Experience, Identity and Career of Professionals in Long-term, Non-standard Work Arrangements

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration
in Collaboration with Munich Business School

September 2024

Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree. I was an enrolled student for the following award:

   Name of award: Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching for Higher Education
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2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.

4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy.

5. The word count of the thesis is 72,582 (main body only).

Name	Jonathan William Allott
Date of Submission	September 2024
Resubmitted with amendments	June 2025
Award	Doctor of Business Administration
Research Institute	Sheffield Business School
Director(s) of Studies	Professor Jennifer Smith Maguire

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors Jennifer Smith Maguire and John McAuley for their invaluable guidance, continuous support, and encouragement throughout the course of my research and the writing of this thesis. Their expertise, insightful feedback, and patience have been instrumental to my academic development.

I would also like to thank the faculty and staff of Sheffield Hallam University and Munich Business School for providing a stimulating and supportive academic environment.

I am sincerely grateful to my friends and colleagues who have shared this experience with me, offering both input and emotional support.

Lastly, I wish to express my appreciation to my family, above all my wife Mareike, for their unwavering love, understanding, and sacrifices. Mareike and our daughters, Selena and Amina, gave me the strength to continue and finish the thesis. Without their support, this accomplishment would not have been possible.

Thank you all.

Abstract

The thesis focuses on a homogenous, skilled, professional group, namely Teacher of English as a Foreign Language, and looks at the impact of their work arrangement on how they experience their work, understand their professional identity, and plan for a career. A series of nineteen semi-structured interviews were undertaken. This is important as it is not clear from the current literature what happens when changes in the organisation of market relations generate challenges for professionals. In line with the researcher's interpretive philosophy, these were analysed through Interpretive Thematic Analysis techniques. Using the Creative Analytical Process, the data from the nineteen participants was presented in the form of four composite vignettes which characterised the different way in which individuals perceived their work. The key findings were the incompatibility between non-standard work arrangements and a strong teacher professional identity; the support of the neo-professional thesis of legitimacy through clients and other relationships; and the notion that to thrive in non-standard work arrangements, individuals need to combine a mastery and performance approach which requires inter-occupational growth through recognising training and development ideas demanded by the market. In essence, to thrive in non-standard work arrangements such as the gig economy, one must be able to develop outside of one's profession so that a weak professional identity coupled with professional fluidity is necessary. The research is particularly pertinent currently when aligned to the ongoing university lecturer strikes and the UK's governments plans to tackle zero-hour contract work. Some aims of the strikes are to end contract casualisation and job insecurity and to tackle the rising workloads driving their members to breaking point. There are clear parallels between TEFL workers and lecturers at universities and indeed some overlap.

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction to Myself and My Background

In terms of my own personal experience, I moved to Germany in 2007 to take up a teaching position in TEFL at the *Cambridge Institut*, Munich, a private language school. To do so, I needed an academic qualification (Bachelor's degree) in addition to a specific teaching qualification, in my case the CELTA (see 1.5 Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, where there is also more information about the TEFL market in Germany). At the *Cambridge Institut*, I had an eleven-month contract which was later extended by another eleven-month period. I stress eleven months, because it left the month of August with no work and no money. Having left Germany after (almost) two years, I moved to Spain, went travelling, moved back to Munich and worked in a 'traditional' job, before establishing myself as a freelance TEFL worker in 2011. The first week I worked I earnt €36, and this set me on a long journey to try to understand this type of work arrangement, which is a long-term reality for so many people. Anecdotally, whether I did or did not enjoy this work arrangement and whether I wanted full-time employment or not was immaterial, as there were either no positions or not enough available in language schools, and universities allowed you to work there on a freelance basis with just a Bachelor's degree, but for full-time employment you required a doctoral-level degree. So, wanting to understand this method of work and wanting to achieve a doctoral degree inspired me to conduct this research. I left Munich in 2022 with roughly fourteen years of teaching experience, of which eleven years were in Higher Education on a freelance basis.

1.2. Research Aims

The aim of my research is to understand skilled workers' experiences in non-standard work arrangements, their perception of their professional identity, and how they view and plan their career. There is insufficient meaningful scholarship about the experience of contemporary work outside of traditional organisations (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018) yet the topic is of growing importance as non-standard work arrangements such as the gig economy comprise more and more workers year after year (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). I will focus on the experience of non-standard work arrangements

for skilled, professional workers in a very specific, homogeneous context, namely Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in Munich, Germany.

Since TEFL is a form of teaching, it is a profession. Professions are associated with distinctive forms of identity, security, and autonomy, among others. While this is largely well researched, it is not clear what happens when changes in the organisation of market relations generate challenges for those distinctive characteristics of professionals. Therefore, this should prove an interesting area of research, and I expect to contribute to the larger topic of the new world of work and how it shapes the experience of the aforementioned group. This is important not only to build organisation and contemporary work scholarship (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018) but also to explain broader changes in society (Woodcock *et al* 2014 as cited in Woodcock and Graham, 2020).

1.3. Research Questions

Based on the above research aim, the following research questions have been derived, in part based on the research of Ashford, Caza and Reid (2018):

- How do TEFL workers ensure job quality and immediate success while planning a career in non-standard work arrangements? (viability challenge)
- How do TEFL workers understand / experience their professional identity in the context of non-standard work arrangements? (identity challenge)
- How do TEFL workers perceive, experience, and negotiate risk and precarity in the context of their work? (emotional challenge)

Answering these questions through my research will allow me to achieve the aim of understanding skilled workers' experiences in non-standard work arrangements.

1.4. Research Gap

Current literature on professional identity is heavily drawn from the organisational perspective or assumes 'standard' employment, both of which ignore the growing number of people outside of traditional work structures (Cross and Swart, 2020). Although the new world of

work has firmly arrived and arouses much interest, academic research is still scarce (Kaine and Josserand, 2019), questions remain unanswered (Crouch, 2020), and organisational studies is unprepared (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). There have been several recent studies in this area, but many have focused on non-standard workers such as Uber drivers or food deliverers rather than skilled non-standard workers. In a good approximate to my research, Petriglieri *et al.* (2018) interview a whole range of skilled workers in the gig economy but via a heterogeneous group in terms of occupation, professional level and so on. This may lead to different understandings and experiences based on occupation rather than work arrangement. Other papers focus on a particular aspect of the new world of work such as working on platforms (Bellesia *et al.*, 2019) or capabilities and behaviours required to survive or thrive in the gig economy (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). In particular, individuals' experiences have been neglected (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018; Woodcock and Graham, 2020) with numerous calls for more research (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018; Ravenelle, 2019; Woodcock and Graham, 2020). My research aims to shed light on how a homogeneous occupational group of skilled workers' work experience and professional identity are affected by their differing work arrangements, currently lacking in the literature. As this is a DBA not a PhD, there will also be a contribution to business practice.

1.5. Structure of the thesis

The thesis starts with an introduction chapter comprising the research aims and objectives, followed by an overview of teaching in Germany and teachers of English as a Foreign Language. Chapter 2 is a 'selective literature review' (Yin, 2011). This is broken down into two main components and begins by introducing several forms of non-standard work arrangements, before discussing the impact on professional identity, which is aimed at addressing the current literature understanding of the identity challenge. The literature review then moves on to discuss the experience of non-standard work arrangements. This features an extensive discussion of the nature of 'good' versus 'bad' work (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011), which is applied to the new world of work and helps to address the current understanding of the research questions of the viability challenge and the emotional challenge. The third chapter is the research methodology and design. This begins by stating

the researcher's philosophical assumptions before the methodology, design and then data analysis process are discussed. The data analysis is based on Clarke and Braun's (2013) Interpretive Thematic Analysis. This is then developed using the Creative Analytical Process (McMahon, 2016). In this thesis, the Creative Analytical Process is explored in the form of creative nonfiction and four composite vignettes are produced which reflect the different themes derived from the iterative data analysis. These four vignettes are presented in the form of interviews, and this forms a separate chapter 4. This is due to the scale of the analysis, and the rich data presented in the interview format. Chapter 5 completes the thesis and comprises an extensive discussion of the findings of the research, followed by contribution to knowledge, and more substantial contribution to professional practice, and a reflection on the limitations of this thesis and suggested potential areas for future research. Finally, a conclusion to the whole work is given. In the appendices there are various documents which support the DBA thesis process such as information sheets and interview guides in addition to a personal reflection (Appendix F).

