EAP teachers’ conceptions of and interactions with professional development: A phenomenographic investigation

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University
December 2015
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EAP teachers’ conceptions of and interactions with professional development: A phenomenographic investigation

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Acknowledgments

I firstly acknowledge the contributions, guidance and assistance provided by my principal supervisor and academic mentor, Associate Professor Indika Liyanage. I am very grateful for having enjoyed the privilege of working with Indika and hope that I may continue to do so in future.

Thanks to Dr Rod Neilsen, Professor Brendan Bartlett and Dr Minglin Li for their assistance at different stages of my candidature. Your contributions are greatly appreciated. I also thank the assessors who provided me with useful feedback following my confirmation of candidature seminar and the administrative staff at Griffith and Deakin who assisted me with milestones, applications and other procedures. I acknowledge the guidance of Dr Jenine Beekhuyzen regarding the use of the NVivo software.

Many thanks to Samuel Campbell and William Richard Gurney for your assistance with editing. I appreciate your attention to detail. Thanks also to Glenda Gurney for helping me to negotiate and refine discussion points.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to the research participants. Working with such an insightful and experienced group of participants allowed me to explore the research questions with depth and nuance. Thank you for your time and contributions.
Abstract

The research reported in this thesis was undertaken to explore the conceptions of professional development held by a group of teachers of English for academic purposes (EAP), the influence of these conceptions on their interaction with professional development activities and the learning outcomes resulting from this interaction. Professional development is a topic of much importance both in education generally and in the specialist field of EAP. Teachers of EAP face numerous challenges in their work related to the content they teach, their employment conditions, and the lack of opportunities for EAP-specific education and training available to them. Access to effective and ongoing professional development has the potential to assist in the development of EAP teachers’ cognition and practice, and the enhancement of their wellbeing through the provision of support and opportunities for collaboration with other practitioners. Ultimately, this may lead not only to negotiation of effectiveness in EAP teaching practice but also to practitioners’ professional resilience and longevity. However, despite its importance, the study of professional development in EAP remains in its infancy.

In order to critically interrogate professional development from practitioners’ perspectives, a phenomenographic study was undertaken with a group of eight in-service EAP teachers employed in the non-compulsory tertiary sector in Queensland, Australia. Data collection involved two instruments used in a three-step process. Participants took part in an initial semi-structured interview at the beginning of data collection to explore their conceptions of and previous experiences with professional development. Following this interview, they undertook and reflected on two professional development activities of their own choosing using a reflection sheet instrument designed specifically for the project. Participants then took part in a second semi-structured interview to discuss their interaction with their activities in detail, including their goals for attendance, expectations, engagement and learning outcomes.

The participant group reported thirteen conceptions of professional development. These conceptions were organised into three meta-categories: person-oriented, skills-oriented and career-oriented. The conceptions formed a lens through which participants understood professional development and, as such, influenced their attendance to professional development activities. However, their engagement and learning outcomes were influenced to a greater extent by contextual and perceived contextual factors, as well as participants’ existing interest in the topic or focus of the professional development activity at hand, than by
their conceptions. Furthermore, the findings indicate that learning outcomes were negotiated by the participants in consideration of their beliefs, values and experiences.

The investigation has illuminated the multiple outcomes and applications which EAP practitioners may associate with professional development as well as the numerous factors, both personal and otherwise, which may affect teachers’ engagement in and learning from professional development activities. Implications of the findings include recommendations regarding the design, framing and provision of professional development opportunities in EAP in order to heighten the benefits for the teachers who undertake them.
Glossary of key terms and abbreviations

Phenomena: Physical and mental aspects of individuals’ worlds.

Conceptions: The understandings that individuals hold of phenomena.

ESP: English for specific purposes.

EAP: English for academic purposes.

EGAP: English for general academic purposes.

ESAP: English for specific academic purposes.

ELT: English language teaching.

ESL/EFL: English as a second/foreign language.

EAL: English as an additional language.
Table of contents

Glossary of key terms and abbreviations ................................................................. iii
Table of figures ......................................................................................................... viii
List of tables .............................................................................................................. viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ........................................................................... 1
1.1 Introduction and statement of the research problem ............................................. 1
1.2 Professional development: A brief background .................................................. 2
1.3 Professional development in education ............................................................... 3
1.4 English for academic purposes .......................................................................... 5
  1.4.1 Challenges for learners of EAP ..................................................................... 7
  1.4.2 Challenges for teachers of EAP ................................................................. 8
1.5 EAP teachers and professional development ..................................................... 11
1.6 Teacher cognition and teacher learning ............................................................ 12
1.7 Outline of thesis chapters and contents ............................................................ 14
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................... 16
2.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................... 16
2.2 Teacher cognition and teacher knowledge ....................................................... 16
2.3 Stages of teacher learning ................................................................................. 20
  2.3.1 Forms of professional development ........................................................... 22
    2.3.1.1 Traditional forms ..................................................................................... 22
    2.3.1.2 Self-directed and collective professional development ......................... 23
    2.3.1.3 Further study ........................................................................................ 24
    2.3.1.4 Incidental opportunities for professional development ......................... 25
2.4 Professional development and professionalisms in ELT .................................... 26
  2.4.1 Sponsored professionalism .......................................................................... 26
  2.4.2 Independent professionalism ......................................................................... 29
  2.4.3 Professional development in EAP ............................................................... 29
2.5 Ancillary outcomes of professional development ................................................. 30
  2.5.1 Identity, agency and awareness ................................................................. 30
  2.5.2 Lifelong learning ....................................................................................... 33
  2.5.3 Career plateau and stagnation .................................................................... 34
2.6 The study of professional development and teacher learning ......................... 35
5.4 Engagement and learning ................................................................................................. 135
  5.4.1 Fostering engagement and learning in professional development ..................... 136
  5.4.2 Sponsored professionalism, professional development and effectiveness .......... 139
  5.4.3 Changes: Participants’ cognition and behaviours .................................................. 142
5.5 Summary ....................................................................................................................... 147
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION .......................................................................................... 149
6.1 Summary of the study ................................................................................................. 149
  6.1.1 Limitations ............................................................................................................. 151
6.2 Synthesis of the findings and implications ................................................................. 152
  6.2.1 Question One ........................................................................................................ 152
  6.2.2 Question Two ....................................................................................................... 153
  6.2.3 Question Three ..................................................................................................... 156
6.3 Recommendations for future research ....................................................................... 157
6.4 Summary ....................................................................................................................... 159
References ......................................................................................................................... 160
Appendix A: Information for the participant ................................................................. 196
Appendix B: Consent form ............................................................................................... 198
Appendix C: Semi-structure for interview 1 ................................................................. 200
Appendix D: Semi-structure for interview 2 ................................................................. 201
Appendix E: Reflection sheet ......................................................................................... 203
Appendix F: Sample transcript - Interview 1 ............................................................... 206
Appendix G: Sample transcript - Interview 2 ............................................................... 215
Table of figures

Figure 1 .................................................................................................................................... 72
Figure 2 .................................................................................................................................... 73
Figure 3 .................................................................................................................................... 74
Figure 4 .................................................................................................................................... 79
Figure 5 .................................................................................................................................... 80
Figure 6 .................................................................................................................................... 81
Figure 7 .................................................................................................................................... 84
Figure 8 .................................................................................................................................... 91
Figure 9 .................................................................................................................................... 93
Figure 10 ................................................................................................................................. 94
Figure 11 .................................................................................................................................. 95

List of tables

Table 1 ..................................................................................................................................... 57
Table 2 ..................................................................................................................................... 64
Table 3 ..................................................................................................................................... 66
Table 4 ..................................................................................................................................... 67
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and statement of the research problem

The aim of this introductory chapter is to set the context for the research project reported in this thesis. The evolution of professional development, a phenomenon which has existed in various professional fields for a number of decades, is set out at the beginning of the chapter. The focus is then narrowed to professional development in the field of education, encompassing consideration of how professional development has been utilised to influence teachers’ knowledge and practice in compulsory and non-compulsory sectors. The field of English for academic purposes (EAP), a sub-branch of English language teaching which is of increasing importance in tertiary education globally, is then described. The aims of EAP instruction, and the challenges experienced by teachers and learners in the negotiation of academic language proficiency, are outlined in subsequent sections. The challenges inherent to the field are exacerbated by a lack of pre-service education and training opportunities available to practitioners which are specific to the teaching of academic English. In negotiating the complexities of EAP practice in the absence of sufficient training and education, professional development takes on a critical role for EAP teachers. However, little is currently known concerning how EAP teachers understand and undertake professional development. This research project addresses this gap through examination of the following three research questions with a group of in-service EAP teachers:

1. What are the conceptions that the EAP teachers have of professional development?

2. How do these conceptions influence the ways in which they engage in professional development?

3. What are the learning outcomes of the interaction between conception and engagement in professional development?

The research questions were explored using a phenomenographic approach, facilitating the exploration of the participants’ conceptions of professional development and their
interactions with professional development activities. Processes of data collection and analysis, and presentation and discussion of the findings, are presented in subsequent chapters.

1.2 Professional development: A brief background

The pursuit and offering of professional development are generally premised on the assumption that it is desirable for practitioners to engage in ongoing improvement of their professional practice through learning. The trajectory for this learning is likely to align with certain values (Carr, 2011), standards (Shuler, 1995) or codes of behaviour (Weis & Schank, 2002) which derive from society, individuals, professional regulatory bodies and other stakeholders (Leung, 2009), or a synthesis of these (Lasky, 2005). Directing practitioners’ work-related behaviour and setting parameters for professional identities, these professional values, standards and codes constitute prescriptive definitions of effective practice at the individual level (Carr, 2011), grounded in wider notions of the responsibility that a group of professionals has within a society (Hamberger & Moore, 1997; Weis & Schank, 2002). Professional learning trajectories are often responsive to and enfirmed within these prescriptions (Blasie & Palladino, 2005) which operate at the institutional, organisational and industry levels. Processes of ongoing learning related specifically to professional practice have been codified into the notion of professional development.

However, many years after its initial introduction into professional spheres, professional development has come to be associated with a multiplicity of meanings, applications and outcomes (Boud & Hager, 2012) which are largely responsive to dominant discourses regulating and redefining the behaviour of groups of professionals (see Ball, 2003). Although initially considered to be a practitioner-initiated process intended for self-fulfilment, professional development has since become closely connected to policies governing ongoing practice and registration requirements (Boud & Hager, 2012; Webster-Wright, 2009) supported by regulatory bodies (Ikenwilo & Skåtun, 2014; Queensland College of Teachers, 2015). With the advent of managerialism and widespread promotion of neo-liberal agendas across professional sectors during the latter part of the 20th century, professional development offerings have tended to become more centralised (Bloomfield, 2006; C. Farrell & Morris, 2003; Tuinamuana, 2011). Grounded in discourses of performativity (Ball, 2003), this
application of professional development has come to be popularly viewed as imperative to the effective implementation of policy reforms (Harland & Kinder, 1997), ensuring visibility of practices and developing the identity of industries rather than of individual practitioners (Bloomfield, 2006; Murphy & Gale, 2004; Sachs, 2001). The role of professional development in the implementation of practice-based outcomes is now a common preoccupation of institutions, industries and professional development providers (see for example Pehmer, Gröschner, & Seidel, 2015). However, despite widespread emphasis on top-down implementation of policy and standards, researchers have remained interested in the benefits of participation in professional development at the individual level. From practitioners’ perspectives, professional development may provide a buffer to burnout and career plateau (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Milstein, 1990; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), and provide opportunities for beneficial interaction with colleagues (Snow-Gerono, 2005) and identity development (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Trent, 2011). These benefits are not only associated with professional resilience and longevity (M. Moore & Hofman, 1988) but also with meeting practitioners’ needs and providing them with support throughout their careers (Lynn, 2002). Overall, professional development is widely championed in the literature for potential outcomes impacting both individuals and industries. Nonetheless, practitioners’ experiences with professional development across various industries are increasingly marked by a sense of urgency to keep up with developments in industry and society. The maintenance of a high standard of practice in order to remain competitive and viable (Webster-Wright, 2009), backed by popular rhetorical stances regarding the necessity for lifelong learning (Coffield, 1999), has become central to the pursuit of professional development. This ultimately performance-oriented stance has been accompanied by significant financial investment in professional development initiatives in many different professional sectors, including the education sector (Borko, 2004).

1.3 Professional development in education

Professional development has attracted much attention from education researchers and is widely considered critical for teachers working in all discipline areas (Borko, 2004; Glatthorn, 1987). Teacher professional development initiatives position teachers as key variables in determining student learning outcomes (Kedzior & Fifield, 2004) and implementing educational reforms (Hill, Beisiegel, & Jacob, 2013; Lowden, 2005; Villegas-
Reimers, 2003). Optimisation of teacher knowledge for effective practice has been a major concern within teacher professional development research (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). As research has progressed, the capacity of professional development initiatives to instigate change in teacher practice has been further investigated (see Imants, Wubbels, & Vermunt, 2013; Lasky, 2005; Tang & Choi, 2009). However, debates over views on learning (Kelly, 2006) and emphases on teacher agency in the negotiation of learning and practice (Lasky, 2005) have led to a disjuncture between goals for professional development originating at the policy level (Tang & Choi, 2009) or in institutions and industry bodies (M. Evans & Esch, 2013; Leung, 2009), and practitioners’ own goals and preferences for learning and practice. Although teachers are responsible for implementing change and reform in education (Breen, 2007), teacher learning and change in practice resulting from participation in professional development have been problematised (Flessner & Stuckey, 2014; Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014). Teachers are popularly considered to be agents who determine their own learning (Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, & Miller, 2012; Riveros, Newton, & Burgess, 2012; Underhill, 1992). Resultantly, calls for professional development to be more practitioner-oriented have arisen (see Avis, 2005; Osgood, 2006; Sachs, 2000). Nonetheless, the specifics of how teachers learn and the outcomes of practitioner-led and institutionally-led professional development activities continue to be the site of much debate and discussion (González Moncada, Montoya, & Sierra, 2002; Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Lüdtke, & Baumert, 2011; Sachs, 2001). This discussion is further complicated by the variety of professional contexts in which teachers work.

Teachers’ experiences with professional development differ between the compulsory and non-compulsory sectors. For practitioners employed in the compulsory sector, professional development is enacted in a regulated manner and is more likely to be mandated or built into registration requirements (Queensland College of Teachers, 2015; Webster-Wright, 2009). Within the compulsory education sector, professional development tends to be conceptualised as “systematic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students” (Guskey, 2002, p. 381). In comparison, practitioners employed in the non-compulsory sector may experience a greater level of freedom in interacting with professional development as they are likely to be unconstrained by registration requirements and mandated participation in broadly-aimed,
system-led initiatives (Kahn, 2009). However, practitioners in the non-compulsory sector may also be constrained by standards set out by regulatory bodies for the provision of professional development by institutions (see for example NEAS, 2015), which interact with institutional cultures regarding professional development (Feixas, 2004; M. C. Wright et al., 2004) to shape their experiences. The delineation of professional roles in the non-compulsory sector may also shape teachers’ interactions with professional development. Practitioners working in non-compulsory education may teach on a variety of course structures, including programme-integrated or degree-integrated courses, stand-alone and pre-sessional courses within universities and private institutions. Some practitioners, particularly those who are employed within universities on an ongoing basis, may adopt the dual role of teacher and researcher. The professional development activities in which they take part may be targeted at either of these roles or they may in fact be responsive to both. These factors contribute to determining the experiences of practitioners employed in the non-compulsory tertiary sector as teachers of English for academic purposes (EAP).

1.4 English for academic purposes

EAP is a dynamic area in tertiary education and has been expanding for some time (Jordan, 2002). Its growth and momentum are attributable to global trends in education and rhetoric which have led to the positioning of English, and of the West, as associated with educational prestige and knowledge production, marked by a “perceived superiority” (Liyanage & Walker, 2014, p. 165) over other languages and educational paradigms. These pervasive discourses, accompanied by the increasing use of English as the global medium for academic communication and as a *lingua franca* in general (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2005), have seen English become the language in which many students seek to gain academic qualifications (Liyanage & Walker, 2014).

These global developments in the utilisation of English have seen a surge in numbers of students studying English medium tertiary courses (Terraschke & Wahid, 2011) in both Anglophone and non-Anglophone countries (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2013; Goh, 1998; Liyanage & Walker, 2014). This has been of particular economic significance to Britain, Australasia and North America, referred to as the BANA nations, which have experienced an influx of overseas enrolments (Andrade, 2006; Liyanage, Walker, & Singh, 2014). Numbers
of international students studying in Australia have been increasing over the past few decades (Terraschke & Wahid, 2011) and, according to recent figures, account for nearly one third of enrolments at Australian universities (Saw, Abbott, Donaghey, & McDonald, 2013). Many international students studying in Australia are from China, India and South Korea (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011) and, as such, have English as an additional language (EAL). Other highly represented EAL groups in the Australian higher education sector have included students from Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore, European students on short exchange programmes and students from the Pacific Islands and Africa, some of whom are able to access Australian Government scholarships for study (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2015; C. Thompson, 2002). EAL students require sufficient academic proficiency in English to gain entry into tertiary degree programmes (Terraschke & Wahid, 2011) and later to successfully “navigate their learning” (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002, p. 1) throughout their studies. Their specific and urgent needs have given rise to the field of EAP as the academically-focused branch of the wider field of English for specific purposes (ESP) (Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991), offered in the form of pre-sessional and degree-integrated courses both in Australia and around the world (see Atai & Dashtestani, 2013; Jordan, 2002; I. A. Martínez, 2011; Melles, Millar, Morton, & Fegan, 2005).

The primary aim of EAP is to facilitate learners’ participation in the English language academic community, leading to the successful completion of their studies (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Prosser, 1994). Pressure from regulatory bodies in Australia to accommodate literacy issues with EAL students throughout their university studies through the provision of language support (Fenton-Smith & Walkinshaw, 2014) has accompanied the growth in international enrolments. One example of such pressure is the Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency for International Students in Australian Universities, a document released in 2009 by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (Harper, Prentice, & Wilson, 2011). Language support is often accessible by students throughout their degrees and also prior to their enrolment, depending on their proficiency level (Lobo & Gurney, 2014; Melles et al., 2005). Upon enrolling in an Australian university, international EAL students are normally required to submit a current International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score (Terraschke & Wahid, 2011). Students without sufficient scores for direct entry into a degree programme may undertake a pre-sessional EAP course (Banerjee & Wall, 2006; Terraschke & Wahid, 2011). Pre-sessional EAP courses often simultaneously
focus on preparing students for academic work at university and for sitting a subsequent IELTS exam, wherein they hope to gain a score sufficient for enrolment (T. Moore & Morton, 2005). EAP courses are also offered at some universities within undergraduate degree programmes (see Lobo & Gurney, 2014; Marriott, 2006; Melles et al., 2005). These courses, which may or may not be credit-bearing, aim predominantly to develop students’ skills in research, academic reading and writing (Yates & Wahid, 2013). Although some of these courses are discipline-specific (Melles et al., 2005), most EAP courses in Australia take the form of English for general academic purposes (EGAP). The aim of EGAP is to equip students with academic skills pertinent to all discipline areas, such as general research and writing skills (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Liyanage & Birch, 2001).

1.4.1 Challenges for learners of EAP

Despite institutional support and personal motivation to acquire English medium academic qualifications, EAL students’ attainment of academic English language proficiency is not an uncomplicated or always successful process. Indeed, many students face great challenges in acquiring sufficient academic proficiency to complete their studies (Berman & Cheng, 2010). This is due to a number of factors, including the complexity of academic language (Snow, 2010), the cultural specificity of academic text types (Asaoka & Usui, 2003; Crawford Carducciottoli, 2010) and the emphasis of written over oral English in academic communication (Nero, 2005). In order to assist EAL students to communicate effectively with an academic audience, EAP courses focus on developing their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), encapsulating the various aspects of the academic discourse. CALP is “characterised by abstract uses of language… that require language itself for interpretation and comprehension” (Roessingh & Douglas, 2012, p. 84) and is estimated to take between five and seven years for an EAL student to attain (Cummins, 2000, 2008).

Successful acquisition of CALP requires a high level of intellectual skill and practice. It involves acquisition of appropriate vocabulary, interpretation and production of academic text types, and use of metacognitive skills such as synthesis and evaluation to construct academic texts which are discipline-specific and culturally appropriate (Collier, 1987; Hyland, 2011; L. Taylor & Geranpayeh, 2011). At the sentence level, characteristics of academic language include the use of high-density and morphologically-complex lexical
items, nominalisation, grammatical metaphor, a reduction in the use of personal pronouns, and a prevalence of nouns and prepositions (Nagy & Townsend, 2012; Snow, 2010). At the level of textual patterning, academic communicators are required to produce texts with structures and content responsive to the norms of their academic community (Canagarajah, 2014; Paltridge, 2004; Swales & Feak, 2004). Structural differences in academic text types depend on both the discipline area and the language of communication, thus complicating transfer of all existing academic skills which EAL students may have acquired during previous studies in a language other than English (Hyland, 2011; Nesi & Gardner, 2012; Soler-Monreal, Carbonell-Olivares, & Gil-Salom, 2011; Yakhontova, 2006). Furthermore, communication style and notions such as plagiarism, argumentation, relevance and clarity, all of which are integral to effective academic communication in English, may not be shared by academic communities operating in other languages (Fox, 1994; Liyanage & Walker, 2014). Learners transferring from these communities into English may resist new and culturally alien styles of speaking and writing (Fox, 1994). Even students from non-English speaking Western backgrounds are likely to hold understandings of the structure and content of academic texts which diverge from those advocated in the BANA nations (Canagarajah, 2014; Clyne, 1987). All in all, these factors pose challenges to EAP students’ full participation in their target academic language community and in many instances lead to student failure, dissatisfaction, frustration and criticism of EAP courses (Liu, Chang, Yang, & Sun, 2011).

1.4.2 Challenges for teachers of EAP

Teachers also face challenges in the delivery of EAP. These challenges are related to their work within the classroom and the specific requirements of their professional role, the resources made available to them in terms of employment structure and professional development, and the lack of EAP-specific pre-service education and training opportunities available to them. The first challenge for EAP teachers’ classroom practice concerns the teaching and learning of CALP (Halbach, 2012). CALP is built upon learners’ basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) (Liyanage & Birch, 2001). However, the sequential attainment of BICS before CALP is not illustrative of how language proficiency is necessarily acquired by adults (Cummins, 1999; Roessingh, 2005) and, as a result, many EAL students begin their academic studies before sufficient development of their BICS
(Liyanage & Birch, 2001). Critically, CALP builds on BICS in many ways and learners with insufficiently developed BICS are likely to face difficulties in the EAP classroom. For example, lack of knowledge of syntactic structures and vocabulary restricts learners’ capacity to make complex meaning, particularly in writing, which is devoid of context cues (see Celaya & Navés, 2009; Lorenzo & Rodríguez, 2014). As Lorenzo and Rodríguez (2014) suggest, “features of complexity in L2 discourse” (p. 65) such as increased sentence length, nominalisation and the use of different types of adverbial clauses, “seem to occur only after L2 production is correct and fluent, which suggests that L2 syntactic complexity comes after accuracy and fluency measures” (p. 65). Furthermore, adults and older adolescents are more likely to possess a strong base in a first language and a command of academic concepts and skills, some of which they may be able to transfer into English (Roessingh, 2005). This means that a variety of ability levels, skills and experiences may converge in the EAP classroom, wherein students’ CALP and BICS are not clearly predictable.

Non-sequential acquisition of BICS and CALP has implications for the EAP curriculum and EAP teachers’ professional practice (Liyanage & Birch, 2001). In the case that learners are obliged to utilise academic language skills before their BICS develop, EAP courses must deal with both BICS and CALP (Liyanage & Birch, 2001). This is problematic in a number of ways. Courses designed to develop BICS, such as courses in general English (GE), differ markedly from those designed to develop CALP. GE courses aim to cultivate interest in language learning, the development of language learning strategies and the enhancement of learners’ proficiency in everyday communication (Liu et al., 2011). Learners enrolled in GE courses may be motivated by a view to preparing for future academic study and careers, but also typically have psychosocial needs associated with travel, communication and integration into the target language community (Liu et al., 2011; Seedhouse, 1995). In contrast, EAP students have more specific needs and face pressures to perform academically (Belcher, 2006; Liu et al., 2011; Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003) by comprehending, analysing, synthesising and producing highly complex academic texts. As such, GE and EAP have different instructional objectives and, whilst GE instruction may not directly work on EAP principles, EAP instruction builds on GE (Liyanage & Birch, 2001). However, in courses attended by students with inadequate BICS, these objectives may have to be combined (Liyanage & Birch, 2001). As a result, teachers of academic English may find themselves in
the dual role of GE and EAP teacher, attempting to develop two very distinctive sets of linguistic skills simultaneously.

Challenges faced by learners in the acquisition of CALP also problematise EAP teacher practice. For example, teachers face the responsibility of ensuring that students are aware of cultural and, in some instances, disciplinary conventions in academic communication and that they can navigate and employ them accordingly when producing texts. As Canagarajah (2014) argues, this may entail fostering students’ ability to move between academic discourse communities and developing their awareness of the hybridity of academic communication globally, so that they may gain a full understanding of the complexities and nuances of the field. Furthermore, in many EAP classrooms teachers work with students from multiple cultural and linguistic backgrounds and must therefore simultaneously accommodate heterogeneous orientations to academic communication whilst ensuring that course objectives are met for all learners. This is compounded by the variety of skill levels which may converge in the classroom, as discussed previously.

Accompanying the complexities faced by EAP teachers in their classroom practice are the issues of their education, training and employment. EAP teachers are able to access very few EAP-specific teacher education and training opportunities prior to commencing their work (Hamp-Lyons, 2011). As Hamp-Lyons (2011) argues, despite considerable growth in the sector over the past few decades and an expanding body of research addressing teaching and learning in EAP, the status of professional education and training for EAP teachers lags behind and remains a “cause for concern” (p. 100) resulting in the widespread employment of minimally qualified EAP teachers by tertiary institutions around the world. Whilst TESOL pre-service teacher education and training courses are accessible throughout the BANA nations and elsewhere, these courses prepare teachers broadly for GE work in both the compulsory and non-compulsory sectors (Liyanage et al., 2014). However, given that teaching any branch of ESP, including EAP, necessitates its own approach in the classroom (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Rajabi, Kiany, & Maftoon, 2012), specific preparation for teachers to work in EAP is an issue which is critical but remains unresolved.

Employment conditions for EAP teachers pose further challenges. As Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002) contend, “EAP teachers are frequently employed as vulnerable, short-term
instructors in marginalized ‘service units’” (p. 10) within institutions. Such employment conditions are found around the world, including in Australia, where many EAP teachers are employed on short-term contracts and paid by the hour for teaching but not remunerated for routine activities outside the classroom (Anderson, 2007; Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). Such an environment compromises teachers and makes facilitation of change over the profession extremely difficult (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002).

1.5 EAP teachers and professional development

In light of the challenges discussed above, access to and participation in professional development activities are high priorities for EAP teachers. Effective and accessible professional development presents a pathway for teachers to develop awareness of the issues they face and the ways in which they may address them in their professional practice. Participation in professional development may also bring various other benefits to practitioners such as opportunities to shape their career trajectories and work towards job security (Bland & Roberts-Pittman, 2013; Lawton & Wimpenny, 2003) by facilitating practitioners’ awareness of factors which affect their employment context and providing them with opportunities to develop their skills in a demonstrable way, meet evolving professional needs throughout their careers (Eros, 2011) and develop their professional identities (Beijaard et al., 2004; Gurney, Liyanage, & Gharachorloo, 2014), as outlined in section 1.2.

Given that many EAP teachers are employed in the largely unregulated non-compulsory sector, their participation in professional development is likely more determined by their own agency and by institutional cultures than requirements associated with registration and ongoing practice (see section 1.3). Although industry regulatory bodies in the non-compulsory sector require institutions to provide some professional development opportunities for staff (see Chapter Two, section 2.4.1), the fact that institutions operate autonomously within the sector prevents implementation of broadly-aimed professional development initiatives (see for example Uysal, 2012). As such, professional development for EAP teachers in the non-compulsory sector tends to be small-scale and dependent upon initiation by institutions and individuals. Theoretically, this should not pose a barrier to the implementation of effective professional development activities, as a narrower scope increases the potential for responsiveness to the preferences and needs of the target
practitioners. However, little is currently known about the ways in which EAP teachers working in the non-compulsory sector understand and interact with professional development. Exploring this area has the potential to contribute to effective facilitation of professional development in the sector and to deepen the understanding of teachers’ interactions with professional development in general. The results of such an exploration are not only important for EAP teachers but also for EAP learners, institutions offering EAP courses, facilitators of professional development and policymakers in the field. The study reported in this thesis, which addresses this area, is informed by two theoretical constructs: teacher cognition and teacher learning. These constructs are outlined below and discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two (section 2.2).

1.6 Teacher cognition and teacher learning

The construct of teacher cognition, in combination with reconfigurations of the process of teacher learning, positions teachers as central actors who determine their learning and decision-making in their professional practice. Teacher cognition is an umbrella term referring to what teachers know, believe and think (S. Borg, 2003b, 2006), constituting an unobservable and far-reaching dimension of teaching. Teacher cognition stretches across “all aspects of [teachers’] work” (S. Borg, 2003b, p. 81) and influences decision-making (Artiles, Mostert, & Tankersley, 1994; Pajares, 1992). Professional development initiatives commonly target the critical link between cognition and action (van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001) and aim to enhance or influence teachers’ “knowledge, beliefs and attitudes” (Fishman, Marx, Best, & Tal, 2003, p. 645) in order to direct their practice in effective ways. However, popular uptake of the situative (Korthagen, 2010; Putnam & Borko, 2000) and constructivist (Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997) perspectives on learning and cognition has seen a paradigmatic shift in the conceptualisation and problematisation of teacher learning processes. The constructivist and situative perspectives view learning as an ongoing process which occurs through learner participation and interaction. From the situative perspective, teacher learning occurs within a community of practice (CoP) (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005) which possesses a set of values and expectations to guide and shape members’ actions (Lave, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Although their decisions are somewhat responsive to the repertoires which regulate their community and context (Lasky, 2005), teachers act within CoPs as agents who make decisions regarding their own practice and development. Some
researchers, such as Underhill (1992), contend that teachers’ agency is so determinant that teacher development “can only be self-initiated, self-directed, and self-evaluated” (p. 79). Therefore, whilst professional development initiatives target teacher cognition and practice, any subsequent changes are thought to be in the hands of teachers themselves. In light of these propositions, the critical nexus of how EAP teachers understand, interact with and respond to professional development warrants investigation in order to extend current understandings and inform provision of professional development for teachers in the sector.

Constructivist and situated theories of teacher learning emphasise teachers’ roles as agents who determine their own learning in interaction with fellow practitioners and the constraints and affordances of their employment context. These theoretical orientations are accommodated in this research project via the centralisation of teachers, their beliefs and their perspectives regarding professional development, facilitated via the use of phenomenography. Keeping teacher agency and the teacher-as-learner construct central to the examination of professional development draws not only on constructivist and situative contentions, but also on decades of phenomenographic research investigating learners’ agency in determining their interaction with learning activities (see for example Entwistle, Hanley, & Ratcliffe, 1979; P. Thompson, 2013; Trigwell, Prosser, & Waterhouse, 1999). In fact, phenomenographic investigations into the ways in which learners understand and negotiate the various facets of their learning at the secondary and tertiary levels (Lucas, 2001; Marton & Säljö, 1976a) have informed developments in teaching in order to better respond to these (Richardson, 2005; Trigwell et al., 1999). Both teachers’ ways of teaching and learners’ ways of learning have been connected to the conceptions, or understandings, which they hold of the activities of teaching and learning (Kember & Kwan, 2000; Richardson, 2005). Investigation of teachers’ understandings of their own learning when taking on the role of learners during professional development activities has the potential to impact how professional development is provided and to contribute to the discussion regarding the extent of its influence on teachers’ cognition and practice. Greater knowledge of how teachers understand and interact with professional development would better equip institutions and policymakers to design and facilitate it in order to achieve optimal levels of engagement and learning and to better align with teachers’ goals for professional development (see also Richardson, 2005).
Teacher cognition and its relationship with teacher learning form the basis of the study reported here. To align with the popular view that teacher cognition determines teachers’ decision-making and actions (Pajares, 1992), phenomenography was utilised to examine EAP teachers’ cognition regarding professional development. Phenomenography focuses on individuals (Säljö, 1979b) and positions their understandings of the phenomena in their lives as both resulting from and subsequently determinant of their interaction with these phenomena (Booth, 1997; Marton, 1981). Therefore, phenomenography facilitates considerations of constructivist and situative emphases on the importance of teacher cognition and action in negotiating learning activities and provides a way to explicitly and carefully examine these.

Within the wider field of education practitioners, EAP teachers provide a well justified cohort of participants in light of the challenges they face in education, employment and practice. Better informed provision of professional development for these practitioners is a much needed step toward addressing, supporting and enhancing EAP teachers’ practices, wellbeing and professional success and satisfaction. In light of the contribution of previous phenomenographic research to understandings of learning at other levels (Arvidsson & Franke, 2012; Reid & Petocz, 2002; Stenfors-Hayes, Hult, & Dahlgren, 2013), the current study makes a valuable contribution to the professional development literature for EAP teachers as well as to phenomenographic research.

1.7 Outline of thesis chapters and contents

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The introductory chapter has provided an outline of the context for the research and of the problems which led to the formulation of the three research questions. Professional development, widely recognised for its potential to develop both industries and individuals, is an issue of considerable importance within education sectors. However, the study of professional development has remained largely neglected for teachers of EAP. This research aims to address this gap by interrogating the phenomenon from the perspective of in-service EAP teachers, utilising phenomenography to investigate how these participants understand professional development as well as how they undertake, engage in and learn from professional development activities.
The second chapter contains a review of relevant literature and detailed discussion of the theoretical concepts pertinent to the three research questions. This chapter situates the study within previous research regarding teacher professional development as well as phenomenographic research focused on learning. The third chapter outlines the method undertaken to answer the research questions. Selection and utilisation of the instruments for data collection, participants and their recruitment, and the processes of data collection and analysis are outlined in this chapter. The fourth chapter presents the key findings for each research question. These findings are discussed in the fifth chapter in terms of their implications for teacher professional development, both generally and for teachers of EAP, teacher learning and practice. The sixth and final chapter concludes the thesis. A synthesis of the findings and their implications for theory and practice is provided in this chapter, accompanied by recommendations for future research and limitations of the present study.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this literature review is to provide a theoretical context for the study reported in this thesis. The first half of the chapter is concerned with teacher cognition, teacher knowledge, professional development and teacher learning (see sections 2.2-2.6.2). In these initial sections, the assumptions and constructs underlying the provision of professional development for teachers are outlined. The concept of professional development is explicated and a discussion of the benefits which professional development may bring to individual practitioners, as well as the ways in which it has been previously studied, is provided. In the second half of the literature review (see sections 2.7-2.8.5) the study of teacher professional development is contextualised within phenomenography. Previous phenomenographic research examining learning, conceptions of learning and approaches to learning are discussed. These sections provide a methodological foundation for the study reported here, the results of which are outlined and discussed in the following chapters. Finally, the research questions set out to guide the study are revisited.

2.2 Teacher cognition and teacher knowledge

The study of teacher cognition finds its premise in the interconnectedness of three factors: teachers’ thoughts, their actions, and the observable effects of these (Artiles et al., 1994; Pajares, 1992). Teaching is a complex activity which requires immediate decision-making; immediate responses to events take precedence over reflective responses due to the nature of classroom interaction (Shavelson & Stern, 1981). For this reason, decisions made whilst teaching are likely to be connected to underlying and possibly unconscious orientations, beliefs or judgments rather than deliberate and rational consideration. This way of understanding teachers’ actions distinguishes itself from antiquated models of learning, which minimised the importance of classroom interaction (McLoughlin & Oliver, 1998), and represents a shift toward interaction-based models of classroom learning (M. A. Martínez,
Sauleda, & Huber, 2001). These models position learning as “a form of assisted performance” (McLoughlin & Oliver, 1998, p. 128) and uphold the roles of teachers in helping learners to achieve outcomes.

The study of teacher cognition sets the foundations for the study of professional development in a number of ways. Premised on the notion that teachers’ thoughts, knowledge and beliefs influence their actions, teacher cognition has implications for the design and delivery of professional development initiatives to improve teacher performance through enhancement or adjustment of cognition, particularly with regards to teachers’ knowledge and dispositions (Avalos, 2011). An area of research within teacher cognition has grown responsively around teacher knowledge, centring on the delineation of what kinds of knowledge teachers employ during the exercise of their profession. This research has led to the prescription and delivery of certain forms of teacher preparation and development activities (Juang, Liu, & Chan, 2008; Mishra & Koehler, 2006), considered to be effective in light of understandings of how teacher knowledge is actioned into practice. Reflexively, the intentional exploration of one’s own cognition and its relationship with professional practice has been advocated as a platform for practitioner-centred, self-reflective learning (Golombek & Johnson, 2004). Purposefully self-reflecting and interpreting the meaning behind one’s beliefs and decision-making are argued to bring to the surface underlying contradictions between these (Golombek & Johnson, 2004), the exploration of which may include negotiation of dissonance between cognition and practice arising from the demands inherent to the contexts in which teachers work (Feryok, 2010). Finally, teacher cognition is said to extend to all aspects of teachers’ work (S. Borg, 2003b). Irrespective of form and provenance, professional development is one aspect of many teachers’ work. Therefore, it stands logically that teachers’ thoughts, values and beliefs regarding their own learning and development influence their decision-making relative to these areas.

Before returning to explore this final point, which forms the basis of the study reported in this thesis, a brief discussion of teacher knowledge and its relationship with the pursuit of effectiveness in teaching is provided in this chapter, setting the stage for later exploration of the hybrid forms of professional development offered in educational sectors. Whilst the study of teacher knowledge in and of itself has been largely descriptive, the central preoccupation which underpins it concerns the knowledge, or the kinds of knowledge, required to teach
effectively (Santoro, Reid, Mayer, & Singh, 2013). The subsequent delineation of domains or categories of teacher knowledge has resulted in the creation of teacher standards. Different education sectors set out their own standards to guide teachers’ practice and development (Australian Council of TESOL Associations, 2013; O’Meara & MacDonald, 2004; Storey, 2006). Standards encapsulate prescriptions of what teachers should know (or need to learn), organised into categories related to all aspects of teacher practice (subject, students, educational context and more), thus “quantifying the knowledge, skills and dispositions” (Ní Chróinín, O'Sullivan, & Tormey, 2013, pp. 261-262) required by teachers practicing within a given sector. These prescriptions in turn influence the design and implementation of professional development activities, informing priorities for how teacher development should occur and what it should focus on.

