *5.2 Recognising readiness*

Deciding at what stage of a dance teacher's training or on-going professional development the proposed model of dance teacher professional identity should be introduced may present challenges. Akin to notions of a 'readiness to learn' (Knowles, 1984; Bruner, 1960) dance educators wishing to implement the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers will need to consider when a dance teacher is best motivated to engage with the processes which underpin the model. For some trainee dance teachers, the lack of experience of being dance teachers may limit their ability to reflect on their professional identities. I would argue, however, that while a lack of experience may impact on the quality of reflexive engagement, sowing the seeds of the processes through which one becomes a

reflexive dance teacher is best introduced in the early stages of a dance teacher's professional identity formation. In contrast, for more experienced dance teachers, some of whom may question the necessity to reflect on their professional identities, recognising the value of engaging with the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers may only be realised after encountering recurring moments of tension and contradiction in their practice as dance teachers. Thus, rather than imposing engagement with the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers, dance educators may decide to make known that opportunities to engage in conversations about professional identities are available if dance teachers feel that it would be beneficial to their on-going professional development.

### *5.3 Managing conflict: individual empowerment and normative orientation*

As stated early on this chapter, the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers should not be viewed as a form of counselling or coaching. Nonetheless, in engaging with the model, dance teachers may reveal deep-rooted moments of conflict, which may be revealed as disagreement with the listener's interpretations of their professional identities. Regardless of the triggers of conflict, listeners need to be prepared that their perceptions of a speaker's professional identity may be at odds with those of a speaker. Rather than viewing the perceptions of listeners taking precedence or holding greater validity to those of speakers, it may be prudent for listeners and speakers to have a clear understanding from the outset that one form of professional identity type is not necessarily 'better' than another. This shared recognition may be particularly important if, as it has been argued, many dance teachers will find questioning themselves as dance teachers, let alone engaging with that questioning in the company of another, as an unnecessary confrontation of their professional standing as a dance teacher.

Other challenges may arise when speakers view the processes underpinning the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers, or indeed the implementation of the model to support their professional development as dance teachers, not as a means towards individual empowerment but as an affront to their normative orientation within dance teacher communities and/or the wider field of dance as a performance art. While individual empowerment may be framed as

being virtuous, the prospect of identifying 'gaps' in one's professional identity profile, or instigating changes which challenge normative expectations, might be a daunting prospect, especially if the perceived consequences of potential change alienates a dance teacher from the collective. This being the case, some dance teachers may be less than enthusiastic in engaging with the processes of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers, and be resigned to the development of their professional identities being left to chance.

The challenges to implementing the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as outlined above, and throughout this chapter, have been drawn from my experiences of conducting the research for this investigation and from insights gained from my involvement with dance teachers over many years. For dance educators and dance teachers wishing to implement the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers, some or all of the challenges highlighted may be encountered. Undoubtedly, as and when the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers is implemented by other dance professionals, new challenges will emerge which may instigate new ways of thinking and, indeed, amendments to the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers.

## **Conclusion: implications and provocations**

### **1. Introduction and purpose**

In writing the conclusion to this investigation, I am reminded of my own personal and professional connections with the subject matter. From the outset, and ahead of conceptualising the investigation's lines of enquiry, I was interested in 'getting to know' dance teachers through their perceptions, aspirations, values and beliefs of what it was to be a dance teacher. I was interested in discovering how these factors shaped the formation of their professional identities which, in turn, may have informed past, current and future possibilities. These intentions may appear to be anomalous given that I had been a dance teacher for many years, resulting in an 'insider's knowledge' and understanding of what it was to be a dance teacher. However, in reflecting on my own experiences as a dance teacher, and more specifically as an educator of dance teachers, I began to question the extent to which I really understood the dance teaching profession, or if that understanding was merely a reflection of normative beliefs and practices which were inconspicuously woven through the fabric of the teaching of dance.

What began to emerge from my personal reflections, and through recalling formal and informal conversations with dance teachers, was a realisation that through engaging in opportunities to discuss values, beliefs and practices, dance teachers appeared to gain a sense of empowerment and motivation in navigating on-going professional development and career opportunities. Given the apparent value of these 'professional conversations', I felt that there was a need for a more prescribed process through which dance teachers and dance educators could engage in discursive dialogues. Thus, as well as exploring factors which informed professional identity formation of dance teachers as a means to identifying different professional identity types, this investigation sought to provide a platform through which dance teachers and dance teacher educators could purposively engage in 'professional conversations' against a backdrop of professional identity.

As a dance teacher educator, I was familiar with various models drawn from the wider field of education to support the knowledge, understanding and skills (the *how* and *what*) associated with the teaching of dance. What I considered to be missing

from this *repertoire* of models was one which focussed specifically on the exploration of the professional identities of dance teachers. Believing in the need for dance teachers to better understand themselves as dance teachers (the *why* of dance teaching) I concluded that by providing a framework which supported discursive dialogue amongst dance teaching professionals in relation to professional identities would not only give dance teachers greater confidence and motivation in the self-direction of their professional development but also with a better understanding of the *how* and *what* of dance teaching. As a result of this investigation, my initial professional 'hunch' of the need for a model of professional identity resulted in the construction of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers, with a vision that this model would be used amongst dance teachers and dance teacher educators to give a 'voice' to those involved in the field of dance teaching.

In drawing this investigation to a conclusion, I will give consideration to the potential impact of what I believe to be some of the key implications and provocations arising from the investigation, with a reflection on how these implications and provocations might form the basis for a more attuned eye in relation to the professional identity formation of dance teachers. I will also consider how some of my experiences of engaging in this investigation have impacted on my knowledge and understanding of being a practitioner researcher, which may be of interest to other practitioner researchers wishing to explore similar or different aspects of the dance teaching profession.

## **2. Towards a new understanding of the professional identities of dance teachers.**

For many dance teachers, the regularity of practice as influenced by normative expectations may be the hook on which hangs the supposition that professional identities are relatively stable and fixed. For some dance teachers, this sense of containment may be reassuring, while for others it may provide a sense of underlying frustration resulting in feelings of disempowerment. Through this investigation I have presented a case for greater recognition of the fluidity of professional identities as a result of time, space and evolving practices. As evidenced by several participants in this investigation, 'light bulb' moments were revealed when they began to

contemplate how their professional identities had indeed evolved over time and as a result of engaging in different spaces, teaching different dance *genres*, as well as employing a range of practices which conformed and challenged normative expectations.

Making sense of professional identities, and the directions of possibilities within and outside normative views, begins with one's inner conversations. Being able to articulate emerging thoughts can provide individuals with a roadmap of possibilities as to where this new thinking may lead, and how new thinking will reveal new opportunities. For these trajectories of possibilities, which may result in a reconstruction of professional identities, to be realised, I have argued that individuals need to be provided with opportunities to share their inner conversations with others. In doing so, professional aspirations which had been confined to one's self begin to become 'real world' possibilities. Through engaging with the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers, dance teachers will have a platform through which to contemplate inner conversations with other dance professionals.

### **3. Contribution of methodological accomplishments in exploring professional identities in dance teacher education**

The MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers is underpinned by four professional identity types: the Active Materialist, the Passive Materialist, the Active Idealist and the Passive Idealist. Through the synthesis and analysis of messages emerging from the *Instigate* stage of the model, it is possible to plot a dance teacher's professional identity type on a co-ordinate plan which distinguishes different positionings within a single category type. I believe that this aspect of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers is a methodological accomplishment.