1.6. Teaching in Germany

In terms of the organisational and educational context in Germany, the nation's education system is highly decentralised, with each of the 16 federal states responsible for their own schooling systems, teacher training, curricula, and hiring practices. This federal structure leads to significant diversity in terms of school types, requirements for teacher certification and training, and policies regarding alternative pathways into teaching (for example, lateral entrants with related degrees) (Koestner et al, 2022). Operating education policy as a federal state creates different standards. For example, in Bavaria, stringent teacher training requirements and minimal use of alternative certification pathways create challenges in recruiting from other states, exacerbated by unique training structures (Seeliger & Håkansson Lindqvist, 2023).

In order to become an English teacher in Germany, one typically must have a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in English (with a focus on linguistics, literature, cultural studies, and didactics), undertake a two-year preparatory service, which includes in-school teaching practice and accompanying seminars, and pass the state examination. This rather arduous

journey to becoming a qualified teacher may explain the current teacher shortages. Seeliger and Håkansson Lindqvist (2023) highlight that teacher shortages are an acute issue in several federal states. This has led to policy changes in some federal states, with differing levels of success. In Berlin, policy changes in 2004 that removed civil servant status from teachers led to reduced recruitment and declining quality. This decision was eventually reversed. Meanwhile, Bavaria now offers alternative paths for university graduates in related disciplines to enter the teaching profession, although this is often treated as a last resort and may lead to bureaucratic delays and incompatibilities across states (Seeliger & Håkansson Lindqvist, 2023).

In addition to the long-winded process of becoming a teacher, the teaching shortage may also be explained by the psychological burdens and working conditions. According to Koestner et al. (2022), teachers in Germany experienced heightened psychological stress during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to other professional groups for reasons including abrupt shifts to online teaching, increased workload and blurred work-life boundaries, and additional responsibilities for maintaining student engagement and wellbeing. This is consistent with research on the teaching profession in other countries such as the UK which also pre-date COVID-19 (see Day, 2002). Younger teachers, in particular, reported higher rates of depression-like symptoms, possibly due to less professional experience and weaker support networks.

It is conceivable that the private Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) market may benefit from the difficult conditions in statutory education within Germany and Teacher Professional Identity is discussed at length in *2.2.7. Impact on Professional Identity*. There is a growing market for private language schools and adult education centres (*Volkshochschulen*), offering alternative career opportunities in TEFL outside the public school system. Although the TEFL market precedes digitalisation and literature on the gig economy, it is indeed a reflection of the gig economy. Certainly, a large component of TEFL work fits in with the three primary characteristics of the gig economy as described by Watson et al. (2021), namely project-based, flexible, and temporary.

The TEFL market can be understood to have three main stakeholders: businesses, language schools and teachers. Teachers may either source work via the language schools, who ostensibly act like job agencies, or independently.

The predominant method of TEFL is face-to-face and it can therefore be classified as geographically tethered. The TEFL market has been impacted by digitalisation (Selwyn, 2016) and advancements in communications technology could even lead to the disappearance of the industry (Ferris, 2016; OECD, 2019). However, although there is literature detailing which jobs or industries are at threat from digitalisation or automation, such as Wood et al. (2019) or Stoepfgeshoff (2018), these do not include teaching, let alone language teaching. Even if not recorded in the literature, the existential threat to TEFL teachers is palpable. In terms of temporality, TEFL falls into a grey area not adequately described by the literature, mainly because it can take many forms. Typically, gigs can be counted in either task completion or hours, while traditional waged employment could indeed be temporary to permanent. TEFL has low capital and high skill entry barriers (See Ravenelle, 2019), with close to zero capital investment and a minimum of a university degree and the relevant professional teaching qualification required.

Many TEFL workers work via a language school which acts as an agency that they use to connect with clients or consumers. They are affiliated with the agency; however, the agency does not employ them in the traditional sense (see Egetenmeyer, Breitschwerdt and Lechner, 2019). These agency-like organisations are integrated in institutional contexts (Faulstich, 1993; Schrader, 2011) and play a central role in the development of these contexts, which allow for professional work. This is not only the case concerning infrastructure, freedom in the development of programmes and forms of teaching. Adult education organisations develop possibilities for creating networks and for learning on a collegial basis. They provide their freelance staff with continuing professional development opportunities (Egetenmeyer, Breitschwerdt and Lechner, 2019). Professional groups might be tied to professional service firms that operate internationally, and these firms might become important for the reconfiguration of professionalism. Suddaby et al. (2007) claim that "… conglomerate professional firms have become less the subject and more the site of professional regulation …" (p. 334) but see also, for example, Cooper & Robson, 2006).

Nevertheless, many TEFL workers may also choose not to use an intermediary or to be affiliated with an agency and instead source work themselves.

Gig workers operate in a workspace with individual responsibility but often with rules imposed by a platform (Bellesia et al., 2019). In TEFL, the language school imitates the role of the platform. As with platforms, language schools do not offer training, and growth and development, essential to define one's professional identity, are again the domain of the individual. As such, in line with gig workers and platforms, teachers may strive to break away from language schools to become wholly autonomous. One key difference between platforms and language schools could be the (a)symmetry of information. Whereas the online platform provides public information and one can typically see competitors' actions and strategies, profiles and job proposals, and multiple job opportunities (Bellesia et al., 2019), language schools have complete authority over the information available to teachers, in this sense having a more powerful position than platforms. This means teachers not only have less autonomy and more precarity, they also have no frame of reference to align themselves to competitors in the market, with potential negative consequences on their identity construction. Another key difference is the review system. On platforms, good reviews can boost reputation and consequently career prospects (Bellesia et al., 2019) whereas in the opaque TEFL market there are no openly available reviews. These are important considerations as they impact the research questions laid out earlier.

1.7. Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

This section focuses on skilled workers in the growing market of Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), otherwise known as Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) or Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) based in Munich, Germany. For consistency, TEFL is used here.

The global marketplace for education has been forecasted to surpass 5 trillion US dollars (Selwyn, 2016) and the market size of the global language services industry more than doubled to 49.6 billion US dollars from 2009 to 2019 with a further projected rise to 56.18 billion US dollars by 2021 (Statista.com, 2019). While these figures do not encapsulate the

private TEFL market, they can be indicative. With globalisation on the rise and the position of English as a *lingua franca* inarguable, the necessity to speak English is unquestionable (Tarnopolsky, 2016). There is literature on English Language Teaching in developing countries (Ghoneim and Elghotmy, 2016; Tarnopolsky, 2016), integrating teachers into universities and employment criteria used by school administrators (Qudah, Davies and Deakin, 2019; Tatar, 2019), and methods of teaching and student expectations (Finkbeiner, Olson and Friedrich, 2013; Tarnopolsky, 2016; Dalton-Puffer, Boeckmann and Hinger, 2019) but no current literature focuses on TEFL workers' experience with respect to their work arrangement.