The activity of teaching draws on many different kinds of knowledge for realisation and is considered to be “dependent on flexible access to highly organised systems of knowledge” (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 1020). However, notions of ideal or necessary knowledge are not static (Santoro et al., 2013) and may depend on factors such as employment context, subject area, modes of teaching and student populations. In recent times, for example, notions of necessary teacher knowledge have changed in response to the following:

… developments in information technology, the diversification of student cohorts, the ways in which knowledge is produced and transmitted, as well as pressing and urgent issues about the state of the world’s environment and the need to educate for citizenship and sustainability. (Santoro et al., 2013, p. 123)

Standards frameworks are closely linked to identified categories of teacher knowledge, the study of which dates back to the 1980s (Elbaz, 1981; Shulman, 1986, 1987). However, proposed categories of teacher knowledge diverge depending on the epistemological orientation of researchers. For example, Elbaz (1981, 1983), who produced a seminal study in the field, explored practical knowledge and identified it as a multifaceted concept encompassing knowledge of self, the nature of teaching, subject matter, curriculum development and instructional practices (Elbaz, 1983; see also Golombek, 1998). The work of Elbaz (1981, 1983) has been extended and developed by narrative researchers such as Golombek (1998), who focused on language teachers, and Clandinin and Connelly (1986),
who introduced a second category of teacher knowledge labelled *personal practical knowledge*, emphasising the importance of experiential knowledge and the intersection of personal beliefs and classroom experience. Similarly, Tsui (2003) characterises teacher knowledge as “personal, practical, and situated” (p. 2), developed and negotiated in dialogue with the contexts in which teachers work.

Other proposed categories of teacher knowledge provide a more categorical stance. Largely articulated by Shulman (1986, 1987) and subsequently advanced by many researchers (see Karseth & Sivesind, 2010; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; van Driel & Berry, 2012), these categories capture different knowledge domains utilised in teaching. They include knowledge of content, pedagogy, subject-specific pedagogical approaches, curriculum, learners and learner characteristics, and educational contexts and values. The work of Shulman (1987, 1987) has been influential in debates centring on teacher knowledge and his categories of knowledge continue to be developed and discussed in research (Hashweh, 2013).

Another important consideration in the discussion of teacher knowledge, learning and development concerns where teacher knowledge originates. According to Shulman (1987), there are four main sources of teacher knowledge, which have subsequently been explored by other researchers (see Friedrichsen et al., 2009; Johnston & Goettsch, 2000). The first is discipline area scholarship, referring to in-depth learning of the content which one is to teach. The second source consists of materials and structures of the “institutionalised educational process” (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). These include curricula, assessment, institutions, teachers’ organisations, government policy and other artefacts contributing to the creation of the educational context. Shulman (1987) posits that the principles behind these materials and structures can contribute significantly to teachers’ knowledge base and that they can familiarise teachers with the educational processes with which they work. The third source of knowledge is formal education scholarship, involving education research pertaining to teaching, learning and development. Within this body of research, theoretical or conceptual work is emphasised. The final source of teacher knowledge is experience. As Shulman (1987) labels it, the wisdom of practice may be the least codified source of knowledge, but it is perhaps the source which contributes most to the development of the maxims which guide teachers’ work. The importance of experience in the construction of professional knowledge is also emphasised by other researchers, including Eraut (1994b), Connelly, Clandinin, and
He (1997) and Tsui (2003). Naturally, given the diversity of its sources, teacher knowledge is gathered over an extended period of time and is negotiated via exposure to different external stimuli, including experience in the classroom, formal pre-service preparation and professional development.

2.3 Stages of teacher learning

Several stages of teacher learning have been identified in the literature. These include the apprenticeship of observation, formal teacher preparation and professional development. The apprenticeship of observation is the first exposure that pre-service teachers have to the teaching profession. It refers to “the phenomenon whereby student teachers arrive for their training courses having spent thousands of hours as schoolchildren observing and evaluating professionals in action” (M. Borg, 2004, p. 274) and contributes to the theories which inform beginning teachers’ practice (Eraut, 1994a). However, whilst an inevitable step, the apprenticeship of observation offers only a partial view of the teaching profession. Students may witness teachers’ observable behaviours, actions and reactions, but not the underlying cognition (M. Borg, 2004; Lortie, 1975). As such, it is important for pre-service teachers to undertake formal pre-service preparation via education or training programmes, constituting the second stage of teacher learning.

Teacher education is undertaken preceding the commencement of a teacher’s career, typically in the form of a three or four year undergraduate programme offered at the tertiary level (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Teacher education programmes allow for extended examination of the theories behind teaching, general pedagogy and content, and offer pre-service teachers opportunities for practice. However, despite widespread support for teacher education programmes, stakeholders in education systems around the world oftentimes advocate more short-term teacher preparation, principally in response to teacher shortages (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). These short courses are referred to as teacher training and normally aim to provide teachers with certain skills, with specific intended outcomes (see for example Baker-Henningham, Walker, Powell, & Gardner, 2009). Furthermore, training programmes typically focus on observable behaviours in the classroom rather than the epistemology which may underlie them (Kyriakides, Creemers, & Antoniou, 2009). Many training programmes are offered as ways to gain certification or registration. However, both
teacher education and training may also be taken up by in-service teachers as a form of professional development and can be either voluntary or mandatory (Blasie & Palladino, 2005; Day, 1999; Rajabi et al., 2012).

Teacher education and training programmes for language teachers have historically been accused of a lack of coherence and a focus on ancillary knowledge areas such as applied linguistics (Freeman, 1989). However, more recent developments in the field have led to the incorporation of education theory, opportunities for teaching practice and observation, and a focus on materials and curriculum development into language teacher preparation programmes (Crandall, 2000; T. Wright, 2010). Resultantly, language teacher education is argued to have become a “microcosm of teacher education, and many of the trends in current language teacher education derive from theory and practice in general teacher education” (Crandall, 2000, p. 34). Although pre-service education and training programmes for language teachers have been grouped under the same term – second language teacher education (SLTE) (see Richards, 1990) – there are myriad programmes available, differing in length and depth of study (T. Wright, 2010). T. Wright (2010) describes the components of SLTE as concerning reflective practice; teacher knowledge, learning and thinking; pedagogical content knowledge; and school-based teacher learning and mentoring (see also Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Tamir, 1988; Woods, 1996). However, one of the major foci of SLTE is preparation of practitioners of general English. As discussed in Chapter One (section 1.4.2), a lack of tailored training and education opportunities for language teachers seeking entrance into specialist fields such as EAP still persists.

The third stage of teacher learning, following teachers’ entrance into the profession, is professional development. Professional development refers to the learning activities in which in-service teachers engage. As discussed previously, these activities are often set out with the goal of enhancing teachers’ knowledge and improving their professional practice (Avalos, 2011; Garet et al., 2001). Temporally, participation in professional development extends further than the previous stages and can span the duration of a teacher’s career. Professional development may be undertaken in both anticipated and unanticipated, top-down and bottom-up ways (Haigh, 2005; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Section 2.3.1 of this chapter describes popular and common ways of undertaking and facilitating professional development in education.
2.3.1 Forms of professional development

Professional development for teachers is offered in a variety of ways. Popular forms include workshops, conferences and seminars, further study, reflective activities encompassing personal journal writing and action research, peer observation, collaboration with colleagues, and participation in face-to-face and virtual professional learning communities, to name a few. Recent literature suggests that the majority of teacher professional development takes the form of one-off workshops, seminars or conferences of short duration (Duncan-Howell, 2010; McConnell, Parker, Eberhardt, Koehler, & Lundeberg, 2012). These are referred to as traditional forms of professional development (A. Lieberman, 1995) and are contrasted with self-directed and collective forms (Glatthorn, 1987, 1990; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Although the majority of professional development is planned, it may also occur in unplanned ways (Haigh, 2005). The different avenues of professional development which are popularly undertaken by teachers are reviewed in the following sections.

2.3.1.1 Traditional forms

Traditional forms of professional development are framed around “structured learning environments with a specified curriculum” (Richter et al., 2011, p. 117) and offer teachers focused information in relatively small amounts (A. Lieberman, 1995), oftentimes delivered by an outside expert (Brack, Samarakwicrema, & Benson, 2005). Some researchers argue that traditional forms of professional development can be of value to teachers, especially if used in tandem with other activities in an on-going manner (Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Zeegers, 1995). However, traditional professional development has been criticised for its mode of delivery – one-off format with no follow-up sessions, removed from the site of teachers’ work (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). According to Day (1993), one-off professional development has in fact had a “disabling effect upon teachers’ professional growth” (p. 84).

Furthermore, traditional professional development is top-down, meaning that the target practitioners are not generally involved in its conception, design or facilitation. It may be system-led and policy-oriented and, as such, has come to be associated negatively with a mechanism utilised under managerialist and performative approaches to the management of education sectors. Features of managerialism include the primacy of management in
organisational functioning and rhetoric, centralised decision-making, and the use of performance indicators to monitor and assess teachers’ work (Bolam, 2000; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Dunworth, Drury, Kralik, & Moore, 2014). The conduct of teacher professional development is very much a centralised operation within such systems (Bolam, 2000) and is used to promote cultures of accountability, maintain organisational hierarchies, and achieve homogeneity and visibility of teachers’ practice (Murphy & Gale, 2004; Sachs, 2001). Managerialist and performative systems have been criticised for their propensity to limit and redefine understandings of learning and knowledge (Ball, 2003), leading to the implementation of professional development activities which are unresponsive to teachers’ experience and learning (Gurney & Liyanage, 2015; Varghese et al., 2005).

Criticism of the traditional, system-led model of professional development, accompanied by calls for increased effectiveness and accommodation of practitioners, has seen other forms of professional development rise within various education sectors. Based on theories of social and cultural capital (Murphy & Gale, 2004), activism (Avis, 2005; Sachs, 2000) and feminism (Osgood, 2006), these other forms of professional development are practitioner-centred and emphasise the importance of fostering strong teacher identities, practitioner agency and reflective practice (Trent, 2011) in collaboration with colleagues (González Moncada, 2007; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). Calls for professional development to be embedded in context and therefore of greater relevance to teachers have coincided with the rise of these new forms of professional development (see Borko, 2004). The forms of professional development associated with these aims are referred to as self-directed and collective (Glatthorn, 1987; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Self-directed and collective professional development activities offer teachers greater flexibility to pursue developmental goals, individually or in groups (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). In this bottom-up model, teachers take charge of their learning, often with institutional guidance and supervision (Villegas-Reimers, 2003).

2.3.1.2 Self-directed and collective professional development

Self-directed and collective professional development is based upon the provision of platforms and opportunities for collaboration, discussion, planning, research, reflection and mentoring, led by and for teachers (Glatthorn, 1987, 1990; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). The
increasing popularity of such activities is demonstrated in the rise of professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004), which are “groups of staff members committed to a collaborative learning effort with the explicit goal of improving practice” (McConnell et al., 2012, p. 268), as well as the advocacy of a number of reflection-based group and individual activities for professional development (Chen, 2000; Fenton-Smith & Stillwell, 2011). As well as traditional institution-based groups, online communities are becoming a popular platform for practitioner-directed learning (Duncan-Howell, 2010). Self-directed activities which may be undertaken individually, such as academic research and writing for publication, are also advocated for teachers (Rathert & Okan, 2015; Wong, 2014). Within the wider education literature, self-directed and collective professional development activities have also been advocated specifically for language teachers (Bashir, 2011; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Yadav, 2011). Yadav (2011) reasons that this is due to the fact that more traditional modes of professional development may not be readily available to language teaching practitioners in all sectors and that, as a result, these practitioners may turn to more innovative means of learning and developing.

2.3.1.3 Further study

One other form of professional development for teachers is formal study. Whilst initial teacher preparation is necessary for entry into the teaching profession (Sachs, 2003), teachers may also opt to undertake programmes and degrees for in-service professional development (Blasie & Palladino, 2005; Day, 1999). Formal study provides a mix of predetermined and practitioner-led activities. For example, formal coursework provides a structured form of learning (Blasie & Palladino, 2005), whilst research components offer teachers varying levels of freedom to pursue topics of interest or relevance. Research degrees such as professional doctorates are offered to allow working practitioners the opportunity to engage in research-based professional development (Bourner, Bowden, & Laing, 2001). As Bourner et al. (2001) claim, these degrees are somewhat responsive to policy and standards frameworks surrounding the importance of lifelong learning and entail a shift in focus away from initial skills development towards ongoing learning and reflective practice.
2.3.1.4 Incidental opportunities for professional development

The different forms of professional development presented above have a common feature: they are all planned and organised, either by teachers or other facilitators. Some alternative forms of professional development, distinguished by their incidental or unplanned nature, have also been put forward (Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, & McKinney, 2007; Haigh, 2005). Prominent among these is that of spontaneous, incidental and unplanned conversation. Haigh (2005) describes this type of conversation as a tool for professional learning which is fruitful yet unanticipated. He suggests that spontaneous, incidental conversation between teachers often turns to talking about learning and teaching. This may lead to reflection and thus provide learning opportunities to practitioners who are “not those who readily take up other professional development options, including individual consultation and workshops” (Haigh, 2005, p. 4). These opportunities may be incidental, but nonetheless, Haigh (2005) argues, they have the capacity to foster problem-solving amongst peers, sharing of ideas, and reflection on practice.

The common forms of professional development described in this chapter are practiced throughout many education domains and discipline areas. The research investigating these modes of professional development addresses both the P-12 compulsory sector and the non-compulsory higher education sector, in which many language teaching professionals are employed. The utility of many common forms of professional development has also been explicitly argued for language teachers (Chen, 2000; Dayoub & Bashiruddin, 2012; Yadav, 2011). However, participation in professional development in ELT, particularly at the tertiary level, is made unique by a number of factors. In the compulsory education sector, the criteria that apply for recognition, recruitment and standardisation of content area teachers apply equally for ELT teachers. However, in the absence of such requirements for ELT practitioners in the non-compulsory sector, codified responses (Thomson, 2004), driven in part by market forces advocating for quality instruction (Farmer, 2006), have been put in place through various organisations which act as regulatory bodies at the international, regional and local levels (Liyanage et al., 2014). These bodies, which take the form of councils, associations and national boards, identify the required knowledge, skills and level of accreditation practitioners must possess in order to practice (MacPherson, Kouritzin, & Kim, 2005; O'Meara & MacDonald, 2004). As such, ELT practitioners at this level must
negotiate professional development stemming from two different sources of professionalism: *sponsored* and *independent* (Eckerth & Leung, 2009; Leung, 2009). These sources of professionalism not only dictate the motivations underlying professional development and its desired outcomes, but also influence its content and delivery. The next section in this chapter outlines these two sources of professionalism, their origins, and their impacts on ELT professionals’ learning and development.

### 2.4 Professional development and professionalisms in ELT

The two domains of professionalism, which describe the origins of different modes of professional development for practitioners of ELT, echo the motivations underlying top-down (sponsored) and bottom-up (independent), or traditional and practitioner-driven, forms of professional development discussed in other literature (Glatthorn, 1987; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). However, the domains allow for specific exploration of how they affect ELT practitioners and how they are disseminated in the sector in terms of professional development opportunities. This distinguishes them from commentaries made in response to professionalism in other sectors (Hargreaves, 2000; O’Reilly & Reed, 2011). Sponsored professionalism in ELT originates from industry bodies and regulators which produce and enforce standards for teachers’ skills and knowledge, whereas independent professionalism derives from practitioners (M. Evans & Esch, 2013; Leung, 2009). These two domains are explored separately in sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2.

#### 2.4.1 Sponsored professionalism

Sponsored professionalism is “driven by central professional or regulatory bodies that define professional standards and frame the content and aims of professional development programmes” (M. Evans & Esch, 2013, p. 137). These bodies have arisen around the world in a concerted effort to regulate and professionalise the largely self-governing industry of ELT (Liyanage et al., 2014; Thomson, 2004). Regulatory bodies have several functions including setting out standards for practitioners and implementing and invigilating professional codes of ethics and conduct (MacPherson et al., 2005).
Regulatory bodies in ELT are numerous and far-reaching. They operate at the international, regional and local levels as councils, national boards and associations. In Australia, regulatory bodies operate at both state and national levels. National organisations include the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) and the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE). At the state level, organisations include the New South Wales Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ATESOL NSW), the Victoria Association of TESOL and Multicultural Education (VATME) and VicTESOL in Victoria, QATESOL in Queensland, SA TESOL in South Australia, WATESOL in Western Australia, ATESOL ACT in the Australian Capital Territory, ATESOL NT in the Northern Territory and TasTESOL in Tasmania. Membership to the meta-organisation of ACTA is gained through membership to a state-based affiliate.¹

Most of these regulatory bodies do not have the capacity to enforce thresholds for professional development. However, those with the capacity to endorse institutions or register education providers stipulate standards which must be adhered to under the conditions of endorsement and operation. One such organisation is the National ELT Accreditation Scheme (NEAS). NEAS is an Australian-based organisation which has endorsed ELT centres in Australia, South East Asia and the Middle East. Its objectives are to determine and invigilate standards for ELT centres (NEAS, 2015). Centres which comply with NEAS standards may apply for NEAS endorsement. Endorsement, which is reviewed biennially, is a mark of competence for ELT centres – a desirable trait in an industry characterised by client demands for “measurable results” (Farmer, 2006, p. 162) and quality of service. Professional development is one of the standards which must be met in order to obtain and maintain NEAS endorsement. Under the scheme, organisations must support staff development and provide staff with ongoing professional development opportunities (NEAS, 2014).

Other regulatory organisations operating within Australia with the capacity to enforce standards include the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) (see Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2012; Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, 2012). Unlike NEAS, TEQSA and ASQA are government-based. Compliance with the standards set out by these organisations is a

¹These state-based affiliates are ATESOL ACT, ATESOL NSW, ATESOL NT, QATESOL, SA TESOL, TasTESOL, VicTESOL and WATESOL.
precondition for operation as a higher education provider. TEQSA regulates the Australian tertiary sector, including English language courses run by tertiary institutions, and stipulates evidence of support for the development of teaching staff as one of the minimal standards for registration. Similarly, ASQA sets out and monitors standards for vocational education providers, including Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions, and registers providers of English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) outside the university system. In order to gain registration and permission to teach international students on student visas, these ELICOS providers must comply with various regulatory instruments, including the ELICOS National Standards (Department of Education and Training, 2015). The ELICOS National Standards have strict criteria for professional development. Registered ELICOS providers are required to provide teaching staff with ongoing professional development opportunities and to develop a professional development programme for staff each year.

Accrediting bodies such as NEAS, TEQSA and AQSA, which implement professional development thresholds to be met by ELT providers, do not facilitate activities for teacher professional development. Other organisations, such as ACTA and its state-based affiliates, organise and offer professional development activities to promote standards for ELT practitioners. These include opportunities to attend and participate in conferences, special interest groups and workshops, and the opportunity to publish in professional journals. Although institutions may take different approaches to the accommodation of standards, professional development stipulated and designed by these regulatory bodies is typically associated with sponsored professionalism (M. Evans & Esch, 2013). Whilst it may take different forms, this professional development is commonly “centralized, programmed and often information-oriented” (M. Evans & Esch, 2013, p. 137). Its underlying knowledge base is likely to derive from disciplinary academic research from the field of education, applied linguistics or second language acquisition (M. Evans & Esch, 2013). The design of such professional development may be largely out of practitioners’ control. Furthermore, whilst practitioners may voluntarily take part in these professional development activities, they may also have to comply with professional development requirements implemented by their institution of employment in response to regulatory requirements.
2.4.2 Independent professionalism

Pursuit of independent professionalism, on the other hand, places control over professional development in the hands of practitioners (Leung, 2009). Independent professionalism stems from a “reflexive examination” (M. Evans & Esch, 2013, p. 138) of one’s own values, beliefs and practices and a “critical examination” (Eckerth & Leung, 2009, p. 195) of those filtering down from the industry and institutional levels. Therefore, development of independent professionalism via professional development is closely related to the goals of self-directed and collective professional development (Glatthorn, 1987, 1990; Villegas-Reimers, 2003) advocated by other authors (Bashir, 2011; Chen, 2000; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Self-directed professional development has been advocated explicitly for teachers of specialist English (Chen, 2000) such as EAP, as explored in section 2.4.3.

2.4.3 Professional development in EAP

Professional development for teachers of EAP is recognised to be an underdeveloped area of research (Hamp-Lyons, 2011). To date, there has been a lack of empirical studies conducted to investigate professional development in the field. Certain characteristics of the field render it distinct from other branches of ELT (Chen, 2000; Ghanbari & Rasekh, 2012). For example, the knowledge base required for EAP teaching is complicated and contested (Arnó-Macià & Rueda-Ramos, 2011), and there is much variation in course delivery across the industry (Fortanet-Gómez & Rääsänen, 2008). As such, transfer of research findings regarding teachers’ practices and needs from other areas is not always productive. In response to the lack of studies which have been conducted in the area, Eslami (2010) and Gaffield-Vile (1996) point respectively to the need for greater explication of EAP instructors’ needs and of the complexities inherent in teaching EAP.

As discussed in Chapter One (section 1.4), EAP orients around learners’ attainment of CALP, a mix of complex syntactical structures, vocabulary, writing conventions, academic concepts and higher-order skills such as synthetising and argumentation. Transferring from the more general fields of ESL and EFL into the specialist field of EAP, a pathway undertaken by many practitioners, is complicated by the requirement of a significantly expanded knowledge base (Ewer, 1983). Undertaking tasks such as instructing students with regards to academic
conventions, developing their general academic language proficiency and use of metacognitive skills, and fostering their awareness of academic concepts and processes such as referencing and plagiarism means that EAP practitioners also require specialist methods of instruction and course delivery (Gaffield-Vile, 1996; Rajabi, Kiany, & Maftoon, 2011). However, as Ghanbari and Rasekh (2012) argue, a salient issue still problematising professional development for teachers of specialist English is the disconnect between theory and practice. Arguing that theory does not easily translate into practice in the area, the authors conclude that, “prospective ESP practitioners among teachers of general English are justified in training themselves in a practice-into-theory direction by a process of professional reflection, problem-solving and decision-making” (Ghanbari & Rasekh, 2012, p. 113). Many novice practitioners in the field negotiate their own practice and develop in an “individual manner” (Ghanbari & Rasekh, 2012, p. 119). Resultantly, the pursuit of self-training has been advocated for ESP teachers (Chen, 2000).

2.5 Ancillary outcomes of professional development

As well as refining teachers’ classroom practices and enhancing their knowledge, professional development can occasion other significant outcomes at the practitioner level. Participation in professional development may bring with it various ancillary benefits, many of which are critical for individual practitioners’ wellbeing and professional longevity, as mentioned briefly in Chapter One (section 1.2). Understanding these ancillary effects of professional development is essential to the exploration of what professional development means to practitioners, how the association of professional development with such outcomes may influence practitioners’ interaction with it over their careers, and the necessity for provision of effective professional development in every educational sector, including in EAP.

2.5.1 Identity, agency and awareness

Professional identities are non-static constructions formulated and negotiated by individuals within the boundaries and discourses of institutions and industries (Beijaard et al., 2004; Søreide, 2006). Teacher professional identities encompass understanding of the purposes underlying teaching and activities associated with teacher practice; they derive from deeply
held philosophies regarding teaching, and are constantly formulated and renegotiated through participation, interaction and engagement within communities of practice (J. Lieberman, 2009; Varghese et al., 2005). Communities of practice, which Wenger (2000) defines as “the social ‘containers’ of the competences” (p. 229) which regulate and define social learning systems, are embedded within institutions and other organisations. Values, standards and expectations for members are transmitted within communities of practice both implicitly and explicitly through avenues such as professional development. Each community of practice possesses its own specific values and expectations which guide and shape possible member identities and behaviours and set out notions of competence (Lave, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000). Indeed, such notions may not be conducive to improvement or ongoing learning (Wenger, 2000) – for this reason, teachers may be restrained or enabled by their community of practice.

Learning and identity formation are therefore considered to be reflexive, ongoing processes for teachers, tied up with the professional context in which they work and informed by its values and expectations. Within these contexts, professional development ideally provides space for teachers to critically reflect on their own professional identities and to differentiate them from those of their colleagues (Harrell-Levy & Kerpelman, 2010; Trent, 2011). As such, professional development should confer resources to teachers with which they can construct an effective and resilient professional identity within their community of practice (Gurney et al., 2014). This may entail the provision of relevant and targeted resources which either arise from teachers’ working contexts (Servage, 2008) or which teachers may effectively transfer into these in order to tailor their practice in line with their own notions of effective teaching (Trent, 2011).

Teacher agency, concerning teachers’ capacity to make decisions regarding their work (Priestley et al., 2012), is a critical consideration in understanding how professional development interacts with teachers’ professional identities and their practice. Teacher agency is grounded within their community of practice (J. Lieberman, 2009; Norton, 1997) and is utilised to negotiate teachers’ own goals for practice, learning, development and identity alongside those deriving from institutions or policy (Lasky, 2005; Priestley et al., 2012). Teacher agency also forms the basis for learning through reflective practice (Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Johnson & Golombek, 2002).
Connected to the development of identity is an unfolding awareness of the cognition underlying one’s practice and the effects of one’s decision-making, referred to as *teacher self-awareness*. Teacher self-awareness has been linked both to declarative knowledge of external behaviours and actions and to an understanding of one’s inner self, associated with reflective practice (Baum & King, 2006; T. S. C. Farrell, 2013; Laycock & Bunnag, 1991; Woolfolk Hoy, 2013). According to Laycock and Bunnag (1991), “true self-awareness comprises the capacity to perceive and articulate what takes place in one’s lesson, and then to interpret and reflect on it, so as to evaluate lessons in terms of the learning that took place” (p. 43). Woolfolk Hoy (2013) treats self-awareness as a component of self-regulation and defines it as the accurate assessment of “your feelings, interests, values and strengths” (p. 265). Baum and King (2006) unite these two components and argue that development of self-awareness through the articulation of one’s epistemology and world view is critical for helping teachers to understand their professional decisions and the theories and values underlying them. The authors define self-awareness as the “foundation of good decision-making” (Baum & King, 2006, p. 217), and, like others before them (Golombek & Johnson, 2004), advocate self-reflection using questions that probe the basis for one’s decisions in the classroom and the factors that might influence them. Self-awareness is considered to be a critical component for effective teacher learning (Laycock & Bunnag, 1991; Underhill, 1992). Underhill (1992) proposes that “self-development is driven by continuous and unfolding clarification of self-awareness coupled with an emerging will to change” (p. 73).

As well as knowledge of the self, awareness can also comprise knowledge of other aspects of one’s practice and employment context. Awareness is an attribute which impacts teacher practice over many areas, including language of instruction (Andrews, 2003, 2008), students (Berg & Brouwer, 1991; Tirosh, Even, & Robinson, 1998), classroom interaction and social dynamics (Martin & Keller, 1976; Smith & Kleine, 1969). Awareness of these factors has a critical presence in a teacher’s mindset, forming a backdrop which gives depth and clarity to classroom events and helping teachers respond effectively to issues.
Participation in professional development is also popularly considered as a means by which individuals may pursue lifelong learning. The objective of lifelong learning, which can be defined as the intentional pursuit of learning opportunities in a continuous manner (Sharples, 2000), is to foster and facilitate learning throughout an individual’s life. Lifelong learning is advocated across professional sectors (Balasubramanian, Thamizoli, Umar, & Kanwar, 2010; Sharples, 2000; Terzioglu et al., 2013) and is posited around the notion that individuals must remain adaptive and open to learning in an ongoing manner. As Sharples (2000) summarises,

The basic premise of lifelong learning is that it is not feasible to equip learners at school, college or university with all the knowledge and skills they need to prosper throughout their lifetimes. Therefore, people will need continually to enhance their knowledge and skills, in order to address immediate problems and to participate in a process of continual vocational and professional development. (p. 178)

Lifelong learning has a wide focus. It encompasses formal learning, collaborative projects and pursuits which stretch beyond the boundaries of individuals’ professional roles, extending into their personal lives (Meyer & Logan, 2013; Sharples, 2000). Some authors emphasise the professional elements of lifelong learning; for example, Koper (2004) labels it a “competitive necessity” (p. 6) in a world in which knowledge and information continue to expand at a fast pace. Others highlight the importance of remaining adaptive and flexible as a citizen in such a fast moving, information-based society (see Fischer, 2000). In order to foster effective learning throughout an individual’s life, adherence to principles of authentic, context-based learning which support collaboration with others and may result in intrinsic rewards for learners are advocated (Fischer, 2000). Furthermore, the development of learning as a habit is critical; encouraging learners to engage in their own processes of learning is therefore considered to be highly important (Blaschke & Hase, 2015; Fischer, 2000).

Aside from maintaining a competitive edge and pursuing personal enrichment (Meyer & Logan, 2013), lifelong learning via participation in professional development may buffer the potential effects of career stagnation and plateau. The cessation of learning at work has been linked with several negative outcomes which can impact on individuals’ wellbeing and
professional longevity (Milstein, 1990; Ongori & Agolla, 2009). These outcomes and their relevance for participation in professional development are explored in section 2.5.3.

2.5.3 Career plateau and stagnation

Lifelong learning and ongoing participation in professional development have slowly gained more relevance as employment stability has lessened across industries (Bland & Roberts-Pittman, 2013; Hall & Louis, 1988). Restructuring, downsizing, cost-cutting and financial instability have affected the ways in which organisations function in many professional sectors (Hall & Louis, 1988; Ongori & Agolla, 2009). These factors have also contributed to career plateau for many employees (Hall & Louis, 1988), encompassing content plateau and structural plateau (Milstein, 1990). Content plateau, alternatively described as job content plateau, refers to repetitiveness, and lack of novelty and challenge (see also Lentz & Allen, 2009), whereas structural plateau refers to the inability to move hierarchically upwards within an organisation. Career plateau is considered to contribute to attrition, as employees may leave to seek career advancement or stimulation elsewhere, and to be a precedent to stress and employee dissatisfaction (Ongori & Agolla, 2009). However, whilst career plateau can result in feelings of uneasiness and entrapment, it can also provide practitioners with the opportunity to reassess their career and take active steps towards growing professionally (Milstein, 1990).

Similar to career plateau, career stagnation refers to “the involuntary – at least temporary – end of one’s career development” (Abele, Volmer, & Spurk, 2012, p. 6). Career stagnation is considered to affect one’s quality of life, the effects of stagnation becoming more detrimental the longer the period of stagnation endures (Abele et al., 2012). Abele et al. (2012) argue that personal-level, interpersonal-level and organisation-level factors may contribute to career stagnation. Person-level factors include self-efficacy (see also Bandura, 1993), incompatible or unrealistic goals, adaptability (see also Rottinghaus, Day, & Borgen, 2005) and attitudes to work (Abele et al., 2012). Interpersonal-level factors include the development of one’s career in line with that of a partner and balancing work with family (Abele & Volmer, 2011; Abele et al., 2012). Organisation-level factors which can contribute to career stagnation and eventual employee attrition include a lack of socialisation, support and mentoring, and
antisocial behaviour experienced at work, such as stereotyping and discrimination (Abele et al., 2012).

For teachers, a lack of available opportunities for promotion within institutions or repetitive and unstimulating practice may provide catalysts for stagnation and plateau (Milstein, 1990). These factors are closely linked with underchallenged burnout (Farber, 2000). Unlike other types of burnout, which are associated with unrelentingly stressful conditions over extended periods of time (Maslach, 1993; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001), teachers may experience underchallenged burnout when “faced not with an excessive degree of stress per se (i.e., work overload), but rather with monotonous and unstimulating work conditions that fail to provide sufficient rewards” (Farber, 2000, p. 677).

In order to combat the negative effects of stagnation and plateau, Milstein (1990) advocates the pursuit and implementation of job enrichment strategies. These may include lateral transfer of employees, provision of opportunities for collaboration amongst employees, and in-service training and development in order to “keep up with relevant changes that relate to roles” (Milstein, 1990, p. 178). Milstein (1990) argues that professional development should be accompanied by “challenges, with attendant rewards, to grow, try new methods and alternative approaches” (p. 178) in order to act positively against stagnation and plateau.

In summary, professional development conducted in an effective manner can result in a number of positive outcomes at the practitioner level. These include development of teachers’ professional identity; raising levels of self-awareness and awareness of other factors relevant to their practice; fostering lifelong learning; and buffering career stagnation, plateau and underchallenged burnout (Farber, 2000; Milstein, 1990). Although examination of teacher professional development tends to minimise these outcomes in favour of facilitation of change through improved practice (see Avalos, 2011), they may nonetheless be important outcomes for practitioners.

2.6 The study of professional development and teacher learning

In terms of the effects which professional development may have on teacher cognition and practice, different theoretical perspectives suggest different outcomes, responsive to different
understandings of teacher learning processes. In order to thoroughly examine these outcomes of professional development, the following sections of this literature review are concerned with theories of teacher learning. The optimisation of effectiveness in professional development has attracted much attention from researchers (Desimone, 2009; Fishman et al., 2003; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005) and has led to the examination of teachers’ interactions with professional development from a number of theoretical perspectives. Prominent amongst these are the constructivist and situative perspectives, and the examination of teacher career cycles.

2.6.1 The constructivist and situative perspectives

Constructivist and situative perspectives have been widely applied to investigate learning (Bonk & Cunningham, 1998; Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999). The constructivist perspective finds its roots in the work of Piaget (see Wadsworth, 1996) and emphasises learners as an essential factor in mediating their own learning. Constructivists view learning as characterised by learners’ active involvement in the construction of knowledge (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Prawat & Floden, 1994) and posit that,

[Learning is] more concerned with understandings achieved through relevant experience than with accumulated facts received from others, more imbued with meaning, more domain or situation specific, more influenced by social and cultural contexts, and, in general, less purely cognitive and less governed by abstract principles than traditional conceptions of learning (Black & Ammon, 1992, p. 324).

Researchers have utilised constructivist principles to make recommendations regarding how best to facilitate teacher learning through professional development activities (see Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Cárdenas, González, & Álvarez, 2010). This literature emphasises active teacher involvement in learning as well as knowledge construction through collaboration (Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Boudourides, 2003; Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997). Abdal-Haqq (1996) argues that adherence to constructivist principles is essential for fostering effective teacher development and facilitates reflection and inquiry, coaching, collaboration, inclusivity and accessibility, a focus on student learning, and the recognition and treatment of teachers as professionals and adult learners. Cárdenas et al. (2010) set out several considerations for
facilitating effective professional development activities responsive to constructivist principles, accommodating practitioner agency and identity. These considerations include, amongst others:

- Opportunities for practitioners to engage in reflective practice in a meaningful way, responsive to their needs and interests;
- An orientation towards growth, rather than the acquisition of instructional tools, and accommodation of practitioners’ experiential knowledge;
- Opportunities for collaboration with colleagues;
- An inquiry-based stance;
- Establishment of support systems;
- Critical consideration of the intersection of theory and practice, based in teachers’ experiences;
- Opportunities for action research;
- Encouraging teachers’ autonomy in affective, intellectual, cultural and social terms; and
- Avoiding the use of context-free models of expertise to be imitated by teachers, instead accommodating context-responsive negotiation and construction of practice.

Cárdenas et al. (2010) restate the importance of positioning teachers as knowledge constructors via promotion of reflection and inquiry within educational and social contexts. The principle underlying these recommendations relates to the primacy of teachers in mediating their own learning, cognition and practice.

Another popular orientation to understanding teacher learning is the situative perspective (Borko, 2004; Greeno, 1998; Lave, 1996; Putnam & Borko, 1998, 2000), which replaced cognitive and behaviourist views of learning (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Putnam & Borko, 2000). The situative perspective is characterised by a “theoretical focus on interactive systems that are larger than the behavior and cognitive processes of an individual agent” (Greeno, 1998, pp. 5-6). Whilst the situative perspective has existed in psychology for some time, only in the last few decades did it attract the attention of researchers in education (Borko, 2004; Greeno, 1998). This perspective holds that learning cannot be thought to occur out of context – as such, learning is considered to be responsive to the context in which it
takes place and the particular sessions or interactions used to facilitate it. In other words, how an individual learns is a fundamental part of what they learn (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

In terms of professional development, from the situative perspective, “the most effective inservice education will be constructive in focus and situated in authentic classroom practice” (Swan et al., 2002, p. 171). Putnam and Borko (2000) provide several recommendations for accommodating teacher learning from this perspective. These include:

- Grounding teacher learning within practice by conducting professional development activities on site at teachers’ place of work;
- Incorporating teachers’ experiences into professional development activities, facilitated through ongoing, structured discussion regarding classroom practice; and
- The provision of ongoing support to teachers to follow-up on their professional development experiences and assist them to contextualise their learning within their practice.

As such, the situative perspective incorporates elements of constructivism and emphasises the importance of situating learning opportunities carefully within a relevant context.

2.6.2 Teacher career cycles

Whereas the constructivist and situative perspectives on learning have been applied to various groups of learners, the examination of teacher career cycles is strictly applicable to in-service teachers as it involves description and analysis of the different possible stages of a teacher’s career (Christensen & Fessler, 1992). According to Christensen and Fessler (1992) and Lynn (2002), a teacher’s career may progress in a non-linear fashion along the following series of generic stages: pre-service, induction, competency building, enthusiasm and growth, career frustration, career stability, career wind-down and career exit. Growth, development and transformation are argued to be of utmost importance throughout the cycle of a teacher’s career in order to prevent disengagement (Avalos, 2011; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001). However, different career stages present different needs for learning and development (Bevan, 2004; Huberman, 1989; Lynn, 2002); as such, what constitutes effective or relevant professional development for teachers has been argued to depend upon their current career stage (Richter
et al., 2011). Indeed, the lack of professional development opportunities which effectively respond to the needs of teachers at each of the stages is seen to be a primary reason for the brevity of many teachers’ careers (Eros, 2011). Identifying one-size-fits-all professional development as dangerously irrelevant to many practitioners, Eros (2011) states that “it is fundamentally important to acknowledge the presence of different career stages and to build on this knowledge to design stage-appropriate professional development” (p. 68).

Professional development has been examined through several popular theoretical lenses, including the constructivist and situative perspectives on learning as well as the study of teacher career cycles. Overall, these theoretical approaches emphasise the centrality of practitioners and the importance of responsiveness to their context and experiences in the successful conduct of professional development. An alternative theoretical lens, which has thus far been used very sparsely in the study of professional development, is that of phenomenography.

Phenomenography is concerned with how individuals conceptualise phenomena and has been used to investigate learning for some time (Marton & Svensson, 1979). However, unlike the theoretical perspectives outlined above, phenomenography is yet to be utilised to examine teacher learning and development. Nonetheless, one study conducted by Hornung (2013) used phenomenography to investigate professional development for librarians. This illustrates the potential of phenomenography to begin to illuminate how and why professionals engage with and learn from professional development.

2.7 Phenomenography

One of the most significant outcomes of phenomenographic research has been the firm establishment of the individual as a critical variable in determining their reality and behaviour. Phenomenographic research is primarily concerned with variation in the ways in which individuals experience and understand phenomena (Booth, 1997), premised on the contention that individuals hold qualitatively different understandings of phenomena in their worlds (Marton & Booth, 1997). The phenomenological epistemology, upon which phenomenography is based, defines knowledge of phenomena as constituted through individuals’ experiences with and conceptions of them (Sandbergh, 1997). Rather than
examining individuals and the phenomena in their lives in isolation, the aim of phenomenographic research is to make visible “the world as experienced by [the individual]” (Marton & Svensson, 1979, p. 472). Phenomenographers seek to describe knowledge variation through examining and categorising the qualitative, different ways in which the different aspects of phenomena are experienced, conceptualised, remembered, perceived and understood by different individuals (Marton, 1981; Prosser, 1993). Asserting that realities are divergent and that they exist within individuals’ minds and perceptions (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2008), phenomenographers seek to gain clarification from the inside, rather than from simple observation (Marton & Svensson, 1979). Several branches of phenomenography have been developed to facilitate such investigation in different areas. These branches include experimental phenomenography, which is often used in education; pure or discursive phenomenography, which focuses on uncovering conceptions outside the field of education; naturalistic phenomenography; hermeneutic phenomenography and phenomenological phenomenography (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997). Several terms and concepts, outlined in the following sections, are necessary for understanding the phenomenographic approach.