A further methodological accomplishment arising from this investigation, which relates specifically to dance teacher education, is the use of the concepts of materialist and idealist positionings to distinguish dance teachers who hold and articulate more traditionalist values and beliefs in their practices from those who align themselves to more innovative and progressive aspects of dance teaching. The idea that dance professionals and connoisseurs of dance performances align themselves

towards materialist or idealist positionings are well engrained in the analysis of dance performances (Anderson, 1983). Thus, making reference to terminologies which are already familiar to dance teachers and dance teacher educators may make the use of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers appear to be more accessible as dance teachers would be able to make links between their professional identity types and the terms Anderson uses when analysing dance performance. The concept of agency is less commonly referred to within the field of dance. Nonetheless, I believe that dance teachers would recognise themselves as 'followers' or 'leaders' within their professional practices which align with notions of passive and active agency.

#### **4. The MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as a Resource for Dance Teacher Educators.**

Throughout this investigation I have presented arguments for the importance of providing opportunities for dance teachers to engage in discursive dialogue with other dance teaching professionals in the exploration of professional identities, with the aim to develop knowledge and understanding of the *why* of dance teaching through the lens of being a dance teacher. While discursive dialogues do take place, these are done so in informal settings rather than as an integral component of initial and continuing professional development. I believe that the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers provides a resource for dance teacher educators to act as facilitators and enablers of the development of professional identities of dance teachers.

In adopting the role of facilitator, a dance teacher educator would use the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as a framework to engage in discursive dialogue (professional conversations) with trainee and established dance teachers to explore their professional identities. As a facilitator, a dance teacher educator would guide the discursive dialogue journey based on the processes which underpin the model. Rather than viewing the processes as being deterministic in mapping potential journeys, a dance teacher educator will use his/her professional judgements on an initial shape of the discursive dialogue whilst acknowledging that the shape will also be co-constructed between the listener and the speaker. Thus, a

dance teacher educator adopting the role of facilitator will assist dance teachers in articulating their perceptions of professional identities with minimal intervention. Acts of facilitation are embedded within the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers in the *Instigate* and *Reflect* stages

As enablers, dance teacher educators will draw on their understanding of being a dance teacher and the various methodologies which will support other dance teachers in the exploration of their professional identities. The MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers provides methodological approaches in the *Aim*, *Create* and *Synthesis and Analysis* stages which allow a dance teacher educator to construct an interpretation of a dance teacher's professional identity type, profile.

While this investigation has demonstrated the potential of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as a resource to support trainee and established dance teachers gaining knowledge and understanding of their professional identity formation and development, introducing the model to the field of dance teacher education will involve disseminating the model more widely and promoting its value to dance teachers and dance teacher educators. Before doing so, further cycles of implementing the model would need to take place in order to gain feedback on a) the perceived value of the model, b) the validity of the processes which underpin the model, c) the reliability of the model to identify professional identity types and d) further amendments which would enhance the model.

#### *4.1 Value of the model*

As recognised in this investigation, dance teachers and dance teacher educators may be reluctant to engage with and/or introduce the model as part of initial and continuing dance teacher education. Through further trials of the model with different participants (for example, a wider range of dance teachers and with dance teacher educators) I would gain a sense of ways in which I could promote the value of the model as a result of feedback from an extended group of participants.

#### *4.2 Validity of process*

Through instigating the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers as part of this investigation, I am reasonably confident that the processes which inform each of the stages of the model have a degree of face validity, that is, the processes allow the information required to be revealed. However, as I have only implemented one cycle of the model, further implementations and appraisal of the processes may provide insights into amendments and/or enhancement to the processes.

#### *4.3 Reliability of the identification of professional identity types*

I recognise that a criticism of the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers might be that the processes which underpin the model do not provide a sufficient level of reliability in identifying professional identity types. As I have argued throughout the presentation of this investigation, I believe that it is the interpretive process rather than the reliability of product which may hold greater significance for understanding professional identities of dance teachers. Nonetheless, I would be interested in sharing the MIPA Model of Professional Identities of Dance Teachers with more experienced qualitative and quantitative researchers in order to receive feedback on further amendments and enhancements to the model.

### **5. My development as a dance teacher educator through the lens of practitioner- researcher**

#### *5.1 Enhancing my role as a practitioner-researcher*

Through conducting this investigation, I encountered many ways in which my role as a practitioner researcher was challenged and, as a result of those challenges, my skills as a practitioner researcher developed. While I have always had a curiosity in interrogating my own practices and the practices of other dance professionals, conducting this investigation has provided me with a more formal means through which I could appraise my role as a practitioner-researcher. In reflecting on the challenges and developments of my emerging identity as a practitioner-researcher, I have identified two significant aspects which I feel I will take away from this experience.

One of the challenges encountered in conducting this investigation was the extent to which I felt I was able to develop a nuanced insight into a profession I had been involved in for many decades. While I was aware that in interviewing the participants for this investigation I would bring my own values, beliefs and perceptions, I was unsure if I would be sufficiently intuitive to question those values, beliefs and perceptions so that I 'heard' what others had to say rather than overlooking the significance of perceptions which did not align with my own. In a sense, I was anxious that I would not be able to ameliorate my professional self in order to understand the values, beliefs and perceptions of others. What emerged from conducting the 12 interviews for this investigation was an increased confidence that I had developed strategies (for example, keeping an *aide memoire* notebook) which would allow me to engage in hermeneutic processes through the lens of a practitioner-researcher (an 'other') as opposed to a dance teacher educator. Nonetheless, moving from thought (my inner voice analysis of emerging messages *in situ*) to action (creating an interpretative narrative which could be shared with others) was and remains something of a challenge which will hopefully become less so the more experienced I become as a practitioner-researcher.

A second challenge which I feel holds significance in relation to the development of my professional identity as a practitioner-researcher is a feeling of being overwhelmed by the expansive body of knowledge related to professional identity formation. I recognised that in conducting this investigation I would only be scratching the surface of the expertise of others who had written about professional identity formation and associated areas of investigation. Initially I felt that my professional voice was in some way being disempowered by more knowledgeable others, and that what I produced as a result of this investigation would hold little significance. However, as I worked through conducting and writing up the investigation, and in talking to others outside the field of dance teacher education about what I wanted to achieve, I began to feel more confident that the outcomes of the investigation would, albeit it in a small way, contribute to the enhancement of the dance teaching profession. Undoubtedly, these feelings of uncertainty are also experience by other emerging practitioner-researchers. However, I believe that such feelings should not be a deterrent to engaging in professional practice research;

rather, practitioner-researchers, regardless of the field of practice, should focus on the significance of what they wish to achieve within their professions rather than being daunted by the contribution to wider domains of academic research.

### *5.2 Enhancing my role as a dance teacher educator*

In tandem with my emerging identity as a practitioner-researcher, I feel that through conducting the research for this investigation that I have been given an opportunity to reflect on my role as a dance teacher educator. Many of my views, for example, appreciating dance teachers for their individuality whilst being part a collective, and the need to recognise an individual's 'readiness' to learn or engage in further professional development rather than imposing timeframes and deadlines, have been reinforced. Other beliefs, for example, that dance teachers who teach certain dance *genres* or in particular spaces are constrained by the constructs of those *genres* and spaces, have been reconstructed as a result of engaging in conversations with the participants of this investigation. I have also gained a more attuned appreciation of the need to go beyond the 'stories' told to me by dance teachers, for example, connecting more with an individual's subjective emotionality, as they share their stories with me in order to better understand the aspects of professional identities which have personal meaning for dance teachers. Moreover, I now believe that my quest for raising the status of dance teaching as a profession, and empowering dance teachers through giving them a 'voice', is no longer a representation but a reality.