In Munich, there is a large, established TEFL market as well as an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) test centre. The TEFL market can be understood to have three main stakeholders: businesses, language schools, and teachers. While some TEFL workers may be employed on a standard, full-time basis, there are a large number working independently. Within this thesis, the term 'workers' is often preferred to 'teachers'. This is based partly on the protected status of using the term '*Lehrer'* (teacher) within the teaching profession ("*lehrende Berufe*") in Germany (Terhart, 2022, but see also Cortina & Thames, 2013; Gerlach, 2024). That is, many TEFL workers in Germany may identify as teachers, but may not use the title 'teacher' as they are not qualified under German law to do so. The term 'workers' is also preferred as it may be the case that many workers in TEFL do not work solely in TEFL. That is, the teachers will not only be teachers but may have other jobs and titles. These independent TEFL workers may either source work via the language schools, who ostensibly act like job agencies, creating triangular relationships (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022), or independently by soliciting directly with businesses, the end consumer.

The TEFL group of workers are often native English speakers who work abroad. Typically, TEFL workers will be required to have both a university-level qualification and an industry-specific certification, often CELTA (Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults), which is regulated at Level 5 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Cambridge English, 2024a). A further qualification, a DELTA (Diploma of English Language Teaching to Adults), is regulated at Level 7, the same level as a Master's degree (Cambridge English, 2024b), and is available but is not usually requested on commencement of work. TEFL workers therefore fit in Russ's (2017) shrinking sector of skilled

labour as defined in the literature review. For those working outside their home country, this is a form of skilled migration as they are migrants with an academic education who are engaged in professions globally in demand (Sharma, 2013). Teaching mobility is rising in line with and as part of globalisation (Beck, 2000, 2007) and this expanding of horizons impacts the development of their professional identity (Ospina and Medina, 2020). Nevertheless, despite the academic and professional qualifications and the growing global demand for these professionals, in this industry workers are often hired on an *ad hoc* basis, with contracts typically for one or two hours a week for a duration of several weeks or months, while some may be for as little an hour. As such, it is necessary to have multiple contracts, potentially from multiple sources. This could be considered multiple jobholding, or part of the gig economy, as described in the literature review. These contracts typically contain little or no contractual rights for the worker and none of the benefits that full-time employees receive. The following literature review looks at the current understanding of skilled workers in non-standard work arrangements.

2. Literature Review

As stated in the previous chapter, the aim of this dissertation is to explore the current knowledge around new forms of work arrangement and how these impact on skilled workers', namely TEFL workers', experience, professional identity, and the way they conceive the notion of career. The intention of this literature review is to show to what extent the current literature can help to answer the three research questions, and to highlight any gaps in the current literature. The three research questions restated are:

- How do TEFL workers ensure job quality and immediate success while planning a career in non-standard work arrangements? (viability challenge)
- How do TEFL workers understand / experience their professional identity in the context of non-standard work arrangements? (identity challenge)
- How do TEFL workers perceive, experience, and negotiate risk and precarity in the context of their work? (emotional challenge)

As recommended by Yin (2011), to develop the researcher's preliminary knowledge of the topic, method and data source, the method of selective literature review was chosen. Contrary to a comprehensive literature review, which assumes a broader perspective and reports what is known about a topic, a selective review helps the researcher to define a new study which is relevant to this research (Yin, 2011). In a selective review, the topics of the studies that need to be targeted and reviewed are those that closely resemble the researcher's chosen topic (Yin, 2011). The goal of the selective literature review, according to Yin (2011), is to find a niche for one's thesis, situating it in the array of related studies.

In order to develop a well-informed and targeted understanding of the existing body of knowledge relevant to non-standard work arrangements and professional identity, a systematic yet selective literature review approach was undertaken, as recommended by Yin (2011). The literature search aimed to identify scholarly sources that directly inform the core research questions concerning viability, identity, and emotional challenges faced by skilled professionals in non-standard work contexts, and, where appropriate literature could be found, particularly on TEFL workers.

Sheffield Hallam University's Library Gateway, with access to a range of databases such as Business Source Premier and JSTOR, was utilised for the initial search. The first key word combination used was "non-standard work" OR "precarious work" OR "gig economy". As this returned approximately 17,000 results, this needed to be refined. Changing the request to "professional identity" AND "non-standard work" OR "precarious work" OR "gig economy", nevertheless, only reduced the results by some 500, and so further refinement was required. Inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and chapters published in English from 2015 onwards, to ensure contemporary relevance, but this also had limited impact. Google Scholar was then accessed via the Hallam Library Gateway. This allows students and staff to leverage the university's subscriptions and access full-text articles and other resources that might otherwise be behind paywalls while also ensuring the academic quality of the sources. Putting in the same search terms here as before, that is "professional identity" AND "non-standard work" OR "precarious work" OR "gig economy", returned around 3,450 articles. Restricting this to articles from 2015 onwards reduced the terms somewhat. Some immediate exclusion criteria included studies focusing solely on unskilled gig work such as food delivery, ride-share drivers, unless offering generalisable insights, literature concerned with traditional employment models without reference to flexible or non-standard arrangements, as well as articles with limited academic rigour or from journals of low standing. Thereafter, it was necessary to begin to read the abstracts of some journals in order to assess whether they were relevant.

Some of the first journals encountered were Petriglieri et al. (2018) and Ashford et al. (2018). These were seen as highly relevant and seminal works and have been well cited elsewhere. This led to some snowballing to identify additional key texts, particularly those frequently cited in the foundational articles mentioned above. For example, another key article in this thesis is Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2010) look at the experience of non-standard work in the creative industries. While accepted that creative industries may not be the same as professional industries such as teaching, this article was stillhighly irrelevant and too important to ignore as it provides a good context for itemising the different elements of non-standard workers' experiences. It thus became a vital part of the literature review. Other key texts emerged from snowballing Petriglieri et al. (2018) and Ashford et al. (2018), including Connelly & Gallagher (2004), O'Mahony & Bechky (2006), Cappelli & Keller (2013).

Additionally, concepts by Deci & Ryan and Demerouti & Bakker which were found in the two aforementioned articles were searched for, which led to more recent work by those authors being explored and subsequently included in the literature review. This snowballing effect went further, so those articles also produced further relevant articles, and so on.

This structured approach ensured a comprehensive yet focused engagement with the literature and helped identify critical gaps. However, the need to draw parallels between the creative industries and professions also made clear that there was a research gap around the lived experiences and identity negotiations of skilled professionals in fragmented work environments such as TEFL. This approach is therefore justified and in line with a selective literature review (Yin, 2011).

Please note, a further example of how the literature review was conducted is given in chapter 3.3.1. Research Methods Literature Search where the is also Figure 2 which represents the literature retrieval process specifically for the search for composite vignettes for data analysis and is therefore no figure is added here.

The literature review comprises two main parts, the first of which is an overview of non-standard work arrangements and the second part details the experience of non-standard work arrangements. More detail is given at the beginning of each part.

2.1. The New World of Work

The following section focuses on the 'New World of Work'. It begins by looking at the antecedent conditions, before moving on to look at its constituent elements. The discussion then turns to whether the 'New World of Work' is an uncontested paradigm, focussing firstly on whether this is actually 'new', and secondly whether this paradigm is beneficial or detrimental to workers and organisations alike.