Phenomenographers argue that “experience is characterized as the internal relationship that is constituted between individuals and phenomena” (Linder & Marshall, 2003, p. 272). This perspective does not sit in opposition to other orientations to the study of learning, such as the constructivist and situative perspectives, but it does diverge from these in terms of focus. Phenomenographers characterise learning as a “nondualist model of experience” (Linder & Marshall, 2003, p. 272), rather than depicting it in the form of mental models (Limberg, 1999) or “something that is formulated outside of a person in some social milieu” (Linder & Marshall, 2003, p. 272). Marton (1981) argues that the benefit to adopting this perspective lies in the link between individuals’ conceptions of phenomena in worlds and the ways in which they interact with the various aspects of them, summarising that “whatever an individual feels that [he/she] knows contributes to [his/her] actions, beliefs, attitudes, modes of experiencing” (p. 82).

The terms conception and phenomenon are used throughout phenomenographic research. Conceptions are the central unit of description in phenomenography (Marton & Pong, 2005). A conception is a way of understanding a phenomenon or an aspect of one’s world (Marton & Pong, 2005). Conceptions are subjective and are formed by individuals, although the same
conception may be shared by multiple individuals. In phenomenographic research, a conception is considered to possess two intertwined characteristics: a referential aspect and a structural aspect (Marton & Pong, 2005). The referential aspect of a conception refers to the “particular meaning of an individual object (anything delimited and attended to by subjects)” (Marton & Pong, 2005, p. 336). The structural aspect is the “combination of features discerned and focused upon by the subject” (Marton & Pong, 2005, p. 336).

Conceptions are distinct from concepts. Ezcurdia (1998) describes that “having a concept is a matter of being in certain conscious or tacit epistemic states” (p. 189) and possessing an awareness of its existence. A concept has a “public character” (Ezcurdia, 1998, p. 188). For example, two individuals may both be aware of the notion of learning and, as such, they possess the same concept. However, they may understand the applications and outcomes of learning in different ways and thus have different conceptions of it. In summary, a conception encompasses the particular characteristics which an individual ascribes to a concept whereas the concept, with its public character, is possessed by any individual who claims to be aware of it.

For the purposes of this research, to avoid terminological confusion and to align with other phenomenographic research, the term concept is replaced with phenomenon. Phenomena may be physical objects or mental objects, although the latter are more commonly the focus of phenomenographic research. The capacity of humans to act as mental agents (Tomasello & Rakoczy, 2003) precludes our capacity to interact individually and collectively with mental phenomena. This is encapsulated in the notion of intentionality (Connolly, 2012).

The study of mental phenomena has its roots in Brentano’s (1874) notion of intentionality. Intentionality distinguishes mental phenomena from physical phenomena and describes the capacity of humans to individually and collectively create and interact with mental constructs (Linder & Marshall, 2003; McAlister, 1974; Philipse, 1987; Tomasello & Rakoczy, 2003). Humans possess an intentional nature, which allows for participation in cultural learning and other collective activities as well as the understanding of other humans as fellow “mental agents” (Tomasello & Rakoczy, 2003, p. 122) with intentional actions. Intentionality is evidenced in several ways, including the ways in which humans share psychological states.
through activities such as collaborative action, joint attention and participation in instructed learning.

### 2.8 Phenomenography in educational research

Phenomenographers take a relational view on learning (Linder & Marshall, 2003; Marton & Svensson, 1979), foregrounding learners’ perspectives in order to make phenomena visible in the ways in which learners view them (Marton & Svensson, 1979). As Marton and Svensson (1979) explain, “instead of two independent descriptions (of the student on one hand and of [their] world on the other) and an assumed relationship between the two, we have one description which is of a relational character” (p. 472).

Phenomenographers have long investigated learning involving learners at various levels (Marton & Säljö, 1976a, 1976b; Säljö, 1979a). For example, Marton and Säljö (1976b) and Säljö (1979a), in some of the earliest phenomenographic studies, were interested in understanding students’ conceptions of learning, exploring how these affected their behaviour during a learning task and investigating how different conceptions related to learning outcomes. Whilst there are other strains of phenomenographic research, examinations of learners’ conceptions and actions involving the what and how of learning (Booth, 1997) have proved to be the most prominent (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997). As Booth (1997) clarifies,

> The “what” concerns the quality of the understanding arrived at, or the perspective taken on, or the conception held of the content of the learning task, as a result of the learning activity; and the “how” concerns more the nature of the act of tackling the learning. (p. 135)

The how of learning was added to investigate how learners operationalise their understandings of phenomena when “tackling the learning” (Booth, 1997, p. 135). This area of research, developed in an iterative process over several decades, evolved into investigation of learners’ approaches to learning (see section 2.8.1), encompassing the motives underlying their participation in a learning task as well as the accompanying strategies they use to negotiate it (Diseth & Martinsen, 2003; Säljö, 1981; Trigwell, Ellis, & Han, 2012).
This line of investigation is characteristic of experimental phenomenography (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997), which is utilised for this research project. Researchers employing experimental phenomenography examine learners’ understandings, learning approaches and outcomes. Much work has been carried out in this area (see Booth, 1997; Trigwell et al., 2012; Walsh, Howard, & Bowe, 2007), including early investigations into what later became known as the approaches to learning and their relationship with engagement, behaviours and learning outcomes, carried out by Marton and Säljö (1976b), Säljö (1979a) as well as later studies (Baeten, Kyndt, Struyven, & Dochy, 2010; Diehm & Lupton, 2012; Trigwell & Prosser, 2011). However, while approaches to learning have been widely investigated with student cohorts from preschool to university (Bumgarner, Martin, & Brooks-Gunn, 2013; Trigwell et al., 2012), they have not yet been examined with teachers undergoing activities for professional development. Approaches to learning and the various factors which may contribute to learners’ adoption of them are discussed in the following sections.

2.8.1 Approaches to learning

An approach to learning describes a learner’s goal(s), focus and the ways in which they engage in learning for a given task (Diehm & Lupton, 2012), otherwise called their motive and strategy (Biggs, 1988). Goals refer to what the learner intends to do or gain by completing the task. Goals for a particular learning task may include gaining an understanding of the learning material or satisfying an external requirement. Focus refers to where their attention goes during the task; a learner may focus on the process of a task, the information content contained within it or the meaning behind it. The ways in which a learner engages in the act of learning may include metacognitive processes such as memorising, synthesising information and organising content (Diehm & Lupton, 2012). Overall, “the notion of an approach to learning describes both what students do and why they do it” (Heikkilä, Niemivirta, Nieminen, & Lonka, 2011, p. 516). In general, three approaches to learning are identified, although some divergence is argued by various authors. These main three approaches are reviewed in section 2.8.1.1.
2.8.1.1 Surface, strategic and deep approaches to learning

The typology of approaches to learning generally includes surface, strategic and deep approaches. The surface approach to learning is characterised by the goal of reproducing information, rather than gaining an understanding of it. In this sense, it is “basically instrumental or extrinsic” (Biggs, 1988, p. 199). Extrinsic motivators, which may be positive or negative, tend to lie behind the adoption of this approach (Biggs, 1988). The strategic approach is based on competition and achievement (Diseth & Martinsen, 2003). Learners utilising this approach have in mind the goal of achieving high grades or performing well in their given context (Biggs, 1988). This approach is chiefly connected with externally demonstrable success and is not associated with any particular learning strategy past the maximisation of organisational skills (Baeten et al., 2010; Biggs, 1988). Finally, the deep approach focuses on meaning and understanding, accompanied by a desire to relate the content of the learning back to one’s personal experience (Entwistle et al., 1979; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999).

2.8.2 Approaches to learning and conceptions of learning

The study of approaches to learning began with research into conceptions of learning, carried out in Sweden by Marton and Säljö (see Marton & Säljö, 1976a, 1976b; Säljö, 1979a, 1979b). Upon observing learners using different approaches to tackle the same learning task, Marton (1976) made initial observations which related approaches to learning to what learners understood learning to be. Different conceptions, held by learners of various ages and levels of experience, were subsequently uncovered (Säljö, 1979a). These conceptions were:

- Learning as the increase of one’s knowledge;
- Learning as memorising;
- Learning as the acquisition of facts or principles;
- Learning as an abstraction of meaning; and
- Learning as an interpretative process aimed at the understanding of reality (Säljö, 1979b).
For some participants of this early research, Säljö (1979a) argued, learning was simply a “taken-for-granted” (p. 446) activity, while for other participants the activity of learning had become an object for reflection in itself. This original list of conceptions has been developed in an iterative process by subsequent research. For example, van Rossum and Taylor (1987) proposed a further conception which positioned learning as a process directed by personal interest and aimed towards wide-ranging, positive outcomes. Marton, Dall’Alba, and Beaty (1993) also added a sixth conception, similar to that proposed by van Rossum and Taylor (1987):

- Learning as changing as a person.

More recently, Purdie and Hattie (2002) added three further conceptions of learning:

- Learning as a duty;
- Learning as a process not bound by time or context; and
- Learning as developing social competence.

Many subsequent authors, following the initial observation made by Marton (1976), have highlighted conceptions as a contributing factor to the adoption of approaches to learning. In an early study, van Rossum and Schenk (1984) associated the first three conceptions of learning set out by Säljö (1979b) with reproduction of information external to the learner, characteristic of the surface approach. They identified the final two conceptions as more holistic and indicative of complex processes associated with understanding and acquisition of insight, characteristic of the deep approach. Marton et al. (1993), taking into account the original five conceptions set out by Säljö (1979b) as well as the later conception of learning as changing as a person, agreed that the conceptions were indeed hierarchical and that learners progressed through them linearly, from simplest to more sophisticated. Similar distinctions have been made in more recent studies investigating conceptions of learning (Light & Calkins, 2014; Minasian-Batmanian, Lingard, & Prosser, 2006). For example, Minasian-Batmanian et al. (2006) studied a different set of conceptions particular to their

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2 Learning as the increase of one’s knowledge, learning as memorising and learning as the acquisition of facts or principles.

3 Learning as an abstraction of meaning and learning as an interpretative process to aid in the understanding of reality.
sample group of biochemistry students regarding their understandings of biochemistry. Comparing fragmented conceptions with cohesive conceptions, they found that students with cohesive conceptions, which focused “on the topics [of study] as being constituent parts related to a greater whole” (Minasian-Batmanian et al., 2006, p. 1899), were more likely to use a deep approach. However, the correlation between cohesive conceptions and deep approaches was not consistent across the sample. This discrepancy led the authors to conclude that “cohesive conceptions are a necessary but not sufficient criterion for deep learning outcomes” (Minasian-Batmanian et al., 2006, p. 1899). They also found that the use of surface approaches was related to the students’ goals and interests; specifically, students who employed a surface approach were interested in process, rather than a combination of process and content (Minasian-Batmanian et al., 2006). Richardson (2011) similarly claimed that conceptions of learning play a significant role in determining approaches to learning, but argued that students’ conceptions may be stable over the long term. However, factors other than conceptions of learning are also seen to influence learners’ adoption of an approach to learning (Diehm & Lupton, 2012; Newble & Clarke, 2009; Richardson, 2011; Sadlo & Richardson, 2003). These factors include goals, expectations, the learning environment and learners’ perceptions. A discussion of how these factors inform approaches to learning, engagement and learning outcomes is provided in the following sections.

2.8.3 Goals for learning and professional development

One factor contributing to the adoption of an approach to learning is the learner’s intention(s) or goal(s), concerning their motivation(s) for undertaking the learning task (Diehm & Lupton, 2012). Motivation plays a key role in various social psychological theories on learning and has been widely investigated in education (Ntoumanis, 2005; Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004). A variety of goals may exist for undergoing any instance of learning and range from autonomous, or self-motivated, to controlled, or externally-influenced (see Sheldon & Elliot, 1998; Vansteenkiste et al., 2004). Autonomous goals are divided into two subcategories: identified and intrinsic. Identified goals align with an individual’s values and convictions but are not necessarily linked to enjoyment or interest. Intrinsic goals, on the other hand, are set out with personal interest, fun and enjoyment in mind. Controlled goals can be either external or introjected. External goals are pursued “to get some incentive or payoff, such as money, awards, or approval” (Sheldon
Introjected goals revolve around a person’s sense of obligation and the avoidance of negative feelings, such as guilt or anxiety, which may arise if individuals fail to undertake the task linked to the goal.

Individuals interact differently with controlled and autonomous goals, and different goal types lead to “different behavioral and affective consequences” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 227). Gillet, Lafrenière, Vallerand, Huart, and Fouquereau (2012) found that participants in their study who reported autonomous goals were more likely to experience higher levels of satisfaction in pursuing them than those who reported controlled goals. Other researchers have also argued that the pursuit and satisfaction of autonomous goals result in greater psychological satisfaction (Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser, & Deci, 1996; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). The pursuit of autonomous goals also correlates positively with individuals’ health and wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This is due to the fact that “autonomous regulation involves greater need satisfaction” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 243). Vansteenkiste et al. (2004) further conclude that, for students, framing learning opportunities in terms of their intrinsic utility leads to higher levels of learning and better performance on tests.

Teachers’ goals and motivations for undertaking work-related initiatives have also been investigated with similar outcomes. For example, Gorozidis and Papaioannou (2014) investigated teachers’ motivations for taking part in an educational innovation which involved participation in training as well as implementation of a new academic subject in their institutions. The researchers found that teachers who held autonomous motivations for taking part in the innovation experienced more positive outcomes, including increased job satisfaction, and were more committed to changing practice through implementation of the subject (Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014). Stout (1996) explores teachers’ motivation to take part in professional development activities. Although the author does not use the terms controlled or autonomous, he presents a list of four motives which he ascribes to teacher participation. These include salary enhancement, maintenance of certification/registration, résumé building and the pursuit of enhanced classroom practice (Stout, 1996). Of these, only the last could be defined as based in autonomous motivation, linked to the desire to gain knowledge in order to improve one’s practice. Other authors have similarly uncovered a variety of goals, fitting within the autonomous and controlled categories, held by staff for
undertaking professional development in other professional sectors and industries (see for example Dia, Smith, Cohen-Callow, & Bliss, 2005; Tharenou, 2001).

2.8.4 Expectations and other factors affecting engagement

Goals are closely linked with expectations, a critical factor influencing and mediating learners’ decisions to undertake a particular course of learning or activity as well as their subsequent engagement and dedication (Lobo & Gurney, 2014; Troiano & Elias, 2014). Expectations have been closely linked to persistence in learning, particularly with adults (Kerka, 1995). However, expectations can function in a number of ways. Unrealistically high expectations with relation to a learning experience or to one’s own capacity as a learner may result in dissatisfaction and disengagement if unmet (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Similarly, incompatible expectations of a learning experience held by learners and facilitators may also result in disengagement and dropout (Longden, 2006). Some authors have pointed out that misleading marketing of a programme or institution may worsen the likelihood of incompatible expectations (Belanger, Mount, & Wilson, 2002). This is particularly relevant for non-compulsory education, wherein attracting learners can be a serious financial concern (Belanger et al., 2002). On the other hand, and more readily associated with learners who attend an activity, course or programme under external pressure or compulsion, there is the issue of low expectations. Low expectations are generally seen to preclude low engagement and learning. As Lobo and Gurney (2014) point out, low expectations are hardly likely to increase learners’ engagement if they are met. Furthermore, low expectations of oneself as a learner have been equated to having no expectations at all, precluding low motivation and low achievement in learning (Walkey, McClure, Meyer, & Weir, 2013). Overall, the most positive scenario represented in the literature is the possession of high expectations by learners, both of themselves and of the learning activity, course or programme which they will undertake, and the subsequent satisfaction of both (Harbaugh & Cavanagh, 2012). Indeed, Harbaugh and Cavanagh (2012) regard learner expectations as a facet of engagement. Through investigating the learning engagement of high school students, they found that learners’ “positive self-esteem predicted positive expectations of the learning” (Harbaugh & Cavanagh, 2012, p. 8), leading them to surmise that engagement may be closely linked to personal traits and expectations.
Overall, personal, contextual and perceived contextual factors are understood to influence engagement in learning (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002; Baeten et al., 2010; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Whilst it is widely agreed that high engagement contributes positively to success and persistence, disengagement is considered to result in boredom, a lack of motivation and a lack of involvement in learning (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008). As mentioned in the previous paragraph, high engagement in learning is seen to be precluded by a number of factors, including high levels of motivation and high perceived self-efficacy (Harbaugh & Cavanagh, 2012; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). Learners who are interested in and value a particular task, holding autonomous goals for taking part in it, are likely to be more motivated to undertake it (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Self-efficacy, or a learner’s evaluation of their own capacity to complete a particular task, is also critical in determining engagement (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). Whilst self-efficacy is based on a judgment which a learner makes for themselves, it is important to note that it may be influenced by personal and contextual factors, including how the learner is feeling at the time and the setting in which the learning takes place (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003).

Both expectations and engagement have been associated with learning outcomes (Bulger, Mayer, Almeroth, & Blau, 2008; Walkey et al., 2013). However, engagement is a complex construct to measure and to define (Fredricks et al., 2004). Behavioural signals of engagement, such as appearing to pay attention, may not provide an accurate indication of whether a learner is engaged or not (Bulger et al., 2008). Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) explain this scenario through differentiation between behavioural and cognitive engagement. Behavioural engagement includes remaining behaviourally on-task or paying attention to the instructor, whereas cognitive engagement involves thinking deeply as well as “critically and creatively” (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003, p. 124) about the content at hand.

Given the complexity of goals, expectations and engagement in learning, all of which contribute to a learner’s approach to learning, these approaches are not seen to be static. They have been found to change over time as learners gain experience, advance in epistemological understanding or shift in context (Cano, 2005). Overall, personal, contextual and perceived contextual factors may contribute to the adoption of an approach to learning (Baeten et al., 2010; Richardson, 2011). Personal factors include conceptions of learning, interest in the subject material, motivation, prior knowledge, emotions and experience, whereas contextual
factors include the learning environment, curriculum, cultural expectations, subject, content and task requirements (Diehm & Lupton, 2012; Hess & Azuma, 1991; Marton et al., 1993; Richardson, 2011; Trigwell et al., 2012). Perceived contextual factors include learners’ perceptions of the learning context and subjective factors such as relevance of the learning, workload, usefulness of materials and effectiveness of teaching methods (Baeten et al., 2010).

2.8.5 Approaches to learning and teacher professional development

A valuable contribution of studies concerned with the approaches to learning has been the presentation of solid evidence supporting the contentions that instruction does not automatically lead to learning (Vermunt, 1996) and that information cannot simply make its way into a learner’s head without firstly being negotiated by a number of factors. Whilst instruction and instructional practices are certainly seen to impact on learners’ approaches to learning (Richardson, 2005; Trigwell, Prosser, & Ginns, 2005), other personal, contextual and perceived contextual factors are at play both before and during a learning task. Examining learning from learners’ perspectives highlights the complexity of participation in any learning task as well as the situation of learning within a specific context and its connection to learners’ previous experiences and understandings.

However, the approaches to learning and their relationship with conceptions have yet to be extensively applied to cohorts of learners outside primary, secondary and tertiary education. Through the study reported in this thesis, it is proposed that a reinterpretation of this experimental phenomenographic paradigm is appropriate for the study of EAP teachers’ conceptions of professional development and how these conceptions influence their learning and engagement in professional development activities. Conceptions of professional development were investigated previously by Hornung (2013) with a sample group of professional librarians in Ireland. Seeking to determine the ways in which the phenomenon of continuing professional development (CPD) was understood by the group of participants, Hornung (2013) uncovered five conceptions:

- CPD is upskilling for the sake of the organisation of employment;

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4 This contention has led to the formation of a complementary area of research: the approaches to teaching (see for example Kember & Kwan, 2000; Trigwell & Prosser, 1996; Trigwell et al., 1999).
• CPD is about developing as a professional librarian;
• CPD is helping you to do your job;
• CPD is learning something new and wanting to change practices; and
• CPD is about development as a human being.

Furthermore, Hornung (2013) stated that different motivations lay behind the different conceptions of CPD expressed by the participants. These included extrinsic motivations such as the need to keep up with the profession and intrinsic motivations such as the pursuit of personal satisfaction. Hornung (2013) also argued that different conceptions of CPD influenced the ways in which the participants engaged in professional development, leading to “employing more formal or informal means” (p. 695) of doing so.

Hornung’s (2013) study makes the connection between conceptions of professional development and ways of interacting with it, reiterating the primacy of the individual in determining this interaction. However, the findings of the study are bound to the sample group of professional librarians. No literature was found examining language teachers’ conceptions of and approaches to professional development in a similar fashion. Stein, Shephard, and Harris (2009) investigated conceptions of e-learning and of e-learning professional development held by educators in the New Zealand tertiary sector. The researchers uncovered four conceptions of e-learning professional development expressed by participants – “as training; as opening up possibilities; as collaboration; and as relevant and purposeful” (p. 145). However, the research was embedded within the context of e-learning and did not focus on the participants’ conceptions of professional development for educators generally. From a different theoretical perspective, Huibregtse, Korthagen, and Wubbels (1994) investigated the relationship between physics teachers’ use of teaching methods and their own learning preferences. These researchers did uncover variation in the teachers’ learning preferences; however, the research focused on the relationship between teachers’ conceptions of learning and their methods of teaching, rather than the relationship between their conceptions of professional development and their interaction with it.

In the research reported in this thesis, the examination of conceptions of professional development is extended to EAP teachers, utilising a phenomenographic approach. As well as investigating EAP teachers’ conceptions of professional development, the relationship
between these conceptions and the motivations underlying their participation in professional
development activities, the resultant outcomes of this relationship for participants’
engagement in professional development and their learning outcomes are examined. In this
manner, the study acknowledges and contributes to the field of experimental
phenomenography and the approaches to learning literature. The application of this
theoretical perspective to teachers of EAP, for whom professional development is a topic of
much importance, led to the investigation of the three research questions presented in section
2.9.

2.9 Research questions

The three research questions are:

1. What are the conceptions that the EAP teachers have of professional development?
2. How do these conceptions influence the ways in which they engage in professional
development?
3. What are the learning outcomes of the interaction between conception and
engagement in professional development?

2.10 Literature review summary

In this chapter, the theoretical constructs upon which this study rests have been explored. The
provision of professional development is ultimately connected to teacher learning; however,
the outcomes of participation in professional development can be wide-ranging and affect
individuals in multiple ways. The individualised nature of participation in professional
development, engagement and learning renders an investigation from teachers’ perspectives
valuable. Phenomenography, the theoretical lens selected for the study, accommodates such
an investigation.

The context for the study, comprising both conceptual and theoretical components, having
now been presented, the following chapter presents the method used to investigate the
research questions. In Chapter Three, processes of data collection and analysis are set out in
detail. This allows for presentation of key findings in Chapter Four and subsequent discussion of these in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

3.1 Introduction

The aims of the research reported here were to explore EAP teachers’ conceptions of professional development, their interaction and engagement with it, and resultant learning outcomes using a phenomenographic lens. According to phenomenographers, the ways in which individuals conceptualise a phenomenon influence the ways in which they understand its values, applications and intentions, how they interact with it and the qualitative outcomes of this interaction (Säljö, 1979a). Relationships linking conceptions of learning to learning outcomes with students have previously been uncovered and labelled approaches to learning (Entwistle et al., 1979; Lucas, 2001). Professional development is considered under a similar lens for this study.

Phenomenographers set out to describe qualitative ways in which phenomena are understood and experienced by individuals (Marton, 1981). As has been reviewed in Chapter Two (section 2.8), the phenomenographic approach has been utilised to investigate diverse conceptions, many of which are related to learning and teaching (Åkerlind, 2003; Bradbeer, Healy, & Kneale, 2004; Brew, 2001; Lucas, 2001; Prosser, Trigwell, & Taylor, 1994). Exploration and interpretation of individuals’ conceptions are key to this approach and inform the methods selected for phenomenographic research (Svensson, 1997).

Two instruments for data collection were used in a three-step process to explore the research questions for this study: semi-structured interviews and a reflection sheet (see section 3.3). In this method chapter, the manner in which these instruments were used to collect data and the processes of data analysis undertaken to answer the three research questions are outlined. Participant demographics, recruitment and ethical considerations of the research are also presented (see section 3.2).

The study reported here is purely qualitative in nature. Various authors have used quantitative instruments to investigate approaches to learning with student participants, such as the Study
Process Questionnaire and later iterations thereof (Biggs, 1978; Biggs, Kember, & Leung, 2001; Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2008). However, such instruments were not considered appropriate for use with the teacher participants due to the exploratory nature of the study (see section 3.3.2).

3.1.1 Research questions

Before proceeding with the rest of the chapter, the three research questions set out to guide the study are revisited here:

1. What are the conceptions that the EAP teachers have of professional development?
2. How do these conceptions influence the ways in which they engage in professional development?
3. What are the learning outcomes of the interaction between conception and engagement in professional development?

3.2 Participants

Eight in-service teachers of EAP working on a casual, part-time or full-time basis in tertiary institutions in South East Queensland were participants for the study. Throughout the thesis, participants are referred to by number (e.g. Participant 1). These numbers represent the order in which they undertook their first interviews. Participant selection was based on two criteria: 1) participants were employed at a higher education institution and, 2) they were teachers of EAP. No minimum qualifications or experience were required to participate in the project. However, all participants possessed postgraduate qualifications (masters or PhD). The group comprised four male (Participants 4, 5, 6 and 7) and four female (Participants 1, 2, 3 and 8) teachers (see Table 1). Of these, Participants 1, 5 and 7 spoke English as an additional language – their L1s were Spanish, Afrikaans and Malay. At the time of data collection, participants were employed across three different tertiary institutions.

Participant demographics are presented in Table 1. The table shows participants’ L1, sex, and the subject areas and the sectors in which they had taught. For each subject area, years of experience, location and the level at which they taught are presented in the adjacent columns.
All participants had at least four years’ experience teaching in higher education and some (Participants 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7) had also taught in the P-12 compulsory sector. All participants had taught subjects other than EAP, including other forms of ELT such as ESL and EFL. These other forms of ELT are shown in the column *Subjects taught* in Table 1 under the category *Other ELT*. Five participants (Participants 1, 4, 6, 7 and 8) had also taught in different subject areas, including history, sociology, linguistics and languages other than English. This experience is represented in the *Subjects taught* column of Table 1 under the category *Other*. Six participants (Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7) had taught both within Australia and overseas and two participants (Participants 3 and 8) had taught only within Australia.

Participant demographics are presented with the intention of permitting readers to understand the diversity of the participant group. However, due to the theoretical aims of the research and the small sample size, no claims are made in this thesis with regards to correlation between participants’ variables and the findings of the research.

The number of participants involved in the project is justified in reference to the work of other phenomenographic researchers. Other phenomenographic researchers who have sampled a similar number of participants argue that such a sample is sufficient to allow for variation in conceptions but also permits in-depth analysis, given the richness of data collected from each participant (Flodén, Berg, & Forsberg, 2011; Hyrkäs, Koivula, Lehti, & Paunonen-Ilmonen, 2003; Widäng, Fridlund, & Mårtensson, 2008).
Table 1

Participant demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Subject(s) taught</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Location(s)</th>
<th>Level(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other ELT</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>P-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10-15 years</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>10-15 years</td>
<td>Australia and overseas</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other ELT</td>
<td>15-20 years</td>
<td>Australia and overseas</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other ELT</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other ELT</td>
<td>15-20 years</td>
<td>Australia and overseas</td>
<td>P-12 and tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>Australia and overseas</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other ELT</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>Australia and overseas</td>
<td>P-12 and tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>Australia and overseas</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Other ELT</td>
<td>15-20 years</td>
<td>Australia and overseas</td>
<td>P-12 and tertiary</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>Australia and overseas</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Other ELT</td>
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<td>Australia and overseas</td>
<td>P-12 and tertiary</td>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
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<td>EAP</td>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.1 Ethics and recruitment

Prior to commencement of participant recruitment, ethical clearance was obtained from Griffith University.\(^5\) Two documents, an information sheet for participants and an informed consent sheet, were designed for the research and approved by the Griffith University Office

\(^5\) At the time of data collection, the researcher was enrolled as a PhD candidate at Griffith University.
for Research (see Appendices A and B for copies of these documents). The approved
documents were used formally to obtain participants’ informed consent to participate in the
project. Consent forms were signed by participants upon initial meeting and were kept on file
in hard copy.

The information for the participant sheet mentions one extra instrument for data collection:
qualitative observations. This instrument was originally selected for the study but later
discarded before the commencement of data collection, due to practical and theoretical
concerns regarding its use as a data collection tool. Participants were informed of this change
at the outset.

After obtaining ethical clearance from Griffith University, the English language departments
of a number of tertiary education institutions in South East Queensland were contacted in
order to establish contact with the EAP teachers. In all instances, the heads of department
and/or programme convenors forwarded an invitation email to EAP staff with the information
sheet for the participants and the researcher’s contact details attached. Interested participants
then emailed the researcher directly to arrange a time to begin data collection.

3.3 Instruments

1. Semi-structured interviews
2. Reflection sheet

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview was the initial instrument used in phenomenographic research
(Green, 2005; Richardson, 1999). Many researchers have since utilised this instrument for
phenomenographic data collection (Jormfeldt, Svedberg, Fridlund, & Arvidsson, 2007; Säljö,
1981; Schröder, Ahlström, & Larsson, 2005; Stefani & Tsaparlis, 2009). The instrument
allows for extended dialogue and in-depth exploration of conceptions, as outlined by authors
who provide guidelines for its use (see Ashworth & Lucas, 2000; Trigwell, 2000). In light of
its extensive use in phenomenography and its benefits as a qualitative data collection
instrument, it was decided that the semi-structured interview would be appropriate for use in
this project. The recommendations provided in the phenomenographic literature (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000; Trigwell, 2000) were adhered to as much as possible throughout the use of the instrument. Key recommendations include the importance of allowing participants to speak for themselves to authentically present and discuss their conceptions and experiences without permitting previous research findings to colour questions or interpretation, allowing participants sufficient opportunity to discuss and reflect, and asking impromptu questions for clarification during the interview (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000; Trigwell, 2000). In order to allow sufficient time for discussion, the average length of a phenomenographic interview is 40 to 60 minutes (Trigwell, 2000). For this study, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant (see section 3.4). In combination, the interviews were used to explore the three research questions set out for the study. The aims and features of the first and second interviews are outlined in sections 3.3.1.1 and 3.3.1.2.

3.3.1.1 Semi-structured interview 1

Questions asked during the first semi-structured interview were both reflective and prereflective and explored professional development within the scope of the participants’ careers, experiences and attitudes (see Appendix C for the semi-structure of this interview). The questions were designed to gain a holistic view of each participant’s conception(s) of professional development and provided prompts for them to consider and discuss professional development from a number of angles. At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked to describe the intention of professional development and then to reflect upon what distinguished high and low quality professional development. They were then asked to reflect upon how professional development applied to teachers and to them. The following questions focused on the kinds of professional development that the participants had undertaken in their EAP teaching roles, and how one might go about engaging in professional development as an EAP teacher in a productive and effective way. The final three questions required participants to comment on how professional development had affected them, how they approached their participation in professional development, the connection between professional development and professional learning, and the value of professional development to the profession. Alongside the list of open-ended questions, extra questions were asked pertinent to the content of each interview to gain clarification where necessary.
3.3.1.2 Semi-structured interview 2

The second semi-structured interview differed from the first in focus and format. The second interview was used for in-depth exploration of the professional development activities which the participants undertook for the study as well as how they understood change to occur to their cognition and practice generally. With the completed reflection sheets providing a prompt, participants’ learning and engagement in professional development activities were explored during this interview. A list of questions was put together to guide the interview (see Appendix D); these were adapted to the professional development activities reported by participants in their reflection sheets.

The second interview comprised four parts. Firstly, participants’ reported conceptions of professional development from the first interview were revisited. This step was undertaken to cross-check whether the conceptions had been interpreted authentically and whether the participants had anything to add or adjust. For the second part of the interview, participants were asked to describe the professional development activities which they had undertaken in light of their expectations, engagement and reported learning. For example, they were asked why they took part, whether they had any expectations of the activities or of themselves as learners or participants, what they focused on during the activities, and their engagement and feelings. Participants were also asked to reflect on the extent to which the professional development undertaken affected their practice and cognition, including any recountable conceptual or actionable change(s) which they had made or experienced as a result. This section of the interview expanded upon the content of the reflection sheets with extended discussion and prompts for clarification and description. Participants were informed at the outset that the professional development activities which they undertook were to relate to some aspect of their work, not necessarily to classroom practice, thus change in a classroom practice-based sense was not assumed (see section 3.4.2 for the criteria provided to participants concerning the professional development activities they could undertake as part of the study). The final part of the interview concerned exploration of how changes were instigated and made to the participants’ teaching practice and cognition generally, including the factors that they felt contributed to and precluded change in practice and opinions.
3.3.2 Reflection sheet

The other instrument used was a reflection sheet (see Appendix E for the template). The reflection sheet was designed to elicit information from participants concerning their expectations, engagement and learning with relation to the professional development activities they undertook for the study. The instrument consisted of several pages with a mix of open- and closed-ended questions.

The first section of the reflection sheet required participants to give a background to the professional development, describing where it took place, what form it took, whether participation was mandatory or voluntary, who participated in and facilitated it, and its focus. All questions in the first section were open-ended. The second section consisted of two open-ended questions that required participants to reflect on any expectations they had of the professional development prior to undertaking it and whether these expectations were met. The third section of the reflection sheet concerned participants’ engagement. Participants were required to indicate their engagement during the activity on a five-point rating scale, from very low to very high, and then to explain what factors influenced their engagement. They were also asked to comment on any feelings they experienced in response to the activity. The final section of the reflection sheet concerned what participants learnt during or as a result of their participation in the professional development. Participants were required to indicate on a four-point rating scale how much they learnt, from I didn’t learn anything to I learnt a great deal. Details of this learning were elicited in two open-ended questions. Space was provided at the end of the reflection sheet for extra comments.

The decision to have participants reflect upon their professional development activities using this instrument was based upon several considerations. The first consideration relates to the second and third research questions, as listed below:

2. How do these conceptions influence the ways in which they engage in professional development?
3. What are the learning outcomes of the interaction between conception and engagement in professional development?
These two questions are closely aligned with research examining approaches to learning (Diseth & Martinsen, 2003; Trigwell & Prosser, 2011). Researchers examining approaches to learning with students typically have their participants complete a learning task pertinent to the object of study and then engage them in a semi-structured discussion regarding how they went about the learning task and how they understood it (Lucas, 2001; Säljö, 1979a). In order to be able to replicate this step, it was necessary to allow participants to discuss their engagement and learning within the context of specific examples. This provided scope and focus for discussion and exploration of how their conceptions related to their participation in the professional development activities, their engagement and their learning outcomes.

The second justification for this instrument finds its roots in the exploratory nature of this study. Other researchers in the area have used inventories to explore the nexus between approaches to learning, context and learning outcomes for students (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983; Trigwell & Prosser, 1991). However, given that these instruments were designed for use with students, they would not have been appropriate for use in this project. The inherent differences in sample groups and the varying formats of the professional development activities undertaken by participants problematised the use of an existing instrument.

Although this study resembles others carried out to examine approaches to learning in both its intention and design, the use of teachers as participants and professional development sessions as learning tasks sets it apart from other research. As discussed in Chapter Two, the relationship between teachers and professional development is complicated by the fact that teachers are professional practitioners who may engage in professional development for a number of different reasons. They may have orientations toward professional development responsive to their own needs and interests and to the demands of the context in which they work. Furthermore, the ways in which teachers learn are complicated by the intersection of experience and new information, all of which must be negotiated by teachers before making alterations to practice or to their opinions (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Elbaz, 1983, 1991; Freeman, 2002; Golombek, 1994, 1998; Shulman, 1987). Finally, teachers employed at the tertiary level may experience varying levels of freedom in directing their professional development and, in some cases, may design and implement their own professional development programmes or initiatives (Kahn, 2009). All of these considerations render this study somewhat exploratory in nature.
In attempting to account for the uncertainties of their own exploratory research, Zimmerman and Wieder (1977a) designed a template for an instrument called the *diary-interview method*. Upon conducting interviews with participants at the end of their data collection process, Zimmerman and Wieder (1977a) found themselves unsure as to how to elicit information most reflective of the participants’ experience, as they had no templates with which to work. The authors subsequently created the diary-interview method, which required participants to fill out a journal for a given period of time, listing their thoughts and activities. These journals were then collected by the researchers, analysed and used as a basis for a follow-up interview. This allowed the researchers to ask for elaboration, description or explanation pertaining to the contents of participants’ diaries, which were collected in an unobtrusive way (Zimmerman & Wieder, 1977a). The diary-interview method has since been utilised by other researchers such as Jacelon and Imperio (2005), who elected to conduct two interviews, spaced apart to allow the participants to complete diaries in the interim, addressing a specific set of questions.

Although the research reported here is not in the same research area as that of Zimmerman and Wieder (1977a, 1977b), a similar dilemma arose when contemplating how to elicit pertinent information from the participants concerning their engagement in and learning from their professional development activities. No templates were found in the literature to explore teachers’ conceptions of and interactions with professional development. It was decided that it would be unwise to assume that approaches to learning research carried out previously with students would automatically reflect similar results to this study. Crossover between students’ and teachers’ approaches to learning was neither assumed nor applied in the design and selection of the instruments. The original reflection sheet was created to overcome these difficulties. It provided an instrument to assist in gathering detailed data relevant to the research questions set out for the study in an unobtrusive way, allowing the participants to undertake their sessions with minimal interruptions and impositions and providing a platform for later detailed exploration of their interaction with their sessions.
3.4 Data collection

Data were collected via a three-phase process (see Table 2). The first phase of data collection was the first interview. For the second phase, the participants undertook two separate professional development activities and reflected upon them using the reflection sheet instrument. The third phase in the process was the second semi-structured interview. The instrument used in each phase and the manner in which it was used are outlined in Table 2 and presented in detail in sections 3.4.1 – 3.4.3.

Table 2

Data collection phases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection phase</th>
<th>Instrument used</th>
<th>Procedure for use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview 1</td>
<td>Interviews were conducted individually with each participant at the beginning of data collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Reflection sheet</td>
<td>Participants used the instrument to reflect on two professional development activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview 2</td>
<td>Interviews were conducted individually with each participant following return of their reflection sheets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.1 Phase 1: Semi-structured interview 1

The first semi-structured interview was carried out with each participant and was approximately 40 to 60 minutes in length. This interview explored participants’ conceptions of professional development, corresponding to the first research question set out for the study. Interviews were conducted in mutually convenient locations. Most interviews were conducted on-site at the participants’ places of work. Interviews were audio-recorded for later transcription. All interviews were conducted in English.