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## Appendix 1: Invitation to participate in a research project

### An Invitation to Participate in a Research Project

Mapping Professional Identities of Dance Teachers through Time, Space and Practice: towards a qualitative model of identification

September – December 2017

As part of my studies for my Doctor of Education programme at UCL Institute of Education, London, I am looking for participants to be interviewed for a piece of research which I am required to undertake. This leaflet outlines the proposed research project, and considers some questions you may have about the process.

#### **Why is this research being done?**

The focus of the research is to discover how dance teachers understand what they do as dance teachers, and how characteristics of the contexts within which dance teaching takes place and the type of dance *genre* taught might impact on the construction and development of their professional identities as dance teachers. I am also interested in how dance teachers make decisions in relation to their practices and career developments.

#### **Who will be in the project?**

The research will involve dance teachers who teach in private, public and community dance contexts and across a range of dance *genres* such as ballet, contemporary dance, hip-hop etc.

#### **What will happen during the research?**

Collecting information for the research will be through one face-to-face semi structured interview. The interview will be approximately 45-60 minutes in length. Information drawn from the interview will form part of a mid-scale research project which will contribute to my Doctor of Education studies. If, at a later date, the research is to be shared more widely (e.g. a peer reviewed paper or conference report) I will seek further permission from you to do so.

#### **What questions will be asked?**

At the start of the interview I will ask you some preliminary questions such as where you teach, the main dance *genre* you teach, how long you have been teaching and your engagement with dance outside the teaching which you do. From there, the discussion will move on to consider how you feel the context and/or dance *genre* influences your work as a dance teacher and the work of other dance teachers, how

you feel other dance professionals view dance teachers and what, if any, challenges are presented to dance teachers in the construction and development of professional identities.

### **What will happen to you if you take part?**

If you agree to take part in the research, I will record the interview and type it up later. I am not looking for right or wrong answers, only for what everyone really thinks. You will have an opportunity to read the interview transcript and make any amendments, if you wish.

### **Could there be problems for you if you take part?**

I hope you will enjoy talking to me and that you will get something out of the interview process. Some people may feel uneasy when talking about some topics. If this happens, you do not have to respond to the question. You may even want to stop the interview or withdraw from the interview entirely. Once the interview has been completed, I am more than happy to speak with you informally about any issues or concerns you may have.

### **Will doing the research help you?**

The research will mainly help me learn to be a researcher so that I may do more research in the future, and to complete the final stage of Doctor of Education studies. However, I hope that you will enjoy the opportunity to share your thoughts and views and reflect on your identity and practices as a dance teacher. This has certainly been the case with previous research projects I have conducted.

### **Who will know that you have participated in the research?**

Apart from myself, my two supervisors (Dr David Guile and Dr Celia Whitchurch) and a small number of other UCL Institute of Education academics who will read the research for assessment purposes only, no one else need know that you are participating in the interview. I will keep recordings and notes in a safe place, with any electronic files being password protected. Your name will not be used in the final written report of the project, nor will specific mention of employers etc. be made.

### **Do you have to take part?**

There is no pressure for you to take part in this research, but if you decide that you would like to take part then I will need you to sign a consent form before conducting the interview. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time or decline to answer some of the interview questions.

I know that dance teachers are extremely busy so I will arrange for the interviews to fit around your schedule at a time which best suits you. You will not incur any financial costs.

**Will you know about the research results?**

I will send you a written copy of the interview for approval once it has been transcribed. Once the thesis has been completed you can, if you wish, ask to read the investigation in full.

The research has been granted ethical approval by UCL Institute of Education as an extension of research conducted by myself September- November 2014 and by the Research Ethics Committee of the Royal Academy of Dance.

**Thank you for reading this leaflet.**

I hope that you will be willing to take part in this research. If this is the case, or if you have further questions, please contact me.



Michelle Groves

[mgroves@rad.org.uk](mailto:mgroves@rad.org.uk)

Tel: 0207 326 8028

## Appendix 2: Consent Form

**Title:** Mapping Professional Identities of Dance Teachers through Time, Space and Practice: towards a qualitative model of identification

### Consent Form for Interviews

Thank you for reading the information sheet about the research study identified above. If you are happy to participate then please complete and sign the form below. Please initial the boxes below to confirm that you agree with each statement:

***Please  
Initial box:***

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

I agree for this interview to be tape-recorded. I understand that the audio recording made of this interview will be used only for analysis and that extracts from the interview, from which I would not be personally identified, may be used in any conference presentation, report or journal article developed as a result of the research. I understand that no other use will be made of the recording without my written permission, and that no one other than the interviewer will be allowed access to the original recording.

I agree to take part in this interview.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant                      Date                      Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Interviewer                      Date                      Signature

*To be counter-signed and dated electronically for telephone interviews or in the presence of the participant for face to face interviews*

## **Appendix 3: Interview questions**

### **Background Information**

How many years have you been teaching dance?

What types of dance do you teach?

What would you say is your main/specialist dance style that you teach?

Where do you do most of your teaching?

Are you involved in dance outside your dance teaching?

### **Interview questions**

1. Why did you become a dance teacher?
2. What does being a dance teacher mean to you?
3. Have you always felt that way?
  - Why is that?
4. How does what is important to you as a dance teacher come out in your practice?
  - Do you perceive any barriers which prevent you from delivering your practice as you would want?
5. Who (or what) do you look to in determining the characteristics or expectations of dance teachers?
6. How do you feel about the expectations of dance teachers as set out by others?

7. Your main teaching takes place in XXX context. How does that context shape your teaching?

8. How do you think other people view dance teachers who teach in a XXX context?

9. If you were to teach in a different context, what approach would you take, and why?

- What about teaching a different *genre*?
- Do you see any barriers which you might face if you were to teach in a different context or a different *genre*?

10. Thinking about the main dance genre you teach, how do you think the wider dance community views that genre and the way should be taught? (materialist idealist, practice)

- How do you feel about that?
- Do these views affect you in how you see yourself as a dance teacher?

11. Where do you see yourself as a dance teacher in five years' time?

12. Why do you think this?

#### **Appendix 4: Example of an interview transcript**

##### **Why did you become a dance teacher?**

So I was asked this in my interview for my PGCE course as well, and I remember my response was something along the lines of well I am a dance teacher – whether or not I have the qualification is almost irrelevant – I just feel like that was what I was already doing. Unofficially I had been helping people from the age of 13, and officially from the age of 16, continued when I was an adult and it just felt like the most logical step for me because it was just what I was already doing and what I felt was part of my identity. It was natural.

##### **You saw yourself as a dance teacher because you'd had that apprenticeship route all the way through?**

Yeah, but even that apprenticeship route was self-directed; no one was making me do it. I've always felt like teaching is something that's enjoyable, and dance is obviously the best thing to be teaching – so it made an obvious connection.