This paragraph looks at potential explanations for how the 'New World of Work' came to be. In the 1970s, a series of negative economic events occurred (Noordegraaf, 2016) and big business and investors became sceptical about the stability of institutions and the economy,

giving rise to ‘neo-liberal’ policies (Standing, 2011). Following on from Milton Friedman’s (see McAuley, Duberley and Johnson, 2014) rhetoric that business organisations exist to maximise shareholder value, management acknowledged the shift of power in accommodating shareholders, but power became split off from responsibility (Sennett, 2006). In neo-liberalism, growth and development are dependent on market competitiveness, and as such, the market should be predominant in all aspects of economic life (Standing, 2011). The Efficiency Theory states that institutions adapt to serve the needs of a society most efficiently, attempting to optimally combine market forces with government regulation to establish a system of control (Botero et al., 2005). Costs, the primary ‘value’ of the market system, and customers, who have ‘control of the work’ (Freidson, 2001), become organisational priorities (Noordegraaf, 2016). Despite the 1970s boom ending in a 1990s bust, the legacy left in place is the way governments now think about welfare institutions, specifically their dependence and self-management with many of them either privatised or wholly eliminated (Sennett, 2006). These socio-economic changes, including globalisation (Sennett, 2006; Crane and Matten, 2010; Piketty, 2017; Bellesia et al., 2019), have changed the composition of the professional labour force (Bellini and Maestripieri, 2018).

The term ‘New World of Work’ has emerged to describe the evolving landscape of employment shaped by technological advancement, globalisation, and changing worker expectations. It encapsulates a shift from stable, long-term employment toward flexible, autonomous, remote and hybrid work, technology-mediated work arrangements, and implies the decline of traditional career structures (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; Kalleberg, 2009; Gratton, 2011; Eurofound, 2015). Ashford, Caza and Reid (2018) refer to the ‘New World of Work’ as a context dominated by independent, gig-based employment in which individuals work outside of traditional organisational structures. The outcome of this ‘New World of Work’ is characterised by short-term contracts, high autonomy, financial and identity insecurity, career-path ambiguity, and physical and relational isolation. Success in this environment requires individuals to be self-directed, resilient, and proactive, relying on personal capabilities rather than organisational support to survive and thrive (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018).

It is questionable whether the 'New World of Work' is indeed a new paradigm. For instance, it can be contested that precarious work is nothing new, as seen by academic research on conditions for dock workers throughout history (Turnbull, 1992; Brody, 1960). Further, more modern academic voices consider the security of traditional, full-time employment to be a Western concept which never existed elsewhere, for example in Africa (Matthews and Onyemaobi, 2020). It may indeed be the case that the 'New World of Work' is a label that captures the *zeitgeist* of our times and may become obsolete in the future. While Pedler and Trehan (2009) argue that we are now moving back from markets to hierarchy (government) as a means to establish order and control, they also suggest that different forms are likely to appear in the future such as association and partnership, a 'hybridised' or structured network which combines flexibility and freedom of action with visibility and accountability to stakeholders (Pedler and Trehan, 2009). Nevertheless, it is argued that we are currently in the stage of late capitalism, 'liberal capitalism' (Pedler and Trehan, 2009), or 'hypercapitalism' (Piketty, 2020), which in turn has affected how organisations are run. Several major changes from social capitalism (Sennett, 2006) to this new capitalism are identified. This brings the debate onto whether this is beneficial or detrimental to workers and organisations.

Some scholars suggest that the 'New World of Work' operates more as a hegemonic narrative than a genuine shift in power dynamics (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). It frames workplace transformation as inevitable and apolitical, positioning the 'New World of Work' as a progressive, value-neutral evolution of the modern economy, ignoring the role of state policy, corporate power, and labour resistance. More extreme positions, on the one hand, include proponents who view the 'New World of Work' as a liberating and empowering shift promoting autonomy and control (Davenport & Kirby, 2016), innovation and agility (Gratton, 2011) and inclusivity (Messenger, 2019), and generally offering an emancipatory shift from the bureaucratic constraints of Fordist and Taylorist models toward more human-centred, flexible paradigms.

On the other hand, critics argue that it masks precarity and insecurity (De Stefano, 2016; Standing, 2011), algorithmic control and surveillance (Wood et al., 2019), inequality (Huws, 2016; Chung et al., 2021), leading to a general erosion of worker protections. In stark contrast to both the market ideal and bureaucracy ideal of Freidson (2001), large organisations set the

terms, be it with customers, workers or passive suppliers (Crouch, 2020). The ever-increasing organisational power has permitted not only increased labour market flexibility but also the transfer of the risks of flexible economic markets to employees (Fournier, Lachance and Bujold, 2009; Standing, 2011; Crouch, 2020). While Crane & Matten (2010) suggest "[t]he power and influence of business in society is greater than ever before" (p. 9), the result has been the creation of a global 'precariat', a new class of people below the working class (Standing, 2011). It is said the emphasis on self-management and entrepreneurialism reflects a neoliberal ideology that transfers responsibility for career success (or failure) from organisations to individuals (Sennett, 1998). This undermines collective labour rights and the role of unions in shaping working conditions. "[I]n most advanced economies the rights of standard employees themselves have been steadily eroded. Growing insecurity is becoming a general condition for working people (Crouch, 2020, p.10)."

To conclude, the 'New World of Work' captures important transformations in how labour is organised and experienced. However, it is not an uncontested or value-neutral paradigm. While it holds potential for innovation and autonomy, it also introduces new forms of inequality, precarity, and control.

2.2. Non-standard Work Arrangements

The following section looks at non-standard work arrangements and aims to discern between the various forms. Firstly, the scope of non-standard work arrangements is discussed. Secondly, there is an overview of the different types of non-standard work arrangements and how these are categorised in the literature. This discusses how the various definitions affect clarity on the scope of non-standard work arrangements, and more generally hinder effective scholarship. It also discusses the idea of a hierarchy of non-standard work arrangements. Next, there is a look at part-time work, a well-established non-standard work arrangement and the highest in the hierarchy, which shows that this form or work does not include the same benefits as standard, full-time work. After this, multiple jobholding is introduced, before the gig economy, the contemporary work *zeitgeist*, is introduced. Lastly, the section looks at definitions of identity, jobs, occupations, and professions before discussing the increasing prevalence of non-standard work arrangements. A conclusion to this section follows.

2.2.1. The Increasing Prevalence of Non-standard Work Arrangements

Research suggests non-standard work arrangements comprise 40% to 50% of all work arrangements in some European Union countries, 37% in Japan, and 33% in the United States, where the growth of new jobs filled through non-standard work arrangements has long since outpaced the growth of jobs in standard work arrangements (Befort, 2003). While this data may seem outdated, more recent research speculates that 88% of American organisations use some form of gig work, an extreme form of non-standard work (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). As this refers specifically to gig work, it is expected that broader non-standard work arrangements are even more profuse. Nevertheless, as stated in the introduction, relevant research in organisational studies has not developed at the same rate (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018).

Still now traditional academic accounts of organisational behaviour are usually based on the 'standard' full-time employment model and tend to consider anything else as 'non-standard' (Cappelli and Keller, 2013). Traditional, 'standard' work can be defined as: "full-time work for an open-ended duration, performed at an employer-owned location and under the employer's administrative control" (Broschak, Davis-blake and Block, 2008, pp. 3–4). This definition is consistent with others such as Pfeffer and Baron's (1988). Some definitions of standard work expand on the above to include the notion that organisations invest in their employees, for example via training and development, or through the provision of additional benefits such as pensions and healthcare (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). Nevertheless, these definitions are, on the whole, not contradictory; rather, they vary to the degree they include certain conditions such as location, control, and investments in employees.