3.4.2 Phase 2: Reflection sheet

Following the completion of the first interview, participants were provided with either hard or electronic copies of the reflection sheet, depending on their preference. Reflection sheets
were filled out by participants after they took part in two professional development activities.\(^6\) Participants were instructed to use the reflection sheets as soon as they were able following completion of the corresponding professional development session. After the participants had undertaken and reflected on two such sessions using the instrument, they returned the completed sheets to the researcher. All reflection sheets were filled out in English.

### 3.4.3 Phase 3: Semi-structured interview 2

The second semi-structured interview was the final data collection phase. These interviews ran for approximately 45 to 70 minutes and were conducted after receiving participants’ completed reflection sheets. As described in section 3.3.1.2, the second semi-structured interview was used to explore participants’ experiences with the professional development activities on which they reflected using the reflection sheets. Interviews followed the same semi-structure; however, some questions were adjusted responsive to the nature of the professional development activities that participants undertook and to the conceptions that they reported during their first interviews (see section 3.3.1.2 and Appendix D). Interviews were conducted in mutually convenient locations and were audio-recorded for later transcription. All interviews were conducted in English.

### 3.5 Data analysis

The interviews and reflection sheets yielded large amounts of rich qualitative data from each participant. The data used to answer each research question are outlined in Table 3. The first research question was answered with interview data collected from the first semi-structured interview. The second and third research questions were answered with interview data from both semi-structured interviews and participants’ recorded reflections from the reflection sheets.

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\(^6\) All participants undertook and reflected on two professional development activities with the exception of Participant 1, who elected to undertake and reflect upon three.
Table 3

Data used to answer each research question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Instrument(s)</th>
<th>Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview 1</td>
<td>Interview data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 2</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview 1</td>
<td>Interview data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection sheets</td>
<td>Participants’ recorded reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured interview 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 3</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview 1</td>
<td>Interview data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection sheets</td>
<td>Participants’ recorded reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured interview 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To analyse data for the first question, the seven steps for phenomenographic data analysis outlined by Dahlgren and Fallsberg (1991) were utilised. These steps have been subsequently used by various authors (Lagerløv, Leseth, & Matheson, 1998; Stenfors-Hayes et al., 2013; Wahlström et al., 2001; Widäng et al., 2008). The steps are as follows: familiarisation, condensation, comparison, grouping, articulation, labelling and contrasting. The way in which this process was applied in this research project is set out in section 3.5.1 and outlined in Table 4.

Data collected to answer the second and third questions were analysed using the pre-existing categories set out for exploration: participation, engagement and learning, as well as several sub-categories which arose during analysis (see sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3). Similarities and differences in the ways in which data related to each of these categories provided initial groupings (see also Flegg, Mallet, & Lupton, 2013). Groupings were refined through consultation with existing literature on each of the categories, such as motivation and expectations, to assist with description and labelling (see Chapter Two, sections 2.8.3 and 2.8.4).

As a reliability measure, the process of negotiating consensus was utilised throughout data analysis. Negotiating consensus is a process which was developed to replace the earlier phenomenographic reliability measure labelled interjudge consensus. Negotiating consensus entails discussion of results between researchers, wherein one researcher is typically responsible for initial categorisation of data and then discusses this categorisation with other researchers involved in the project in order to reach consensus (Kärner, Göransson, & Bergdahl, 2003; Wahlström, Dahlgren, Tomson, Diwan, & Beermann, 1997). Negotiating
consensus was accommodated in this research project through discussion of findings and analysis with academic supervisors. The conceptions and their organisation into the meta-categories were discussed and reorganised several times before they were finalised.

Table 4

*Data analysis procedure, Dahlgren and Fallsberg (1991)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiarisation</td>
<td>The researcher carefully reads the interview transcripts in order to become familiar with their contents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condensation</td>
<td>Significant statements are extracted from the transcripts. These statements are considered to be reflective of participants’ conception(s) of the phenomenon in question. Significant statements are considered in light of their relationship with such statements from other interviews, as well as their relationship with the interview from which they were extracted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>All significant statements extracted during condensation are compared horizontally (across participants), in order to note variation and agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouping</td>
<td>Statements considered to be representative of the same meaning are grouped together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulation</td>
<td>This step constitutes the first attempt to encapsulate the essence of what makes each statement of each group, identified during grouping, similar. Structural aspects of each group are articulated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labelling</td>
<td>An appropriate label is given to each structural aspect to represent them linguistically. A referential aspect is derived.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrasting</td>
<td>Structural and referential aspects are compared to judge variation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Throughout the process of analysis, the NVivo qualitative data analysis programme was used for organising, visualising and categorising data. NVivo provided a database for storage and navigation of interview transcripts and completed reflection sheets. The utility of the software for storing large amounts of data has been noted by other researchers (see Beekhuyzen, Nielsen, & von Hellens, 2010). The specifics regarding how NVivo was used during data analysis are elaborated in the ensuing sections of this chapter.

Although very little has been documented regarding the use of NVivo by phenomenographic researchers (Asensio, 2000, provides one example), the programme provided an effective electronic platform for undertaking Dahlgren and Fallsberg’s (1991) data analysis procedure
for the first interviews, as well as for grouping, organising and exploring data for the second and third research questions. In light of its usefulness as a supplementary tool for qualitative research, NVivo was deemed to be appropriate for use with the phenomenographic approach. As Ozkan (2004) describes, NVivo “does not force the use of certain data analysis strategies, but provides various tools for the researchers which they can choose from based on their research goals and ways of approaching their data” (p. 593). NVivo and similar software packages cannot replace a researcher’s own analysis of data (Beekhuyzen et al., 2010). Rather, in order to effectively utilise the software, researchers must possess a clear understanding of the methods of qualitative analysis pertinent to their research as well as the guidelines for data analysis set out by previous researchers in the field (Beekhuyzen et al., 2010).

These observations are reflective of the use of NVivo throughout the research reported here. As well as assisting with data organisation and analysis, the software facilitated the generation and storage of analytical notes to record ideas and reflections, and the use of the query function to search data for specific terms. NVivo was also used to generate several models which were used in data collection, analysis and presentation of the findings (see Chapter Four, sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4). Some of these models were constructed manually using the research findings, whereas others were generated by the software based on previous manual categorisation of data.

In the following sections of this chapter, data analysis procedures are presented for the first semi-structured interview, the reflection sheets, the second semi-structured interview and, finally, across the three instruments. Guidelines followed for analysis of data from each of the instruments are outlined. The use of NVivo throughout the process is described in the relevant sections.

3.5.1 Data analysis: Semi-structured interview 1

Recordings of the first interview were transcribed verbatim (see Appendix F for a sample) and analysed following the seven-step procedure outlined by Dahlgren and Fallsberg (1991) to arrive at the outcome space, with the assistance of NVivo. For analysis of these transcripts, NVivo provided a way to organise information through grouping similar statements, refining
these groups and creating models to represent conceptions uncovered for each participant and for the group at large. Bazeley (2009) suggests that the use of such visuals assists in the data analysis process, both “to assist in initial conceptualisation and planning” (p. 15), as well as providing “a means to present conclusions from an analysis” (p. 15). The steps undertaken to analyse the transcripts from the first interview are listed below (see Table 4 for the condensed steps).

i. Reading transcripts for familiarisation

Once interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were imported into NVivo. Care was taken to read each transcript several times in order to gain familiarity with the contents and to begin to understand the meaning behind them. This also facilitated later identification and extraction of significant statements from the participants’ comments.

ii. Extracting significant statements from transcripts

Once transcripts had been read over several times for familiarisation, they were read for the purpose of extracting significant statements. A statement was considered significant if it was seen to represent a participant’s conception of the phenomenon in question (Dahlgren & Fallsberg, 1991). Once identified, these statements were extracted from the transcripts and grouped together. Between 25 and 30 significant statements were extracted from each participant’s transcript. The same conception was often represented by a number of significant statements and some statements included more than one conception of professional development. Examples of significant statements describing professional development extracted from transcripts are as follows:

Professional development looks more at your growth as a teacher... Growth as a teacher, growth as an individual, growth as a professional. (Participant 7, Interview 1, lines 254-257)

So, basically as it says, developing professionally. So not doing, being stuck doing the same things all the time. Finding better ways and you know, as we find out more about the best practice … regarding teaching. (Participant 3, Interview 1, lines 24-26)
These two sample statements were considered to represent different conceptions of the phenomenon (see Chapter Four, section 4.2 for more detail).

iii. Comparing statements within and across transcripts

Once the significant statements were identified and grouped together, they were compared in two ways. Firstly, they were compared within transcripts, against other statements extracted from the same interview. Secondly, they were compared across transcripts, against statements taken from other participants’ interviews. During this process, some of the significant statements were eliminated from the group as they were considered to be an elaboration of a previous statement or, in some cases, a description of a phenomenon other than professional development. All participants made reference to more than one conception of professional development during their interviews. These were grouped accordingly with similar statements as outlined in step iv.

iv. Grouping statements into meaning pools

Once the statements were narrowed down, they were grouped into pools of similar meaning. Pools of meaning, which were organised as sub-categories under the main group of significant statements, were formed as similar statements were placed together and then compared and contrasted with statements from other pools. Creation of the meaning pools was an iterative process with several stages of revision. Some data organised under the sub-categories were reorganised several times. Examples of similar statements which were grouped together include the following:

A lifelong learning, lifelong journey. I don’t think it ever ends, no matter whether you are taking the course or delivering the course. I think it’s something that’s ongoing, and for teaching it just never stops. And the intention of PD therefore, is to try and keep up with that learning. (Participant 1, Interview 1, lines 7-12)

Um, so I think PD for teachers in general, there needs to be an awareness that it’s an ongoing process of development. It’s not just something that you learn once and then
you can just carry on doing the same thing … I think people need to be more aware, be aware of the fact that it’s something they continue to be doing. (Participant 6, Interview 1, lines 54-58)

This pool of meaning was loosely titled lifelong learning for initial identification purposes. All meaning pools were given tentative titles and were refined in an iterative process until all the significant statements were considered to be grouped as cohesively as possible.

v. Articulation, labelling and contrasting

Once the statements in each of the meaning pools were considered to be grouped cohesively and accurately, names for each of the pools were articulated. Pools were subsequently compared and contrasted once more to make sure that they all revealed something new about the phenomenon in question and that the referential and structural aspects were representative of the nature of statements contained within. Identification of referential and structural aspects is central to the effective presentation of conceptions. The referential aspect of a conception refers to “how the phenomenon relates to its surroundings, its global aspect” (Andén, Andersson, & Rudebeck, 2009, p. 2). In other words, the referential aspect represents the way(s) in which participants attribute meaning to the phenomenon in question (Irvin, 2006). The structural aspect is said to “refer to both the way the parts of the phenomenon are delimited from and related to each other – the internal horizons, and how the parts are delimited from their context – the external horizon” (Andén et al., 2009, p. 2). The internal and external horizons are further explained by Bruce et al. (2004) as follows:

The External Horizon represents the outer limits, or perceptual boundary, of the participants’ ways of seeing and identifies that part of the world beyond which participants, who are looking at the world in a particular way, do not see. The Internal Horizon represents the focus of the participants’ attention, that which is figural in awareness. (p. 224)

The structural aspect therefore authentically represents participants’ understandings, from the perspective of the participant as well as from a global perspective, encompassing all uncovered conceptions from the sample group, whereas the referential aspect captures the
meaning of the phenomenon lexically (Bruce et al., 2004). In order to represent the structural aspect of the conceptions, or how they fitted together with relation to one another and to the participants’ external horizons, the conceptions of professional development reported by participants were grouped into three meta-categories. These meta-categories are:

- Person-oriented conceptions of professional development
- Career-oriented conceptions of professional development
- Skills-oriented conceptions of professional development

Participants’ reported conceptions were used to construct several models. Three models were created to show the conceptions organised under each of the meta-categories reported by the participants (see Chapter Four, section 4.2). Models were also created for each participant to show the conceptions they reported during their first interview in order to discuss them during their second interview. At this stage, preliminary referential aspects had been assigned to each conception to allow discussion of reported conceptions with each participant. An example of one of these models is included as Figure 1 below. The conceptions reported by Participant 7 during the first interview have been grouped here to reflect the three meta-categories: person-oriented conceptions are grouped to the left, skills-oriented conceptions are in the middle and a career-oriented conception is placed to the right.

Figure 1
Participant 7 conceptions
3.5.2 Data analysis: Reflection sheets

As well as being used as a prompt for the second interview, the reflection sheet was used as an instrument in its own right. Once the reflection sheets had been completed by the participants, they were returned either in hard copy or electronically. Documents returned in hard copy were copied into digital form and saved electronically. The reflection sheets were imported into NVivo and their content was categorised. Data were grouped according to the foci of the second and third research questions. The following categories were used for categorisation and analysis: goals, expectations, engagement, feelings, learning and future practice. Several subcategories were generated under each to accommodate nuances in participants’ reflections (see Figures 2 and 3 for illustration of the node organisation in NVivo). For example, participants who reported low levels of engagement were grouped together into a subcategory for low engagement under the main category of engagement. Different levels of reported engagement and learning, positive and negative feelings, and satisfied and unsatisfied expectations were also grouped as subcategories. The reflection sheets were also used to prepare the questions for each participant’s second interview.

Figure 2

Node organisation in NVivo for Question Two
3.5.3 Data analysis: Semi-structured interview 2

During the second interview, participants were invited to agree or disagree with the conceptions uncovered from their first interview transcripts, which were shown and described to them using the aforementioned diagrams (see Figure 1), and also to elaborate on or adjust them if they desired. A few participants chose to make slight adjustments or provide further explanation. These adjustments, none of which fell outside the boundaries of an already identified conception, were incorporated into the data used to explore the first research question through organisation of the relevant statements into existing groups.

Upon completion of each of the second interviews, recordings were transcribed verbatim and imported into NVivo (see Appendix G for a sample). Categories set out for coding data from reflection sheets, described in section 3.5.2 and shown in Figures 2 and 3, were used to code the second interviews. An extra category was added responsive to the evolving data analysis and in consultation with the literature. This category, labelled participation, was allocated two sub-categories: controlled goals and autonomous goals. These were used to group the participants’ reported goals for the activities undertaken. Participants’ goals were grouped together according to similarity and labels for each group were refined through further consultation with the literature.
The same categories were used to organise data from the reflection sheets and second interviews. This facilitated comparison across the instruments, giving a broader and deeper view of participants’ participation, engagement and learning. This final stage of analysis, which entailed combining the data from all three instruments together, is presented in section 3.5.4.

3.5.4 Data analysis across the instruments

The final stage of data analysis involved comparing participants’ responses across the instruments to explore relationships between their conceptions and interactions with professional development presented in the reflections and second interviews. NVivo was used at this stage to help with visualisation of the findings for each question and to allow comparison between categories.

Each participant reported multiple conceptions of professional development. Therefore, in order to answer the second and third research questions, multiple conceptions were considered in comparison with each participant’s participation in their professional development activities, as well as their engagement and learning outcomes. Participants’ interactions with their professional development activities were explored individually and across the group in this manner.

To visualise the findings for the second and third research questions, NVivo was used to generate several models, automatically and manually. Figures 7 and 8, presented in Chapter Four, were generated manually based on the findings to explore the second and third research questions. These models will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five.

3.6 Summary

Eight in-service EAP teachers employed at the tertiary level participated in the research. Two instruments were used with these participants to collect data: semi-structured interviews and reflection sheets. Data were collected in three phases. The participants took part in the first semi-structured interview at the beginning of the data collection period. The aim of this
interview was to explore their conceptions of and previous experiences with professional development. After completing this interview, participants were given copies of the reflection sheet and were asked to use them to reflect upon two professional development activities of their choosing. The reflection sheet elicited information regarding participants’ goals, expectations, engagement, feelings and learning from their professional development activities. Following completion of the reflection sheets, they were returned for analysis. The second interview was used to explore the participants’ participation, engagement and learning in their professional development activities in greater depth, as well as to examine how participants understood changes to generally occur to their practice and cognition. The second interview also allowed sharing and discussion of each participant’s conceptions of professional development uncovered during the first interview. Data analysis was carried out separately for each instrument and finally, a combined analysis was undertaken in order to answer all research questions. The results of this analysis are presented in Chapter Four.
4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the key findings for each research question are outlined. To enhance communication, findings are visualised throughout the chapter using figures and are accompanied by excerpts taken from participants’ interview transcripts and reflection sheets. Findings for each research question are presented individually and a summary is provided at the end of the chapter. Findings presented in this chapter are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

4.2 Question One

*What are the conceptions that the EAP teachers have of professional development?*

From the group of participants, thirteen conceptions of professional development were uncovered. These conceptions are organised into three meta-categories: person-oriented, career-oriented and skills-oriented conceptions of professional development. For each meta-category, the conceptions grouped under it are presented in a figure. It is important to note that each participant expressed multiple conceptions (see for example Figure 1). In alignment with other phenomenographic research (see Loughland, Reid, & Petocz, 2002; Mbabazi Bamwesiga, Fejes, & Dahlgren, 2013; Stein et al., 2009), the outcome space represents conceptions uncovered from the whole sample group. The influence of individual participants’ conceptions on their engagement and learning are explored in subsequent sections of the chapter in order to answer the second and third research questions. As outlined in Chapter Three (section 3.5.1), referential aspects (see Åkerlind, 2012; Harris, 2011) of the conceptions are communicated through labelling. The structural aspects of the conceptions, or how they relate to one another (Harris, 2011), are accommodated through grouping into the three meta-categories and described in sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.2.3.
As indicated by the titles of the meta-categories, each centralises a different perspective regarding professional development. The conceptions grouped under each meta-category relate to different applications and outcomes of professional development. Person-oriented conceptions encompass ways of understanding professional development which give primacy to teachers and centralise their wellbeing, satisfaction and growth. As such, these conceptions position teachers as the recipients of the benefits of undertaking professional development activities. Career-oriented conceptions focus on the impacts of professional development on teachers’ career progression and success, as well as external expectations for professional development imposed by employers, associated with workplace cultures and administrative requirements. Skills-oriented conceptions position professional development as a means to acquire and negotiate the skills utilised in professional practice. The focus of these conceptions is the improvement of practice with the goal of heightening student learning outcomes. Each of these meta-categories is presented in more detail in the following sections.

4.2.1 Person-oriented conceptions of professional development

Person-oriented conceptions (see Figure 4) position professional development as a phenomenon which fosters benefits for individual practitioners. Overall, the goal of professional development from the person-oriented perspective is to maintain and enhance practitioner wellbeing, motivation, resilience, connectedness to other practitioners and professional longevity. Under these conceptions, professional development is a means by which practitioners may pursue lifelong learning and personal growth, explore their professional passions and interests, prevent stagnation, and increase self-awareness of their decision-making and epistemologies. Some of these conceptions encompass a relational perspective on professional development, positioning professional development activities as opportunities for giving and receiving support, and for collaborating and interacting with other practitioners. The nuances and specific features of each of these conceptions are explored and discussed in Chapter Five (section 5.2.1.2).
4.2.2 Career-oriented conceptions of professional development

Career-oriented conceptions position professional development as a phenomenon which affects participants’ employment and career trajectories. Three conceptions are included in the career-oriented group (see Figure 5). Two of the conceptions in the group relate to the place of professional development within particular institutions of employment and working contexts. Participants discussed professional development as a means by which they could develop awareness of and adapt to factors affecting their current work context, including institutional protocol governing their roles and developments in the wider EAP sector which may impact them and their colleagues. From the career-oriented perspective, professional development was also associated with requirements, expectations and obligations put forward by employers. This conception was typically reported in a negative way as it positioned professional development as divorced from participants’ practice and interests. The remaining conception, concerning professional development as a tool for career advancement, assigns a highly instrumentalistic value to professional development. It positions participation in professional development as a way to build teachers’ résumés and develop their competitiveness in the employment market. Through undertaking and
delivering professional development for external recognition by current employers, future employers and industry stakeholders, teachers may be able to secure promotions or more desirable positions. Career-oriented conceptions are discussed in Chapter Five (section 5.2.1.3).

4.2.3 Skills-oriented conceptions of professional development

Skills-oriented conceptions (see Figure 6) centralise the development of skills and abilities which may be used during teaching practice and are often focused upon in professional development initiatives. Participants who cited these conceptions discussed the outcomes of undertaking professional development positively, considering it to be a toolkit which could be used to develop, extend and amend their practice. Skills-oriented conceptions approach the acquisition of skills via professional development from differing bases. One conception approaches skills acquisition from a needs basis, wherein practitioners actively seek out professional development to help them to address perceived weaknesses or gaps in their knowledge or skills. The other three conceptions approach skills acquisition in a more holistic way. Under these conceptions, professional development provides a means by which
practitioners can generally improve skills, transform practice and gain exposure to new information and ideas related to their classroom practice in order to become more effective teachers. Overall, skills-oriented conceptions are based on perceived needs and requirements for day-to-day operation and the improvement of practice for the benefit of students. These conceptions are discussed in Chapter Five (section 5.2.1.1).

Figure 6
Skills-oriented conceptions

4.2.4 Question One summary

Overall, thirteen conceptions of professional development were uncovered and were organised into the meta-categories of person-oriented, career-oriented and skills-oriented. Person-oriented conceptions emphasise participants’ lifelong learning, motivation, satisfaction, connectedness and emotional wellbeing. Career-oriented conceptions contextualise professional development within practitioners’ employment contexts and career trajectories, highlighting its utility in helping practitioners to achieve career success and mobility and its use by employers in quota systems or expectations for employee participation in professional development. Skills-oriented conceptions address the particulars of professional practice and the desirable or necessary skills connected to teaching.
The results gathered for Question One provide a basis for answering Questions Two and Three (see Chapter Three, section 3.5). Later in this chapter, Question One results are revisited and compared with the findings for the other two research questions in order to illustrate the ways in which participants’ conceptions of professional development interacted with their participation, engagement and learning. In the next section of this chapter, the findings for Question Two are presented.

4.3 Question Two

*How do these conceptions influence the ways in which they engage in professional development?*

The findings for the second question are broken down into two components: participation and engagement. In order to gain a full picture of participants’ engagement in professional development, it was considered necessary to take into account the motivations which led to their participation in their activities as well as their levels of engagement during the activities. Participants held a mix of controlled and autonomous goals for undertaking their professional development sessions. These goals recalled conceptions of professional development which they had previously reported. Engagement, however, was generally found to depend on contextual and perceived contextual factors specific to each session rather than on pre-participation factors such as goals or conceptions. As such, participation and engagement are dealt with separately in the ensuing sections.

4.3.1 Participation in the professional development activities

The data suggest that an alignment exists between participants’ conceptions of professional development and their participation in their activities. The participants generally used their conceptions as a filter through which to understand their participation in professional development and to set out their goals for their activities. For example, during his first interview Participant 7 reported the conceptions *professional development as exposure to new ideas and information* and *professional development as lifelong learning and personal growth*, amongst others. His later comments highlighted the influence of these particular
conceptions on his motivations for participating in one of his professional development sessions. He commented,

I think I was really excited about learning new things. And regardless of the content I was still quite excited … I actually love going to workshops and courses. I don’t know why but I think it’s this element of, ooh I’m going to be here and learn something, you know? So even if I don’t make use of that knowledge, at least I learn something. (Participant 7, Interview 2, lines 203-207)

Overall, the goals set out by participants spoke to what they wished to achieve by taking part in their professional development activities and ranged from autonomous, or self-motivated, to controlled, or externally-influenced (see Sheldon & Elliot, 1998). Three activities, reflected on by three participants, were linked to controlled goals. Six activities, reflected on by six participants, were linked to autonomous goals. Eight activities, reflected on by six participants, were linked to both autonomous and controlled goals.

In terms of the intersection of conceptions and goals, if an activity was perceived to align with a person-oriented conception of professional development, participants typically held autonomous goals for taking part in it. If participants expected that an activity would align with a career-oriented conception, they generally held controlled goals for undertaking it. Skills-oriented conceptions, however, aligned with both kinds of goal. It is important to note here that not all conceptions reported by participants found parallels in the goals they reported for their activities. In Figure 7 below, a visual illustration is provided of the interaction between conceptions and goals. This interaction is explored in detail in sections 4.3.1.1 – 4.3.1.4.
4.3.1.1 Person-oriented conceptions and autonomous goals

Where participants associated an activity with a person-oriented conception of professional development, they outlined autonomous goals for undertaking it. Autonomous goals spoke to participants’ ongoing learning, intellectual and emotional growth, wellbeing and satisfaction. Both identified and intrinsic autonomous goals (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998) were cited by participants. Identified goals revolved around participants’ professional needs, values and choices. These related to what they perceived they needed in order to realise their practice to their satisfaction or to achieve identity objectives as reflective and collaborative practitioners. As such, identified goals also encompassed the desire to support colleagues and peers who were presenting sessions. Intrinsic goals, on the other hand, were set out to satisfy interests and curiosities. Some participants held both intrinsic and identified autonomous goals for the same professional development activity. For example, Participant 5 (Interview 2, lines 294-297) reflected,

I’ve got an interest in using technology in the classroom. I feel that’s one area that I can definitely improve my teaching practice. Um, and anything related to that I’m
happy to learn and you know, listen to, and see if I can introduce new practice into my own teaching.

In this example, the participant expressed both an identified goal (to develop his teacher practice in line with his notions of effectiveness) and an intrinsic goal (to explore an area of professional interest). Of all the autonomous goals reported by the participant group, only one was unrelated to participants’ professional roles. This was an intrinsic goal reported by three of the participants (Participants 4, 6 and 7): to explore an area of personal interest by attending a professional development session. However, these personal interests were often linked with some aspect of the participants’ industry of employment. For example, Participant 6 (Interview 2, lines 247-251) stated,

[This presentation was] interesting because it was to do with teacher development in developing countries. Uh, which is something I’m interested in … How do people learn and teach English in developing countries, where they don’t have access to broadband or even textbooks, and so on? And yet people learn English marvellously.

Overall, the autonomous goals reported by participants revolved around the individuals participating in the professional development and their ongoing learning, satisfaction, and emotional and intellectual needs. These goals were person-centred, wherein the participants and their colleagues directly received the benefits of undertaking the professional development.

4.3.1.2 Career-oriented conceptions and controlled goals

Where participants perceived a professional development activity to align with a career-oriented conception, they generally expressed controlled goals for undertaking it. Controlled goals reported by participants positioned the professional development activities within institutional and industry contexts. Participants cited both external and introjected controlled goals for undertaking activities. However, the majority of the controlled goals reported by participants were introjected.
As introjected goals, some participants reported a sense of obligation, deriving from institutional pressure, to attend particular sessions, even though their attendance was not strictly mandatory. For example, Participant 3 (Interview 2, lines 224-227) reflected,

> Oh, well I just think if you make the effort to come it leaves a good impression. And they’re into that … And if they’ve got this and they think it’s a good idea, well … I mean if you can go, then you should go. So not compulsory, but you get me.

Similarly, Participant 2 (Interview 2, line 230) commented that she attended one professional development session, “principally because I felt I should”. She explained that it was facilitated by a supervisor and, although attendance was not mandatory, she felt pressure to attend. On the other hand, some participants attended their professional development under institutional mandate or in response to a direct request from a colleague or supervisor (for example, Participant 1, session one; Participant 6, session one; Participant 8, session two).

Two participants (Participants 6 and 7) reported external goals for undertaking professional development activities. For Participant 7, this goal was related to ongoing professional viability and competitiveness. Participant 7 explained that he attended one of his sessions in order to acquire a skill that would render him more competitive and up-to-date in what he perceived to be an ever-advancing employment context. His attendance was responsive to an achieving motivation to build on an existing skill-set. He reflected,

> [The professional development activity was] not mandatory, so it is in fact volunteer … So it was something that I wanted to learn so that’s part of … this new information and new ideas that I need to get my head around … I don’t want to be losing out from the opportunities. So that is the reason why I actually booked in. (Participant 7, Interview 2, lines 89-96)

Similarly, Participant 6 reported that one of the motivations underlying his attendance to one of his professional development activities was to network with colleagues and peers in the field. This goal was related to remaining up-to-date with fellow practitioners and researchers. Overall, controlled goals expressed by the participants revolved around responding to
institutional pressure to attend professional development and maintaining their viability and competitiveness as practitioners.

4.3.1.3 Skills-oriented conceptions

Skills-oriented conceptions did not readily align with any particular type of goal. Rather, the goals reported depended on participants’ orientations and attitudes to the skill(s) in question. If participants were personally interested in acquiring a skill or if they perceived it to align with their values as a teacher, allowing them to realise their practice more effectively, they expressed autonomous goals for undertaking the related professional development. For example, Participant 8 perceived that the acquisition of skills to navigate an area which was becoming important for her work through one of her professional development sessions would allow her to continue to work effectively, thus aligning with an identified autonomous goal which she endorsed herself. She stated,

This was the first time I’d run across the idea of creative commons copyright. It simply wasn’t something I knew anything about and given that we’re being increasingly pushed to use kind of open learning resources which are going to be creative commons copyright, it seemed to be a good idea to find out precisely what creative commons copyright actually was, what it involved, so I didn’t accidentally breach copyright. (Participant 8, Interview 2, lines 93-98)

However, if acquisition of the skill was connected to institutional mandate or policies which the participants perceived to be of little contribution to their own practices, controlled goals were associated with undertaking the session. An example was provided by Participant 6, who was required to learn to use several online tools in response to an institutional mandate. He commented,

I had to do that [professional development activity]. Basically because we’re putting together an online course … And I am sort of centrally involved in writing and creating, doing the curriculum design, so, which is what all this stuff is … I mean I knew nothing, I knew very little about online learning and the tools for that, so it was very important that I sort of, learn fast. (Participant 6, Interview 2, lines 77-86)
This goal was not connected to the participant’s own practice-based objectives, but rather to compliance with external requirements connected to institutional developments.

Overall, participants’ person-oriented conceptions generally aligned with autonomous goals, career-oriented conceptions with controlled goals and skills-oriented conceptions with both, mediated by the extent to which participants endorsed acquisition of the skill(s) in question. Two more important features of participants’ goals for their professional development are presented in the following section. Firstly, for a small number of professional development sessions, participants expressed a mix of autonomous and controlled goals for taking part. Furthermore, the findings suggest that participants hierarchised some goals for their professional development over others. These findings are described further in section 4.3.1.4.

4.3.1.4 Mixed goals and hierarchised goals

Some participants held a mix of autonomous and controlled goals for undertaking the same activity. In these instances, a single activity was associated with conceptions deriving from more than one of the three meta-categories. Typically, this occurred when participants were either required to attend professional development, such as under institutional mandate or by request, or considered that it would be beneficial for their career development, but also endorsed the focus of the activity or had some interest in it. For example, Participant 1 reported attending an activity under institutional mandate, but also reported that she expected to receive feedback from her colleagues and to gain new information relating to her practice, which she felt was of value to her. Participant 8 also reported undertaking a professional development activity in response to a request from her supervisor; however, she also had an interest in its focus and felt that her participation would result in learning information which would be of value to her teaching role and future interaction with students.

Participants’ comments also revealed a hierarchy of goals for undertaking professional development. As has been presented in this chapter, participants understood professional development to be a phenomenon with multiple purposes and outcomes. In some instances, multiple outcomes were perceived for the same session. However, regardless of the number of goals which participants held for a given activity, autonomous goals – and by extension,
the conceptions which underlay them – were valued more highly by participants than other goals. This was evident in their positive reflections on these goals and the associated professional development sessions, contrasted with their less enthusiastic and, in some cases, negative appraisal of professional development which they attended based on controlled goals. These findings suggest that participants formed a hierarchy of goals and conceptions associated with professional development activities based on their perceived value. In order to predict the value of a given activity, they projected this schema onto the information which they had been given about it along with any assumptions or expectations they held. The approaches to learning provide a useful framework for interpretation of these findings, related to the motives underlying participants’ attendance to their professional development activities and the relative importance they assigned to different goals. The participants’ goals for their activities share some similarities with goals associated with the deep, surface and strategic approaches to learning (Diehm & Lupton, 2012; Diseth & Martinsen, 2003). Indeed, participants held distinctive differences “in intentions and motives when facing a learning situation” (Diseth & Martinsen, 2003, p. 195). However, their approaches possessed different features from those set out in the original approaches to learning framework (Baeten et al., 2010; Diseth & Martinsen, 2003; Trigwell & Prosser, 1991). The participants’ approaches to professional development are discussed in detail in Chapter Five (section 5.3.1).

4.3.2 Engagement

Although participants held a variety of autonomous and controlled goals related to their participation in their professional development activities, their goals and expectations of what each activity would deliver were not always met. This complicated the pre-participation predictability of participants’ engagement levels. Rather, participants’ engagement in their professional development was highly dependent on contextual and perceived contextual factors (see Chapter Two, section 2.8.4) particular to each activity. These factors included participants’ perceptions of the quality and format of the activity, the relevance of informational content presented, technology used and the behaviours of others, such as the facilitator or presenter.

Given that engagement was mediated by the features of participants’ professional development activities and their perceptions of them, several participants reported that their
engagement fluctuated throughout. For example, Participant 4 (Interview 2, lines 206-221) described how his engagement fluctuated during one of his sessions as follows:

So [my engagement] was high, because I was, as I wrote, genuinely interested in learning about the speaker’s area of expertise … well, as much as I was engaged I also, the speaker made the old error of too much stuff on the PPT slide and too many slides. So, the classic presenter’s mistake. So that factor did detract from engagement because as you start to … well you just can’t read everything on the slide, and they start flicking through them a little bit and, um, you also start to get a little bit annoyed as an audience member, thinking, why are they doing this? And so on.

However, two factors reported by participants as mediating their engagement were pre-determined, one of which is reflected in Participant 4’s comment above. One of these factors concerned participants’ personal or professional interest in the topic of the activity (for example Participant 6, session one; Participant 1, session two; Participant 4, session one). Interest, or lack thereof, predicted to some extent high or low levels of engagement. Where participants had high levels of existing interest in the topic at hand, they were able to maintain their engagement despite encountering other negative factors (for example, Participant 4, session one; Participant 1, session two). However, where participants had low interest in the topic of the professional development, they found it difficult to engage to a high degree even if met with positive factors (for example, Participant 6, session one). The second factor was the perceived utility or relevance of the content of the professional development for participants’ professional practice. As Participant 8 reflected, one of the factors contributing to her engagement in one of her professional development activities was its high level of relevance for her work. As she reflected, “I felt that the thing was relevant and dealing with a fairly significant subject” (Participant 8, Interview 2, lines 158-160). For some participants, interest and perceived relevance interacted to influence engagement. For example, Participant 6, who reported controlled goals for his first session related to compliance with an institutional mandate, held low levels of personal interest in the topic at hand which lowered his engagement, despite the fact that he considered the professional development to be relevant for his future practice. He reflected,
I think that [my engagement] wasn’t going to be low because it was something that I had a professional … not a professional interest in, but I knew that it was going to be important for my profession, for my work. It wasn’t going to be any higher than that because it just doesn’t, it’s not something I find exciting … there are certain things that I literally do find exciting. This wasn’t quite in there. It didn’t quite float my boat! (Participant 6, Interview 2, lines 118-124)

The complex interplay of factors influencing participants’ attendance to and engagement in their professional development activities is visualised in Figure 8. An extension of Figure 7, Figure 8 adds one more step to the participants’ interactions with their sessions and illustrates the relationship between conceptions, goals and engagement. As is shown in the model, regardless of participants’ goals for their professional development, their engagement depended on their interest in the content of the session, the perceived utility or relevance of the professional development for their work, and contextual and other perceived contextual factors.

Figure 8

Conceptions, goals and engagement

![Diagram showing the relationship between conceptions, goals, and engagement with nodes for autonomous goals, controlled goals, interest in the session, perceived relevance of the session for participants’ work, and contextual and other perceived contextual factors.](image-url)
4.3.3 Question Two summary

The results for the second research question indicate that the participants used their conceptions as a filter to understand their participation in professional development. Participants projected their understandings onto future activities, utilising what information they had to predict the utility of the professional development and form goals. However, not all participants’ goals for their activities were met. Their engagement, therefore, was somewhat more complex and was highly dependent on contextual and perceived contextual factors such as content presented, the quality and format of the activity and the behaviour of others. However, in instances where participants were highly interested in the topic of the professional development or perceived that it was relevant for their work, their engagement was likely to persist at a higher level. Low interest or little perceived relevance detracted from engagement. These two factors could also oppose each other (for example, low interest accompanied by high perceived relevance), to mediate participants’ engagement.

The findings for the third research question build upon the findings presented thus far. Question Three concerns the relationship between participants’ conceptions of professional development, their engagement in their professional development activities and their learning outcomes. Question Three findings are presented in section 4.4.

4.4 Question Three

What are the learning outcomes of the interaction between conception and engagement in professional development?

The participants’ goals, engagement and learning did not always interact in predictable ways. For participants who had some control over their activities, their goals and expectations were easily aligned with their learning outcomes (for example, Participant 2, session one; Participant 1, session two). In both instances, the participants took part in organised discussions which they were able to influence and direct through their contributions.

However, the majority of participants did not have control over how their professional development activities were run and thus their engagement and learning depended highly on
factors which were out of their control. Where participants held learning-oriented goals which were met, or in instances where the professional development was compatible with other learning interests they had, their reported learning was higher and associated with positive outcomes (see for example Participant 5, session one; Participant 3, session one; Participant 7, session two). In all of these instances, the participants learned about topics and ideas which were of interest to them and which they saw as practical, relevant and contributive to their work. This was typically met with high levels of engagement and positive emotional reactions. Figure 9 below illustrates the presence of these factors as reported and discussed by Participant 5 with relation to his first professional development activity.

**Figure 9**
**Participant 5 – Expectations, engagement and learning**

For this activity, Participant 5 held a mix of autonomous goals related to developing his classroom practice, exploring an area of interest and supporting his colleagues who were presenting the session. As he reflected, the topic of the session was not only interesting but also “related to what I generally teach which is these … higher ends of the English language classroom spectrum” (Participant 5, Interview 2, lines 111-112). His learning-related expectations for the session were satisfied, as he commented “a lot of the things I thought they’d be talking about did come up” (Participant 5, Interview 2, line 114). This resulted in high engagement, which was also fostered through the use of interactive tasks throughout the session, and high levels of learning. In contrast, where participants perceived that their professional development was of low relevance to their work, of little interest or of low
quality, high levels of learning or engagement did not eventuate even if the session aligned with their expectations. For example, Participant 6 held an introjected goal for his first session, connected to an obligation to attend. As he reflected, “I had to do that [activity]” (Participant 6, Interview 2, line 76). He reported learning an average amount, gaining a sufficient grasp of the target content to be able to utilise it. The participant reflected that his engagement and interest in the session were low to medium. His expectations were relatively low as was his interest in the topic and its perceived contribution to his work. The subsequent satisfaction of his expectations did not increase his engagement, although he commented on his relief that the session was easy to understand and concerned the relevant topics – “this is easier to understand than I thought … and I could see its applicability for what I was doing” (Participant 6, Interview 2, lines147-148). Figure 10 provides a visualisation of this.