##### **So what does being a dance teacher mean to you?**

Well I think, if we look at dance first of all, it draws on all different types of learning and therefore can draw on all different types of learners, and I feel it can be one of the most inclusive ways to develop. So, for example, my own experience of school – they didn't offer dance at my all-girls grammar school and it was very isolated. And then I'd go to my local dance school afterwards and I would be friends with people from all different walks of life and all different schools, and I found that whether you were dyslexic or had maybe a physical disability, or were super clever or found school really hard, quite often it didn't really make any impact on how students did in a dance context with a dance professional leading that lesson because it was a different way of learning. And also you can draw on visual learning, kinaesthetic, auditory, and there are just so many possibilities and I found that some of my friends who admitted that when they were at school they didn't really listen or do homework, they came into dance and were really engaged. Being a dance teacher myself, I just feel like it's not just about teaching dance (although I love dance), it's about teaching those skills of how to learn and how to enjoy learning. And as a secondary school teacher, often teaching the boys more than the girls – I've had the conversation with them when they ask why they have to do [dance] and I've said at the beginning of the year you wouldn't stand up and do this dance, and now you do it at the beginning of every single lesson as does everyone without a fuss... think about how much you've learnt about confidence, life skills, group work, and they have that little moment of reflection. In dance it's a habit and what I want is for all these really good habits to dissipate into all the other areas of your life as well.

##### **So thinking about your role as a secondary school dance teacher, do you think you had the flexibility to shape your teaching the way you wanted to? Or were there restrictions in terms of what was expected of you?**

That's really interesting. I was in a one person department, and my Head of Department therefore wasn't a specialist in dance, and I was also the first qualified dance teacher that they had employed so there wasn't anything prepared of any substantial quality for me to repeat. So when I first arrived, everything that I taught I

had to create from scratch – especially for Key Stage 3 where there is no set syllabus in place. So in that respect, actually it was a very creative process and I didn't have anyone telling me that's right or that's wrong. However, that would sort of apply more to the content of what I was teaching. Of course there are restrictions when it comes to things like marking, assessments, all of those feedback opportunities. And I would say on balance, in my situation I was able to feel more creative than I was feeling restricted, but perhaps that's not always the case. Perhaps it depends on whether you are the sole dance teacher, or if you are part of a big team.

**So did you, as a secondary school dance teacher have this image or expectation of what was expected of you teaching dance in that context? Is there a notion of what it is to be a secondary school dance teacher?**

Well, all I had to go on really was my own PGCE – which I did with the University of Exeter. As I said, I didn't experience the GCSE or A Level at my school because they didn't offer it. And the schools that I went to for my placements in Devon I suppose really moulded my opinion on what being a secondary school dance teacher would be. And as it happened, the placement schools that I went to both had a very strong dance ethos and were both parts of big departments. So it was definitely a case that I had a clear image in mind of what a dance teacher would be, based on those experiences, but equally I had to really adapt and develop that picture because I was going from big departments to me on my own.

**Looking at your experience as a secondary school dance teacher and your experience teaching in the private sector, do you think private sector dance teachers are more constrained by what is expected of them?**

Perhaps the private sector in general terms is more closely linked to how I would have to teach at GCSE [level] or above – so there is a syllabus in each case, a set of expectations, and an exam at the end. Whereas when I was teaching my younger pupils (which was Key Stage 3) there was certainly much more flexibility for me than in the private sector so yes perhaps it would be fair to say that it was more restrictive. But I would also add to that that with a secondary school, if there are going to be assessments, they are set by senior management or the Exam Board whereas in the private sector presumably the head of the dance school gets to decide when those students get put in for the exam. So although there may be more restrictions on how and what is taught, the duration differs and actually I think that's quite a big difference.

**You told me a little bit about what dance teaching meant to you. Have you always felt that way or has your notion of what it is to be a dance teacher evolved over time?**

It has definitely evolved over time. I guess I didn't really have as much thought about it until I was in the final year of my degree and I really started to seriously think about what my career path would be and I made the active decision to apply to be a dance teacher. It wasn't the case that when I was young I thought I was going to be a dance teacher when I'm older. I was much a person who did a lot of extra-curricular of all different types and also tried very hard in lessons (to different outcomes) and then as your choices narrow down from GCSE to A Level, from A Level to my joint Honours Degree, until I realised what it was that I wanted to specialise in.

**I'm interested that you used the term 'active'. Do you feel that in terms of you becoming a dance teacher, and the type of dance teacher you wanted to become, that you had control over that?**

Yes, well I knew that I could, in theory, become a private dance teacher and I had that unqualified experience for a few years to give me an idea of that. But at the time I decided I wanted something that was more stable, maybe, and also gave me more opportunities to have a qualification I could take with me. Whereas I felt if I was in a private dance school I had this view at the time that I would be 'stuck' in my local dance school forever.

**Thinking about your career trajectory, were there any barriers that you met in terms of you becoming the sort of dance teacher you wanted to become, or did you feel you had free range?**

My barriers were my experience at the time, because I felt like a lot of other people on the course knew names of choreographers and key words that I had never even heard of and I had managed just fine without until that point. And suddenly I had twice as much work to do as the others on my course because I had to catch up and so my obstacle at that time was just content and subject knowledge, but other than that and finding a job (which was harder than I thought it might be!) I was very determined and confident that it would be fine.

**In your secondary school teaching, did you feel at all restricted or did you feel you had a freedom in terms of working with the syllabus?**

I found it quite constrictive because there is a lot to do in a short amount of time and also the more courses you go on to find out how they want something taught, even if it's not directly said in the syllabus, you work out quite quickly that actually there's a hidden curriculum and so that narrows it down again as to how you can present a scheme of work to your students.

**How does what is important to you as a dance teacher come out in your practice?**

It comes out in my practice via the planning I put in. So, as an example, I work very hard to try and ensure that the lessons I prepare have different options for the students to choose from. I think it's important that we try and engage with as many different learner types as possible so I will always – even now – have a basic level of this is what I need you to do, and then a kind of silver and gold level. And often, especially with my year 7s, 8s, and 9s who are still trying to find their feet, I will give them different tasks they can choose from, different images they can draw on, and because I'm trying hard to provide as many opportunities for children to succeed as possible it usually does make a difference and they usually do [through] one route or another find a way to succeed. And if they are leaving a dance lesson feeling like they have learnt something and got a sense of achievement or enjoyment from it then that is meeting my goal.

**You talked earlier about this notion of inclusivity. In your secondary school context, do you think there was anything that was a barrier to you teaching in an inclusive way? Was it encouraged by your school?**

Never with Key Stage 3! But in the same breath, I taught about 900 pupils a year so I made an effort to ensure that I could speak to as many students as possible and not fall into that trap of speaking to 1 and ignoring the other 29. So I created my own methods of things so I made praise post it notes. I would stand watching the class and if I saw someone that needed a bit of additional help or was trying much harder than perhaps in a previous lesson, then I would make a little note – a praise note – and if they needed help I might write a question on it that I hoped would instigate something, and I would go and deliver that note to them. And I found that really helpful because it freed me up because I was there watching and observing rather than focusing in and ignoring everyone else, but equally they could have that little note to read when it was suitable to them (they wouldn't always read it straightaway) and it was there for them to refer to. I was never told I was spending too long, but perhaps that's because of the strategies I put in place.

**I expect when you were teaching, especially in NQT year, people came in and observed your teaching. Did they make you think they were telling you to teach in a different way?**

Well I think the easy answer to that is that I had a Head of Department who was very encouraging and I think I had a lot of good ideas and because she was encouraging, I felt able to go and ask her when I felt like I didn't know what I was doing. So I don't think I came across any instances where they said to me I think you're doing this wrong, but equally, we built CPD into our department meetings because actually when I joined the school our whole department was new and we were all NQTs apart from the Head of Department who was new, but not an NQT. So we were all learning from each other and I imagine that would have had quite a big impact on the ethos and also on how the Head of Department gave feedback to us actually as well. So it was a very helpful sensation of collaboration actually.