By contrast, in a literature drawn heavily from the perspective of standard work, definitions of non-standard work are much more ambiguous despite their prevalence. 'Non-standard' work has been defined as broadly as anything which deviates from historical 'standard' work (Kalleberg *et al.*, 1997). Based on the inclusion of location in the definition given above, this implies that an otherwise 'standard' job working from home could be considered as 'non-standard' – while this may be the case, this distinction is not useful and therefore inadequate

in a post-COVID world. There is also a plethora of terms used to describe these alternative work arrangements. For example, the widely-used and established term 'contingent workers' does not refer to a homogenous group and there is no consensus in the literature as to what defines this group (cf. Connelly and Gallagher, 2004; Fevre, 2007; Cappelli and Keller, 2013; Watson *et al.*, 2021). All this may explain the lack of substantial knowledge on the subject (Cappelli and Keller, 2013) and the inconclusive research outcomes (Ierodiakonou and Stavrou, 2015) on non-standard work arrangements.

Despite the lack of a clear definition, this topic is of great significance and not just because of the growing magnitude and scope of non-standard work arrangements. Indeed, it is claimed that non-standard jobs not only represent a new stage in the commodification of labour but also provide employers with an opportunity to cut labour costs to such an extent that contractual status represents a form of labour market segmentation (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004). It is argued there is a 'dualism' or 'dualisation' in the labour market between a shrinking minority of often older employees with a 'secure' position as manifested through full-time, standard employment, and a growing number of those under precarious working conditions (Beck, 1992; McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004; Crouch, 2020). Some researchers suggest precarious work is now the dominant form of employment (Kalleberg, 2009), which would fit with the statistics given previously. Societal shifts are nothing new, for example, Braverman (1998, p. 17) argued in the 1970s that the definition of 'working class' is not static, but "… a dynamic process the mark of which is the *transformation* of sectors of the population". What is interesting here is that any notions of a work order and by extension class system are no longer predicated along lines of income, or the often but not always correlated level of job skills required, rather on the security perceived to be inherent in the contractual work arrangement. It is suggested that contemporary work arrangements have led us to a class of workers *below* Braverman's (1998) understanding of the working class. Standing (2011) deems this precarious class of non-standard workers 'the *precariat'*. However, as can be seen from the literature cited above, a secure/precarious dichotomy has become conflated with standard/non-standard work arrangements respectively whereas this need not necessarily be the case. This is discussed in more detail later.

On the other hand, the age of systematic insecurity for workers has its doubters, such as Fevre (2007), who claims the evidence evaporates on closer scrutiny. From the neoliberalist perspective, non-standard work arrangements such as self-employment reflect a growing sense of entrepreneurialism in society where workers can work when they like and for whom they like, helping to avoid recession and increasing unemployment (Fraser and Gold, 2001; Crouch, 2020). Workers have freedom of choice (Crouch, 2020). As such, contemporary, non-standard work arrangements may be favourable to professionals in leveraging their specialised knowledge to provide a better work situation (Cross and Swart, 2020).

However, some researchers would suggest this view of work and that of the actual workers is wholly incongruent:

> *"Workers try to make a living in a hyper-competitive planetary labour market; clients and platforms take zero responsibility for their working conditions; and yet workers are often relatively satisfied with that state of affairs because of the lack of other good options"* (Woodcock and Graham, 2020, p. 9).

The above chimes with Marx's (1976) idea of the double freedom of labour. It further suggests there may well be some benefits of these work arrangements to organisations, but they are at odds with the interests of the individual workers. Contemporary researchers argue that the employment contract has become weaker, to the detriment of the worker (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). The increased labour market flexibility in contemporary non-standard work arrangements means not only the loss of workers' rights, but also the transfer of the risks of flexible economic markets to employees (Fournier, Lachance and Bujold, 2009; Standing, 2011; Crouch, 2020) so that insecurity is now a systematic condition of modern work for an ever-increasing number of workers.

Irrespective of whether contemporary, non-standard work arrangements equate to insecurity for workers, "the power and influence of business in society is greater than ever before" (Crane and Matten, 2010, p. 9) and large organisations set the terms, be it with customers, workers or passive suppliers (Crouch, 2020). This suggests that as long as business interests

are met through these arrangements, they will perdure. For example, permanent employees with 'standard' employment contracts have been terminated only to be rehired as fixed-term contractors (Ho, Ang & Straub, 2003 as cited in Connelly and Gallagher, 2004). So, while from the organisation's perspective non-standard work can be used to acquire knowledge required only for a short period of time, and these workers may be well remunerated, Beck (1992), in accordance with Braverman (1998), insists that such forms of work inevitably imply a decline in job quality because the conditions that trade unions won cannot be maintained in a world of individualised, non-standard arrangements (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004) and thus management can separate planning and execution of work, reducing the complexity of work and severing the link between past knowledge and performance (Braverman, 1994, 1998). This *managerialism* (McAuley, Duberley and Johnson, 2014) demeans workers' function (Braverman, 1994; Bellesia *et al.*, 2019; Cant, 2020; Woodcock and Graham, 2020). In some cases, this has led to the elimination of jobs (Hume, 1995; Russ, 2017). Technology can act as something of an intensifier here, in that it enables work to be disaggregated to the level of the task where it can then be wholly outsourced (Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett, 2017), for example through automation replacing people with machines (Gandini, 2019). Workers must adapt to these contemporary working arrangements, requiring job crafting and work identity management, both discussed at length later (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022).

In sum, the definition of non-standard work remains largely unclear. One contributing factor is the wide range of different forms of non-standard work arrangements and these need inspecting further. This is the focus of the next section.

2.2.2. Overview of Different Work Arrangements

There are several approaches to differentiating non-standard work arrangements that emphasise different elements of Broschak, Davis-blake and Block's (2008, pp. 3-4) definition of standard work which is "full-time work for an open-ended duration, performed at an employer-owned location and under the employer's administrative control". For example, while Connelly and Gallagher (2004) categorise by impermanence, Cappelli and Keller (2013) categorise based on control, and these two are key themes which need exploring. It is understood that these are characteristics of non-standard work arrangements rather than

different types of work arrangement, but this is considered a good entry point into the literature. Impermanence will be explored first before moving on to control.

In terms of impermanence, it is argued that an economy based on freelance work and short-term contracts necessarily has job insecurity and financial instability as key attributes (Ashford, Caza, Reid, 2019). Nevertheless, job security is not a discrete variable, and even within standard jobs it is difficult to know when jobs move from 'secure' to 'insecure'. Furthermore, the perception of job insecurity can be based as much on anxiety levels of individuals as on the organisation's current position (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004). Indeed, Fevre (2007) discusses that there is no link between perceptions of insecurity and trends in non-permanent employment. As such, insecurity, traditionally the primary property used to distinguish between regular and contingent work arrangements (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004), no longer provides a useful criterion to classify work (Cappelli and Keller, 2013). In general, job insecurity is present for many 'standard' jobs in organisations today (Lee, Huang and Ashford, 2018) and individuals may experience employment as insecure (Cooper, 2014). Nevertheless, job insecurity is at its highest for those on a temporary contract, being in poor health and having experienced unemployment over the previous year (Benito, 2006), with the gig economy particularly less secure (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). This again conflates the two concepts of security/insecurity with permanence/impermanence but suggests a useful correlation between contractual status and job security.