Figure 10

Participant 6 - Engagement, expectations and learning

4.4.1 Categories of learning and actionable and conceptual changes

After undertaking their professional development activities, participants reported learning about a range of topics and areas including classroom practice, their institutions and industry, the EAP sector, other areas related to their professional roles and information outside the determined boundaries of their practice. For example, Participant 1 (Reflection sheet, session one) reflected, “I learnt about [institutional] policies in relation to assessment, I reflected on my own assessment practices through concrete examples provided by my colleagues’
presentations”. Participant 2 (Reflection sheet, session one) reported learning about “Ideas about how to/how not to encourage [students’] critical reading skills”. Participant 7 (Reflection sheet, session two) commented, “I learnt a lot about giving instructions, processing information, planning in-class activities that are engaging, processing feedback and facilitating discussions”.

Through exposure to different information via their professional development activities, participants also reported their learning in terms of changes which occurred to their knowledge, dispositions, confidence, ideas classroom practice. Their reported changes have been organised into two categories: actionable and conceptual. Whilst all participants reported some conceptual change, most of which took the form of increased awareness or knowledge of a topic or issue, five participants (Participants 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8) also reported actionable change. Figure 11 provides an illustration of the factors which precluded actionable and conceptual changes. As shown in the figure, participants’ conceptions and goals did not contribute directly to their learning outcomes. Rather, regardless of the goals they held for their sessions, participants’ learning was mediated by their interest in the topic of the session, its perceived relevance for their work, and contextual and other perceived contextual factors particular to the session. Actionable and conceptual changes reported by participants are presented after the figure.

Figure 11
Conceptions, goals and learning outcomes
Conceptual change refers to new knowledge, ideas, confidence or awareness, not affecting the participants’ practice directly but enhancing or altering their cognition. For example, several participants reported learning about factors in the tertiary EAP environment which informed their employment and the functioning of their industry or institution. Others reported learning about colleagues or academic research affecting their teaching area. Most conceptual changes related to increased awareness. An exception to this was provided by Participant 3, who reported experiencing an increase in confidence after taking part in one of her sessions as she realised that she was already well informed in a particular area. She reflected, “I learnt that I knew a lot of that stuff already. Which was good. Because I was thinking, well I’m on top of it” (Participant 3, Interview 2, lines 321-322).

Actionable changes encompass knowledge which may be implemented in the form of practices. Participants 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8 reported actionable changes as a result of their professional development. These actionable changes were projected as, in many cases, insufficient time had elapsed between the professional development sessions and the second interviews or receipt of reflection sheets for participants to have implemented any changes in practice. Actionable changes reported by participants resulted from learning about specific software or programmes, discussion of effective practice, observation of instructional practices and information concerning relevant institutional policies. For example, Participant 2 outlined several actionable changes which she perceived to have resulted from her first session, during which she discussed aspects of effective practice with several colleagues. She reflected that she had acquired, “Some new approaches to try out – making clear what we mean by ‘academic’ sources – explaining rhetorical as well as ‘mechanical’ function of citation – ways to reinforce this through materials” (Participant 2, Reflection sheet, session one). Similarly, Participant 5 (Reflection sheet, session one), who attended a session on pronunciation, reflected that,

I will definitely attempt a [pronunciation] diagnostic with feedback in my future practice. I may – depending on time/workload factors – incorporate [the programme] into my future practice. The session has definitely motivated me to use a more blended approach to teaching/learning in the future.
Participant 7 was able to observe the strategies of an effective instructor during one of his activities. He reported the following actionable changes after its conclusion:

Some of the strategies observed in the session are already in my classroom practice. And there are many others that I can use. Among the many instructional strategies that I feel I can use and will impact on my classroom practice is to set out student-learning objectives in the beginning of the class. (Participant 7, Reflection sheet, session one)

Most participants reported changes, either actionable or conceptual, which were congruent with their existing dispositions and values as teachers. In other words, the changes did not require alteration of their existing values, beliefs and approaches. Two participants (Participants 5 and 6) reported changes which were incongruent with their existing dispositions. Participant 6 reported an actionable change which was owed to an institutional mandate rather than based on his decision. Participant 5 reported an actionable change which coincided with a change of his disposition toward an aspect of classroom practice. In this way, he experienced both a conceptual and an actionable change.

4.4.2 Question Three summary

Participants’ learning depended highly on contextual and perceived contextual factors. Participants who had control over their professional development were able to manipulate and direct the content to address their interests or needs. However, for those who did not control how activities were designed or run, their learning outcomes depended on an alignment of factors including their interest in the topic and its perceived utility for their work. As well as reporting categories of learning, participants also discussed conceptual and actionable changes resulting from their sessions. Reported changes were dependent upon a number of factors including institutional requirements, participants’ dispositions, values and beliefs, and the potential that the professional development had to inspire them or to highlight a gap in their practice or knowledge. Most changes aligned with participants’ existing approaches to teaching. However, there were two exceptions to this (Participants 5 and 6), as described in section 4.4.1. Conceptual change was more frequently reported than actionable change and was largely associated with increased awareness.
Overall, participants’ learning resulted from a combination of relevance and comprehensibility of their sessions. Relevance relates to the connection of the informational content presented during the professional development activities with the participants’ professional experiences, needs, interests, values and trajectories. Where participants felt that content was irrelevant to them and to their practice, they were likely to disengage and not report high levels of learning. On the other hand, where the content was relevant to them, they were more likely to learn from it, even if the professional development session didn’t align with their goals (see for example Participant 3, session one). Secondly, the professional development had to be comprehensible and moderately well run, both of which constituted perceived contextual factors, in order to occasion much learning. Just as factors such as poor organisation or unclear information impeded engagement, they also impeded participants’ learning. The reasons for this are logical; where participants were unable to make sense out of the session or struggled to maintain their attention, its potential to effectively convey information to them and to convince them that the information was of interest or relevance was reduced.

4.5 Summary of findings for the three research questions

The findings for the first research question constituted the conceptions of professional development reported by the participant group. Numbering thirteen in total, the conceptions fitted within three meta-categories: person-oriented conceptions, career-oriented conceptions and skills-oriented conceptions. Although the number of conceptions held by each participant varied, they each expressed multiple conceptions.

The findings for the second research question revealed an alignment between the participants’ conceptions and the goals they set out for their professional development activities. Participants understood professional development and its potential applications and limitations through their existing conceptions of the phenomenon. These conceptions were projected onto future instances of professional development, informed by participants’ previous experiences with similar professional development activities, information they had been given about the particular session or their understandings of what it would focus on or provide, and were used to form goals and expectations.
The influence of conceptions in determining participants’ interaction with their professional development, however, was restricted to the pre-participation stage. The remaining findings for the second research question and the findings for the third research question suggest that participants’ engagement and learning were highly dependent on contextual and perceived contextual factors. Two particularly critical factors which influenced participants’ engagement were their interest in the topic of their professional development activities and the perceived relevance of information presented or discussed for their work.

Participants’ learning was also influenced by a multitude of factors, many of which were session-bound. Relevance and comprehensibility were two critical perceived contextual factors which influenced the extent to which participants learnt from their sessions. In terms of change, conceptual changes commonly resulted from their professional development, frequently in the form of increased awareness. Actionable change also resulted from several of the participants’ sessions, referring to projected changes or adjustments to their practice. Furthermore, most changes (in the instance that they were not institutionally-mandated) aligned with participants’ existing values and dispositions as teachers.

The following chapter contains a discussion of these findings. Their relationships with other phenomenographic research and with the approaches to learning framework are explored. The findings will also be contextualised within the literature on professional development and learning for teachers, presented in Chapter Two, and the implications of the findings for teacher professional development in EAP will be discussed.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a discussion of the findings for the three research questions presented in Chapter Four. The discussion first addresses participants’ conceptions of professional development, taking into account the implications that these conceptions have for their understandings of their professional roles and their negotiation of goals, needs, responsibilities, interests and obligations via participation in professional development activities. The findings for the first component of the second research question, concerning participants’ goals for attending their professional development activities, are then addressed. The relationship between their conceptions and the motives underlying their attendance, as presented in Chapter Four (section 4.3.1) and Figure 7, is discussed in detail in section 5.3. In this section, a version of the approaches to learning framework is used to categorise participants’ approaches to professional development, consisting of the motivations underlying their attendance to their activities, in order to explore further the implications of their conceptions for their attendance. Recommendations are made regarding how certain conceptions may be fostered in order to encourage ongoing and resilient attendance to professional development activities. The findings for the second component of the second research question, concerning participants’ engagement during their activities, are then discussed. This discussion is accompanied by further recommendations, targeted at institutions and providers, concerning how teachers’ engagement in all professional development activities may be heightened. The findings for the third research question, concerning participants’ learning outcomes, are then explored. This discussion encompasses consideration of the complexity of teacher learning processes, including the numerous factors involved, and the possible outcomes of participation in professional development for teachers’ cognition and practice. This discussion accommodates consideration of the extent to which professional development may be expected to influence practitioners and includes recommendations for the design and delivery of activities to achieve best outcomes for teachers. It is important to note that, although the discussion and recommendations presented
throughout the chapter target teachers of EAP, they may also have some general applicability to teachers working in other sectors.

5.2 Participants’ conceptions of professional development

The participant group reported thirteen conceptions of professional development, as presented in Chapter Four (section 4.2). These conceptions were organised into three meta-categories: person-oriented, career-oriented and skills-oriented (see Figures 4, 5 and 6). These findings align with the phenomenographic view that different individuals may hold diverse conceptions of the same phenomenon (Marton & Säljö, 1976b; Säljö, 1979a), as confirmed by previous research (see Chapter Two, section 2.8.2). However, the understandings of professional development that participants’ conceptions represent diverge significantly from dominant literature definitions. As was explored in Chapters One and Two, there has previously been a wide focus in the literature on teacher professional development as a process that ultimately leads to improved student learning outcomes (see Avalos, 2011; Bashir, 2011; Borko, 2004; Diaz-Maggioli, 2003; Lowden, 2005; Pehmer et al., 2015). This focus positions professional development in an interventionist manner, as a phenomenon which “direct[s] the evolution in professional behaviour in a more desirable way” (Kelchtermans & Vanden Berghe, 1994, p. 45). Professional development is popularly conceptualised for its capacity to promote certain practices or cultures of accountability. Even self-directed and collective forms of professional development have tended to orient towards practice-based outcomes, albeit through more practitioner-centred pathways and accompanied by emphases on reflective practice, teacher agency and development of professional identities.

In contrast, the conceptions introduced by the participants of this study offer a more comprehensive, heterogeneous view of professional development and, in combination, position it as a phenomenon which is diverse and nuanced in applications and outcomes. Some of the conceptions are particularly responsive to the features of the EAP sector, whereas others may also relate to the experiences of teachers in other sectors. Furthermore, not all conceptions position professional development in a positive light. Although most highlight the potential of professional development to assist teachers in a number of ways, this is not always the case (see section 5.2.1.3). Overall, all conceptions are united by the
centralisation of practitioners as individuals who interact with professional development on professional, emotional and intellectual levels for various purposes.

5.2.1 Exploring the three meta-categories

Whereas industry and literature-based views of professional development have tended to position teachers as agents operating within larger structures or, more instrumentally, as conduits for achieving certain educational or societal aims, the participants’ conceptions of professional development centralise teachers as agentive individuals who negotiate multiple roles and who come into contact with professional development from a variety of personal and professional standpoints. Participants’ roles as reflected by their conceptions were numerous. They encompassed those of lifelong and passionate learners, isolated teachers seeking support from colleagues and other knowledgeable individuals, independent researchers and knowledge constructors, employees operating within and sometimes constrained by larger institutional and industry structures, skilful classroom technicians negotiating salient ideas alongside their own reflection on practice and careerists motivated by the goal of progressing in their profession. Each conception involved a different orientation towards professional development, interwoven with a different aspect of participants’ identities and trajectories.

Such a complex array of viewpoints can only be captured through interrogation of professional development from practitioners’ perspectives. This undertaking has provided insight into the participants’ lifeworlds and cast light on the variety of applications in-service EAP teachers may associate with professional development. Furthermore, it has illuminated the cognitive basis for the participants’ interaction with professional development, explored further in sections 5.3 and 5.4 in response to the second and third research questions. The three meta-categories of conceptions, each of which reveals a different practitioner orientation towards the phenomenon, are discussed in detail in sections 5.2.1.1-5.2.1.3. This discussion encompasses exploration of each conception as well as the relationship between the meta-categories, existing definitions of professional development and professional development practices in EAP. Where applicable, consideration is given to how the identified conceptions may alter practitioners’ future engagement with professional development and, subsequently, how institutions and providers of professional development
should accommodate or respond to the conceptions. In some instances, reference is also made to how the conceptions may impact practitioners working in other education sectors.

5.2.1.1 Skills-oriented conceptions

Discussion of the meta-categories begins with skills-oriented conceptions (see Chapter Four, section 4.2.3 and Figure 6) as, of the three meta-categories, these conceptions align most closely with popular definitions of professional development (see Avalos, 2011). These conceptions approach the acquisition, development and improvement of teaching skills from a number of angles and ultimately orient towards improved teacher practice, leading to better student learning outcomes. Such understandings of professional development are typically encouraged in the literature and involve an active stance on behalf of teachers regarding their practice. From the skills-oriented perspective, professional development is not passively received but rather intentionally pursued by teachers. From this perspective, participants discussed professional development as a means to enhance their skills for the purposes of pursuing effectiveness and responsiveness in their practice and resolving perceived practice-based issues. These conceptions are discussed individually below.

One skills-oriented conception concerned professional development as a means for general improvement of teaching skills, the goal of which was to enhance student learning and students’ overall experience. As Participant 4 (Interview 1, lines 11-22) explained,

… The intention of PD is also to be doing a better job for your students … to improve the service that your students get from you, so they learn better … it’s so that the people, whoever they are, that benefit from your role, it’s so that they continue to get a greater benefit from, out of what you do.

The participant later clarified, “and if no one’s developing, then I imagine, I would guess that the students are not getting as much result as they should be” (Participant 4, Interview 1, lines 406-408). Participant 5 (Interview 1, lines 39-40) also reflected on this goal for professional development, commenting, “I mean, if you are an EAP teacher, or any kind of teacher really, that should be the goal, that is, to provide the best classes for your students”. This conception was comparatively general in terms of the specifics of improved practice.
However, it stemmed from an understanding that teachers play critical roles in the classroom and that they have considerable responsibility to directly aid student learning. As Participant 4 commented, this conception is not solely applicable to EAP teachers. Nonetheless, EAP teachers’ capacity to make skilful and informed decisions regarding their practice and the appropriacy of course delivery for their students is vital. As mentioned previously, EAP teachers’ decision-making is complicated by challenges faced in their practice (see Chapter One, section 1.4.2; see also Ghanbari & Rasekh, 2012; Rajabi et al., 2011) and the ambiguities surrounding their roles and responsibilities within institutions (Arnó-Macià & Rueda-Ramos, 2011). This holistic conception is therefore highly applicable to EAP teachers and promotes participation in professional development as a way of negotiating these complexities and challenges through pursuit of ongoing enhancement of knowledge and skills, driven by the centralisation of student experiences and a commitment to best practice. Although somewhat general in nature, this conception represents an important way of understanding professional development and may contribute to practitioners’ willingness to engage in professional development activities for practice-based purposes.

Participants also discussed professional development as a means to acquire skills responsive to needs. As Participant 8 (Interview 1, lines 219-220) commented, “I think it’s a question of assessing what I would need to do my job and to develop in my skills. And then looking for available things to do that”. Needs were identified in response to participants’ reflections on their classroom experiences viewed through their understandings of effective practice, thus highlighting pertinent areas for improvement or resolution. For example, Participant 7 (Interview 1, lines 172-173) commented that, “I think for me, I usually look at myself, where I need or where I’m lacking in, and that’s how I engage”. Similarly, Participant 5 (Interview 1, line 193) commented that his pursuit of professional development to address needs was defined by first “identifying the problem and then learning to solve the problem”. This conception reveals a high degree of agency and reflection on participants’ behalf, accompanied by a desire to pursue new avenues for heightening their self-efficacy, or their estimation of their own capability to bring about student engagement and learning (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). It also aligns with the contention made by Ghanbari and Rasekh (2012; see Chapter Two, section 2.4.3), who argue that ESP teachers are justified in training themselves through processes of reflection and problem-solving in light of the difficulty of translating theory into practice in specialist English teaching.
However, effective pursuit of professional development in response to this conception is arguably dependent upon practitioners’ ability to accurately reflect on the impacts of their decision-making and to weigh these impacts alongside other factors and variables which come into play during classroom teaching. This ability would determine their capacity to identify issues to which they may actively respond, compared with those on which practice-based intervention would have little impact. Given that their subsequent pursuit of professional development may be based on possibly inaccurate assessments of classroom events, this conception does not necessarily predispose practitioners to undertaking professional development in a manner which is likely to be of most benefit to their practice. Furthermore, in light of the important relationship between self-efficacy, a factor contributing to professional resilience and to teachers’ ability to manage stress and maintain interest in their career (Klassen & Chiu, 2010, 2011), it may be argued that overly negative assessment of one’s decision-making and the impacts thereof is neither productive nor conducive to high self-efficacy. As such, pursuit of professional development from a problem-solving stance must be accompanied by acknowledgment of teachers’ strengths and abilities and a desire to build upon these through the integration of new knowledge, rather than treating professional development as a fix for perceived issues. In order to pursue professional development effectively from this standpoint through accurate assessment of issues and identification of potential responses, teachers must develop their self-awareness. Ideally, professional development may also provide a pathway for this. Development of self-awareness is the focus of one of the person-oriented conceptions reported by participants and is discussed in section 5.2.1.2.

Transformation of practice was also conceptualised as an important outcome of professional development from a skills-oriented perspective. Key to understanding this conception was the idea that professional development facilitated a learning process leading to tangible cognitive or practice-based changes which affect classroom practice. For example, one participant reflected that he determined the impact of professional development as follows:

… I might measure it in terms of “am I doing things differently?” to what I was before the PD event or activity or whatever it was. So … am I doing things differently, have I gained a new knowledge, um, which is slightly different. So one’s maybe an action-based outcomes-oriented measurement, and the other one is more
just an acquisition of knowledge type measurement. (Participant 4, Interview 1, lines 35-39)

Although this conception orientsr around the notion of change resulting from participation in professional development activities, it does not set specific parameters for what this change might entail. However, it reveals a general expectation of professional development – namely, that it is defined by outcomes rather than intentions. This expectation has implications for those who design and deliver professional development activities and reinforces the importance of keeping target practitioners at the centre of all initiatives (see section 5.4 for further discussion). Centralisation of target practitioners is likely to involve acknowledgment of the subject area and student cohort that they teach. Ultimately, if a session does not offer teachers the opportunity to experience some transformation or enhancement of their knowledge and/or practice, then it may not satisfy their expectations and subsequently may result in confusion, dissatisfaction and irritation. Repeat exposure to such experiences with professional development, particularly if practitioners are in the early stages of their careers, may lead to the formation of negative views of professional development and an eventual lack of willingness to participate in activities in the absence of external pressure. As discussed further in section 5.3.3, it is recommended that professional development offerings accommodate such practitioner expectations in order to ensure relevance and opportunities for valued learning and transformation.

The remaining conception in the skills-oriented group positioned professional development as a conduit for exposure to new ideas, information and practices. Participants who reported this conception were motivated by innovation and improvement which they could adapt in their own work. As Participant 5 (Interview 1, lines 47-50) reported, “high quality [professional development] is something that you walk away from with new knowledge, I think. New skills, something that you can apply in your job … and something that’s thought-provoking”. This conception was not based in perceived inadequacy of practitioners’ current knowledge and practice - rather, knowledge and practice were seen to benefit from an open stance and continual exposure to new input regardless of current strengths or weaknesses. While participants considered this exposure to be primarily important for the ongoing development of their knowledge and practice, there was also an element of enjoyment associated with the experience. As Participant 3 reflected, exposure to new ideas could in itself be engaging. She
commented, “I realise as well, that there’s so much I don’t know. And that’s, I think, why I want to study, to find out more … I really enjoy that, finding out more” (Participant 3, Interview 1, lines 361-363). Like other conceptions in the skills-oriented group, this conception is not solely responsive to EAP. Rather, it represents a valuable orientation to professional development for all practitioners as it may predispose them to remaining receptive to ongoing negotiation of effectiveness, subsequently developing a greater capacity to critically assess new input and its relevance for their practice.

Overall, the ultimate goal of professional development from a skills-oriented perspective was to enhance practice for the benefit of students. In light of previous literature and the requirements of the teaching role, such a perspective can be considered largely non-controversial and may be particularly important for EAP teachers as they negotiate their work in the absence of sufficient preparation and face difficulties reconciling theory and practice. These conceptions centralise participants’ classroom work, underscored by their identities as reflective and agentive practitioners. Given that the pursuit of professional development from a skills-oriented perspective was related to participants’ goals for responsiveness and effectiveness, these conceptions are associated with an assertion of agency. Acquisition and negotiation of skills were not couched within interventions but were rather responsive to participants’ pursuit of improved practice. Skills-oriented conceptions represent effective ways of understanding professional development as they associate it with teacher agency, autonomy and responsibility for practice. Opportunities for teachers to develop such conceptions, either via attendance to professional development activities which allow them to achieve such outcomes or via direct instruction concerning the potential outcomes of professional development, are of high value, as discussed further in section 5.3.3. However, one caveat, concerning teachers’ capacity to accurately identify practice-based problems and their origins, must be considered alongside the promotion of these conceptions. As such, it is recommended that development of self-awareness should accompany a skills-oriented pursuit of professional development in order to ensure effectiveness.

Furthermore, although participants reported skills-oriented conceptions positively, it must be acknowledged that, in undertaking their professional development activities for the study, the acquisition of skills was not always connected to participants’ own volition but also to
institutional mandate. In the absence of participant endorsement of the acquisition of particular skills, it was considered in a negative light. This will be explored further in section 5.3 as part of the discussion of motives underlying participants’ attendance to their professional development activities.

In contrast with the participants’ skill-oriented conceptions, which were concerned with practice-based outcomes, their person-oriented and career-oriented conceptions associated professional development with ancillary benefits such as those presented in Chapter Two (section 2.5). Considered in combination with the skills-oriented conceptions, these contributed to a more rounded view of how participants experienced professional development, encompassing personal outcomes as well as institutional requirements negotiated as aspects of their employment. The person-oriented and career-oriented meta-categories are discussed separately in sections 5.2.1.2 and 5.2.1.3.

5.2.1.2 Person-oriented conceptions

Person-oriented conceptions positioned professional development as a means to address practitioners’ personal needs and enhancing their wellbeing. Six conceptions were classified as person-oriented (see Chapter Four, section 4.2.1 and Figure 4). These conceptions addressed professional development in terms of its emotional and intellectual impacts on individual practitioners. From this perspective, professional development was considered to be a means by which practitioners could pursue lifelong learning and personal growth, increase their self-awareness, prevent stagnation, pursue professional passions and interests, give and receive support, and collaborate and interact with others. From a person-oriented perspective, practitioners themselves received the benefits of participating in professional development. Each of the person-oriented conceptions is explored individually below.

Under one of the person-oriented conceptions, professional development was conceptualised as a pathway to lifelong learning and opportunities for personal growth. Participants considered lifelong learning to be particularly applicable to teachers in light of the nature of their work. One facet of this related to advancements with respect to general education, language teaching and EAP concerning theory and practice. As Participant 6 (Interview 1, lines 55-56) reflected, professional development should represent “an ongoing process of
development. It’s not just something that you learn once and then you can just carry on doing the same thing”. However, participants also noted that lifelong learning should extend beyond professional practice and encompass personal growth and enrichment (see also Meyer & Logan, 2013). For example, Participant 7 commented that he occasionally pursued professional development opportunities in order to renew his sense of creativity and enthusiasm. Although this pursuit of professional development had outcomes for his work, it was focused more acutely on his personal development. He stated,

… I’ve been teaching so far, for quite a long time now and I’ve become quite, how do I say, worn out in a way. And, I’ve run out of ideas for how to make my class interesting and I think it’s because I have somewhat lost my … ways in which I can think creatively. And it’s more of a personal opinion, and I think I need to get that back. So that’s why, that’s how I see professional development relating to my personal development. (Participant 7, Interview 1, lines 15-23)

Lifelong learning may be considered critical for all teachers for both job-based and personal reasons. However, lifelong learning has particular significance for teachers of EAP. As was reviewed in Chapter One, the teaching of academic English is characterised by ongoing interaction with learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, all of whom bring unique orientations and experiences into the classroom. Debates surrounding the place of English as a medium of academic communication internationally and the role of EAP teachers in perpetuating certain ideas and norms associated with the use of English have impacted the field for some time and continue to do so (Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2014; Liyanage & Walker, 2014). Furthermore, the teaching of EAP is itself in a constant state of renegotiation – as mentioned in section 5.2.1.1, confusions regarding the relative status and specific roles of EAP teachers within higher education institutions are examples of this (Arnó-Macià & Rueda-Ramos, 2011; S. Evans & Green, 2007). Academic communication and the teaching of academic English continue to evolve. As EAP teachers participate in this increasingly interconnected and evolving arena, they should remain open to the possibility that their beliefs and practices may need to be renegotiated in light of local or global developments and foster ongoing awareness of their position within the wider community of academic language learners and users. Remaining cognizant of their position and relative stance is necessary in order to implement effective and ethical practice. An open and ongoing
Another person-oriented conception positioned professional development as a conduit for increasing self-awareness. Participants identified the potential of professional development to provide them with opportunities to become more aware of the cognition underlying their decision-making by allowing them to compare their ideas with those held by researchers and other practitioners in the field, and to reflect on the implications of these for their practices. As Participant 4 (Interview 1, lines 224-235) reflected,

> Once you're a teacher ... you're always putting theories into practice ... you can't avoid doing that. However you decide you want to teach, that's your theory. Even if you've never explicated it to anyone or even to yourself. Or even read about it. But whatever you do in the classroom is one way of going about out of an infinite number of ways you could have gone about it ... So for me, one definition of PD is becoming acquainted with whatever your own theory is. Becoming aware to yourself of what you're doing and then asking, why do you do it that way? And could you have done it another way. So that way theory and practice is truly combined. And I think fruitful PD ... is all about giving a teacher that opportunity.

This desire to achieve praxis, a “dialectical union of reflection and action” (Hoffman-Kipp, Artiles, & López-Torres, 2003, p. 249), provided participants with an impetus to pursue professional development opportunities which would allow them to critically interrogate their decision-making, and to explore their professional identity and their values. Participants reflected that this process eventually allowed them to either come to a point at which the theories and values underlying their teaching were transferred into practice or at which their decision-making became clearer to them. As reviewed in Chapter Two (section 2.5.1), self-awareness is considered to be critically important for all teachers’ practice and learning (Baum & King, 2006; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Underhill, 1992). In line with this literature, this conception represents a sophisticated and effective understanding of the reflective nature of teacher practice and of professional development as a conduit for enhancing practitioners’ capacity to interpret, reflect upon and evaluate their teaching via assessment of the nuances and impacts of their cognition (Laycock & Bunnag, 1991; Woolfolk Hoy, 2013). Furthermore, as mentioned in section 5.2.1.1, development of self-
awareness is a necessary precursor to accurate assessment of classroom events and, subsequently, a more useful pursuit of professional development in order to address perceived practice-based issues. In light of its importance, opportunities for the development of self-awareness via professional development offerings may be of benefit to EAP teachers. Opportunities for mentoring and discussion groups, wherein teachers are able to share theories and experiences, may provide an efficient avenue for doing so. Furthermore, exposing teachers to alternative ways of approaching EAP practice may be a productive way of encouraging critical consideration of their own beliefs and convictions concerning effective teaching.

Professional development was also conceptualised as a means to prevent stagnation of participants’ practice, ideas and orientations to teaching. Participants discussed stagnation in a way which was similar to content plateau (see Chapter Two, section 2.5.3), involving a “lack of challenge, decrease in responsibilities, and overall staleness of the job itself” (Lentz & Allen, 2009, p. 362). In line with this definition, participants did not associate stagnation with effectiveness in practice but rather with enjoyment of the teaching role and motivation to continue in the profession. The consequences of “getting stuck in a rut” (Participant 8, Interview 1, line 411), “being stuck doing the same things all the time” (Participant 3, Interview 1, lines 24-25) and being “stuck forever” (Participant 1, Interview 1, line 98) were reported as negative outcomes of stagnation which could be addressed through participation in appropriate professional development. The kinds of professional development which may combat stagnation would inevitably depend on each practitioner’s interests and needs – some may seek interaction and collaboration with peers, whereas others may prefer to attend information-based sessions which align with their interests. Regardless of how it is addressed, stagnation is a critical issue for teachers which, if left unattended, may lead to underchallenged burnout, wherein teachers face monotony and lack of stimulation in their work (Farber, 2000). Participant 4 (Interview 1, lines 4-9) reflected on this, stating,

I guess everyone would like to think they are always developing in their job. ‘Cause if you’re not developing, I guess by definition you’re stagnating. And if you’re stagnating you’re probably not going to be enjoying your job … you just want to develop so that you can remain motivated in what you’re doing.
As Farber (2000) contends, teachers experiencing underchallenged burnout “are uninterested rather than fed up, bored rather than intolerably stressed. For underchallenged teachers, the stresses of work are not especially great but neither are the rewards, particularly those of a psychological nature” (p. 686). Professional development, as identified by participants and others in the field, has the potential to bring new energy and inspiration into teachers’ practice and to combat boredom, stress and burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Awareness of this, accompanied by opportunities to undertake professional development activities which are relevant, engaging and interesting, is critical for teachers experiencing or at risk of underchallenged burnout and general disengagement from their work. As such, this conception should be promoted as it may provide an impetus for teachers to seek out professional development opportunities in order to reinvigorate their interest and motivation to teach and to (re)connect with fellow practitioners, topics of interest and pertinent ideas, thus acting against stagnation.

Participants also conceptualised professional development as a means for general exploration of topics and ideas which they found stimulating or about which they felt passionately or enthusiastically. Such passions and interests were likely to intersect with their professional roles in some way; however, like the other person-oriented conceptions, the conception primarily revolved around practitioners’ enjoyment and intellectual stimulation. As Participant 2 commented, professional development provided a way to bring interest to her work. She reflected, “for me, well especially in terms of my self-directed professional development, it’s what makes my job more interesting” (Participant 2, Interview 1, lines 213-214). She later added,

I think also, because I like studying. I’ve always been a bit of a perpetual student. Yeah, I think … and the more, probably recently, it’s intensified even more. But yeah, if I didn’t have that, I don’t think I’d enjoy my job as much as I do. (Participant 2, Interview 1, lines 226-228).

Participant 7 discussed the important role of professional development in allowing teachers to engage in activities and explore topics which they found interesting, but which could also lead to beneficial learning. Importantly, teachers’ enjoyment was the focus of such activities; learning outcomes, although probable, were secondary to this. Participant 7 pointed out that
taking part in such professional development could refresh teachers and renew their enthusiasm for learning. This conception fits in a complementary manner with the previously discussed conception, connected to the prevention of stagnation, and may further clarify teachers’ participation in different professional development activities. The pursuit of interests and passions provides a reprieve from repetitive practice and may pre-empt feelings of boredom and dissatisfaction. Possession of this conception may promote practitioners’ pursuit of professional development in response to the satisfaction of autonomous intrinsic goals and, as a result, potentially strengthen their interest in and commitment to their work. In this manner, teachers may encounter new topics of interest to further develop their enthusiasm for EAP teaching. Furthermore, as teachers progress in their careers, revisiting topics in which they are interested or about which they feel passionately may remind them of why they were initially attracted to the field and refresh their outlook regarding their work.

In contrast with the previous person-oriented conceptions, which focused inwardly onto individual practitioners, the final two conceptions in the person-oriented meta-category were interpersonal in nature. The first of these conceptions concerned the role of professional development in providing opportunities for practitioners to give and receive support. Support for teachers is considered to be critical in light of the stressors they face in their work. For participants, these stressors were compounded by isolation in the classroom and high levels of professional responsibility. As Participant 1 (Interview 1, lines 369-370) reflected, “I mean, the concept itself of PD is invaluable. The concept itself of what it can provide the profession, because as I said, once you start teaching, you’re very much yourself and the students”. To combat this isolation and the pressure to perform effectively, participants recognised the importance of using professional development opportunities to offer support to others and to seek support. As Participant 7 (Interview 1, lines 150-152) stated, “not only that you support yourself, you support your students, but … I can also use my knowledge to support my peers. So I think that’s the higher end of PD in a sense”. In the EAP sector particularly, such interpersonal applications of professional development should be fostered. The support of one’s colleagues in facing challenges in work and employment is indispensable and may act against isolation, low self-efficacy, professional disengagement and dropout. However, in order to provide such professional development opportunities, safe spaces in which teachers feel free to communicate in the absence of scrutiny or judgment should be provided. This may entail provision of professional development activities which
are not attended by managers or supervisors, thus allowing teachers to more openly discuss a range of positive and negative experiences. In consideration of the fact that many EAP teachers are employed on a casual basis (see Chapter One, section 1.4.2) managerial incentivisation or facilitation of such opportunities would likely increase teachers’ capacity to attend. Furthermore, although improving practice and addressing gaps in teachers’ knowledge may result from participation in such activities, it is recommended that these outcomes not be positioned so as to detract from the goal of allowing teachers to give and receive support.

The second interpersonal conception concerned the role of professional development in facilitating collaboration and interaction amongst practitioners. Opportunities for collaboration constituted an important application of professional development in EAP for a number of reasons. As Participant 2 (Interview 1, lines 187-188) reflected, many professional development sessions provided for EAP teachers were “very much TESOL-based” and therefore communicating and sharing ideas with other practitioners in the specialist area was seen as a way to address topics specific to their practice. There was also a collegial aspect to this collaboration, wherein like-minded practitioners dealt collectively with relevant issues and were able to develop relationships with others in the field. As Participant 2 (Interview 1, lines 29-34) reflected,

Also, I think, [professional development] can be a way of sharing some ideas. And maybe some of the more relevant PD isn’t formal but comes, like, through the staffroom, over coffee, that kind of thing. Brain storm ideas, talking about perhaps a challenge that you’ve got in the classroom and then other people talk about that … more of an informal sharing of information, um, for teachers.

Opportunities to collaborate would allow EAP practitioners to discuss issues directly with other practitioners who may experience the same challenges, thus allowing them to capitalise on their collective experiences, seek confirmation and negotiate solutions together. As with previous conceptions, the complexities inherent in EAP practice compound the importance of such opportunities. Given that many practitioners are unable to access sufficient pre-service EAP preparation, opportunities for collaboration and for mentoring, whereby experienced practitioners provide novice practitioners with ongoing guidance, would be
useful for fostering teacher identities, resilience and collaboration in EAP. Furthermore, in consideration of the relatively small size of the field, concerted efforts to offer practitioners collaborative opportunities would be of much benefit in creating EAP-focused learning communities. Indeed, it is likely that the ongoing development of EAP as a cohesive branch of ESP will be dependent upon communication and collaboration between practitioners, responsive not to university protocol to increase rates of student participation but rather to teachers’ commitment to carrying out their work effectively.

Overall, although the person-oriented conceptions did not disassociate professional development from enhancement of practitioners’ cognition and practice, the central goals of professional development from this perspective concerned the personal and ongoing development, motivation, enjoyment, collaboration and wellbeing of practitioners. Possession of person-oriented conceptions suggests a degree of self-awareness on behalf of participants with regards to their long-term needs. In negotiating external goals for their professional development (discussed further in section 5.2.1.3), participants were able to also reflect on how professional development could make a positive difference to their experience as EAP teachers and make their work more interesting and fulfilling, ultimately encouraging professional longevity. These conceptions cast professional development in a very positive light – as will be discussed in section 5.3.3, fostering such conceptions in the minds of pre-service and in-service practitioners may encourage commitment to participation in modes of professional development from which they are likely to experience enduring benefit. However, such outcomes are also dependent on the availability of appropriate opportunities for professional development or, in their absence, on practitioners’ willingness to instigate their own professional development activities.

5.2.1.3 Career-oriented conceptions

The career-oriented conceptions reported by participants contrasted significantly with their person-oriented conceptions. Under career-oriented conceptions, professional development was associated with successful operation within an institution or industry, career advancement (see also Stout, 1996), and requirements and expectations imposed by employers for staff participation in professional development. These conceptions positioned professional development as a mechanism used to regulate participants’ professional
behaviour and contribute to various short-term and long-term career-based outcomes. Outcomes included acquisition of information pertaining to employment context, career advancement and compliance with externally imposed demands and expectations for professional development (see Chapter Four, section 4.2.2 and Figure 5).

In terms of acquiring information, participants conceptualised professional development as a means of developing and maintaining awareness of external factors affecting their employment context. These factors included student cohorts, institutional policy, the academic literature and other developments in the EAP sector. Awareness of these factors did not directly affect participants’ practice, but rather allowed them to stay up-to-date and to communicate effectively with employers, colleagues and other practitioners about salient ideas and occurrences in their field. As Participant 8 (Interview 1, lines 463-467) commented,

[Professional development] can be useful because it keeps everyone aware of the same things. So I mean … if I’m going to have people come in to teach courses, they’re often coming from other places or from other courses. So, I need to stay aware of what’s going on in the field generally because they’re going to bring ideas with them, and it’s, you know, it hugely helps communication if I know what they’re talking about.

Development of this awareness was not related to what participants found to be interesting or engaging – as Participant 5 (Interview 1, lines 44-46) commented, “it’s not really about your field of interest in a sense because, just because I’m not interested in it doesn’t mean it’s low quality”. Rather, what defined professional development from this perspective was its potential to convey to practitioners necessary information which they were otherwise unlikely to uncover themselves. This was summarised by Participant 8 (Interview 1, lines 408-410), who reflected that, “professional development ensures that we stay aware of things that aren’t directly in our line of interest but are relevant to our jobs … it also ensures we stay aware of things that are directly relevant to us”. Using professional development to keep abreast of such developments was considered by participants to be particularly relevant for practitioners of EAP. For example, Participant 5 (Interview 1, lines 33-35) reflected that professional development provided him with a way to “stay up-to-date, basically, with
what’s happening in the world of teaching … especially academic English, things change a lot”. In comparison with previous conceptions, within which the pursuit of professional development was primarily driven by participants’ volition, this conception supports some external intervention in the provision of professional development to EAP practitioners. As the participants reflected, it is unlikely that practitioners are able to identify all relevant external developments by themselves and subsequently may rely on externally-facilitated professional development, delivered by their institution of employment or other relevant organisations, to do this. Congruent with Participant 5’s reflections, practices surrounding the teaching of academic English, as well as policy within and above tertiary institutions, are not static. In the absence of externally-facilitated professional development opportunities, extensive dedication on behalf of practitioners would be required to remain up-to-date with occurrences in the field. In light of this conception, and discussed further in section 5.4.1, institutional responsibility in the provision of professional development may contribute to facilitating a rounded professional development experience to address a range of outcomes.

The remaining two conceptions in the career-oriented group positioned professional development as a mechanism utilised by both employers and practitioners. These instrumentalistic conceptions positioned the phenomenon outside the scope of teacher practice, wellbeing and interaction with peers, associating it with institutional administration and navigation of industry expectations. Under these conceptions, the outcomes of professional development were considered to be both positive and negative.