**And do you think through that collaboration you were able to not only reflect on what you were doing in terms of dance but be really reflexive on you as a dance teacher?**

There was definitely a sense of [ticking the boxes] at first, but it was not for my benefit it was definitely always for the students' benefit. And then I suppose as I became more familiar with my classes and with these techniques I was putting in place, I was then able to take that step back and say this is how I want to brand my lessons. And because I taught almost all of the dance lessons myself, it did feel like my own brand and I suppose there was never a moment when I stood back and said 'yes this is how I am as a dance teacher' but ultimately that was the outcome.

**So who, or what, do you look to in terms of determining the characteristics or expectations of dance teachers?**

I suppose I take it from my own experience, and my own experience has been very varied as I've said. And I suppose I based my initial ideas from my PGCE with the University of Exeter and then my next stage was to include this higher level of learning that I worked on with my Head of Dance at that time – as I said we had CPD every week for our department. And then I was a mentor for University of Brighton trainee teachers; I did that for four years and they had their own set of criteria of what they felt was an important dance teacher. And I think that made me reflective on how I deliver my lessons because of course the trainee teachers were using that

as an example. So perhaps those were the three most important things that fed into what I consider to be a good dance teacher.

**How much did you prescribe to what the University of Brighton said are the characteristics of a good dance teacher? Did that have resonance with you personally?**

I would say that a lot of what they said was complementary to what I was already agreeing to and doing anyway, so there weren't huge differences. However there were some moments where I queried wording and I queried value of a few of the things that came to me. I don't think it swayed what I thought, but I feel like it was something that I considered when I was planning my lessons for the sake of the trainee teachers, and it might not be that I changed my plan of how to teach a lesson, but it might be that I explained my plan to the trainee teacher using terminology they were more familiar with. So the outcome might have been the same, but the route to that planning might have been a little bit different.

**So if you were to describe the really important characteristics or expectations of a dance teacher in secondary school, what would you say those were?**

You have to be a competent dancer in terms of physical skill. You need to be able to be assertive in front of children, probably colleagues as well. You need to be creative and to be able to explain or help the students to explore why dance is fun and artistic. And you have to have a good method of being able to plan because you are assuming you are going to be delivering in that physical skill, but if you haven't been able to put in the planning time and also the content of the planning that needs to take place, all of the physical skill falls apart.

**The characteristics you've just described match up with, let's say, the expectations of the NCTL in terms of trainee teachers and teachers in the field, or the University of Brighton's expectations. It sounds like yours may be very similar or very different or have come to you through experience rather than someone saying 'these are the characteristics, and you must show these characteristics.'**

Yeah I haven't got them off a list somewhere but I feel like through my experience possibly of mentoring trainee teachers, if any one of those areas falls down, they as a trainee will probably start to feel like they are falling down too.

**So if you were a HoD, let's say, and you were hiring a dance teacher, are those the key characteristics you'd be looking for?**

Definitely, along with them showcasing a lesson where the students made progress because that's what Ofsted want them to do (and well, what we want them to do).

**It's quite interesting you said that's what Ofsted want them to do – in your experience do you feel in a way you were constrained at any point as a result of what Ofsted expectations were?**

Our school's interpretation of the Ofsted framework, yes. So, for example, showing progress in a lesson – absolutely, and I feel like that's important anyway. But then more recently they have had much more of a discussion on *how* to go about showing that progress and there was this whole debate on green, purple and red pens, etc. And our school did put in place various methods that they felt would help to

showcase to Ofsted that the teachers and the pupils were working together to make progress. However, it did often create a lot more time and a lot more paperwork and a lot of other schools found this and then it started being published in the newspapers that Ofsted said 'we've never said you had to use these coloured pens!' So schools like ours just carried on doing it anyway because if you've put something in school policy then that's what you carry on doing. So no, I don't think what Ofsted have required has particularly created constraints but I do feel like senior management within schools and their interpretation of that framework can create constraints, and did in my case.

**How do you think dance teachers outside of secondary dance view dance teachers teaching in secondary dance?**

Good question! When I was doing my DDI type learning over the past two years, the teacher who was helping me was a dance instructor and she is now, this Academic Year, starting to teach GCSE in her private dance school. So I've gone and spoken to her about GCSE to reciprocate that learning and she has suggested to me that there is so much more planning involved in secondary school teaching and the set of criteria feels more linked to perhaps academic progress rather than the actual dance skills themselves. And I think there's a little bit of a sensation of secondary school teachers being a bit of a strange phenomenon; getting them to work in a way that is so far estranged from perhaps that private dance teaching which may well form the basis of those secondary school teachers.

**When you were teaching in secondary school, do you think that the context shaped your teaching?**

Yes, definitely.

**In what ways did it shape your teaching?**

Well, to give a tiny scenario, at the end of my DDI exam, the examiner said to me 'and what would you do at the end of the class?' and I said 'oh well I'd question the pupils to consolidate their learning' and she said 'yes and what else', and I said 'oh well I would praise those that had done well, and maybe give out a sticker, maybe write to their parents'. And she said 'yes and what else'. And then I said 'oh, we would do a bow'! Because there's a definite separation of expectations in those two contexts.

**That leads me really nicely into my next question. If you were to teach in a different context, what approach would you teach? From a secondary school context moving into private or community, would you teach exactly the same or would you teach differently?**

I would have to change my teaching style because I think students and parents, rightly, have certain expectations about what their children will receive and I feel that it's fair to give them as close to that experience as you can. However, there's no point in throwing away the experiences that I would come with, so I think if I were to teach for example in a private setting now, I probably would still have learning outcomes but I just wouldn't write them on the board and I wouldn't make a big fuss about saying them all. Instead, I would integrate it much more into the lesson, so I would be saying things like 'right, everyone ought to be doing this but I'm hoping that

most people can also do this by this point... who are those people who can achieve that?' rather than having it on the whiteboard.

**It sounds a little bit like in secondary school teaching dance could be dance by numbers, whereas in the private context or community context – you're still using principles but they are delivered in a slightly different way. You're not having to evidence them in the same way?**

Yes perhaps there is something in the evidence. I feel like teaching in a secondary school can be very creative actually, but I have found that students of varying ability in the same class are much more likely to be creative if you give them set success criteria. Whereas, I feel like in a private setting that's just not the nature of how the lesson runs.

**You've had quite a bit of experience teaching a range of genres. So I'm really interested to find out what your approach would be if let's say you were to teach ballroom dancing (I'm assuming you're not a ballroom dancing expert!) If all of a sudden you had to teach ballroom dancing on the GCSE curriculum, where would your starting point be?**

Well I would... first of all the GCSE curriculum has recently changed and it's now put in various styles that had never been on it before and a lot of teachers felt very concerned about it. My experience has been that a lot of secondary school dance teachers have a very strong ballet and or contemporary background and I am a little bit different in that I will just try anything and that's fine for me. In this new GCSE syllabus that started this time last year, there are six professional works that the students have to study and although most of them are ballet or contemporary based, there's one that's street dance, hip hop and another one that is samba. And a lot of the teachers expressed deep concerns that they would look 'silly' trying to teach the hip hop and that they didn't know anything about that style of dance and that there was no possible way that they could make a student feel comfortable doing that dance style if they themselves didn't feel comfortable. And I found that very surprising because it's so far away from how I've been. If I had to teach ballroom out of thin air it really would be from scratch for me, and I would do exactly that – if there was one available - I'd go into some kind of Get into Teaching the syllabus session if that was on offer, and then I would watch – if there was a professional work linked to that style that the students had to learn – I would watch it. And then I would probably take a section of that dance and try and learn it off YouTube, or whatever it was, in my living room. And I would just start at the beginning to do some research on what the basic movements are written down, and then see if I could identify them – just like a student would.