Job insecurity is not just about losing one's current job, but also gaps in employment (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010), loss of skill, loss of promotion opportunities, and loss of control (Fevre, 2007), all inherent problems in a range of non-standard work arrangements. Not only does this insecurity create a strain on non-standard workers' perceptions of their work, it also impacts their identity, as does the "discipline and opportunity to continue working" (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018, p. 136). Given the nature of particular types of non-standard work, for example the gig economy with frequent exposure to rejection and short work cycles, this precariousness and the lack of a stable identity may be perceived as a threat. As people focus on losses when under threat they may freeze up (Baas, De Dreu and Nijstad, 2008; Petriglieri, 2011), and this may inhibit their ability to persist with finding new work opportunities, suggesting the need for a conscientious effort to overcome this. This

suggests non-standard workers need to perform more identity work than standard workers (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Moreover, non-standard work in the gig economy is associated with feelings such as anxiety, and a heightened emotional sensitivity in general (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). However, it is also associated with a sense of fulfilment that workers value (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Although this paints a rather confusing picture, in general, non-standard employment reduces workers' individual economic prospects and has the potential to further normalise employment insecurity more broadly (Adler, 2021).

Regarding the impact of the perception of job insecurity, not only does it affect the workers directly involved, it can also have a stark impact on the organisation and other workers. Since non-standard workers worry more about their 'replaceability' (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010), they may avoid sharing knowledge with permanent colleagues in order to become employed themselves (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004). Therefore, organising workers based on work arrangements can negatively affect how employees relate to others in the workforce (Killam and Weber, 2014), diminishing trust so that the core workers and the organisation more generally suffer (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004). In some extreme cases, job insecurity in precarious work arrangements can even lead to corruption (Matthews and Onyemaobi, 2020).

Finally, job insecurity does not necessarily result in financial uncertainty, for example in instances where education and family resources can protect workers and enable them to pursue riskier careers (see Adler, 2021). This is the distinction between work precarity and general economic precarity. This also has repercussions for the voluntariness of gig economy participation which will be explored later in the literature review.

In sum, impermanence often manifests itself as job insecurity and this is particularly acute for those in non-standard work arrangements, although a minority of researchers would argue this is incorrect. The threat, whether perceived or real, of job insecurity impacts on non-standard workers' identity and leads to stronger emotional responses to their work arrangement than standard employees have. Moreover, non-standard workers' job insecurity negatively impacts organisations, as these workers are less likely to cooperate with workers with permanent contractual status.

Whereas in the above section Connelly and Gallagher (2004) categorise non-standard work arrangements by impermanence, Cappelli and Keller (2013, p. 576) attempt a broad taxonomy of work arrangements based on "the theoretical construct of control - specifically, how control over the work process governs the relationship between the worker and the organisation that benefits from the worker's efforts." Their classification system distinguishes between employment and contractual arrangements, underpinned by employment law and contract law respectively, and so, for them, control is established through the legal frameworks. However, although this dichotomy may infer how the organisation *can* manage the workers, it does not inform us how the organisation *does* manage them, let alone issues such as employee motivation, commitment, satisfaction and so on. Further, this seems to conflate control over work with legal contractual status where one certainly does not imply the other. As such, this classification does not inform how control is utilised differently in different work arrangements.

Connelly and Gallagher's (2004) and Cappelli and Keller's (2013) approaches to classifying work arrangements based on impermanence and construct of control respectively make a universal classification improbable. Further, both these approaches end up comparing non-standard work arrangements to standard work arrangements, rather than the differences purely between non-standard work arrangements. Nevertheless, a useful outcome of this research is the idea of a hierarchy of non-standard work arrangements, discussed below.

2.2.3. Hierarchy of Non-standard Work Arrangements

There are many different types of non-standard work arrangement, and classification is not universal. One question which arises from the literature review thus far is whether some non-standard work arrangements are preferable to others. Cappelli and Keller (2013, p. 592) discuss "… individuals mov[ing] up the hierarchy of arrangements in the same organisation - for example, from direct hire temp to on-call worker to part-time employee to fulltime employee." They suggest some kind of ranking or preference to work arrangements, with traditional, standard work arrangements at the top of the hierarchy. This contrasts with organisations' preferences, for instance in the aforementioned example of permanent, full-

time workers being terminated and then re-hired on temporary contracts. Crouch (2020) goes as far as to claim that 'standard' is now being repackaged as 'privilege' and precarious workers are being encouraged to see those with a contract, even if moderately or poorly paid, as their enemies. Others conclude that 'standard' was only ever a Western view of employment and never reflected work arrangements in other parts of the world (Matthews and Onyemaobi, 2020).

The concept of a hierarchy and the desirability to reach the top of it, that is full-time employment, could imply that those working in non-standard work arrangements do so involuntarily which could undermine workers who choose these non-standard work arrangements. However, this is not particularly clear in the literature. Nevertheless, in the hierarchy of work arrangements, as suggested by Cappelli and Keller (2013), individuals may want to move from contingent work arrangements up the hierarchy, culminating in full-time employment. Directly below full-time employment on this hierarchy in part-time employment. Part-time employment thus represents the highest ranked non-standard work arrangement and as such is worth exploring in more detail, particularly compared to full-time employment and other non-standard work arrangements.

2.2.4. Part-time Work

Ostensibly, part-time work deviates from standard employment only in as much as it is part-time, that is, a difference in number of hours per week worked, and not a difference of impermanence (and purportedly job security). Other factors such as employer's location and employer control over the work as well as permanence most likely remain. Despite the minor difference, many of the characteristics of standard, full-time employment are missing from part-time work and those of contemporary non-standard work arrangements may be present. Generally, part-time workers are paid substantially less than their full-time counterparts, do not have the same *pro rata* benefits, and have little chance of career advancement (Barrett and Doiron, 2001; Killam and Weber, 2014; McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004; Brown and Gold, 2007; Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett, 2017). In order to understand part-time work, it should not just be considered in terms of the number of hours worked; it can be either permanent or peripheral as well as voluntary and involuntary to the degree that some workers

may not view it as a job at all (Raelin, 1983). In this regard, permanence and voluntariness may help to buffer against the inferior conditions of this work such as pay and benefits. Further, while part-time workers' economic and psychological well-being benefit the most from voluntarily working part-time (Raelin, 1983), Barrett and Doiron (2001) go as far as to describe involuntary part-time work a form of hidden unemployment. This highlights the importance of having a choice over work arrangements and its impact not only on work but also health. It also suggests a large split between those who voluntarily and involuntarily work in non-standard arrangements. It should be remembered that part-time work is second on the hierarchy of preferable work arrangements, so the idea of this hierarchy does not leave much room for positive views of involuntarily work arrangements ranked below part-time work.

Although part-time employees perceive fewer employee obligations but a similar number of organisational obligations to their full-time equivalents, it has been found that the psychological contracts of full-time and part-time employees are less different than between permanent and temporary employees so that there may be a direct link between hours worked and perceived obligations (Raeder, 2018). This is established by a more bilateral arrangement - employers provide job security and employees loyalty (Rousseau, 1990). This may, however, oversimplify the matter down to a case of duration of employment but it does support the idea of contractual status as a modern form of labour segmentation. Further, the two types of psychological contracts, transactional and relational (Rousseau, 1990), can often be implicitly differentiated by the time span of the contract. Transactional contracts tend to be short term, whilst relational contracts imply long-term reciprocal expectations and obligations (McDonald and Makin, 2000). This links back to the previous discussion on job insecurity and could imply the significance of job security, and by extension contractual status, on how the worker engages with the organisation. It would imply that non-standard workers, under increased job insecurity, do not try or want to engage in a relational psychological contract with the organisation. This is similar to research by Raelin (1983), who suggests the use of part-time employment has been resisted in the United States with further concerns about its growth in Western European on the premise that part-time workers negatively affect the employment and earnings of full-time workers. That is, these workers do not invest time in establishing a relational contract with other workers. Nevertheless, irrespective of whether part-time employment is beneficial or detrimental, for either employers or workers, "… when

norms and practices become social facts, firms may adopt them, even if at the expense of their own interests (Oliver, 1991 as cited in Ierodiakonou and Stavrou, 2015, p. 181)." This could help to explain a reluctance to use alternative forms of employment, although they seem to be ultimately adopted.