From a positive standpoint, undertaking and delivering professional development was associated with heightening opportunities for career advancement (see also Stout, 1996). This conception took into account the totality of participants’ work contexts, stretching beyond the classroom and into wider organisational structures and industry parameters, and was grounded in the importance of staying connected, visible and competitive. As Participant 5 described, participation in certain types of professional development could be used as formal evidence to demonstrate technical knowledge, advanced skills and engagement in work. This evidence could subsequently be utilised to further one’s career. As the participant explained,
… So let’s say basically, for an example, I went for a job interview. And I have exactly the same amount of experience as someone else in the classroom. What might set me apart from them is the … professional development that I’ve engaged in. So if I, you know, run workshops for my colleagues, or I’ve done a masters, or you know, um, written journal articles or something like that. That might be what sets me apart from them … In a way, that’s the more formal side of professional development. (Participant 5, Interview 1, lines 127-134)

As Participant 5 reflected, benefits for practitioners were associated with this competitive conception. Professional development was utilised as a tool and valued for its potential to be exhibited to others. Participant 4 stated that careful negotiation of the requirements for promotion within institutions was another aspect of this. He reflected,

There’s also a … formal advancement aspect to it, where you do a PD and you get recognised for doing it. And, you know, you get a brownie points, sort of thing, from your employer, or you’re sort of ticking boxes in their career advancement system … Most employers do put those hoops down for you. And, and you have to, you know, account for whether you did certain PD things. (Participant 4, Interview 1, lines 85-91)

Although such applications are likely representative of teachers’ interactions with professional development across educational sectors, the place of professional development in providing demonstrable proof of experience, engagement and advancement in work is particularly relevant for EAP teachers in light of the lack of specialist teacher education and training opportunities available to them. As mentioned in Chapter One (section 1.4.2) and elsewhere, whilst EAP practitioners may have access to general TESOL teacher preparation programmes, educational opportunities to acquire and demonstrate specialist knowledge are not readily available outside self-directed study (for example, a research degree). Professional development, however, may orient specifically around topics of relevance to EAP practitioners and thus provide some evidence of practitioners’ knowledge of them, particularly if have delivered sessions or led activities. Unlike the skills-oriented and person-oriented conceptions, this conception is unlikely to lead practitioners to undertake professional development which is inwardly endorsed. However, it may provide a platform
for increasing participation in professional development activities, particularly for teachers who are otherwise disinterested in them. For stakeholders with an interest in heightening participation in professional development, it may be of benefit to be cognizant of such motivations and to utilise professional development opportunities efficiently, so that they may provide teachers with more than evidence of attendance. This is discussed further in sections 5.3 and 5.4.

In contrast, the final career-oriented conception stemmed from a negative view of professional development. This conception positioned professional development as a requirement or obligation imposed by employers and associated with accountability and compliance. Participants discussed the role of professional development within their institutions of employment, which they viewed as interconnected systems (Hökkä & Vähäsantanen, 2013). Tight-coupling between organisational tiers with a strong emphasis on management and employee accountability has typified the development of education systems in the latter half of the twentieth century (Bloomfield, 2006; Tuinamuana, 2011). This was recognised by participants, who perceived that requirements for participation in professional development filtered down through organisational tiers and were typically imposed on staff by management. In this manner, professional development constituted a branch of institutional protocol and was seen to typically prioritise institutional interests over practitioners’ needs. For example, Participant 8 commented that guidelines provided by her institution regarding activities which could be defined as professional development often excluded pathways to teacher learning valued by practitioners (see section 5.3.1.3 for further discussion). Overall, this conception provided very weak motivation for attendance to professional development activities. However, it suggests greater implications for institutions than for practitioners, in that it is likely responsive to participants’ previous, negative interactions with institutionally-facilitated professional development activities. If institutionally-facilitated activities are to attract practitioners and occasion valuable learning, emphasis should be placed on benefits for teachers rather than the place of professional development within institutional protocol (see section 5.3.1.3 for further discussion). Professional development occupies too critical a place for EAP practitioners to reduce their willingness to attend based on irrelevant activities or quota systems which do not centralise, or do not appear to prioritise, their learning and needs.
Overall, the career-oriented conceptions associated professional development with participants’ capacity to navigate their professional context and work towards career success and mobility. These conceptions are also reflective of professional development regimes which operate in many higher education institutions. Rather than offering professional development for the benefit of teaching staff, targeted towards issues of importance or relevance, the participants’ comments in this regard suggest that their previous experiences with institutional professional development may have been sufficiently focused on administrative protocol to lead them to perceive it as a tool utilised by employers. In practice, administrative requirements for professional development can distance the phenomenon from practitioners and result in the disconnection of professional development and teacher learning, leading teachers to develop negative, instrumentalistic conceptions of it. These experiences are likely to affect not only EAP practitioners but also other teaching staff working in higher education and in compulsory education sectors. Although practitioners should be encouraged to develop conceptions which may predispose them to pursuing more beneficial participation in professional development, such conceptions must be supported by professional development opportunities which effectively deliver positive outcomes for teachers. These issues are explored further in section 5.3, as part of the discussion of the consequences of conceptions for attendance to professional development activities.

5.2.2 Possession of multiple conceptions

As well as uncovering numerous conceptions of professional development, the findings for the first research question highlight the multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon for each of the participants. Each participant reported multiple conceptions of professional development (see Chapter Four, section 4.2), viewing it as a phenomenon which could fulfil various personal and professional ends encompassing both long-term and short-term outcomes. The discovery of multiple conceptions of a phenomenon held by individual participants is not unique in phenomenography; see for example Tsai, Tsai, and Hwang (2011), Lin and Tsai (2008) and Purdie and Hattie (2002). Indeed, Purdie and Hattie (2002) suggest that high achieving learners tend to have multiple, rather than singular, conceptions of learning. Viewing multiple conceptions as a positive attribute, they suggest that learners should be encouraged to view learning as a “multifaceted construct that is best understood from multiple perspectives and achieved in a variety of ways” (Purdie & Hattie, 2002, p. 28). The
possession of multiple conceptions of professional development by the participants of this study reveals complex understandings of the phenomenon as well as participants’ capacity to treat it with flexibility and interact with it on a number of bases. This interaction is discussed further in section 5.3. As will be explored in this section, the relationship between participants’ conceptions and their interaction with their professional development activities reinforces the view that teachers’ cognition is key to understanding their professional decision-making (S. Borg, 2003a, 2006), including that related to professional development and learning.

A further remark concerning the outcome space is that it diverges from that constructed by Hornung (2013), presented in Chapter Two (section 2.8.5). Given the differences in participant groups, limited crossover is to be expected. Nonetheless, some of the conceptions uncovered by Hornung (2013) do find parallels with those stated by the participants of the study reported here. For example, the conception reported by Hornung (2013) of continuing professional development as “about development as a human being” (p. 684) finds parallels with conceptions in the person-oriented category.

In terms of broad implications for institutions and providers of professional development, the findings for the first research question suggest that those undertaking professional development and those facilitating or implementing it may have diverging understandings of its purposes. In comparison with common understandings of professional development found in the literature, participants’ conceptions were more nuanced and captured comparatively more diverse applications of professional development. Participants viewed professional development as a flexible, non-static phenomenon and reflected that participation in professional development activities could result in diverse outcomes for EAP practitioners, their colleagues, their students and their careers. While most conceptions positioned professional development in a positive light, participants also discussed its negative applications. Suggestions regarding the reconciliation of teachers’ and providers’ conceptions of and goals for professional development are provided in sections 5.3 and 5.4.

Overall, participants’ conceptions also reveal sophisticated understandings of other phenomena widely advocated for teachers, such as self-awareness, collaboration and reflective practice. Their multiple conceptions did not sacrifice the pursuit of more
traditional, practice-oriented goals but rather emphasised that these goals can be achieved in a variety of ways and can coexist alongside other goals for professional development (see section 5.3). Critically, participants also emphasised the importance of working towards practitioner wellbeing through participation in professional development. Practitioners, as skilled technicians, are conduits for achieving wide educational aims such as improving student engagement or heightening student learning outcomes. Practitioners’ wellbeing and satisfaction should be safeguarded and centralised in order to facilitate successful achievement of these aims, brought about in conjunction with the development of their identities, self-efficacy and resilience. This is particularly the case for the EAP sector, wherein negotiation of effective practice may require an extensive period of time and reflection in collaboration with other practitioners. Even ancillary outcomes of professional development which appear instrumentalistic, including taking part in professional development for the purpose of career advancement, may contribute to a fulfilling trajectory for practitioners. While such understandings do not provide practice-based or person-oriented motives for undertaking professional development and, as such, should not constitute the sole basis for interaction with activities, they do highlight practitioners’ salient professional goals and needs. They also serve to further clarify the motives underlying EAP teachers’ participation in professional development. Overall, the findings for the first research question support the importance of valuing the totality of teachers’ experiences and treating professional development as a way to communicate with teachers and negotiate their goals alongside those of institutions, rather than as a patch or intervention designed with an external outcome in mind.

The following section of this chapter will explore the consequences of participants’ conceptions for their attendance to their professional development activities, corresponding to the first component of the second research question. Participants’ motives for attendance are categorised and aligned with the conceptions discussed above. The framework provided by the approaches to learning (see Chapter Two, section 2.8.1) is reconfigured to accommodate and explore participants’ approaches to professional development. The consequences of these approaches for their engagement and learning are discussed in section 5.4.
5.3 Participants’ attendance to professional development

The first component of the second research question concerns the motives underlying participants’ attendance to their professional development activities. Participants held a variety of goals for attending, as presented in Chapter Four (section 4.3.1). Connections were noted between these goals and the three meta-categories of conceptions (see Chapter Four, section 4.3.1 and Figure 7). As is shown in Figure 7, participants’ person-oriented conceptions were evident in their autonomous goals, whereas their career-oriented conceptions connected to controlled goals. Skills-oriented conceptions aligned with both goal types, depending on the value participants perceived in acquiring the skill in question. Notably, some participants made explicit mention of the association between their goals for taking part in their professional development activities and their previously stated conceptions. For example, as Participant 1 reflected on her interaction with her professional development activities during the second interview, she commented, “I was thinking that … some of the things that I did in those PDs really matched to what we were saying [during the first interview] … actually I was thinking on a meta-level reflection on my own reflection” (Participant 1, Interview 2, lines 650-656). For some participants, the interaction between their conceptions and motives remained unacknowledged; however, as no explicit attention was drawn towards it during the second interview, this is unsurprising. Furthermore, the relationships between participants’ conceptions and their goals for their professional development were not presumed and were only firmly established during data analysis.

The relationship between conceptions and goals is explored in detail in section 5.3.1. In this section, the approaches to learning framework is reinterpreted for professional development in order to further explore the motives underlying participants’ attendance to their professional development activities. As was presented in Chapter Four (section 4.3.1.4), the findings for the second research question suggest that, although participants held various goals for their activities, autonomous goals were more highly valued than controlled goals. This finding aligns with previous research, presented in Chapter Two (see Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gillet et al., 2012), and is discussed further in section 5.3.1. Critically, it has implications for how practitioners prioritise professional development and for how professional development opportunities should be framed for practitioners.
Recommendations for framing activities and for fostering conceptions which place high value on participation in professional development are provided later in the chapter.

Participants’ behaviours and engagement during their professional development activities were influenced to a greater extent by contextual, perceived contextual and personal factors than by their goals or conceptions (see Chapter Four, section 4.3.2 and Figure 8). This finding, discussed further in section 5.4, is important for the proposed framework of approaches to professional development as it suggests that participants’ conceptions of professional development had the greatest impact at the stage of determining whether or not they would attend a particular session. For this reason, the approaches to professional development explored below only take into account participants’ motives for attendance.

5.3.1 Approaches to professional development

Participants’ approaches to professional development diverge somewhat from the original approaches to learning framework. This divergence is attributable to differences in learning contexts and desired outcomes. The fact that professional development is a feature on employment landscapes means that it is generally undertaken with some connection to professional roles and careers, whereas students’ approaches to learning typically revolve around their studies and assessment within formal education systems (see Diseth & Martinsen, 2003; Laird, Seifert, Pascarella, Mayhew, & Blaich, 2014). Of the three approaches explored here, the motives underlying the deep approach to professional development bore the closest resemblance to the deep approach to learning (Baeten et al., 2010; Biggs, 1988). The participants’ deep goals centred on understanding the topic of the activity, applying it to their wider context and maintaining their momentum as learners over their careers. However, the other two approaches differed somewhat from previous definitions in terms of the desired outcomes associated with their use. The strategic approach, based on competition and achievement (Baeten et al., 2010; Diseth & Martinsen, 2003), was utilised by participants for promotion and professional success as well as to strengthen workplace relationships and build social capital. The surface approach comprised controlled goals associated with compliance and observance of institutional expectations, obligations and requirements for professional development and practice. Each of these approaches is discussed in sections 5.3.1.1 – 5.3.1.3.
5.3.1.1 Deep motives

The autonomous, learning-related goals cited by participants for undertaking their professional development activities, presented in Chapter Four (section 4.3.1.1 and Figure 7), were associated with understanding the learning material at hand (Entwistle et al., 1979), accompanied by a desire to relate the content of the learning back to their personal experience (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). As such, participants set out to draw conclusions from their learning, view it within context and understand its relevance to them (McCune & Entwistle, 2000).

A number of participants cited deep motives for undertaking their professional development sessions (see Chapter Four, section 4.3.1.1). For example, Participant 8 (Interview 2, lines 103-104) stated that the topic of one of her sessions “was something I needed to know more information about and it applies directly to my work”. Similarly, Participant 2 (Interview 2, lines 56-61) reported the following with regards to her goals and expectations for her first session, which took the form of a practice-oriented discussion with colleagues:

I think … for it to be a real kind of sharing experience … I’m expecting that I’ll go along and share any issues that I might have or any epiphanies that I’ve had during the day! … Being very open to suggestions or listening to what other people have tried or didn’t try.

These goals can be connected back to the skills-oriented and person-oriented conceptions which positioned professional development as a potential pathway to contextualised, relevant learning (see sections 5.2.1.1 and 5.2.1.2). For example, Participant 6 (Interview 1, lines 17-20) explained the importance of pursuing learning which could be connected back to his practice as follows:

I mean other people have had great ideas which I need to incorporate if I’m to improve. So I want to know what their ideas are, what they’ve done and what worked for them, and how’s it going to work for me.
Participants considered the outcomes of pursuing professional development based on inwardly endorsed motives to be of high value. This finding is backed by previous literature which suggests that pursuing autonomous goals is associated with a higher level of psychological satisfaction than pursuing controlled goals (Ryan et al., 1996; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Deci and Ryan (2000) argue that this is because autonomous goals more effectively accommodate individuals’ psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, all of which are essential for wellbeing. The pursuit of these needs subsequently governs the relative levels of satisfaction associated with all goals, wherein the goals which prioritise them are valued more highly than those which do not. Prioritisation of autonomy and competence is evident in participants’ comments associated with the deep approach to professional development. In terms of autonomy, participants undertook their sessions based on their own judgments with respect to their needs or interests. They valued their own choice in the matter, wherein attendance was free of external coercion such as pressure from employers (Ryan, 1995). The pursuit of competence was also evident in the use of the deep approach, as participants sought opportunities for relevant learning to improve or enhance their professional practice. However, the need for relatedness is not directly associated with this approach. Rather, relatedness forms a component of participants’ strategic approach to professional development, equally based on autonomous goals but somewhat different in focus from the deep approach. The strategic approach is explored in section 5.3.1.2.

Overall, while participants’ deep learning goals are compatible with popular constructions concerning outcomes of professional development (Starman, Larson, Proffitt, Guskey, & Ma, 2014), they also reveal an idealised view of professional development as highly relevant, context-responsive and practice-oriented. Participants acknowledged that these outcomes did not characterise their experience with the phenomenon as a whole but were rather associated with professional development which they considered to be particularly effective or of notably high quality. Participants recalled experiences with such professional development throughout their careers and associated it with skills-oriented and person-oriented outcomes such as learning relevant information to contribute to their practice, increasing their self-awareness and confidence to respond to issues, and pursuing lifelong learning.

Nonetheless, participants acknowledged that not all professional development activities would accommodate the deep approach. This acknowledgment was based on projected
understandings regarding the source of the professional development as well as its aims, format and content. Indeed, in some instances participants themselves targeted certain professional development opportunities in response to other goals such as supporting others. Participants also reflected that they were sometimes required to attend certain sessions against their own volition. They utilised surface and strategic approaches in order to respond to these situations. Via the use of these approaches, participants sought to capitalise on their attendance in different ways. The motives underlying these approaches and their specific features are explored in sections 5.3.1.2 and 5.3.1.3.

5.3.1.2 Strategic motives

Typically, strategic motives revolve around competition and achievement (Diseth & Martinsen, 2003). Desire for high performance drives the use of the strategic approach (Biggs, 1988) as it is primarily associated with recognition and success. However, for the participants, the strategic approach to professional development comprised two aspects. The approach was characterised by 1) the desire to perform successfully within the ambit of their profession, responding to the need for competence; and, 2) the pursuit of the psychological need for relatedness through collaborating with, supporting and receiving support from fellow practitioners (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2002). These two aspects are explored below.

Goals which revolved around competence and achievement were noted in the reflections of some participants. For example, Participant 7 reflected on an achievement-focused strategic goal for attending one of his sessions. He understood that the session was to focus on a particular skill which he felt would be of increasing value to employers over the coming years (see Chapter Four, section 4.3.1.2). Participant 6 also cited an achievement-oriented strategic goal for attending his second activity. Several motives underlay his attendance, one of which was to network with colleagues and peers in order to remain up-to-date with developments in their field. Networking is typically considered to be an important strategy for career development (Forret & Dougherty, 2001). As the participant reflected,
And I know a lot of people working in language education in [the site of the professional development], so it was a chance to sort of meet with them and network, find out what they were doing. Also people from uh [another location] and so on were, who I knew in [another location], had come … So, that had something to do with it, too. (Participant 6, Interview 2, lines 241-245)

Although they did not all reflect on strategic motives for undertaking their activities, it is likely that other participants may also utilise the strategic approach when undertaking professional development. This is due to the fact that various participants reported the conceptions of *professional development as a tool for career advancement* and *professional development as a means for developing awareness of and adapting to employment context* during the first interview, both of which may preclude similar external motives for undertaking professional development (see section 5.2.1.3). These conceptions alluded to the desire for competence within an institution or industry of employment and positioned opportunities for professional development as steps to remaining up-to-date, functioning successfully and pursuing more desirable positions or promotions. Although, in isolation, such goals do not suggest a particularly deep commitment to the content at hand, they may be compatible with other deep, learning-oriented goals or with autonomous strategic goals, as explored below. They may therefore provide extra impetus for practitioners to take part in professional development without detracting from other possible outcomes.

The strategic approach to professional development also encompassed autonomous goals related to interpersonal outcomes such as strengthening relationships with colleagues and fostering a supportive and collaborative workplace environment. In this manner, several participants reported attending their professional development activities in order to support their colleagues who were facilitating or presenting, to collaborate with peers, or to provide and receive support. These goals were grounded within the strategic use of professional development as a means to pursue relatedness by developing positive relationships and contributing to the social capital of the workplace (Venkataramani, Labianca, & Grosser, 2013), responsive to person-oriented conceptions. Not only is relatedness an important psychological need for all individuals (Deci & Ryan, 2000), but strong relationships in the workplace may also increase employees’ positive associations with work and buffer the effects of burnout, to which teachers are particularly susceptible (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000;
Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). For teachers, who may experience particularly high levels of emotional strain at work, social support is argued to contribute to job satisfaction, performance and wellbeing (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005; Kinman, Wray, & Strange, 2011). Conversely, negative and unsupportive interpersonal behaviours in the workplace such as bullying and antagonism contribute to employee disengagement and detachment, as well as to potential psychological and physical health problems (Nielsen, Hetland, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2012; Venkataramani et al., 2013). In response to calls for interventions to assist teachers with effective management of their emotional health (Kinman et al., 2011), this finding suggests that professional development may provide an accessible platform for doing so. Even though these motives for attendance were unrelated to the topics of the activities, they evidenced considered strategies responsive to participants’ psychological and workplace needs and those of their colleagues.

Participants’ autonomous strategic motives reveal highly intuitive and pointed applications of professional development. In combination with some of the person-oriented conceptions, they suggest that the phenomenon should be somewhat reconceptualised for the teaching profession in order to encompass not only learning and achievement but also the pursuit of strengthened connections and relationships with other practitioners. From an institutional perspective, addressing teachers’ needs through professional development should encompass provision of practice-based guidance as well as opportunities to foster wellbeing in the workplace. The high levels of stress faced by teachers and the intensity of the emotional labour associated with teaching, which have contributed to high rates of burnout across various educational sectors (Akın, Aydın, Erdoğan, & Demirkasımoglu, 2014; Foley & Murphy, 2015; Kinman et al., 2011), must be addressed in order to foster a resilient workforce. As the participants of this study noted, professional development provides a convenient platform for addressing these aims. It is possible that teachers may take advantage of a number of different professional development activities to communicate with and support each other. Nonetheless, activities which focus on providing teachers with opportunities to share experiences and receive guidance and support, as well as developing their capacity to manage the stressors they encounter in their work, may be of particular use in buffering the isolating, emotionally taxing nature of teaching and, ideally, may assist practitioners to take steps towards wellbeing, resilience and career longevity.
5.3.1.3 Surface motives

The final approach to professional development utilised by participants was the surface approach. The surface approach to learning has previously been associated with positive and negative extrinsic motives linked to reproduction of information rather than to understanding the material at hand (Biggs, 1988). However, surface motives discussed by participants differed from those reported in previous research. Participants’ surface motives encompassed compliance with institutional pressure or mandates for attendance and the acquisition of a skill which was not based in pedagogical consideration but rather specified by their institution of employment.

These motives were highly responsive to institutional protocol, recalling the career-oriented conception of professional development as employer requirements, expectations and obligations (see section 5.2.1.3 and Figure 5) and the compulsory acquisition of skills via professional development. From this perspective, professional development was associated with the imposition of quotas for attendance, restrictions regarding what activities were classified as professional development and strong encouragement for participants to attend certain activities. For some participants this led to a dichotomous view of professional development, wherein the motives behind activities were not always transparent to teachers nor were activities subject to teachers’ input. As Participant 5 (Interview 1, lines 4-6) reflected,

Professional development … my opinion is you probably have to look at it from two different points of view. One would be from you as a teacher, um and the other would be from your place of employment, maybe what they would want for you.

Indeed, Participant 8 stated that, within her institution, what was recognised as professional development was entirely dependent upon institutional definitions. She explained,

For us to claim something as PD, it has to fit into … HR I guess … if they can tick it off it gets counted as PD. If they can’t tick it off, then it’s not PD. Even if it actually is
very useful for helping us to develop what we’re doing. (Participant 8, Interview 1, lines 195-200)

In a less codified way, Participant 2 reflected that certain unspoken rules influenced her attendance to certain professional development sessions within her institution as an extension of what she considered to be office politics. As discussed in section 5.2.1.3, these participants perceived the interconnectivity of their institutions (Hökkä & Vähäsantanen, 2013) and the necessity to comply with expectations, either direct or implied, in order to avoid negative consequences from management. This paints an image of strongly management-focused workplaces (Dimmock & Tan, 2013; Hökkä & Vähäsantanen, 2013) wherein staff interaction with professional development is monitored and regulated. As noted in section 5.2.1.3, such forms of institutional management have been characteristic of many education systems in recent times (Bloomfield, 2006; C. Farrell & Morris, 2003; Tuinamuana, 2011). Teacher accountability, visibility of practices and a strong managerial focus are characteristics resulting from the reconfiguration of education system priorities (Murphy & Gale, 2004; Sachs, 2001) and typically contribute to the privileging of one model of ideal practice, potentially determining the types and foci of professional development offered (Bolam, 2000; Gurney & Liyanage, 2015). For example, mandated practices may be disseminated through professional development in such systems. As Participant 6 reflected, one of his sessions concerned the acquisition of skills and information selected by the institution to allow him to implement new teaching practices in alignment with new policy. A tight management focus has been depicted negatively in the literature as it is said to constrain teachers’ practices (Hökkä & Vähäsantanen, 2013) and to foster instability of teacher identity (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2013; Wilkins, Busher, Kakos, Mohamed, & Smith, 2012) due largely to conflict between notions of good practice disseminated and shifting external priorities (Ball, 2003). However, with the exception of acquiring a skill under mandate, surface motives reported by participants revolved predominantly around compliance and avoidance of negative consequences, rather than achieving practice-based or information-oriented outcomes.

Critically, participants’ surface motives did not position the professional development sessions in question as particularly valuable. Surface motives also tended to influence participants’ expectations of their sessions, distracting them from potential benefits. Although this did not necessarily determine their subsequent engagement and learning, frequent
exposure to such activities may cast professional development in a negative, instrumentalistic light and decrease attendance where it is not compulsory (see section 5.3.3). In order to avoid deterring from professional development in this manner, it is recommended that institutions refrain from framing activities in terms of their place within imposed requirements or quota systems. Rather, framing professional development opportunities in terms of potential outcomes for staff is likely to lead to a more positive approach to institutionally-facilitated or regulated activities (see Vansteenkiste et al., 2004) for the reasons discussed above.

Projecting and implementing such a model for professional development is critical both before and during activities and would involve disclosing the relevance of activities to potential attendees as well as fostering a learning environment centred on practitioners. In order to implement such learning opportunities, Vansteenkiste et al. (2006) describe the importance of creating autonomy-supportive contexts, as opposed to controlling contexts. The authors argue that, within an autonomy-supportive context, “instructors empathize with the learner’s perspective, allow opportunities for self-initiation and choice, provide a meaningful rationale if choice is constrained, refrain from the use of pressures and contingencies to motivate behavior, and provide timely positive feedback” (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006, p. 21). Moreover, in such an environment, individuals are not pressured to think or act in predetermined ways (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). These principles, in tandem with other compatible situative and constructivist principles (see Chapter Two, section 2.6.1), if used consistently to guide implementation of professional development activities, may contribute to positive experiences and the formation of effective conceptions of professional development by practitioners. Where professional development sessions are associated with the introduction of new, mandated practices, it may be of benefit for facilitators to determine and communicate how awareness of these practices would be of use to teaching staff. Failing to frame professional development in terms of benefits for teachers may lead to low motivation for attendance and avoidance of professional development activities, leading to lost opportunities for practitioner learning and a waste of institutional resources.

Ultimately, in order to discourage practitioners’ interaction with professional development on a purely instrumentalistic basis, institutions should carefully consider the need to impose professional development requirements on staff. If quota systems are unavoidable, the type of professional development deemed permissible under such systems should be the focus of
some scrutiny and open to practitioners’ input. Neglecting to include activities which may be of genuine benefit to practitioners is not only detrimental to their immediate learning but may lead to the formation of pessimistic or overly instrumentalistic conceptions which are likely to negatively affect their future interaction with institutionally-facilitated professional development. Ensuring responsiveness to practitioners’ needs and preferences is a positive step towards designing beneficial professional development experiences and can be taken into consideration regardless of their provenance (see section 5.4 for further discussion).

5.3.2 Combinations of motives

Some participants set out a mix of motives for attending their sessions (see Chapter Four, section 4.3.1.4), suggesting that certain combinations of approaches to professional development may be held for the same session. Other authors have noted that, while the deep and surface approaches to learning may both be combined with the strategic approach to learning for students (Parpala, Lindblom-Ylänne, Komulainen, Litmanen, & Hirsto, 2010), deep and surface approaches are considered to be incompatible for a single task (Diseth & Martinsen, 2003; C. J. Evans, Kirby, & Fabrigar, 2003). However, given the differences in surface motives between the original approaches to learning and the framework as it is reinterpreted with professional development, this is not seen to be the case here. Surface motives for undertaking professional development, related to institutional mandates or pressure to attend a session, could potentially coincide with deep or strategic motives oriented towards learning, achievement and success or relational outcomes. This would be the case where a teacher was required to attend a particular session by institutional mandate, but also perceived that the session would be relevant for their practice or beneficial in some other way. Furthermore, although surface motives alone did not provide learning-oriented impetus for attendance, they did not impede engagement and learning. These outcomes are explored further in section 5.4.

To allow participants to hold a combination of approaches, the professional development activity needed to accommodate, or be expected to accommodate, all goals they held for it. This finding has further implications for framing professional development as it suggests that advertising more, rather than fewer, benefits associated with attendance to particular activities may correspondingly increase practitioners’ motives to attend. Nonetheless,
participants’ reflections revealed prioritisation of autonomous goals related to learning and growth over other goals, suggesting that they may have been more psychologically satisfying (see section 5.3.1.1). This suggests that emphasising intrinsic and identified outcomes may encourage teachers’ attendance to activities and their development of positive conceptions of professional development.

5.3.3 Implications of participants’ conceptions of professional development

Overall, the relationship between participants’ conceptions and goals was important in determining their attendance to their sessions (see Figure 7). In light of this finding, it may be concluded that conceptions are relevant in predicting how and why teachers may choose to pursue professional development. Although participants attended their activities in response to a variety of goals, the fact that some goals were hierarchised over others has implications for prioritisation of professional development and subsequent attendance. Professional development sessions considered to provide opportunities to meet comparatively less important goals may thus be avoided or neglected in instances where teachers are time poor or otherwise disinclined to attend. However, due to the fact that participants’ expectations were not always met and that several activities provided participants with relevant learning opportunities despite their predictions to the contrary (see section 5.4), this is potentially problematic as it may lead teachers to avoid certain sessions on the basis of misinformation. Were teachers to possess only those conceptions which predisposed them to perceiving relatively unimportant and instrumentalistic applications of professional development, the likelihood that they would avail themselves of opportunities which may lead to other beneficial outcomes would be curtailed. Whilst the relationship between conceptions and attendance is not in itself problematic, understanding professional development exclusively from such a perspective is likely to negatively impact teachers’ motivation to undertake professional development, as well as their understandings of how professional development may benefit them. On the other hand, encouraging teachers to view professional development more flexibly and to comprehend a variety of beneficial outcomes may positively contribute to increasing attendance and interest, thus increasing the potential for positive outcomes for teachers.
In order to foster the varied and flexible understandings of professional development necessary to achieve this end, it may be productive for both teacher education programmes and professional development activities to allow pre-service and in-service teachers to fully comprehend the potential outcomes of professional development. This may be done inductively, wherein they learn specifically about the benefits or applications of teacher professional development and related phenomena such as lifelong learning, self-awareness and support, or deductively, though exposure to professional development which effectively targets a variety of potential outcomes. Conceptions leading to deep or strategic approaches to professional development would be prioritised over those leading to the surface approach for the reasons discussed above. However, having an awareness of career-oriented outcomes of professional development may also be useful for EAP teachers who wish to advance professionally and are seeking avenues to do so. Such applications of professional development may provide them with extra incentive to remain in the profession in the long term. Overall, in order to facilitate professional development experiences which support the formation of positive conceptions, it is recommended that institutions, facilitators and other stakeholders observe certain principles when initiating, designing and implementing professional development. These principles are discussed in section 5.4.

5.4 Engagement and learning

In contrast to participants’ motives, their engagement and learning outcomes were closely tied to their professional development activities (see Chapter Four, sections 4.3.2 and 4.4, Figures 8 and 11). These findings were explored in order to answer the second component of the second research question, related to engagement, and the third research question. Three general domains were determinant of engagement and learning: participants’ interest in the topic of the activity, the perceived relevance of the activity for their work, and other contextual and perceived contextual factors such as the use of technology and the behaviours of the facilitator, which have been grouped together due to similarities. These findings are illustrated in Figures 8 and 11, which show that clear relationships between goals and particular levels of engagement and learning were not uncovered. Previous phenomenographic research has also made the connection between contextual/environmental factors, learner behaviours and learning (Baeten et al., 2010; Entwistle, 1997; Trigwell et al., 1999). Although there is some disagreement regarding what these factors are and how they
affect learners (see Balasooriya, Toohey, & Hughes, 2009; Papinczak, Young, Groves, & Haynes, 2008; Waters & Johnston, 2004), Baeten et al. (2010) posit that prevalent factors include characteristics of teaching methods (including learner activity, tasks, level of difficulty and information presented), relevance, clarity of goals and workload. Most previous studies in this area focused on classrooms in higher education. However, one study conducted by Kyndt, Raes, Dochy, and Janssens (2012) investigated workplace learning and suggested that learning climate was also a critical factor in mediating employees’ learning. Although they did not focus on particular instances of professional development or learning, Kyndt et al. (2012) indicate that organisational and personal factors mediated employee learning in general in their sample group.

As well as highlighting the importance of considering these factors when designing professional development, the findings suggest that participants were open to deep learning experiences from all their activities. They did not close themselves off from potential learning opportunities but made critical assessments regarding the content and remained open to information or discussion which was of interest or relevance to them. However, they predicted that some professional development would not deliver such outcomes and thus approached it with different goals, as discussed in section 5.3. Overall, this finding is very positive for those designing and implementing activities and for other stakeholders with an interest in heightening teachers’ participation in professional development. Although teachers may have varying levels of motivation for attending professional development activities, once they are in attendance it may be possible to foster a positive, engaging experience and encourage high learning outcomes. The following sections present a discussion, based on participants’ comments and interactions with their professional development, regarding how the potential of any teacher professional development activity may be increased in order to encourage high levels of engagement and learning in attendees.

5.4.1 Fostering engagement and learning in professional development

Contextual and perceived contextual factors mediated participants’ engagement and learning in their professional development activities in both positive and negative ways (see Chapter Four, section 4.3.2 and 4.4, Figures 8 and 11). Participants who approached an activity with controlled goals could still benefit from attendance if they perceived the activity to be high
quality and engaging, involving presentation or discussion of relevant topics at an appropriate level of complexity. On the other hand, even where participants approached an activity with deep motives comprising autonomous, learning-related goals, their learning and engagement were still regulated by the features of the activity. An example of this was provided by Participant 6. One of the participant’s goals for undertaking his second session was to learn more about a specific online programme to which he wished to contribute. However, the session did not consistently meet his expectations and large parts of it were unrelated to the advertised topic, curtailing his opportunities for learning and high levels of engagement. As he reflected,

My attention fluctuated. Um, ‘cause the presentation can really be divided into two strands. One where there were people that were talking about the programme, what it was, how to contribute to it and so on, as I’d expected, which is what I found very interesting. And then, then there was the bit that had me scratching my head because there were two, two or three very well known people who’d put their name to this … and I had expectations that … they were going to be talking about the same thing. But neither of them actually did. (Participant 6, Interview 2, lines 283-298)

In order to avoid such experiences with irrelevant or ill-focused professional development, many authors in the field have advocated that practitioners take part in self-directed and collective forms of professional development (see Chapter Two, section 2.3.1.2). Such forms of professional development involve practitioners leading their own initiatives and collectively participating in them alongside their colleagues. Indeed, some participants had considerable levels of control over aspects of their activities (for example, Participant 1, session two; Participant 2, session one) and reflected positively on them, reporting relatively high levels of engagement and learning. This was due predominantly to their high levels of responsibility in running or contributing to the activities, which necessitated sustained attention, and the fact that they were able to determine and maintain relevance of the topics covered throughout via their own input and/or negotiation of content with fellow attendees. For example, as Participant 2 wrote on her reflection sheet, factors contributing to her high level of engagement in a collaborative session were, “Relevancy / informal nature / freedom to participate in very open session” (Participant 2, Reflection sheet, session one).
At first glance, this finding appears to support calls for practitioner-led professional development. However, careful examination of all findings suggests that practitioner-led professional development has a place within a wide spectrum of professional development activities, rather than an inherent superiority over externally-facilitated, traditional formats. Whilst the positive aspects of practitioner-led professional development were highlighted by several of the participants, the importance of having control over activities depended primarily on their goals. A critical factor in determining these goals was their own and their fellow attendees’ or colleagues’ familiarity with the topic at hand and their perceived need to acquire familiarity with it. These factors determined their capacity to effectively lead or contribute to sessions, based on their expertise and knowledge. Participants reflected positively on the potential of practitioner-led professional development activities for collaboratively negotiating practice-based issues with colleagues, particularly when these colleagues were highly experienced or faced similar issues. This was also the case where participants or their colleagues had specialist knowledge in a particular area, allowing them to successfully lead a session to share this knowledge with others. As discussed in section 5.2.1.1, such sessions may be particularly valuable for teachers of EAP as they allow in-depth exploration of issues specific to practice with colleagues or peers who teach in the same area.

The importance of practitioner-led activities was also highlighted in terms of support. For example, participants reflected that organised discussion groups provided a platform for both discussing issues and for interacting supportively with colleagues, sharing problems and providing advice or assistance. However, in instances where a clear learning need or interest was present and the required knowledge was not possessed by participants or their colleagues, it would have been impractical and time-consuming for participants to attempt to acquire the knowledge by themselves or with their colleagues, at least during initial exposure. Rather, participants reflected positively on their attendance to activities facilitated by their institution or by outside experts in order to learn about new topics and practices or to obtain expert assistance with a relatively unknown or novel issue. Similarly, Participant 1, who facilitated such a session for a different group of practitioners, recognised the value of efficiently imparting knowledge in this manner and thus assisting other practitioners with topics and ideas which could positively impact their work or professional experience.

Ultimately, such findings reinforce the need for a balance of professional development opportunities made available to teachers in order to accommodate their negotiation of
knowledge, practice and the issues they face in their work as well as practical and efficient dissemination of new information and ideas. Placing the onus entirely on teachers for their own professional development is both unrealistic and arguably an abrogation of institutional responsibility to provide professional development opportunities (Gurney et al., 2014), as required under various regulatory mechanisms (see Chapter Two, section 2.4.1). As such, and upon consideration of participants’ high reported levels of learning and engagement from effective externally-facilitated sessions, it is prudent to refocus attention back to the positive potential of these and to how they may be harnessed as an avenue to benefit teachers. This will be further discussed in section 5.4.2.

5.4.2 Sponsored professionalism, professional development and effectiveness

The findings regarding participants’ engagement and learning (see Chapter Four, section 4.3.2 and 4.4) demonstrate that providing in-service EAP teachers with institutionally-facilitated professional development, deriving from the domain of sponsored professionalism, which is of a high standard and designed in response to the needs and interests of the audience can have positive impacts on teacher learning. This was the case even for some activities which did not meet participants’ expectations but nonetheless provided them with valuable and relevant learning opportunities. For example, Participant 3 reflected on her attendance to an institutionally-facilitated session for which she held particular expectations, having formulated these through previous attendance to a similar session. Even though the session did not meet these expectations, she reflected positively on her attendance and reported high levels of engagement and learning as the professional development was efficiently run, interesting and relevant. She commented, “I was very interested in the topic itself and in the practical information the keynote speaker and other speakers shared. I learnt new information and felt that the information given was relevant for me” (Participant 3, Reflection sheet, session one). Nonetheless, despite her positive experience, Participant 3’s attendance to this session may be seen as somewhat fortuitous, at least amongst the participant group. Other participants pointed out that the professional development offerings made available to them by their institutions did not necessarily accommodate such positive outcomes through indiscriminate attendance. As Participant 5 (Interview 2, lines 490-493) commented, professional development activities provided by institutions “won’t always cover
everything that you’re interested in … or feel that you need to know or gain more knowledge of”.