**Do you think you would be very traditional in saying 'this is how it's taught, therefore this is how I'm going to teach it', or do you think you'd go 'this is the general overview – I'm going to be creative as a dance teacher and teach it away from the traditions of teaching ballroom'?**

Well, as I don't know the traditions of ballroom, I think that would leave me with option 2. I think if I were in a position to seek advice from someone else, perhaps I would draw on option 1 but I think I as a teacher would be more within my comfort zone with option 2 and if I as a teacher am more in my comfort zone, my students are more likely to be as well.

**Thinking about you as a contemporary dance teacher, how do you think the wider dance community views contemporary dance and the way it should be taught?**

I think it's viewed as something that older people do, and by older I mean 18 and above. It's something that's done at degree level rather than something that's offered for younger people. And I also think that of the public opinion around contemporary, I think it's been rather heavily swayed by the few opportunities that it's on TV and seen widely – for example the TV show 'So You Think You Can Dance?' and I love the dancers that are on there, I think they are very beautiful, but I would really consider naming and labelling it contemporary. So I think that the public's view of contemporary is not always what my view of contemporary is as someone who has studied it at degree level. I think there's quite a strong crossover with people viewing it as a lyrical and emotional way of moving, which is not my view. And as I said I think it's viewed as something for older people.

**What about different dance teachers, let's think about a predominantly ballet teacher. What do you think they might think of contemporary dance teachers and what they teach – and how it should be taught?**

I don't know. I think that it really depends if that older ballet teacher is part of the general population watching 'So You Think You Can Dance?' or if they perhaps came from their own professional dance background where they interacted with people who are also professional dancers but in the contemporary field instead. I think that would make a huge difference to their perception because I feel like the generic view of contemporary is that it's a lot of release and 'whafting' around and showing character, whereas I feel like people who have experience of seeing professional contemporary dance in a professional setting like a theatre, for example, will know that there are a lot of techniques (plural) involved in creating a contemporary dance and that they are often very difficult because they are so different from the ballet, tap, and jazz techniques that people grow up learning. So, in answer to your question, I feel like it would really make a difference to what that individual's experience was of contemporary.

**How do you feel about some of the misinterpretations or misconceptions about what contemporary dance is?**

I feel like that's (as a secondary school teacher) part of my job to educate and I quite enjoy having those conversations with a student. And there's often a moment when the students are choosing their GCSE options and they say 'but I don't know anything about contemporary dance' and I'll say 'that's what we've been doing for the past three years' and there's that realisation that contemporary as labelled on TV is a separate label to what I use in school.

**Do these different perceptions of what contemporary dance is have an impact on your practices or how you perceive a contemporary dance teacher to be?**

No, because my role as a contemporary dance teacher is to teach the curriculum and the syllabus and that has remained the same until last year. So my role has been constant within all of these different views, and I feel like perhaps if I had been teaching for decades in a secondary school I might have seen some evolution but over those six years I didn't.

**Where do you see yourself as a dance teacher in five years' time?**

That's a really good question because I would have said working in higher education but I'm here! So, as I'm so new I think that I'm probably not quite in a position to answer that question, but higher education is definitely where I want to be.

**Why do you think that?**

Well, when I was doing my PGCE I remember having some really good experiences with the students and I enjoyed what I was doing and my equivalent of a Programme Manager came to observe me teaching and it all went well, and I think she must have asked me a similar question and I remember having that little moment to sit and reflect and I thought it's great teaching, but I'd really love to teach teaching! And I just felt like that would be the ultimate.

**And why do you feel that way – the desire to teach teachers?**

I think because I really wanted to do well at teaching, and if I got as far as teaching teachers it would almost be like an achievement [that I had] done a good enough job to be at that level.

**Do you think in your teaching of teachers that you will follow the prescriptions of what it is to be a good teacher or are you much more drawing on your own experiences in instilling good teaching practice?**

I think that it's my job to tell them what is expected and I feel like it's even more my job to give it a genuine view and to draw on some of my own experiences as well. Because teaching isn't black and white and actually a few scenarios here and there does help, and helps to picture what might happen especially when they haven't even gone into a school yet. So both of the above.

**Appendix 5: Number of statements relating to Passive/Active Agency and  
Materialist/Idealist Positioning**

<b>Public</b>	<b>Passive</b>	<b>Active</b>	<b>Materialist</b>	<b>Idealist</b>	<b>Type</b>
Ida (Contemporary)	1	5	3	0	Active Materialist (5,3)
Belinda (Contemporary)	4	8	2	0	Active Materialist (8,2)
Gary (Ballet)	2	7	5	2	Active Materialist (7,5)
Liam (Contemporary)	0	2	1	0	Active Materialist (2,1)
<b>Private</b>					
Peter (Ballet)	2	12	1	4	Active Idealist (12,4)
Isabelle (Ballet)	0	4	3	1	Active Materialist (4,3)
Eliza (Tap)	0	6	0	3	Active Idealist (6,3)
Anne (Modern)	9	3	2	1	Passive Materialist (9, 2)
<b>Community</b>					
Helen (Musical Theatre)	1	10	0	3	Active Idealist (10, 3)
Grace (Inclusive)	1	5	0	4	Active Idealist (5,4)
Sue (Ballet)	0	9	0	4	Active Idealist (9,4)
Alvita (Contemporary)	1	12	6	1	Active Materialist (12, 6)

**Appendix 6:** Sub themes of *genre*, identification, power, accountability and expectations

	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Identification</b>	<b>Power</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Expectations</b>
Ida	<p>External perceptions of contemporary dance having no technique</p> <p>Certain <i>genres</i> being age related</p> <p>Personal experience influence perceptions</p>	Influence of initial training and teachers	Size of department and no. of years teaching determine power relationships	Constrained by external regulation (e.g. Ofsted) but open to interpretation	<p>Shaped by personal experience as student/trainee teacher</p> <p>Benchmarking to Teacher Standards</p>
Belinda	<p>External perceptions of contemporary dance having no technique</p> <p>Personal experience influence perceptions</p>	Identification with teachers of other National Curricula subjects	Dance not having same status of other subjects. Preference given to higher status subjects	<p>Internal accountability structures can restrict freedoms</p> <p>Other spaces have more freedom due to less accountability</p>	Looks to teachers of other disciplines to inform expectations as a teacher (as opposed to dance teacher)
Gary	<p>Perception that ballet is rigid because of its traditions</p> <p>Psychological challenges if teaching non-specialist <i>genre</i></p>	<p>Influence of initial training and teachers</p> <p>Identification with profession which can present challenges</p>	-----	-----	<p>Shaped by what it is to be a professional dancer</p> <p>Ballet taught in non-vocational spaces is not as rigorous</p> <p>Stereotypes of ballet teachers from within and outside the <i>habitus</i></p>
Liam	Delivery of a <i>genre</i> changes depending on context	<p>Identification with self as well as other dance teachers</p> <p>Identification with other</p>	-----	Less focus on teachers ensuring students attaining specific grades	More practice intensive expectations of the profession are at odds with expectations of teaching