In sum, although part-time work ostensibly has all but one of the characteristics of full-time work, these workers do not enjoy the same contractual status and benefits as full-time workers. Part-time work also has a detrimental effect on full-time workers and the organisations (Raelin, 1983). This is because part-time workers looking for a full-time position, who may or may not have also received promises to that end, may in turn see full-time employees as adversaries, and thus not share information or cooperate, impacting the organisation and current employees negatively (Raelin, 1983). There may be workers who voluntarily perform part-time work for various reasons. However, those who do so involuntarily, apart from it being a hidden form of unemployment, may also need to supplement their income by finding additional work, which is the subject of the next section.

2.2.5. Multiple Jobholding

Workers who do not have one sole, fixed employer are variously deemed multiple jobholders (Hipple, 2010), portfolio workers (Cohen and Mallon, 1999), or plural careerists (Caza, Moss and Vough, 2018). As these terms do not describe radically different concepts, for convenience, the term multiple jobholders is preferred.

Although some research exists analysing the rate of multiple jobholders in the economy and their motivation to do more than one job, little attention has been paid to how they do it and how they differ from workers with one job, what specific demands these workers are under, and what their different attitudes to their first, second and further jobs are, along with the factors that affect these attitudes (Hipple, 2010; Raeder, 2018; Zickar, Gibby and Jenny, 2004). While some researchers assume multiple jobholders have a standard job and 'moonlight' on the side (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022), this need not be the case. Multiple jobholders may combine work of various classifications such as permanent or temporary, full-time or part-time, managerial and non-managerial positions and can either be in the same or different

occupations, even industries, meaning they have probably not been trained or educated for all their occupations (Hipple, 2010; Panos, Pouliakas and Zangelidis, 2014; Raeder, 2018). So, as a speculative example, it may be expected that their first job corresponds to their occupational training, the second might use other knowledge and skills, and the third job possibly lower qualifications (Raeder, 2018).

Similar to part-time work, a split emerges between those who see multiple jobholding as their *best* option, offering autonomy, control, and a real opportunity for professional and personal growth, versus those who see it as their *only* option, due to a variety of factors such as age, disability, or occupational sector (Cohen and Mallon, 1999). Cohen and Mallon (1999) go on to explain how those changing from full-time employment to multiple jobholding expected to be in charge. That is, to have the power to make important decisions and a sense of not being accountable to anyone but themselves, leading to their business being constructed around their interests and values. “Far from wanting to escape into some wholly new way of working, what these participants are seeking is a near approximation to the world they left (Cohen and Mallon, 1999, p. 345).” However, this assumes that workers have previously worked in standard employment and change their work arrangement to work as multiple jobholders, voluntarily or not, which may not always be the case - some workers may have always worked in non-standard work arrangements. It may be a case of workers desiring the same work but a different work arrangement, and Brown and Gold (2007) suggest workers can adapt to certain forms of non-standard status (hours), but not to others (impermanence). This seems to reinforce the importance of the dimension of perceived job insecurity, as manifested through impermanent contracts. It may also suggest a hierarchy of non-standard work conditions. In any case, multiple jobholding is growing in prevalence but remains “a long-neglected topic in organisational behaviour” (Sliter and Boyd, 2014, p. 1042).

In sum, multiple jobholders may undertake their work voluntarily or involuntarily and there can be many different forms that their different work arrangements take. These items of work may or may not be related to their occupational field and qualifications. The research also suggests some elements of non-standard work, such as flexible hours and timetabling, are more readily accepted than others such as impermanence. As such, their motivation for

undertaking this work is poorly understood. Gig workers, who may or may not be defined as an extreme example of multiple job holders, constitute the focus of the next section.

2.2.6. The Gig Economy

While non-standard work arrangements have always existed, the term 'gig economy', despite early references as far back as the late 1990s (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022), seems to capture the contemporary *zeitgeist* and is of growing importance to researchers and practitioners alike (Kaine and Josserand, 2019). Indeed, in the Top 10 Workplace Trends for 2021, gig work was the number one topic of the year, in part due to COVID-19's acceleration of non-standard working arrangements (Watson *et al.*, 2021). As stated previously, it is claimed that in the US a staggering 88% of businesses use gig workers, with similar trends in Europe and Japan (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). Nevertheless, Kuhn (2016) suggests freelancers are one of the categories of workers understudied in the industrial and organisational psychology literature; Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett (2017, p. 480) note that "virtually no research has been published on gig workers to date;" Cropanzano *et al.* (2022) dispute the quality of existing research based on the sparsity of articles in top management journals; and Watson *et al.* (2021, pp. 337–338) claim that "… contemporary forms of nonstandard work arrangements (e.g., gig work, sharing economy, platform economy, and crowd work) were absent in the organisational psychology literature until 2015." It should be noted that the nomenclature here is quite varied, which contributes to the difficulty in producing a consistent definition. Nevertheless, we should not expect gig work to be experienced as other contract work, with demands for organisational researchers to contribute to the conversation surrounding the gig economy (Brawley, 2017 as cited in Keith, Harms and Tay, 2019). Although this is a rapidly growing area of interest, how the gig economy differs from more long-standing interpretations of non-standard work is unclear.

It is accepted that no definition will be perfect, and that people's understanding of the gig economy vary wildly. Indeed, still now the definition of what gig work is remains unclear (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). For example, some writers define the gig economy by stating that gig workers need to use a digital platform to find work, others suggest pay is piecemeal or piecework rather than per hour, while others suggest work that is non-salaried (that is, a

wage,) would suffice (see Cropanzano *et al*., 2022). However, the definition used for this thesis is that of Cropanzano *et al*. (2022) themselves, who reviewed 243 articles and found 78 definitions of gig work, before fixing on their definition: "Gig work is labour contracted and compensated on a short-term basis to organisations or to individual clients through an external labour market" (p. 494).

In this most recent comprehensive literature review, Cropanzano *et al*. (2022) use the "nascent gig work literature" (p.493) to identify "… four key attributes used to identify gig work, namely membership (regular employee at an organisation), time (short timeframe of gigs), compensation (project or piecework basis), and means of connecting with employers (how they sell their labour)." While these are not all the attributes that are used to describe gig work, for example, a 'narrow' view of gig work may include the necessity of a digital platform to solicit work, these attributes appear the most frequently and thus form the authors' broader definition of the gig economy. Based on the four attributes, it can be concluded that gig work is a subset of non-standard work although there is a general lack of consensus about which types of non-standard work belong to the gig economy (Watson *et al.*, 2021), with calls for standardisation (Florin and Pichault, 2020). Returning to the object of this research, as stated in the introduction, some TEFL work can be completely *ad hoc,* work may be of a duration of just a few hours, and it is usually solicited directly with organisations or via a language school, which functions like a *de facto* job agency. Based on the above four attributes of membership, time, compensation, and means of connecting with employers, many TEFL workers' work arrangements would fit this view of the gig economy. Indeed, Watson *et al.* (2021) include the ostensibly similar group of supply teachers in this category. However, as the various current definitions of the gig economy (Farrell and Greig, 2016; Kuhn, 2016; Grgurev and Vukorepa, 2018; Stoepfgeshoff, 2018; Keith, Harms and Tay, 2019; Watson *et al.*, 2021) do not really seem to set gig work apart from other forms of non-standard work arrangements, and a full exploration would exceed the word count for this research, the broader term non-standard work arrangements is preferred when discussing TEFL workers and their work arrangements.