However, despite the number of areas which may be of interest or relevance to practitioners, such problems with institutionally-facilitated professional development are not inevitable. In order to facilitate relevant and beneficial professional development activities, Participant 5 advocated institutional responsiveness to teachers’ needs, interests and experiences. As an example of this, he recalled sessions which he had previously attended at his institution and which had arisen in response to teachers’ requests for assistance with particular aspects of their practice. He commented,

I think the PD arose out of the fact that many teachers were kind of thinking about this … we previously had one um, someone from the university came to talk to us about what academic language features are expected in the various departments of the university. Someone from student services. Because you know, a lot of the teachers will be like, oh, can you use personal pronouns at university? Uh, well this department says you can, this department says you can’t. So, we actually got someone to come and present a PD to us. So that arose out of a need, you know. (Participant 5, Interview 2, lines 495-502)

Such comments, in combination with previously discussed findings and literature, provide the basis for establishment of several criteria to be considered in the interest of heightening the potential of professional development activities responsive to sponsored professionalism and facilitated by institutions and other stakeholders to occasion valuable learning for teachers. The first criterion is that the conduct of professional development is not conducive to a one-size-fits-all template. Careful consideration of the experience level and existing knowledge of audience members, as well as the courses they teach and issues they encounter, is of great benefit in tailoring a fruitful experience. Ultimately, relevance is key to engagement, learning and the capacity of professional development to positively contribute to teachers’ cognition and practice (see section 5.4.3 for further discussion). As various participants reflected, irrelevance was a primary irritation when attending sessions and resulted in disengagement, frustration and low levels of learning. Institutions may act towards preventing irrelevance in professional development through direct consultation with teaching staff regarding their
needs and interests and by keeping abreast of developments in the institution and industry of which staff must be made aware, including new policies and regulations. Comprehensibility is another key concern which was highlighted by participants. Participants wanted professional development sessions to be clearly organised and easy to understand. These criteria are backed up in the literature (Guskey & Yoon, 2009) and are also emphasised by researchers who support constructivist and situative models of professional development, including Cárdenas et al. (2010) and Putnam and Borko (2000). Furthermore, in accordance with other criteria put forward by these authors, responsiveness to teachers’ practice and context, the provision of support, valuing and accommodating teachers’ experiences and facilitating opportunities for collaboration were all highlighted as important factors in professional development by the participants of this study. Contentions made regarding the appropriateness of professional development for teachers based on their career stage (see Chapter Two, section 2.6.2) are also accommodated here. As proponents of this theory attest, it is critical to acknowledge that teachers’ needs evolve over their careers and that these needs should be accommodated through professional development opportunities (see Eros, 2011). Audience-responsiveness is key to meeting such needs.

As discussed in section 5.3.1.3, observance of the above-mentioned principles lends itself to the creation of an autonomy-supportive context. In such a context, learners themselves are centralised and learning opportunities revolve as much as possible around learners’ choices and needs (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). However, regardless of the literature backing for these principles, the findings suggest that a number of activities offered to the participants for professional development did not adhere to them, to the detriment of participants’ engagement and learning.

What is particularly notable, and of relevance to facilitators and institutions, is that the findings regarding participants’ engagement and learning do not privilege any particular format for professional development. Even the considerably unpopular workshops and seminars (see Duncan-Howell, 2010; Hunzicker, 2011; McConnell et al., 2012) were not evidenced to be ineffective based purely on format (see also Guskey & Yoon, 2009). These formats have previously been criticised for their organisation and delivery. For example, they have been considered too long or unstimulating (Hunzicker, 2011), or divorced from teachers’ work in terms of content (Pianta, Mashburn, Downer, Hamre, & Justice, 2008).
However, these characteristics are not inevitable and point to a lack of planning or poor implementation rather than an inherent characteristic of any format for professional development. Indeed, as several participants’ reflections support, when thoughtfully designed and implemented, workshops and seminars can be an effective addition to teachers’ professional development repertoires. Furthermore, they can easily include collaborative activities and other features considered valuable for heightening engagement and learning such as audience-responsiveness. In all, whilst innovative or collaborative formats for professional development may certainly foster benefits for practitioners, resources can also be well spent on more traditional formats, as long as care is taken in their design and planning.

Overall, the participants’ repertoires included a number of different types of professional development, undertaken in different formats and for different purposes. The final findings to be discussed in this chapter concern changes reported by participants resulting from the professional development. These changes are discussed in the following section in terms of participants’ cognition and behaviours.

5.4.3 Changes: Participants’ cognition and behaviours

In terms of participants’ learning, the connection between professional development, their knowledge and their practice was shown to be a complex one (see Chapter Four, section 4.4). All participants reported at least some conceptual change resulting from participation in their activities, most frequently in the form of increased awareness. However, their underlying cognition filtered new information prior to their implementation of changes in practice. Overall, new input contributing to a change in practice tended to align with participants’ existing values and orientations to teaching. Furthermore, as outlined in Chapter Four (section 4.4.1), some knowledge acquired by participants was not directly connected to their teaching practice at all, such as information concerning the functioning of their institution of employment or a topic in sociolinguistics.

The findings thus differentiate between knowledge which forms an awareness backdrop and knowledge which informs practice. Previous studies have also distinguished between different types of teacher learning and teacher change (Coles, Owens, Serrano, Slavec, &
Evans, 2015; Lee, 2004; Tam, 2015; Turner, Warzon, & Christensen, 2011). For example, Tam (2015) distinguishes between different patterns of change, including change in practice but not in belief, change in belief but not in practice, and change in both practice and belief. Cognitive change is considered to comprise several aspects, such as knowledge, skills and beliefs (Coles et al., 2015). Meirink, Meijer, and Verloop (2007), in accordance with the findings of the present study, suggest that change in cognition occurs more frequently than change in behaviour.

While participants could easily acquire new information from a professional development activity, the connection between this learning and change in practice was interrupted by their existing values, beliefs and approaches to teaching. In this way, their professional identities played a key role in informing their practice-based choices, mediated by their agency to determine their behaviours (see Lasky, 2005; van der Heijden, Geldens, Beijaard, & Popeijus, 2015). Several participants made explicit reference to how these factors interacted to determine change in practice generally. Largely, they reported change in practice to depend on alignment between new input and their own values and dispositions. For example, Participant 8 explained how changes in her practice typically occurred, grounded within her own formulations of effectiveness, responsive to context and the characteristics of her students. She commented,

Well if I come across something that I think is going to improve my teaching practice or help me get across information to students better, then I’m inclined to try to incorporate it into my classroom. If I look at something and think, that won’t function in my particular setting or that’s just not going to work with that group of students for whatever reason … It’s not going to work. So, you know, if I think it’s of value within a classroom setting for the students that I am dealing with then yeah, I’m very happy to incorporate it. (Participant 8, Interview 2, lines 356-362)

Other participants outlined a combination of factors leading to change in practice. Overall, like Participant 8, they reported that external input such as feedback and assistance from colleagues and other information received via professional development was filtered through their existing cognition before leading to change in practice. Furthermore, external input was considered to be more valuable when derived from a trusted or knowledgeable source. Such
sources tended to be colleagues or facilitators who were known and respected by participants. These sources were deemed to be free of agendas and committed to sharing information which they felt would benefit practitioners. External input tended to interact with participants’ reflection on their practice responsive to prior classroom experience. As such, their agency lay at the centre of any changes. For example, Participant 2 (Interview 2, lines 435-442) stated that change in her practice was typically instigated as follows:

Uh, typically, I think through discussion with colleagues. Well, these particular colleagues. Um, and reading and research … And then I suppose action research, but not documented. So you try things, and um, in the classroom and then kind of think, yeah that worked or that didn’t work … I think I have a very reflective practice. I think I’m a very reflective person.

Participant 6 (Interview 2, lines 416-424) also localised changes in practice within the scope of his agency, responsive to reflection on his classroom experiences,

I’m the sort of person who will work out something that’s not working properly in what I do. And then … why not? How can it be fixed? … Generally there needs to be some sort of stimulus, and the stimulus tends to be bored students, unhappy students … So, that tends to be the genesis of any change that I make. I go away, right, what didn’t work, how to make it work, implement that, great – problem solved.

These reflections are congruent with previous research findings (Boyle, Lamprianou, & Boyle, 2005) and reveal a complex and circular relationship between professional development, teacher knowledge and practice. A tapestry of factors, which includes professional development, may contribute to enhancing practitioners’ cognition and increasing their awareness of the various aspects of their work. However, as Participant 6 reflected, external stimulus was more likely to lead to conceptual change than practice-based change. He commented,

...I mean you’re getting stimuli from all kinds of, you know, you might see something online, you might have a conversation with somebody, you might read somebody’s
Various explanations could account for this phenomenon. For example, the need for teachers to make immediate decisions in the classroom (see Chapter Two, section 2.2) means that they may default to existing ideas rather than making deliberate judgments. Another possible explanation is that the participants were unwilling to experiment with new practices and preferred to cautiously adhere to practices which they knew were effective rather than trust an external source or experiment unnecessarily. However, such explanations do not fully take into account the role of teacher agency, which was highlighted by various participants as determinant of both their current practice and of their decisions to make alterations or adjustments to it. Rather, participants’ negotiation of new information occurred alongside careful consideration of students’ needs and characteristics, their previous experiences in the classroom, goals for practice and existing notions of effectiveness. Participants acted as agentive and reflective practitioners who were highly responsive to their teaching context. In consideration of this complex process, conceptual change provided a potential precursor to any practice-based changes, rather than being immediately transitioned into practice.

Overall, the participants’ comments point to the unfeasibility of expecting all participation in professional development to result in easily traceable, timely behavioural changes, unless those undertaking it are looking to address a perceived gap or are under institutional mandate. Even in such instances, the durability of change is still arguably subject to teachers’ ongoing assessment of its value. In this sense, it is unrealistic to seek to measure the effectiveness or success of professional development initiatives in practice-based terms. As the participants’ reflections illustrate, the effects of participation in professional development most commonly manifest as conceptual changes, such as increased awareness. Whether such conceptual changes subsequently lead to practice-based changes in the future is dependent on a variety of other factors and is ultimately decided by practitioners. Overall, the findings of this study complicate and problematise the relationship which exists between professional development, teacher learning, cognition and practice, elevating above all the important role played by practitioners in negotiating these factors and determining their own decision-making. The
findings detract from interventionist definitions which position professional development as a pathway to achieving predetermined notions of effectiveness in teacher practice. Furthermore, the mix of factors cited by participants as influencing their cognition and practice illustrates the multiplicity and heterogeneity of sources of teacher knowledge. Participants’ reflections underscore the place of professional development as one of myriad factors which contribute to knowledge and practice, rather than the genesis of change itself.

The notion of effectiveness clearly has a critical role in mediating practice; however, it is not fixed but rather responsive to each practitioner’s understanding. As such, if professional development initiatives are to concern negotiation of effectiveness in practice, they should provide *spaces for agency* (Aitken, 2009) for practitioners to reflect on their understandings of effective practice and how these intersect with their teacher identities and thus develop agentive responses to them, rather than providing venues for disseminating certain predetermined aims (Gurney et al., 2014). As Trent (2011) states, teachers should be “provided with the tools and space to reflect on their understandings of themselves as teachers both in light of the specific [professional development activity] they are undertaking at the time, as well as in the broader context” (p. 630). In this way, professional development may foster practitioner-oriented outcomes such as self-awareness, lifelong learning and personal growth. Ideally, participation in such professional development would allow teachers to negotiate an identity which is not predetermined but “continually renegotiated within specific contexts” (Clarke, 2009, p. 194), rather than orienting around a specific external outcome.

Naturally, within the ambit of professional practice, some professional development initiatives may focus on fostering practitioners’ awareness of issues and topics which affect their work, such as policy. These initiatives are important for keeping practitioners up-to-date with developments in their institution and industry. However, it is recommended that they do so as efficiently as possible whilst allowing practitioners room to make their own decisions regarding how to accommodate or respond to the issues in focus. As the situative perspective on learning (see Chapter Two, section 2.6.1) suggests, learning occurs through participation, interaction and engagement (Varghese et al., 2005) within communities of practice, each of which has its own specific values and expectations regulating practitioners’ work and identities (Lave, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Such values and expectations are ascribed
through institutional rhetoric, the conferral of rights and duties, and the value and meaning ascribed to teachers’ actions (Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009) via professional development and other avenues (Gurney et al., 2014). However, in order to foster agentive and reflective teacher identities, teachers’ agency must be recognised and accommodated, rather than overshadowed by strictly prescriptive instructions regarding responses to policy and other institutional or industry features.

5.5 Summary

Participants’ conceptions of and interactions with professional development paint a complex picture of how professional development may be understood by EAP practitioners and what it can provide them. The participants looked to professional development for intellectual stimulation and new ideas, assistance with classroom practice, support, opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, career advancement and various other outcomes. Professional development held a position of importance in their professional lives. It was not seen as a replacement for initial teacher education or training but was rather viewed in its own right as a phenomenon which could be utilised to achieve various ends and, if relevant and accessible to teachers, encourage long-reaching learning trajectories.

The findings regarding participants’ approaches to professional development highlight similarities with and divergences from the approaches to learning framework. Participants held specific goals for their sessions and approached them with certain expectations. Professional development was not just considered for its potential to contribute to teacher learning. Rather, it was also utilised for formal recognition of engagement and advancement in work, and counted for its potential to strengthen workplace social capital and relationships with colleagues and peers. Such findings point to participants’ capacity to maximise benefits from attendance to professional development activities and highlight their comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of the workplace. However, participants’ goals were not always accommodated by their sessions. Critically, even in instances where they were incompatible with participants’ goals, the sessions were still able to contribute positively to participants’ cognition and practice if they were responsive to their context, professional roles and experience. This finding has implications for the design of professional development activities for teachers and highlights the importance of creating autonomy-supportive
contexts, aligning with constructivist and situative principles as well as those advocated via the study of teachers’ career cycles. The findings also reinforce the need for professional development to be targeted at specific content areas such as EAP. The limitations of professional development in determining cognition and practice were also highlighted by participants, who considered professional development to be one of myriad factors which could contribute to their ideas, awareness and practice. The participants themselves, in consultation with existing cognition and any relevant external input, ultimately determined their decision-making.

The following chapter provides a conclusion to the thesis. It contains a synthesis of the findings for each research question and outlines the conclusions of the study, accompanied by limitations and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of the study

EAP is a growing field internationally, establishing itself in both Anglophone and non-Anglophone contexts (Canagarajah, 2014; Lobo & Gurney, 2014). However, a rise in the number of practitioners required to teach the specialist subject has not been accompanied by an increase in appropriate teacher training and education opportunities (Hamp-Lyons, 2011). This lack of preparation is exacerbated by unstable employment conditions (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002) as well as the numerous practice-based challenges which EAP teachers face in their work (see Chapter One, section 1.4.2). In light of these difficulties, the provision of relevant and high quality in-service professional development is necessary to promote teachers’ professional longevity and wellbeing, the development of their cognition and practice, and the development of the EAP field at large. Despite the importance of professional development in EAP, little has previously been uncovered regarding how EAP practitioners understand, interact with and learn from professional development. Exploration of these critical questions sets the groundwork for discussion of effectiveness and efficiency in the provision of professional development in EAP.

In order to address this research gap and explore professional development for teachers of EAP, the following three research questions were set out to guide the study:

1. What are the conceptions that the EAP teachers have of professional development?
2. How do these conceptions influence the ways in which they engage in professional development?
3. What are the learning outcomes of the interaction between conception and engagement in professional development?

These questions were designed within a phenomenographic approach and were explored with a group of eight participants, all of whom were in-service EAP teachers working in the non-
compulsory tertiary sector in Queensland, Australia at the time of data collection. The sample comprised male and female teachers, native and non-native English speakers with varying levels of teaching experience in EAP and ELT generally. For more information regarding participant demographics, see Chapter Three (section 3.2 and Table 1).

Two instruments were utilised to collect data for the study: semi-structured interviews and a reflection sheet. Data were collected in a three-step process. As the first step, participants took part in an initial semi-structured interview which revolved around exploring their conceptions of professional development and their experiences with it over their careers. Following this interview, participants undertook two professional development activities of their choosing. They were instructed to reflect upon each activity following its completion using the reflection sheet instrument. This instrument elicited information regarding their goals, expectations, engagement, learning and changes resulting from the professional development. The reflection sheet was used as an instrument in its own right as well as a basis for the second semi-structured interview, which constituted the final step in data collection. The second interview was used to explore participants’ interaction with their two professional development activities in depth. Participants’ goals, expectations, engagement, learning and changes were discussed. This interview was also used to revisit the participants’ conceptions of professional development reported during the first interview and to explore how participants understood changes to occur in their cognition and practice generally. For further description of each of the instruments, see Chapter Three (section 3.3). Procedures for their use are outlined in Chapter Three (section 3.4 and Table 2). Interview protocols and the reflection sheet template are included as Appendices C, D and E.

The instruments yielded large amounts of qualitative data. These data were analysed using the procedures outlined in Chapter Three (section 3.5). In order to uncover the conceptions of professional development held by the participants, a process of phenomenographic data analysis, adhering closely to that set out by Dahlgren and Fallsberg (1991), was used to analyse the transcripts for the first interview. For the reflection sheets and second interview transcripts, data were coded in response to the foci of the second and third research questions. Goals, expectations, engagement, feelings and learning were used as categories to organise data and, where necessary, subcategories were generated to accommodate nuances and
differences in participants’ responses. Figures 2 and 3 show the nodes used in NVivo to organise data for these questions.

6.1.1 Limitations

Due to the nature of the study, participants’ interactions with their professional development activities were investigated post-participation. As such, data collected to address engagement relied on participants’ self-reporting following completion of each of their professional development sessions. Two potential limitations could be identified here – namely, that the study relied on participants’ reported engagement and that these data were not collected concurrent to their participation in their professional development activities. Whilst it was not within the scope of the study to do so, a different perspective could have been captured if participants had been observed during the activities or through the use of techniques such as video stimulated recall to enable participants to comment on their engagement. However, differentiation between behavioural and cognitive engagement was not the intention of the study. Therefore, researcher observation or recording of participants during their sessions would inevitably have put parameters and impositions on measurements of their engagement. For this particular study, self-reporting was deemed appropriate.

However, the process of self-reporting used involved some time elapsed between participants’ completion of their reflection sheets and the second interviews. Due to practical considerations regarding participants’ locations and schedules, it was not possible to interview them immediately after they completed each professional development activity. Although care was taken to limit the elapsed time as much as possible, this gap may have compromised their reflections somewhat. The use of the reflection sheet attempted to counteract this limitation, in that it allowed participants to record their salient thoughts after the session and gave them a prompt to consider what they had experienced when discussing it during the second interview.
6.2 Synthesis of the findings and implications

6.2.1 Question One

Thirteen conceptions of professional development were uncovered for the participant group. These conceptions were organised into three meta-categories: person-oriented, career-oriented and skills-oriented. Person-oriented conceptions concerned outcomes for individual practitioners resulting from participation in professional development. From a person-oriented perspective, the goal of undertaking professional development was to maintain and enhance practitioner wellbeing, motivation, resilience, connectedness to others and professional longevity. Career-oriented conceptions positioned professional development as a phenomenon primarily responsive to practitioners’ employment and careers. Under these conceptions, professional development was considered to be a conduit for achieving career-based aims and as a mechanism imposed by employers. Finally, skills-oriented conceptions centralised the development of skills and abilities via professional development and concerned the acquisition, enhancement and maintenance of knowledge and skills used for teaching. These three meta-categories were presented in Chapter Four (section 4.2) and discussed in Chapter Five (section 5.2). Figures 4, 5 and 6 provide visualisations of each of the meta-categories.

The findings for the first research question extend current understandings of professional development and reveal it to be a nuanced and complex phenomenon for the participants, each of whom reported multiple conceptions and discussed interacting with it on a number of bases and for different outcomes. The findings also underscore the capacity of practitioners to navigate multiple roles and aims in their pursuit of professional development. Importantly, the findings suggest that EAP teachers may understand professional development opportunities as not only encompassing learning in a practice-based sense but also involving other outcomes including advancement of their careers, relationships, awareness and wellbeing. Participants also believed that professional development was used by institutions for accountability purposes. Critically, these findings suggest that the teachers undertaking professional development may have divergent understandings of its purposes, outcomes and applications from those facilitating it. Given the impact of teachers’ conceptions on their attendance to their activities and the importance of developing conceptions which place high
value on participation in professional development, this is clearly an issue of which institutions, teacher educators and other stakeholders should be aware (see Chapter Five, section 5.3). Nonetheless, as was discussed in Chapter Five (sections 5.2.1.1-5.2.1.3), many of the conceptions reported by the participants represent effective ways of understanding professional development. Successful professional development initiatives would need to capture such conceptions.

As was explored in Chapter Two (section 2.8), whilst learning has remained one of the major research foci in phenomenography over the years (see for example Marton et al., 1993; Purdie, Hattie, & Douglas, 1996; P. G. Taylor, 1996; Yang & Tsai, 2010), these studies have concentrated predominantly on students’ conceptions of learning or, in a complementary manner, teachers’ conceptions of teaching. The current study extends this body of research via the exploration of EAP teachers’ conceptions of professional development. Additionally, the findings of this study support the contention that individuals’ conceptions of a particular phenomenon, regulated by their own agency, influence their interaction with that phenomenon, as summarised in section 6.2.2.

6.2.2 Question Two

The findings for the second research question were divided into two components: participants’ motives for attending their activities and their engagement during the activities. Whilst the former aspect was influenced by their conceptions of professional development, the latter was not. These findings are synthesised separately here.

The findings concerning participants’ attendance to their activities suggest that they used their conceptions as a basis for understanding their participation in professional development. Specifically, the goals they set out related to their previously stated conceptions. Participants held a variety of autonomous and controlled goals for taking part in their professional development and some reported a mix of both goal types for the same activity. Generally, participants’ autonomous goals aligned with person-oriented conceptions and their controlled goals with career-oriented conceptions. Skills-oriented conceptions aligned with either type of goal, depending on the value participants perceived to underlie acquisition of the skill in
question. These findings were presented in Chapter Four (section 4.3) and discussed in Chapter Five (section 5.4).

Careful exploration of these findings suggests autonomous goals were prioritised over controlled goals, potentially because former revolved more closely around participants’ psychological needs than the latter. Nonetheless, the connection between participants’ conceptions and their motives for attending professional development was an important one. In terms of its implications, it may be beneficial to emphasise conceptions which place high value on participation in professional development, such as those in the person-oriented category, in order to foster a resilient orientation towards participation in professional development based on the pursuit of benefits for teachers and their practice (see Chapter Five, section 5.3.3). These conceptions may be encouraged for in-service teachers through the provision of professional development activities which effectively offer teachers the opportunity to experience such beneficial outcomes or via direct communication of the potential benefits that professional development may bring to teachers’ professional experiences and practice. These conceptions should also be considered in teacher education prior to teachers’ entry into the workforce. A focus on such conceptions of professional development may therefore be something that pre-service teacher education programmes consider in the interest of raising teacher awareness and increased participation. This recommendation has application for all forms of teacher education.

In further consideration of this finding, it would also be beneficial to frame in-service professional development opportunities in terms of their potential value for teachers, as this may increase practicing teachers’ motivation to attend particular activities. Providers of professional development are encouraged to evaluate the benefits of each activity for the audience to ensure that some relevant benefits are offered to teacher participants and that these are effectively communicated to them before the activity commences.

In contrast to their motives for attendance, participants’ engagement during their activities was mediated by their interest in the topic at hand as well as by contextual and perceived contextual factors, rather than by their goals or conceptions. Two factors were particularly determinant of participants’ engagement. These were their interest in the topic and the perceived utility or relevance of the activity for their work. These factors affected
engagement both positively and negatively. Where a session was perceived to be of high interest or relevance to their work, participants’ engagement was raised accordingly. On the other hand, low interest or low perceived relevance led to lower engagement. These findings were presented in Chapter Four (section 4.3.2).

These findings align with previous research which has emphasised the importance of each learning situation in determining learner behaviours and outcomes (Baeten et al., 2010; Entwistle, 1991; Newble & Clarke, 2009; Trigwell et al., 2012). However, an important finding with relation to the participants’ engagement in their professional development activities was that the format and provenance of the professional development were not considered to be predictive of engagement. This finding, in opposition to some previous research, supports the value of traditional professional development and that deriving from sponsored professionalism value within teachers’ repertoires. Ultimately, teachers may benefit from a variety of professional development activities undertaken for different purposes – the relative usefulness of each activity will likely depend on teachers’ needs and/or goals for participation. For example, in instances where teachers pursue professional development to seek support from colleagues, a discussion group would likely allow them to do so successfully. On the other hand, if teachers seek to acquire a new skill or knowledge, the assistance of an outside expert who is able to lead targeted professional development initiatives would be of high value in providing the required information. These findings were discussed in Chapter Five (section 5.4.2).

The importance of establishing autonomy supportive contexts, in which the needs and interests of teachers are prioritised and the information presented is relevant for the audience, is also reinforced by the findings of this study (see Chapter Five, sections 5.3.1.3 and 5.4.2). The findings support calls for professional development to be specifically targeted to its audience. Professional development can be considered most effective, in terms of its potential to foster teacher engagement and learning, when it is tailored to teachers’ needs and context and accommodates their experiences and existing knowledge. EAP teachers may benefit somewhat from professional development which is targeted broadly at various groups of instructors across an institution and which concerns dissemination of policy or similar. However, the cognition informing their classroom practice is likely best negotiated through exposure to relevant, subject-specific content. Although the participants of this study were
able to undertake professional development sessions which were responsive to some aspect of their work in EAP, the literature suggests that relevant professional development opportunities may be lacking for teachers in this area, particularly regarding theories underlying classroom practice. Indeed, given that many of the activities undertaken by participants for the study were targeted at broad areas of their professional practice such as development of online resources, computer assisted language learning, conducting action research and institution-wide assessment policy, this lack of EAP-specific learning opportunities may have been experienced by the participants also. Although these broader topics are likely relevant and useful for EAP teachers, there may be aspects of their practice which are neglected in professional development. It may therefore be productive for institutions and providers to consider these points in order to achieve best outcomes for EAP teachers and utilise resources for professional development effectively.

6.2.3. Question Three

Findings for the third research question shed further light on processes of teacher learning (see Chapter Five, section 5.4.3). Participants reported the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which were organised into the categories of conceptual and actionable changes, resulting from participation in their professional development activities. As with their engagement, their learning was dependent upon the professional development they undertook, rather than on their conceptions or goals (see Chapter Four, section 4.4 and Figure 11). This also functioned in both positive and negative ways. For example, some participants approached their activities with low expectations of learning but encountered unexpectedly relevant and/or appealing content and were able to engage highly and experience valuable learning outcomes. The opposite occurred where activities were associated with irrelevant, confusing or unclear content. All participants reported some conceptual change, most of which took the form of increased awareness. Five participants also reported projected actionable changes (see Chapter Four, section 4.4.1); however, of these participants, only two (Participants 5 and 6) reported actionable changes which were not congruent with their current dispositions and orientations to teaching. Participant 6 reported an actionable change which coincided with an institutional mandate to incorporate new practices. Participant 5 reported an actionable change which occurred alongside a change of opinion regarding an aspect of his practice; as such, he experienced both a conceptual and an actionable change as
a result of the same session. These findings suggest that learning encompassing acquisition of knowledge which is non-challenging to one’s existing cognition and professional identity, such as learning about the features or characteristics of one’s industry, may be processed unproblematically and absorbed into awareness. On the other hand, any potential practice-based changes must first be filtered through practitioners’ existing cognition, which comprises knowledge gathered from many sources and projects the success of future practices (see Chapter Five, section 5.4.3). An exception to this is mandated change in practice. Naturally, the ability to make judgments regarding effective practice and act accordingly assumes a high degree of autonomy to determine decision-making, which was certainly the case for most participants in terms of the aspects of their practice discussed as part of the study. It may also be indicative of other practitioners’ experiences in EAP.

The findings for the third research question have implications for the design of professional development activities, particularly those deriving from sponsored professionalism. Rather than attempting to engender change in practice via professional development, particularly in the absence of sufficient justification or impetus, it may be of greater long-term benefit to offer practitioners opportunities to enhance their awareness and knowledge of issues and ideas relevant to them, provide assistance responsive to their requests, and foster spaces for agency (Aitken, 2009) in which they may negotiate their professional identities and decision-making. In practice, as some participants reflected, some professional development sessions are obliged to target changes in practice in line with institutional or system-wide mandates; however, resilience of introduced practices is likely also subject to teachers’ values, opinions and attitudes. The value of such initiatives in an industry as decentralised as EAP teaching would be particularly questionable, given that individual practitioners and institutions tend to experience comparatively higher levels of freedom than those operating in the compulsory sector.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

Included here are several recommendations for further research to expand upon the findings of this study. These recommendations address several aspects of the research, including teachers’ conceptions of and interactions with professional development, and professional development for EAP teachers generally. In the interest of broadening understandings of
teachers’ conceptions of and interactions with professional development, the research questions could be investigated with other groups of EAP teachers. The views uncovered here are likely responsive to the norms which regulate the participants’ employment context. Whether teachers from other contexts, both within Australia and abroad, share similar or divergent understandings of professional development and how their understandings influence their interaction with professional development activities are questions of much interest. Further use of the approaches to professional development framework, which proved useful for categorisation of the participants’ goals for their sessions, would also be of interest in the examination of teachers’ motives for undertaking professional development across different sectors, both compulsory and non-compulsory.

A further recommendation for exploration of teachers’ interactions with professional development is to have multiple participants attend the same professional development session(s). As has been noted, the participants of this study were free to select their own professional development activities. While this provided valuable data regarding what kinds of activities were undertaken by participants and under what circumstances, having participants attend the same session would allow investigation of any marked differences in how different individuals perceive factors such as quality, comprehensibility and relevance in professional development. Such a study may assist in the identification of professional development activities and topics which are of wide relevance to EAP teachers and would provide greater understanding of the extent to which individuals’ own judgments of sessions may vary. Furthermore, as noted in section 6.1.1, it may be productive to collect data concerning participants’ engagement immediately after participation – this may be more feasible where multiple participants attend the same activity.

Investigation of the resilience of conceptual and actionable changes which come about as a result of participation in professional development would also provide a valuable focus for more longitudinal research. Such an investigation would provide important data regarding the impacts of professional development over the long term and would provide further insight into how teachers negotiate, subsume and discard ideas and practices as well as the possible catalysts for these changes. Such a study would be particularly relevant to the field of EAP, in which practitioners may operate with relatively high degrees of autonomy and independence and typically commence without subject-specific training or education.
6.4 Summary

Professional development is a topic of considerable importance and has received sustained interest in education. The findings of this research project have reinforced the agency of individual teachers in holding their own understandings of professional development and determining their interactions with sessions. These findings have in turn bolstered the phenomenographic hypothesis underlying this thesis concerning the importance of investigating phenomena via the understandings of the individuals who interact with them. The findings have also led to the identification of important implications for institutions and providers of professional development. As a concluding remark, in the wider literature concerning professional development in education, teachers’ voices are noticeably absent. This observation and its implications for practitioners in education sectors, including EAP, led to the formulation of this thesis. The desire to place teachers at the centre of an investigation concerning a phenomenon which is interwoven with their own actions and cognition stemmed from a wish to thoroughly interrogate professional development. This was accompanied by the desire to acknowledge the importance of individual practitioners in ensuring the success and development of their own practice and of education systems. The EAP sector is of vital importance to many tertiary students and the roles played by EAP teachers should be upheld and supported in order to ensure ongoing success for teachers and students alike.


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Appendix A: Information for the participant

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Research Background
The complexities of teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP), combined with the lack of knowledge regarding professional development for EAP teachers, set the scene for this investigation. Effective professional development is crucial to providing teachers with informational and collegial support, ensuring a high standard of instructional practice throughout the industry. However, for teachers of EAP, the exploration of professional development has been neglected and little is known regarding how EAP teachers understand and engage with professional development. The aims of this research are to investigate how EAP teachers understand the concept of “professional development”, how these conceptions influence their engagement with it and the outcomes that this relationship has for their professional learning.

Purpose of Study: In order to investigate these research questions, the researcher plans to utilise three instruments for data collection: interviews, reflections and observations. Using these instruments, the researcher will explore practising EAP teachers’ conceptions of and experiences with professional development and how the teachers report their engagement in two professional development sessions. This reported engagement will be backed up by qualitative observations carried out by the researcher as the teachers participate in one session.

Participation in this research is voluntary and you may choose to not participate without penalty or explanation. The study will focus on the conceptions of in-service teachers of EAP currently working casually, part-time or full-time in higher education institutions in Queensland and representing a range of experience levels and backgrounds.
Participation will involve the following data collection instruments:

- Two semi-structured interviews of approximately 1-1.5 hours in length, during which the researcher will explore conceptions and experiences of participants with professional development;
- Participants’ written reflections of two professional development sessions on a provided template;
- Observations of the participants completing a professional development session (one observation per participant) completed by the researcher.

No risks will be posed to participants through taking part in this research, nor will they be required to endure any discomfort.

Please note the privacy statement at the end of this information sheet. Your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be used in any report of results. Interview recordings, transcripts, and any related data will be stored in locked filing cabinets and/or password restricted computer files accessible only to the research team.

You will be provided with a summary of the final study if requested. If you require further information regarding the project or your participation in it, please contact Ms Laura Gurney.

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the evaluation project they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on (07) 37 358 043 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information, please consult the University’s Privacy Plan at www.griffith.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 3735 8043.
Appendix B: Consent form

CONSENT FORM - EAP teachers' conceptions of professional development: Implications for engagement and learning

I have read the information letter and understand that:

- This research will investigate the conceptions of professional development held by EAP teachers working in Queensland.
- Participation in this project will involve the following:
  1. Two semi-structured interviews spaced at an interval of several months. The first interview will be carried out prior to the completion of the written reflections, while the second interview will take place following the collection of two (2) completed reflections.
  2. Written reflection sheets, which may be filled out electronically or on paper following the completion of an activity or session I have taken part in for the purpose of professional development. I am asked to complete two (2) reflections before undertaking the second semi-structured interview.
  3. In the instance that it is appropriate, one observation of a professional development session or activity in which I take part. The researcher will attend the session to observe and take notes but will not take part.
- My participation is voluntary and I may discontinue my participation at any time without penalty or explanation.
- I understand that my decision to participate will in no way impact upon my relationship with my institution of employment.
- I understand that my privacy will be protected by the following provisions:
(a) Any report or publication from this study will conceal or remove any identifying features which might tend to connect me with any of the material I or other participants have provided.

- The interviews will be voice-recorded only and later transcribed verbatim by the student researcher. The transcripts will be reviewed only by the researcher and academic supervisors, Dr. Indika Liyanage and Professor Brendan Bartlett.

Physical and electronic copies of the written reflections and observation notes will be kept securely on file by the researcher and viewed only by the student researcher and academic supervisors, Dr. Indika Liyanage and Professor Brendan Bartlett. Data will be stored for the duration of the student researcher’s PhD candidature (approximately three years) and then destroyed.

I have read the information sheet and the consent form. I agree to participate in this study and give my consent freely. I understand that the study will be carried out as described in the information statement, a copy of which I have retained. I realise that participation is solely my decision. I also realise that I can withdraw from the study at any time and that I do not have to give any reasons for withdrawing. I have had all questions answered to my satisfaction.

If I have a complaint about the ethical conduct of this research, I understand that I should consult, in the first instance, the Manager, Research Ethics, Office for Research, Bray Centre, Nathan Campus, Griffith University (3755 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au).

Name and signature: 

Date: 

199
Appendix C: Semi-structure for interview 1

- Would you describe the intention of professional development? What is the point of it?
- What distinguishes quality (high and low) in such PD?
- What does “professional development” mean to you as a concept that applies generally to teachers, and as it applies to you - past, present and future?
- What kinds of professional development have you experienced as an EAP teacher?

- How might one go about engaging in professional development as an EAP teacher to ensure it will be high quality, productive and of lasting effect?
- How has professional development affected you? On reflection, how would you want it to have been different in order to be better for you? How do you approach your participation in professional development?
- What relationship do you see between professional development and professional learning for the profession of teaching? … And practicing it?
- How would you rate the value of professional development to the profession generally and to you personally?
Appendix D: Semi-structure for interview 2

- In the first interview, you described your conception/s of professional development as [describe participant’s particular conceptions here, show diagram]. Is that accurate? Do you want to alter it?
- I would like to discuss your engagement with some professional development which you’ve recently completed.
- What were the two activities about? What was their focus?

Activity One and Two – Questions are repeated for each, tailored to each activity.

Objectives and intentions
- Why did you take part in this [specific activity]?
- Did you have any expectations of the [specific activity] before you took part?
- Did you have any expectations of yourself as a participant?

Engagement
- What did you focus on during the [specific activity]?
- How would you rate your engagement in the [specific activity]? What factors do you think contributed positively or negatively to this?
- How did you feel during the [specific activity]? What do you think may have contributed to (this/these feeling/s)?

Outcomes
- What did you take away from the [specific activity]?
- Did “change” because of the [specific activity] feature in your mindset? (If so, what was the change, when did the realisation occur and when was the change to be enacted?; If no, why was that? What could have happened differently that might have promoted “change”?)
With respect to both activities

- How did the professional development affect you in terms of your teacher practice? Are there recountable/foreseeable changes to your classroom practice as a result of either of the PD activities?
- Can you describe how changes in your teaching practice are instigated typically? What factors contribute to you changing your practices? What about your opinions or ideas?
Appendix E: Reflection sheet

NAME: ________________________________ DATE: ____________________

Please describe briefly the professional development session you have just experienced. The following questions are intended as a guide – please adjust them as needs be to best capture your reflections.

1. Background:
   a) Where did the professional development take place? ____________________________________________________________
   b) What form did the session take? ____________________________________________________________
   c) Was attendance mandatory or optional? ____________________________________________________________
   d) Who participated in the session? Please specify the role(s) or position(s) of fellow participants ____________________________________________________________
   e) Who led the session? Please specify the role(s) or position(s) of facilitators ____________________________________________________________
   f) What was the focus of the session? ____________________________________________________________
2. Expectations:
   a) Did you have any expectations of the session before completing it? If yes, please describe them. 
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   b) If you did have expectations of the session, were these expectations met? 
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................

3. Engagement:
   a) How would you rate your engagement during the session generally? Please circle: 
   
   Very Low       Low       Medium       High       Very High
   
   b) What factors influenced your engagement? ......................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   c) How did the session make you feel? You may want to consider feelings of self-efficacy, confidence, confusion, enjoyment, satisfaction, etc. ......................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................................................
4. Learning:

a) How would you rate your learning from this session? Please circle:

- I didn’t learn anything
- I learnt a little
- I learnt a lot
- I learnt a great deal

b) If you learnt something, please describe it:

..................................................................................................................................................
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Extra comments/notes:
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Thnak you for completing this reflection sheet.
So the first question I’ve got here – would you be able to please describe for me what you believe the intention of professional development to be? What do you think is the point of it?

I suppose to… well, to develop me as a professional, so to develop my teaching skills, um, you know, new ideas perhaps new ways of approaching teaching. Not necessarily to advance my career, but that could be a reason for developing professionally.

Right, okay. So what would you say is the primary motivation that drives you to engage in professional development?