		dance teachers in HE			contemporary dance in HE
Peter	<p>Certain <i>genres</i> have greater resonance with individuals</p> <p>Historical legacies</p> <p>External perceptions of ballet as a hobby</p> <p>Ballet is “stuffy”</p>	<p>Identification with self</p> <p>Identification with other ballet teachers</p>	<p>Professional teaching bodies influential</p> <p>Power relations can be challenged</p>	Determined by historical expectations of process and product	<p>Professional teaching bodies and wider profession shape expectations influenced by historical legacies</p> <p>Stereotypes of ballet teachers from within and outside the <i>habitus</i></p>
Isabelle	<p>Historical legacies</p> <p>Ballet has “rules”</p>	<p>Identification with self</p> <p>Influence of initial training and teachers</p> <p>Identification with other dance teachers</p>	Professional teaching bodies influential	Determined by historical expectations of process and product	<p>Professional teaching bodies and wider profession shape expectations influenced by historical legacies</p> <p>Expectations of the profession should be upheld</p>
Eliza	<p>Some <i>genres</i> perceived to have higher status/value</p> <p>Examination culture of some <i>genres</i></p>	Influence of initial training and teachers	Perception that teaching in certain contexts has greater status – hidden power relations	-----	<p>Professional teaching bodies have expectations of examinations but not of teachers</p> <p><u>Not</u> shaped by what it is to be a professional dance</p>

Anne	Knowledge and understanding of a <i>genre</i> are essential for effective teaching	Identification with self Identification with other ballet teachers within the same school (internal rather than external)	Professional teaching bodies can produce power inequalities between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'	—	Professional teaching bodies setting codes of practice  Examination orientation of private dance schools
Helen	Need to expose students to a range of styles within a <i>genre</i>	Identification with self Identification with other community dance teachers  Identification with wider dance profession	More democratic relationships between students and teachers	Increasing external accountability through paperwork	Dance teachers in other contexts see community dance teachers as having a lower status
Grace	Some <i>genres</i> perceived to have higher status/value	Identification with self  Identification with wider community dance profession	More democratic relationships between students and teachers	Increasing external accountability through focus on outcomes	Wider dance profession not sure what to make of community dance practice  Community dance organisations subliminally present expectations of practice

## Appendix 7: Time, space and practice

Public	Time	Space	Practice
Ida	<p>Always seen self as a dance teacher</p> <p>Dance teaching as a viable career as got older</p> <p>Personal practice evolved over time</p>	<p>Restricted by syllabi and curriculum but freedom in one's delivery</p> <p>Nature of dance in secondary schools sees practices replicated</p>	<p>Greater emphasis on inclusive practice (<i>cf</i> private).</p> <p>Importance of process over product</p> <p>Planning and delivery through written lesson plans</p>
Belinda	<p>Always seen self as a dance teacher</p> <p>With time comes greater confidence as a teacher</p>	<p>Restricted by syllabi and curriculum but freedom in one's delivery</p> <p>Constructs within secondary school determines the degree of accountability</p>	<p>Promoting intrinsic connection with dance</p> <p>Importance of process over product</p>
Gary	<p>Becoming a teacher evolved over time</p> <p>Teaching of ballet has evolved over time</p>	<p>Nature of context sees practices replicated</p> <p>HE spaces have different expectations of how a <i>genre</i> should be taught (process) and outcome (product)</p>	<p>Teaching of ballet draws on traditions and expectations of the profession</p> <p>High standards of self-reflection in high expectations of students</p>
Liam	<p>Teaching is intrinsic to self</p> <p>Fundamentals of values as to what it is to be a teacher has not changed (grounded in the self)</p>	<p>Greater freedom in HE with less pressure on teacher-led achievement of students</p> <p>Different contexts have different expectations of how a <i>genre</i> should be taught (process) and outcome (product)</p>	<p>Imparting knowledge drawn from personal experience and values</p> <p>Importance of student transformation in physical as well as cognitive skills</p>

Private	Time	Space	Practice
Peter	Teaching is intrinsic to self  Teaching of ballet has evolved over time	Perceptions of the types of students (middle class/ ballet as a hobby)  Historical <i>genre</i> expectations of what happens within a particular context	Teaching is about progression  Altruistic values  Being a positive role model
Isabelle	Teaching is intrinsic to self  Took 'time out' before deciding to teach	Types of students (students choose to go to private dance schools <i>cf</i> secondary schools where dance is compulsory)  Certain contexts suit certain types of teachers  More freedom in private contexts	Greater emphasis on inclusive practice ( <i>cf</i> public).  Importance of process over product  Personal values/beliefs are central to how one teaches
Eliza	Teaching is intrinsic to self (but has been tempered over time)  Teaching of Tap has evolved over time	Syllabus and examination culture  More freedom in private contexts	Developing understanding of <i>genre</i> and creativity within learning  Empowering students (personal agency)
Anne	Becoming a teacher evolved over time  With time comes greater confidence as a teacher	Syllabus and examination culture  More freedom in private contexts	Building confidence  Approachable but having firm expectations

Community	Time	Space	Practice
Helen	Teaching as a career evolved over time  New opportunities presented over time	Different motivations of learners (wellbeing, social)  Teachers need to be versatile	Greater emphasis on inclusive practice ( <i>cf</i> private). Importance of process over product  Personal values/beliefs are central to how one teaches
Grace	Took 'time out' before deciding to teach  New opportunities presented over time  Overtime greater confidence to be true to one's values/beliefs	Different motivations of learners (wellbeing, social)  Teachers need to be versatile  More freedom in community contexts but resource restrictions  Space for developing creative energy	Facilitating others through creative means  Personal values/beliefs are central to how one teaches  Teaching the individual and not the subject (dance)
Sue	Teaching as a career evolved over time  With time comes greater confidence as a teacher	Different spaces have different expectations of how a <i>genre</i> should be taught (process) and outcome (product)  Some contexts have greater status – fear of the unfamiliar	Developing physical and emotional wellbeing  Empowering students (personal agency)
Alvita	Teaching as a career progression  With time comes more time to think about being a teacher	Different structures within community contexts allow for greater/lesser freedom  Teachers need to be adaptable	Personal values/beliefs are central to how one teaches  Imparting knowledge drawn from personal experience and values  Teaching the individual and not the subject (dance)

## Appendix 8: Pen Portraits (Public Context)

Ida	<p><b>Active Materialist.</b> While recognising some of the constraints of working in a secondary school context (Ofsted, expectations of Senior Management) Ida articulates clear personal values and beliefs when it comes to dance teaching. Ida felt that these values and views are exemplified in her teaching and informs the planning of lessons. There is evidence that Ida demonstrates (and has demonstrated) active agency when making decisions about career progression as well as deciding on the how dance classes should be delivered. In terms of the Materialist/Idealist spectrum, Ida articulates materialist tendencies as evidenced by adhering to expectations of his/her dance <i>genre</i> (rather than challenging conventions) as well as to prescribed standards of teaching (Teachers' Standards).</p>
Belinda	<p><b>Active Materialist.</b> Structures within the space as well as external accountability requirements appear to impact on Belinda's practice which gives rise to frustration and an inner turmoil. Despite this, Belinda articulated an active approach to shaping practice and decisions made regarding career progression. Belinda identified the importance of process over product which sometimes was at odds with expectations of the space (target driven). The potential to move into difference spaces and delivering other dance <i>genres</i> were perceived as motivating prospects, despite no prior experience of teaching in different spaces/dance <i>genres</i>. This perceived eagerness appears to be rooted in personal characteristics (e.g. competitiveness) rather than transferrable knowledge, understanding and skills developed through dance teaching. There was no clear indication of Belinda wanting to challenge the expectations which shape contemporary dance; instead, Belinda emphasised the importance of technique and knowledge of the subject from a materialist perspective.</p>
Gary	<p><b>Active Materialist.</b> Traditions of the <i>genre</i> (ballet) and the expectations of the profession (training to become a professional dancer) are embedded into Gary's practice and expectations of that practice, thus expressing a materialist standpoint. Interestingly, no explicit expression of power relationships or accountability issues was revealed. While predominately articulating active agency, there is evidence of tension between challenging tradition whilst maintaining core values. Personal traits such as 'hard work and effort' appear to have been reinforced in Gary's training as a dance student and then professional dancer. While teaching ballet in a different space does not appear daunting, teaching a different <i>genre</i> is questioned. Gary seems to value specialist knowledge of a dance <i>genre</i>, without which a dance teacher would experience 'psychological' tension if he was to venture into different <i>genres</i> and/or contexts.</p>

Liam	<p><b>Active Materialist.</b></p> <p>Throughout the interview, Liam made reference to how teaching within HE provided him with greater freedom as a dance teacher, allowing him to demonstrate his personal value of teaching as transformative practice. Much of the reflection on teaching in HE was informed by experiences teaching dance in secondary schools which was thought to be much more restrictive. While articulating a somewhat materialist standpoint in terms of aligning practice to the expectations of contemporary dance as a performance art as well as education, concepts of being an active or passive agent did not appear to significantly inform his reflexive stance. In terms of what he wanted to achieve as a dance teacher and future career trajectory, Liam expressed active thoughts and actions. Interestingly, while articulating the importance of reflecting on practice and being reflexive of self, there was little evidence of this type of thinking in his responses.</p>
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**(Private Context)**

Peter	<p><b>Active Idealist.</b></p> <p>A stand-out feature of Peter's interview was his active engagement in practice and personal development. While there was regard given to historical legacies which inform ballet teaching, Peter cited several examples where he actively challenged existing boundaries in order to be congruent with personal values and beliefs, thus suggesting an idealist positioning. These values and beliefs shape Peter's perceptions of self as an individual and self as a ballet teacher, with some regard given to stereotypes/perceptions of what it is to be a ballet teacher. Peter articulated a position of reflexivity which could be mapped against active agency. While Peter recognised that professional teaching bodies had a strong influence on both the profession and individuals within the profession, he was not fearful of challenging authority in order to instigate change.</p>
Isabelle	<p><b>Active Materialist.</b></p> <p>Isabelle consistently referred to teaching as being intrinsic to one's self. For Isabelle, personal values and beliefs are fundamental to practice, as is constant reflection on the 'how, what, and why'. Isabelle valued being able to work with other dance teachers to encourage reflection and development from within the context. With strong values and beliefs, Isabelle has been active in shaping her career as well as supporting aspirations of other teachers through engaging in the wider dance teaching community. Upholding a <i>genre's</i> traditions is fundamental to Isabelle's teaching, thus suggesting a materialist positioning, though this is tempered with a recognition that teaching needs to address the needs of individual students.</p>

Eliza	<p><b>Active Idealist.</b></p> <p>While Eliza articulated that being a dance teacher was intrinsic to herself, there was recognition that over time that this identification had evolved as more interest had been given to activities and experiences outside of dance. Rather than being frustrated by perceived barriers to teaching practice and external expectations, Eliza had adopted an active approach in making change happen to align with his/her ethos of teaching. In addition, Eliza appeared to actively challenge the expectations of what was required to teach tap dance, and looked to other sources to initiate innovation of practice and vision, thus indicating an idealist positioning. Despite this idealist viewpoint, Eliza appeared to give value to the thoughts and practices of other dance teachers in shaping his/her perceptions of what it is to be a dance teacher.</p>
Anne	<p><b>Passive Materialist.</b></p> <p>Throughout the interview, Anne articulated several experiences/actions which suggested a passive agency when it came to her role and practices as a dance teacher. Dance teaching was seen to be more of a hobby rather than a professional career. This is not to suggest that Anne did not set expectations of herself or of students. Anne gave the impression of being 'outside' of the profession, looking towards other teachers within the school setting for validation of practice and sharing of ideas. However, Anne was conscious of the standards and expectations of teaching modern dance within private school contexts, thus suggesting materialist tendencies, with the occasional mention of an idealistic ethos in terms of the school's identity and objectives.</p>

**(Community Context)**

Helen	<p><b>Active Idealist.</b></p> <p>Becoming a dance teacher evolved over time as have opportunities to engage in different contexts. Helen voiced an active agency in seeking out new opportunities as well as shaping practice which defined herself as a 'dance teacher'. There was recognition that practice needs to be shaped by the learners, and not necessarily the context. Helen expressed pride in what she has achieved as a community dance teacher, which has been self-led and initiated. She identified with the wider dance teaching profession, not wanting to be pigeon-holed as a dance teacher of one particular <i>genre</i>. There was some frustration voiced that the community dance context was becoming more accountable through expectations of compliance. This viewpoint, however, did not appear to prevent Helen challenging boundaries and expectations of teaching within a particular context and <i>genre</i>, thus suggestion an idealist positioning.</p>
Grace	<p><b>Active Idealist</b></p> <p>For Grace, teaching inclusive dance practices was very much situated within the self through personal values and beliefs helping to facilitate students' creative engagement and empowerment as individuals. Key to this</p>

	<p>facilitation was recognition of learner needs and adapting practice to suit these needs, beyond the expectations of context and/or <i>genre</i>. Grace teaches in a wide range of community contexts and appears to be active in seeking out new opportunities as well as consolidating current placements/projects. Grace sees herself as a dance artiste rather than a dance teacher as she values the creative possibilities of improvisation and challenging 'norms', suggesting an idealist standpoint. While Grace expressed frustration in terms of lack of resources and increasing compliancy within community contexts, she appeared to be able to think beyond the boundaries of being a community dance teacher. Grace identified that over time he/she has grown in confidence in 'knowing' her professional identity and does not feel the need to fit a certain mould.</p>
Sue	<p><b>Active Idealist.</b>          Having taught ballet in private contexts, Sue felt that he/she was much more fulfilled and empowered teaching ballet in community contexts. In making this transition, Sue articulated an active agency in making changes to practice and engagement in an unfamiliar environment. As well as perceiving community contexts as being empowering for teachers and for students, Sue indicated that not having to comply with accountability procedures allowed greater freedom. Over time, Sue had gained confidence in 'breaking the rules' and challenging assumptions about how ballet should be taught, thus indicating an idealist standpoint. She saw her career as a dance teacher being 'a journey', drawing on experiences of teaching in other contexts and other <i>genres</i> to inform and transform current practices and expectations.</p>
Alvita	<p><b>Active Materialist.</b>          Throughout the interview Alvita demonstrated a strong meta reflexivity when responding to questions; articulating her journey and in making sense of her experiences, values, beliefs and perceptions. Combined with this reflexive style was evidence of active agency in shaping her past, current and future teaching trajectories as well as evolving teaching practices in different community dance settings. It appeared that Alvita's professional training and experience as a professional contemporary dancer had instilled materialist expectations of both of his/her own 'professionalism' and that of student behaviour. She highlighted that across different types of community contexts that different structures can bring about different power differentials, thus preventing a homogeneous understanding of 'community dance practice' from both within and outside the space. These structures and differentials meant that Alvita had to be adaptable to a range of expectations within her teaching practices. However, this adaptability was viewed as empowering rather than inhibiting her professional identity as a dance teacher.</p>