To improve my teaching. That’s always my prime motivator, is to improve in what I’m doing. If I get paid more then that’s great, but that’s definitely not my …

Okay, and can you tell me, what do you think distinguishes quality – high and low quality – in professional development?

Oh, for me it would be the relevance in terms of uh, is it relevant to what I’m teaching? Is it perhaps something new for me, like something new to think about? Or, for example, uh, low quality for me might be a workshop telling me how to teach beginner vocabulary. Same old, stuff you already know. And not relevant to the areas that I’m teaching. Whereas, something high quality would be where I come out thinking, yes I’m going to try that, that’s something new, I didn’t know that before. Um, yeah, something that’s relevant to me would be high quality.

So low quality would be something that …

Not relevant, something I won’t be able to use or apply, you know, same old things. And I do think quite a lot of professional development in EAP is the same old thing trotted out.

So, low quality for you?
P: Yeah.

I: Okay. And can I ask you what does PD, the idea of PD, professional development, mean to you as a concept that applies generally to teachers and as it applies to you personally?

P: Uh…Well, I think for teachers generally, a lot of teachers see PD as like, training. Also, I think, it can be a way of sharing some ideas. And maybe some of the more relevant PD isn’t formal but comes, like, through the staffroom, over coffee, that kind of thing. Brainstorm ideas, talking about perhaps a challenge that you’ve got in the classroom and then other people talk about that. Or, this is something I did to, you know, that. So it’s not- it’s more of an informal sharing of information, um, for teachers. For me, as I say, it’s about improving my teaching, which sometimes will come through formally organised development sessions, but certainly, personally, I think a lot of my professional development has maybe, I’ve been doing myself. Like through reading. And then sharing that, what I’ve been reading about, with other teachers and then talking about that. Like, oh I read this, or even like, trying to get them to read something. Yeah, read this, you know. So that is a way of developing professionally, rather than attending a workshop.

I: Right, yeah. And can I ask how you perceive PD to have affected you over the trajectory of your career? Thinking back to when you started, to now, certainly into the future as well.

P: Hmm. I think in the past I’ve probably done PD because, so formal sessions and workshops, because you had to be seen to be going. So, you know, it’s kind of office politics. You need to be seen to be engaging in professional development. To be kind of, um …

I: Can I ask, was that ever articulated by the management?

P: No, no, it was just the culture. So, for example, at [institution], maybe when we first started there, there would be PD sessions organised. Usually other teachers ran those, sometimes external as well. And yeah, it was kind of just an unspoken that you would go. Especially if you were on a contract. So, at that time I was on a contract and there was almost like an obligation that you would go. Once I became casual and also, I think, when I became more aware of what, you know, how PD could benefit me or what would and wouldn’t benefit me, now I only go if I think it’s relevant. Apart from this one PD
session that’s coming up, where I do feel obliged to go. Even though I know, um, what’s
it’s about. I actually worked as [position] for the person that’s presenting it. I know
exactly what [the presenter is] going to say, but yeah I don’t think it would be looked on
very favourably if I didn’t go. Since I will be teaching on that day. If I wasn’t, then I
wouldn’t … Yeah, so I kind of need to …

I: Okay. And can I ask, what types of PD have you experienced in EAP? I know you’ve
mentioned a few there, workshops, readings particularly. Anything else that you’ve
experienced as an EAP teacher?

P: Um, mostly workshops or presentations through… before I worked at [institution] I used
to go to a lot of the [institution] organised sessions, so, um I worked at [institution], so
we’d go up to [institution] or something like that. Um, I’ve done, I used to do IELTS so
I’ve done IELTS training. Um, so yeah, training as an examiner. And study, I suppose. I
think for me, that’s my best form of PD, is study. Either formal, or … I mean, before
formal study I was, I suppose I would call myself a scholarly teacher. So I was always
looking in literature for ways to, uh, not just new ideas but also support for what I just
thought instinctively. You know, you read something and think, yeah, you know, that
made the connection between the two. So yeah, that aspect of PD is probably the most
important to me.

I: Okay. Okay, so the next question is a bit of a long question and there are a few terms in
here that you might need to define. So the question is, how might one go about engaging
in PD as an EAP teacher to ensure that it will be high quality, productive and of lasting
effect?

P: Well I think for it, high quality is quite subjective. So, for it to be high quality, productive
and to be something that you can apply or have, it needs to be relevant to you. It needs to
be relevant to what you’re doing, so that you can go away and apply it. You know, if it’s
just theory or if you’re in a PD session and say it’s about, for me there would be no point
in me going to a PD session about GE vocabulary building. Because I, I just, I might
occasionally have to teach GE, but I’m just not interested in that. So it’s got to be
something that I can apply, that’s relevant and that I’m interested in.
Okay, right. And how about this term – productive. What would you define as productive professional development?

So, if a session is productive for me, well I have to have got something out of it. I have to go away with um, a new way of thinking about something, some new ideas about how to do something differently, or um, even just support for what I’m currently doing. Or just support to say, yep, that’s the right direction that you’re, kind of, going in. Um, actually some of the more productive PD sessions that I’ve been to have not been related to EAP. So, more to do with teaching in higher education. So even though I’ve just bad mouthed them, the [institution], you know, some of their sessions are more about how to do constructive alignment when you create your course profiles, assessment. So I’m quite interested in that. I think that there’s a lot we can learn from EAP that can be applied to academic literacies in the university. So just thinking about writing. There’s a lot in EAP, well, about developing writing. But because, you know, even in the journals you’ve got these two separate, writing in higher academic writing and then you’ve got EAP. So the two are kind of separated if you like. But there are some benefits you can learn from both, and … so I think for me, although I’m teaching EAP, because I’m teaching in a university context I think it’s important for me to, not just perceive myself as an EAP teacher but also a teacher in higher education. And so professional, for me the professional development in higher education is more interesting, it’s something of a newer area but I can see how I can apply it more.

Okay, so it doesn’t just have to be in that teaching area then?

No, no. I think to be a good teacher of EAP, especially in this context, you need to see the commonalities and you need to be aware of the practices within the university, university teaching. Because that’s the context that you’re teaching in. And ultimately, even if you’re just a [course] teacher, you’re not doing the [name] courses, you’re still preparing the students for university. So you need to have an awareness. I think EAP teachers would benefit from professional development in other areas, not just EAP.

Okay, right.

But it depends how interested you are, at the end of the day.

And it comes back to that idea of relevance?
P: Yeah. You know, for a lot of teachers, it’s go in, teach what you’re doing that day, then go home and that’s the end of it. You know? I think professional development again, for it to be lasting, I think it will also come down to your motivation for doing it. If you’re just going so there are bums on seats, you’re seen to be there. And maybe afterwards you think oh yeah, that was interesting, or that was rubbish. But you’ve really no intention of doing anything with it beyond that point. Um, then you know it’s going to have no lasting effect.

I: So it comes from within the teacher?

P: Well it depends how motivated you are to improve yourself professionally. And I think whether that motivation is intrinsic or external … So I think for professional development to be lasting, you need to be very intrinsically motivated. Beyond just because you need to be seen to be there or you think it’ll mean you’ll get more work, or… Yeah.

I: Okay, yeah. Can I ask you, how do you personally assess the effectiveness of professional development? Any type of PD… how would you for yourself assess effectiveness following that?

P: I think how much it gets me thinking. Yeah, so how much it stimulates me to look more at that. I think, oh that’s really interesting, I’m going to read that article, that would be, that means it’s effective. If I come out and I don’t think any more about it, or I just file the notes in my “to be filed” pile, then yeah, its not.

I: Okay, so a bit of mental stimulation there?

P: Hmm yes. Yeah, it needs to get me thinking.

I: Okay, interesting. Okay, so thinking back now over the PDs that you have done, this is formal and informal, anything you might have done, can I ask you, how has PD, firstly, affected you? And on reflection, how would you want it to have been different in order to be better for you? If that’s a concern of yours.

P: Um, well as I say, professional development for me, I see very much the self-directed, scholarly approach. And in terms of how it’s affected me, oh I think it’s improved my practice, it’s opened up new areas for me, it’s stimulated lots of questions that I find really interesting. So, that aspect of professional development, yeah I love it. Yeah.

I: And on reflection, do you think you would have changed anything?
Anything … well I’m not a big person for regretting things. And there is some value in everything, even if the value was that you were seen to be, your name was on the attendee sheet. Maybe there is some value in that. Um, in an ideal world if things could be different, I suppose I would’ve liked more of a forum to share some of the things I find and to discuss. I do have some colleagues that I ear bash and we kind of talk about these things, but they’re kind of few and far between.

Can I ask, is that a formalised thing, or is it more a casual meeting?

Oh it’s just over coffee, not even a meeting, it’s just, oh I was reading, you know. And you go on.

Okay, so you’d like a forum for that.

Yeah, I think so. But again there are distinctions in the different, say in the staffroom there’s different types of teachers. Scholarly teachers, teachers who see themselves as more say, about academic writing as opposed to language teachers, or more GE or EAP. Some teachers who do what’s on the curriculum and that’s it, don’t think beyond that.

Yeah. I mean, I don’t mean they’re not looking for ways to improve their practice but it’s not a priority.

And how about you, how do you perceive yourself, as a scholarly teacher?

Yes, I think so. Um, hmm … yeah I think so. Forgot what I was going to say then, you can tell I’ve been teaching! I do this to my students all the time; I’ll say to them, what was I thinking? … [Laughs]. Yes, as I say with EAP, I do think there is this kind of dichotomy between, are you a language teacher or are you, in the case of writing, are you a writing teacher? And in EAP you need to be both. But there are some teachers who would conceptualise themselves as being language teachers. That’s what the focus is. So, can’t remember what the question was.

Uh, whether you would have wanted anything to-

Oh, to have changed. Yeah so, maybe more teachers to share ideas with.

Okay.

But, as I say, I think that’s just because of the context of the staffroom in [institution]. They are, and quite right, they are language teachers. But you know, some more teachers with an understanding of that need to crossover, in EAP teachers.
I: That’s interesting, you say, that dual role.

P: Yeah so, it kind of comes through in some of the research literature I’ve been reading. About the critical writing, it’s you know, one of the issues is, when you’re giving feedback in writing. And a lot of EAP teachers, they come to giving feedback on the language form, so you know, maybe indirect coding, something like that. But they’re not so comfortable giving commentary on how to develop the argument or the structure, or intertextuality.

I: But you need that, don’t you.

P: Of course, you need the two. But then they’re also driven that way by the course itself. The course is focused on getting students from a 6 to a 6.5. Or whatever their entry level is. If their entry level’s 6.5 they enter the course as a 6. So the focus is improving their language skills. But one of the processes, the ways they demonstrate that is they write a research essay. So they have to do secondary research, to use literature. They have to develop an argument and all the aspects, using the language in that writing form. And some of the criteria, the criteria’s heavily language focused. But there are criteria that talk about development of argument, coherence and cohesion, terms of developing an argument. So they’re graded on that, but they don’t actually always get feedback on that. Because the focus is on the language. So, partly it’s driven by the requirements of the course on the teacher, also by the teachers who are more comfortable in the language teacher role. And as I say the two work together. You can’t separate the two.

I: Okay. Can I ask another question? How is that dual role that you have, that language teacher plus writing teacher, how does that affect your participation in PD? Or your approach to PD?

P: Umm… I think it would mean that I’m looking for PD that provides me with both, really. So, PD sessions that take that into consideration. But you know, the EAP PD sessions are very much TESOL based. Whereas, you know I might be interested, not that I’ve been to it, but I might be interested in going to a PD session about how, say for all tutors, how to give feedback on writing. The use of formative assessment, how to use written commentary to provide feedback.

I: Okay, and that could be a more general academic one?
P: Yeah. It doesn’t have to be EAP.

I: Yeah, okay.

P: So, because for me, that’s the area that I want to develop more. I mean, the EAP, obviously you’re always developing, always improving, always learning. But I, I think I’ve gone as far as I can with that. I need to integrate the two now.

I: Right, okay. Just on that topic, can I ask you, what relationship do you see between professional development and professional learning? I don’t have any preconceived definitions of this, so what do you perceive to be the relationship there, between PD and professional learning?

P: For me, I’d say they were the same thing. I very much see my professional development as about me learning to improve my professional skills.

I: Sure.

P: Yeah, so for me I’d see them as being the same. The same.

I: Okay, great. And can I ask you how would you rate the value of professional development firstly to the profession in general and secondly to you personally?

P: Yeah, so, to the profession in general I think it’s really important. But I think it, for it to be of value it needs to be done for the right reasons. For example, under NEAS you need to provide professional development for your staff. So therefore you know, you have these sessions or you provide certain opportunities. But that doesn’t necessarily guarantee that they’re of any value or quality. You just have to provide the opportunities or the access for them to develop professionally. So I think it’s really important but I think it’s also important that it’s done well or that there’s enough variety that people can find what’s relevant for them. For me, well especially in terms of my self-directed professional development, it’s what makes my job more interesting. You know …

I: So there’s an affective side to it as well?

P: Oh yes, definitely. If I stopped doing it, I’d feel there was something missing. I’ve constantly got to ... sometimes to my detriment, ‘cause I’m always tweaking and changing, trying to develop materials based on, maybe I should just leave it, there’s other more important things to do. But yeah, if I didn’t do that I wouldn’t find my job interesting.
I: Okay, and can I ask how has that perception changed over your career or has it been something constant for you?

P: Um, I think it’s, maybe to begin with it wasn’t so. You know, when you first start out as an ESL teacher, each day is like, am I going to make it to the end of the day? But certainly, perhaps after the first year, that was the way that I made it more interesting.

I: Quite quickly you got into that real interest in professional development?

P: Yes. I think also, because I like studying. I’ve always been a bit of a perpetual student. Yeah, I think … and the more, probably recently, it’s intensified even more. But yeah, if I didn’t have that, I don’t think I’d enjoy my job as much as I do.

I: Interesting, so you wouldn’t enjoy it as much?

P: Hmm, which, and also that’s my prime motivator for doing it. Is, you know, because I want to improve what I’m doing and I really enjoy learning and developing in that way.

I: Can I ask one more question – I know you’re doing your PhD thesis at the moment. What’s the relationship between that and your professional development?

P: Well, my topic comes out of … [participant gives an extended description of the topic and expected outcomes of the research project] … So what was the question?

I: The relationship between your study and your professional development.

P: Oh, so that topic has come out of the last few years, just trying to find ways to make it easier for students to develop skills, well they are developmental. It’s something you get better at the more you do. So it’s meant me thinking a lot about my writing and the way, you know we just do it without thinking about it, but what I’m actually doing to develop an idea, a paragraph.

I: So it’s directly helping with that?

P: Yeah.

I: Thanks, that’s all my questions, did you have anything else that you wanted to add?

P: No, that’s all.
Appendix G: Sample transcript - Interview 2

Date: 26/11/13 I: Interviewer, P: Participant

I: So after the previous interview that we did, I went away and I took your transcript. And I analysed it quite carefully, I analysed all the transcripts from the first interviews, so it was a meta-analysis of those. And I came up with the different, you could say conceptions or orientations that I understood from the first interview that we did. So I’ve categorised them here and I’ve brought them along because I wanted to go over them with you and see if you had anything you wanted to add, or if you wanted to change anything, or to make any comments, anything at all.

P: Yep.

I: So what I ended up with, your conceptions fell quite neatly into three different categories as far as I perceived. We’ve got career-oriented conceptions, this is of professional development, skills-oriented and person-oriented. So in career-oriented we’ve got professional development as a way to help you adapt to context demands. So speaking of context demands, it could be requirements of your employer, could be particulars regarding your context to help you to, you know, help you feel more comfortable in your job or to do your job … to become more … professional.

P: Is that based on what I said, or are you sort of applying it to an existing framework?

I: No, no. This is based on what you said.

P: Really? I don’t remember saying that! [Laughs]

I: I did paraphrase it.

P: Wow. What a cool thing for me to say.

I: This is from, see these little numbers here as well … [describes a feature of the diagram, irrelevant conversation for a moment].

P: I see.

I: So this one, the career-oriented one, to adapt to context demands. Skills-oriented … the skills-oriented ones are, you could say … with a simple application. We’re looking at professional development as a way to address specific needs, so something that might come up in your practice and you want to pursue, or some problem or some difficulty that
you might have. And professional development as a way to address that. And the other one is PD as a way to improve skills in general. So this one’s quite holistic, just improving skills and adding abilities to your repertoire. So that’s the skills-oriented. And finally the person-oriented one we’ve got here. Professional development as collaboration and as a side note to this one, as collegiality, with the people that you work with. PD as a lifelong learning journey. So it’s looking at something that continues on, it can be a little outside the scope in this regard of your current job or of your particular duties right now. Because we’re looking at something that’s a career long process. And this one, that’s professional development as a means through which to become more self aware as a practitioner. And I remember we discussed this one particularly in regard to teaching theory, any methodologies that you use in the classroom, and professional development as a way to help you understand the choices that you make and the reasoning, perhaps, behind those choices as well.

P: Okay.

I: So this is you in the middle here.

P: I’m the blue dot.

I: Yes. This one here. I couldn’t make it any more interesting, I couldn’t get rid of these either. But, did you have anything that you wanted to alter with that one?

P: Um, let me think about that just for a second.

I: Yeah, take your time.

P: Yeah, I’d say this is accurate. I certainly couldn’t think of any, sort of, additional categorisations there. Yeah so, there’s um development for contextual demands yeah, my job, development to improve as a teacher or as a practitioner, researcher or whatever, and then person-oriented, to work with other people, to increase my store of knowledge for other contexts, and then self-awareness. Yep, no that’s … that makes sense to me.

I: Fantastic. Well if anything comes to you when we’re talking about these other ones, of course you can mention them. It’s not a static document, this one, it can change. And if you want to add something later, just make a mention and we can talk about that, okay?

P: Okay.
I: No worries. So, if we could then talk a little bit about the PD that you have done, and that you have reflected upon. So this one, just to give a general summary of it, we’ve got them online learning one which was a DVD that you watched yourself, and this one was compulsory. And the other one that we’ve got is a [name] conference, it’s a presentation.

P: That’s right.

I: And can I ask, were you there for that? Or was it …

P: I was there, I was in [location] attending the conference. Yeah.

I: Right. Fantastic. And this one was just in October, November? Really recent.

P: Couple of days ago, yeah. Yeah. Well it was the end of October … Yeah so it was about a month ago that it happened, yeah.

I: Okay. Well if we could have a talk about the [online learning] DVD. It was the first one you reflected on, and we might as well look at them in that order.

P: Yep.

I: So that’s this one here. Can I ask, to start with, why did you take part, or why did you complete this one?

P: Um, just the testing one?

I: Yes.

P: Well that was part of the … I had to do that. Basically because we’re putting together an online course, an online version of one of [a course the participant teaches].

I: Sure.

P: And it’s the one that [information about course]. And I am sort of centrally involved in writing and creating, doing the curriculum design, so, which is what all this stuff is. And so yeah, but I wasn’t able to be there at the meeting for this one, I think I had a [explains reason for not attending] and uh, so I asked somebody to film the entire thing. Because what they were doing was showing different sort of online tools or software and so on that could be used for the course once we’ve got it up and running. So I couldn’t just sort of listen, I had to have somebody filming it. And that’s the reason for that. So, but it was something… I mean I knew nothing, I knew very little about online learning and the tools for that, so it was very important that I sort of, learn fast.
I: Excellent. So, did you have any expectations of the session before you, or I guess of the DVD of the session, before you watched it?

P: Um … well I knew what it was going to be about, because it was… you know, they’d sent out an agenda. So I knew that we were going to learn about [specific online tools] and all these other things. I knew what was going to happen and what I was going to get out of it.

I: Sure. So you had specific expectations, then.

P: Yeah.

I: And how about of yourself as a participant, for this one? Did you have any specific expectations of yourself?

P: Um… you mean, that I would pay attention, or?

I: Anything at all.

P: That I’d be bored? Expectations that I’d sit through the whole hour… [Laughs]. Well that’s, that’s one of the big, one of the cool things about watching a DVD rather than being at the meeting, because you can pause it, go and have a cup of coffee, come back, and watch the rest of it. If there was something I really liked, I could play it back again and write it down. Which you can’t do in real time. And so that was a big advantage, that I could do that.

I: And I suppose was that, could you call that an expectation? Of yourself, that you could have a little more control over that session?

P: Yeah, I’d call that an expectation then, yeah, in that sense.

I: Okay fantastic. And can I ask, talking a little bit about your engagement with this one, what did you focus on during the DVD? Where did your attention go, specifically?

P: Um … Specifically I was mostly interested in what was being taught to me, in the sense of these are the tools and this is how I’m going to use them and apply them. There were other, there were other things where they were sort of talking about things that I found sort of spurious to what I was doing, and my attention wanders fast anyway. So if it was something that I wasn’t that interested in, I didn’t fast forward, though I can. I realised it
was for this, so I didn’t fast forward. But you know, you do other things, and “oh, hang on!” and you come back to it. So, yes.

I: Sure. And how would you rate your engagement for this one? I know in here, I think you’ve put down… It’s medium.

P: That would be about right, yeah.

I: Yeah? Can I ask what contributed positively or negatively to that?

P: Um, yeah. I think that it wasn’t going to be low because it was something that I had a professional… not a professional interest in, but I knew that it was going to be important for my profession, for my work. It wasn’t going to be any higher than that because it just doesn’t- it’s not something I find exciting. Like you know [one of the participant’s colleagues], for instance, finds this stuff terribly exciting. I’m not like that. I’m just sort of okay, you know, this, you know I have a … I need to know this stuff. Oh that’s okay, I can see how it’s going to be used, oh fabulous. But there are certain things that I literally do find exciting. This wasn’t quite in there. [Laughs]. It didn’t quite float my boat! Yeah.

I: Sure. Fair enough. So I guess to summarise, you had a bit of a balance between, like you say an obligation to therefore go and use the information, whatever it was that you learnt from this one, but it was also mediated by the fact that you weren’t super interested intrinsically in the topic. Would that be…?

P: Yeah. That would be accurate, yeah.

I: Okay. And can I ask, what’s my next question, how did you feel when you were watching the DVD?

P: Um, hmm… how did I feel? In terms of the emotions I was feeling?

I: Yeah, how were you feeling in general, yeah?

P: Difficult questions, because it was [specific date of activity] … it was, right?

I: It was a while ago. It was [date of activity]. We could have a look at this, see what you’ve got down …

P: Can I refer to this?

I: Of course you can.
Okay … so it increased my confidence to implement … less mystifying, I wasn’t confused, that was a relief. Um, yeah I mean I couldn’t say that I had any feelings other than those. I was just watching, I knew it was only going to be for a limited time. Which is another advantage, because in, some PD sessions go for three or four hours, and I just don’t have that kind of attention span. And I suspect that most people don’t, underneath it all, they’re sort of … because I’ve taught a lot of things, classes, some PD and training and so on, and I know that after the first hour people wander. So I’m pretty sure it’s not just me! So yes, I sort of, I have a sense of, yeah oh this is easier to understand than I thought so I’m happy about that. And I could see its applicability for what I was doing, so I was happy. But yeah, I had no other feelings besides that.

Sure. Relief that there were temporal boundaries, I guess?

Yes, yes. Relief at temporal boundaries, precisely.

Yeah, that’s a big one, it’s fair enough.

For everything, “I can’t wait for this to be over”. Yeah.

Fair enough. Okay. So, can I ask what you took away from this one?

Um, what I took away from it. I think again that would have to do with the fact that it was going to be useful for me professionally. And also the given the fact that we’re under immense time pressure, and we still are under immense time pressure, although we’re on time. But we had to get everything done by the end of the year. This was happening in [month], we had no idea what the hell was going on. So, um the fact that I was able to learn three or four things and think, yes, I can see how that’s going to slot into what we want to do, was, yeah that was, there was a relief that I wasn’t going to have to struggle with learning how to code an HTML or something equally mystifying.

Sure.

So that was something that was important, that’s probably what I took away from it.

Sure. And can I ask what you learnt, specifically, from this one?

Um, um. You mean in terms of the, in terms of what was being taught on the DVD that I … or… okay, right.

Yeah.
‘Cause you know, I learned and I’ve taken that information away and I realise that since then, that some of that’s really not important and frankly, I’m not all that convinced that people are going to learn English language more effectively online than they do in real time. I’ve learnt those, but that’s why I’m asking. In terms of what I leant, what was it, we looked at [specific online tools], how to use [online programmes], that kind of stuff. Do you want me to explain what all those are?

I: Basically online tools, right?
P: Basically a set selection of online tools that I could apply to my online course I was creating.
I: Sure. And can I ask, were you expected to apply these to the course you’re creating?
P: Um, not all of them but at least some of them. After, after watching this meeting I then met with the other team members a couple or a week or so later, and we sort of said, what are we going to use? You know, we like this, we don’t like that so much, this isn’t going to be … so we didn’t use all of it, it was just so that we were … the DVD, which I happen to have here, was just so that we have an idea of what our options were and then, after we’d seen everything, we got to decide what we were going to use and what we weren’t.
I: Okay.
P: ‘Cause there’s all sorts of things which we could use, but then, but then there are issues as to whether it’s going to work overseas, whether it’s going to be supported by certain browsers, can we use Skype, no we can’t use Skype, it’s banned in all sorts of countries for one reason or another.
I: So this is for an overseas course that you’re doing?
P: Yeah it’s all overseas. They’re all in [several locations] … they’re all over the world. And we don’t know where they’re going to be.
I: Yeah, I was wondering if perhaps it was a complementary, like an online module or component, for another course that you were doing here.
P: No, it’s the whole thing. [Described the course for a while].

221
I: Fantastic. Okay, well can I ask, did change because of this one occur to you at all, in any way?
P: Change in what, you mean in terms of my practice?
I: Yeah, I guess so. I guess it’s an open question, so practice, opinions, ideas.
P: Yeah. Um, not really change in my opinions. We used all these online tools because we had to do something. Like I said before, I don’t really have a, I don’t really think it’s going to be that much better than face to face language learning, or even as good. Because language learning, so much of it is about interaction. Um, you can learn by swotting but a lot of it you’ve got to learn by doing and that’s not that easy when you’re online, because there’s limited face to face time, there’s limited synchronous talking, most of it you just have to do by yourself, on your own.
I: Sure.
P: So that hasn’t really changed. Um, on the other hand, you know, I learnt all these, I learnt how to use all these tools or at least I learnt what they were about. And um, I can, yeah I can see how they’re going to be used and uh, I can ... like in the future, I think online learning, there’s no going away from it. That’s the direction [the institution] is going. Well probably, we’ve got [other EAP courses] and chances are they’ll be online too. Over the next couple of years. So I’m, we’re going in that direction, there’s no stepping back from it. So I might as well, I’m glad I’ve got this knowledge and I’m glad I’ve been involved. And professionally it’s another string to my bow; all of a sudden I’m a bit of a CALL expert!
I: True!
P: God help me!
I: Against your better hopes?
P: Yes. Yes, at heart I’m a bit of a purist actually. I like being in a classroom teaching people. Uh, I’m not such a great fan of this new fangled, you know, computer stuff. It’s not my thing.
I: No, that’s fair enough.
P: Yeah.
I: I guess you’re having to interact with it a lot.

P: Yes, I’ve got to work with it. And that’s been a good thing that I’ve had to, and you know, I’ve improved as a teacher and as a curriculum designer, I guess.

I: Right. Fantastic. Okay, well I didn’t have any other questions about that one specifically. Would you mind to have a talk about the second one then?

P: Sure, that was an interesting one actually.

I: Well, okay so my questions are basically the same for that one, talking about objectives, intentions, engagement and outcomes. So can I ask, why did you attend this [name] presentation? Or conference, was it?

P: That particular, or you mean the conference in general?

I: Was it, I suppose you were presenting at the conference?

P: I wasn’t actually. No, I just happened to be um, how did it come about? I just happened to be, I was going to [location of conference] anyway and then the [name] conference was there, at that time, so I said great, two birds with one stone.

I: Okay.

P: And I know a lot of people working in language education in [location of conference], so it was a chance to sort meet with them and network, find out what they were doing. Also people from uh [location] and so on were, who I knew in [location], had come to [the conference] to present their research. Which often was to do with things that I’m interested in … So that had something to do with it, too.

I: Fantastic. So what about this particular one?

P: That one’s interesting because it was to do with teacher development in developing countries. Uh, which is something I’m interested in, it’s not like a research specialty or anything like that, but it’s sort of this nascent thing that in a few years time, I’d really like to steer in that direction. How do people learn and teach English in developing countries, where they don’t have access to broadband or even textbooks, and so on? And yet people learn English marvellously. Without even classes sometimes. I remember in [another country] meeting a little, a 10 year old girl, selling books and stuff like that. And she was illiterate, couldn’t write even in [her L1], but her English was brilliant, fantastic. And
she’d learnt it just chatting to people selling the books and so on. I met another one, sort of, she learnt from listening to the radio. Yeah … you know, it kind of puts a new perspective, gives you a new perspective when you’re thinking methodology, and you’re thinking curriculum and syllabus and assessment. And they don’t care about any of that! They just learnt the language. You know. So that was sort of in my mind when I was taking this, because it was online um, teacher development. [The participant briefly describes the features of the programme].

I: Sure.

P: But yeah, so that’s the reason I liked it.

I: Okay. And did you have any particular expectations of the presentation before you attended it?

P: Yeah, I, I intended, I expected to um hear a lot about um, about how it was set up, what its aims were, how popular it was, who was using it, how it was being supported, how they got the money to get it up and running and that kind of stuff. And I wanted kind of, nuts and bolts things about it. That was my big expectation. Yeah.

I: And of yourself as a participant, or an audience member, perhaps?

P: Yeah well I was an audience member, just an audience member. Um, my expectations of myself … I expected to sort of sit there and listen for the whole thing. Um, I expected to be quite, sort of interested, and maybe even sort of fascinated by what they were going to talk about because as I say, it’s that area of the world that I’m quite interested in.

I: Of particular interest to you.

P: Yeah [describes particular region].

I: Okay.

P: So yeah.

I: So expecting a high level of engagement, I suppose.

P: Yeah I’d say so, yeah.

I: Fantastic. So how would you actually, uh… oh sorry no, just before that one, what did you focus on during this presentation? Where did your attention go?
P: Well that, my attention fluctuated. Um, cause the presentation can really be divided into two strands. One where there were people that were talking about the programme, what it was, how to contribute to it and so on, as I’d expected, which is what I found very interesting. And then, then there was the bit that had me scratching my head because there were two, two or three very well known people who’d put their name to this. [The participant provides further information]. Um, so anyway [presenter one] was there and [presenter two] was there and I had expectations that I would, that they were going to be talking about the same thing. But neither of them actually did. Well [presenter one] kind of touched on it, but it was just, most of the time he was sort of going on about [previous teaching experience]. And then [presenter two] was just, completely different tangent. [Described topics discussed]

I: Sure. So it was quite irrelevant?

P: Well, fine but what’s this got to do with this teacher development thing? So um, yeah my attention to that was, I was just puzzled. Yeah.

I: Can I ask, how did that impact on your engagement for this one?

P: Um, it, I was disappointed actually. I, you know it’s, you can see why they did it and I could understand that. You know, these people need [well known presenters] who will put their name to the thing, oh look we’ve got [name of presenter] supporting us. Um, so I could see why they did it. But I was, if somebody is that well known, you’d expect that they’re going to be pretty good at what they say to you. And these guys were pretty good, they just weren’t talking about what they were supposed to be talking about. And I’m not the sort of person to be enthralled by simply the fact that these people are there. I want to know what you’re talking about. And, um … So yes.

I: And how would you rate your engagement then, over this one. I think here we’ve got here …

P: It’s medium, and then I think …

I: It fluctuates, like you say.

P: Yes medium. Because there were certain, yeah I learned a lot. Did you want- why don’t we come back to that? I did learn a lot.

I: Yes, that’s good.
P: But in terms of my actual engagement, there were certain parts that I was very engaged with, and certain parts I was a little bit, scratching my head over.

I: Okay. And can I ask, I know you’ve mentioned some of the things that detracted from your engagement, such as the irrelevance of some of the presentations. But can I ask what contributed to that medium level of engagement, anything that contributed positively to it?

P: Um, yeah positively ... yeah I think, look, I mean the people that were talking about it ... they were obviously quite passionate about it. And in fact, the guy who seemed to be driving it is, well he’s not famous, but he’s very into what he’s doing and it’s his idea and he’s the guy who has set up the funding for it and he’s put together the website. And he actually does, as an aside, he does exactly the job that I did. When I left my job in [describes previous job], he’s the guy who got that job!

I: Oh really? In the same institution?

P: Exactly. And he came up to me in the conference and shook my hand, and said, “You’re [name]! You left all your lesson plans behind for me, I didn’t have to do anything!”

I: That’s very generous.

P: Well, I couldn’t take them with me.

I: True.

P: So, a guy called [name], and so, so they were interested in it and they had practical, well-founded ideas on what they were doing and they’d obviously sort of brought it to some level of fruition. Which, I really liked that. They were very, yeah … I appreciate passion.

I: Yeah okay. Excellent. And can I ask how you felt during this presentation?

P: Um, yeah by turns interested and as I say, puzzled. Sort of, you know, I felt a little bit sort of, because nobody else was puzzled. Or they weren’t saying anything about, “Hey [name] this has got nothing to do with the topic”. Everybody else was sort of, because these are interesting people talking, everyone else was interested in what they were saying. I had the sort of sense that I was the only one thinking, you know, what’s this got to do with online teacher development?

I: Yeah, sure. Fair enough, so you felt like you were the only one perhaps?
P: I suspect, yeah. You never know, but ... I've actually got the recording if, if for any reason you do want to hear it, it's up to you.

I: Okay.

P: I do have, I recorded it.

I: Fantastic. All right well, can I ask then, what did you take away from this one?

P: Um, well I got, let's see. I was interested in the idea at the time. I think my main thought was that, uh, I'm, this is something that I'd like to be involved in but I just do not have the time.

I: Sure.

P: If I was still an English teacher working in [a different location], then that's something that I could contribute to. And that was all I was thinking as I left.

I: Okay.

P: But, you know, a [described current position] in Australia and I'm sort of constantly overloaded and I just don't have time for anything else. Which is a shame because, as I say, that's something I'd like to sort of be involved in.

I: Yeah.

P: Hmm.

I: And what did you learn from this one? Anything in particular?

P: Um, not in terms of skills. Like, what I learned was that this programme exists ... Um, and yeah I learned that it exists and that it's a fairly big thing and that it's expanding. And I learned how I can contribute to it if I do have time. Because all that you do is ... [participant describes the features of the programme].

I: Ah, so learning the mechanics of the site, how the organisation actually functions.

P: Yeah, yeah. So I learnt quite a lot about that one.

I: Okay. And, this one might not be relevant, but did change occur to you because of this one?

P: Um, I suspect only temporarily. Because you know, I sort of left it thinking, this is something that I'm interested in and then I sort of realised I just don't have the time for it.
I’ve actually only just thrown away the business card, as it happens. Let’s see … here you go, look.

I: Oh, thanks. Right, so you took this with you?
P: Yeah, they gave me that. But, and I’ve carried it around in my wallet but I just don’t have the time to contribute. So, yeah there was a sense of, it changed my thinking but only temporarily. If I had more time, I suspect I’d be, it’s something I’d like to be involved in.

I: Okay.
P: So there’s a sense of disappointment actually. A sense of the onerousness of my workload, hmm.

I: So perhaps it wasn’t the best one to attend then?
P: Hmm.

I: Okay, well that’s all my questions for that one. Did you have anything else you wanted to mention about the [name] conference?
P: Um… I don’t think I did.

I: Because I’ve got some quite in-depth reflections there and I think we’ve covered …
P: Hmm. No there’s nothing else that I’d, nothing else that I’d add to it at the moment.

I: Okay sure. Well I’ve just got a couple more questions with regards to, firstly both of the activities and then in general.
P: Yep.

I: Firstly, can I ask, how did these two PD activities affect you in terms of your teaching practice, if they affected you at all?
P: Um … let’s see. Um, the second one, the most recent one, probably didn’t change my teaching practice that much. Partly because it was very recent, and that was the end of [the teaching period] and I’ve not taught anything.

I: Hmm, haven’t had the opportunity to go back to teaching yet.
P: Hmm. And partly because I mean, I will, I already had ideas in my mind and this sort of supported my ideas rather than changed my thinking. I was already sort of thinking oh, online teaching, developing countries, could be fun. Um, as for the first one, yeah that did
change my practice. Not so much sort of in the classroom but in terms of curriculum
design. Um, because I, I’ve learned about all sorts of things that I now need to apply.

I: Sure.

P: Um, most recently like, there’s a thing called [name of an online platform], where you
can literally record yourself talking to a group ... uh, you can move the screen and you
can sort of record an entire lecture, put it on [the online platform], and then people can
watch it.

I: And you can do it in your office?

P: Yeah, yeah. It’s not live, it’s pre-recorded, although it can be live. So, you know, I
learned how to do that. So that is a change in my practice. Not necessarily, I haven’t sort
of completely abandoned everything else because the only thing that matters in my life
right now is CALL. It’s more of a sort of being grudgingly pushed into the 21st century.
But um, yeah so there has been that change. Yep.

I: Okay fantastic. And can I ask, now this question is very much in general. Can I ask, can
you describe how changes in your teaching practice are typically instigated? And what
factors do you think might contribute to you changing practice?

P: Hmm. Typically, you know, I’d say it’s more likely to be the result of something internal.
I’m the sort of person who will work out something that’s not working properly in what I
do. And then can sort of, you know, why not? How can it be fixed? And that’s, rather
than sort of “hey [name], read this book!” “Oh wow, now I’m going to do things
differently”. I don’t do that. Generally there needs to be some sort of stimulus, and the
stimulus tends to be bored students, unhappy students. There’s nothing, there’s nothing
worse than being in a room full of unhappy people who are looking at you, going, you’re
wasting our time dude! So, that tends to be the genesis of any change that I make. I go
away, right what didn’t work, how to make it work, implement that, great – problem
solved.

I: Sure. So, I guess you could, is it almost a reaction to classroom events …

P: Very much.

I: Coupled with self-reflective practice?
Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Coupled with the desire to improve. But the desire to improve is, that comes about through people who aren’t happy. You know, if I’m not happy I don’t care but if other people are unhappy, you know you’ve got to go in there every week and, hi chaps! And it’s not working, that’s a major motivator for changing my practice.

Okay. And could I ask that same question for your opinions and ideas? How are changes in your opinions and ideas typically instigated? Regarding your teaching.

Right, that’s um … well partly that’s, that’s a little bit different, actually. ‘Cause partly that’s sort of driven by experience, driven by practice that’s deficient in some way. But partly it’s, I mean you’re getting stimuli from all kinds of, you know, you might see something online, you might have a conversation with somebody, you might read somebody’s paper, you might attend somebody’s lecture and something sort of sparks and, oh that’s interesting! And so there’s all kinds of things coming at you and I think, you know, my opinions about things tend to be changed by that, perhaps more so than my actual in-class practice.

Sure, so it’s a much wider scope of factors that could contribute to you changing your ideas, as opposed to your practice.

Yeah. Yeah.

Okay, fantastic, well that’s actually all my questions. Would you mind if I asked you a few demographics to finish up with? Or I could ask you, did you have anything else you’d like to mention?

No, there’s nothing else.