While the focus is on TEFL workers' work arrangements, which may be non-standard but not gig, the term gig economy has become so popular, and it can reveal much about broader,

contemporary non-standard work arrangements, that it is further explored here. Many of the definitions and the majority of research on the gig economy centres around low-skilled work, for instance transportation services such as Uber and Lyft (Ravenelle, 2019; Woodcock and Graham, 2020), food deliverers such as Deliveroo (Cant, 2020; Woodcock and Graham, 2020) and generally outsourced tasks such as cleaning, cooking and so on (Ravenelle, 2019). These can be further divided by the types of barriers in place, namely high/low skill and high/low capital investment requirements (Ravenelle, 2019). TEFL, as mentioned earlier, can be considered as high-skilled work due to the typical requirement of an academic qualification and a professional qualification. Generally, TEFL has relatively low capital investment barriers, although use of own laptop and car may be required. Despite the majority of gig research being focussed on low-skilled occupations, it has, however, been claimed that all jobs, to a certain extent, can be 'gigged' (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022, p. 508). In their article, the focus is not on the type of work being done as in the above examples, rather on two dimensions: how the task is done (the performance process) and the results of the task (the performance outcome). As a comparable example to TEFL work, substitute teaching has an observable process but ambiguous outcomes and therefore hiring gig workers in place of standard workers in this industry is considered 'risky' (Watson *et al.*, 2021; Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). It should be noted that this attacks the issue from the organisational perspective, rather than the individual worker perspective, the latter being the aim of this thesis. Some studies (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018) have covered high-skilled workers more generally through examining heterogeneous occupational groups. In this sense, research covering multiple occupations does not offer insights into the effects of non-standard working arrangements on one specific occupational group. There is a research gap for homogeneous, skilled groups, working in non-standard work arrangements which this research on TEFL workers will contribute towards closing.

The following paragraphs discuss the impact of the gig economy on workers' identity and work experience. As work in the gig economy typically comprises low-skilled tasks, a large supply of labour, coupled with technology-mediated platforms, creates a power imbalance, increasing the chance of exploitation (Keith, Harms and Tay, 2019). As such, powerful organisations are able to offer gig work which is temporary, unstable and patchworked to large sections of the economy, leading to workers spending less time at one job, facing the risk of time spent

without income, undertaking more jobs (possibly at the same time), and investing unpaid time searching for tasks or gigs (Woodcock and Graham, 2020). Petriglieri *et al.* (2018) define two types of work activity in the gig economy: self-defining activities where workers can express or develop themselves; and maintenance activities, that is, administrative tasks such as promoting one's own services, doing background research or billing. This gives them full control over the full work cycle, but this may or may not be desirable. Gig workers are paid only for hours they work although they have to constantly check for updates to get the best job opportunities and be ready at short notice which prevents them from using their time otherwise and essentially means unpaid working hours (Bellesia *et al.*, 2019; Ravenelle, 2019; Crouch, 2020; Woodcock and Graham, 2020). While maintenance activities are viewed as secondary to money-earning and identity-defining tasks, this significant unpaid 'work-for-labour' (Wood *et al.*, 2019) is essential, and may foster a sense of self as an entrepreneur (Bellesia *et al.*, 2019). However, the need to project a certain image could be considered a maintenance activity in itself and might be especially taxing for certain individuals such as introverts (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). Nevertheless, this extra investment of time, resources and capital is unrewarded as the 'goodwill' accrued by the platform provider cannot then be 'onsold' by the worker (Kaine and Josserand, 2019). That is, even if gig workers produce good quality work in the present, it has little or no bearing on the future, which hampers any career planning. This can add further stress to gig workers as they seek to secure repeat work in the short-term, and the long-term impacts are unclear.

On the other hand, control over the full work cycle may allow gig workers to select and perform the work that they want or prefer. Workers may actively participate in "gig-crafting", which describes the way gig workers craft their work lives, including online profiles, through numerous gig platforms (Watson *et al.*, 2021). In this sense, the ostensible maintenance activity of gig crafting may be perceived as positive, perhaps even self-defining, rather than a stressful demand.

In any case, remaining competitive means the extra investment of unpaid time, leading to a loss of earnings, and the uncertainty over securing a gig also leads to frustration and feelings of job insecurity, meaning uncertainty has to be 'rationalised' as an inherent characteristic of work (Bellesia *et al.*, 2019). The constant need to sell one's work services also leads to an

intensification of the self-commodification processes (Ursell, 2000) which can negatively impact identity.

In sum, the definition and scope of the gig economy remains unclarified by the literature, despite repeated calls for more research in this area. Compared to standard workers, gig workers are under more severe demands in terms of extra work which is necessary to search for gigs, and this impacts on their identity, work experience, and emotional state of wellbeing. While the most commonly researched examples of the gig economy are those for low-skilled work, skilled, professional work has been less well examined. More research of homogeneous professional groups operating in the gig economy is needed. It is the aim of this thesis to do so by looking at TEFL workers in non-standard work arrangements, including the gig economy.

2.2.7. Impact on Professional Identity

This section looks at professional identity through changes to professionalism and the advent of neo-professionalism, with a particular focus on teachers. Firstly, it is necessary to have definitions of the key terms. As such, first identity, then jobs, occupations, and professions are defined before moving on to look at neo-professionalism, teacher professional identity, and how the two coincide in the new world of work.

An identity can be seen as a definition of self so that one's inner and social worlds become more understandable (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). However, as identity can ''be thought of as an equilibrium resulting from making sense of attraction to and repulsion from one or more referents'' (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016, p. 120), identities need to be constantly managed and recalibrated. This constant renegotiation of identity fulfils needs for uncertainty reduction, belonging and autonomy while also permitting the individual to reject an identity that is unsuitable (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Further, the strength of identity is directly related to an individual's self-concept (Adler, 2021) and workers may make non-rational work choices to avoid dissonance with their identity, such as turning down salubrious jobs (Adler, 2021). Linking identity to work, identity is informed by occupational identity, which is derived from education, training, and work experience (Adler, 2021).

Although there is more to be said later about identity, this next section moves on to consider important definitions of jobs, occupations, and professionalism. Firstly, jobs have been described as "bundles of tasks performed by employees under administrative job titles" (Cohen, 2013, p. 432). As these 'bundles of tasks' may differ from one organisation to the next, this suggests no two jobs are the same even if they have the same title. This makes research on a group under the same job title, in this case Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, appealing as individual group members may have different tasks and therefore understand and experience their work completely differently from somebody ostensibly in the same job. However, it is also insightful that Cohen's (2013) definition uses the term employees rather than workers. For example, in the UK, workers in some non-standard work arrangements, such as multiple jobholding and the gig economy, are not legally employees (*UK Government*, no date). This implies there is a gap here where contemporary forms of work may not be described as jobs. Kirven (2018) argues that in the modern environment definitions of an employee become inadequate. For the purposes of this research, the term worker is preferred over employee.

Moving on, occupations are social constructs that provide membership to a community that spans jobs. Occupations include:

> *"(i) a category of work; (ii) the actors understood—either by themselves or others—as members and practitioners of this work; (iii) the actions enacting the role of occupational members; and (iv) the structural and cultural systems upholding the occupation* (Anteby, Chan and DiBenigno, 2016, p. 187).

It can be considered that occupations are made up of a number of similar jobs although they may vary in "opportunities for control, creativity, and challenge" (Blauner, 1964, p30, as cited in Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). As jobs themselves all differ, it could be difficult to arrive at a clear understanding of an occupation. This makes the above definition, albeit rather vague, quite useful, as it suggests that it can be the actors themselves or 'others' who decide whether they belong to an occupation. Therefore, belonging to an occupational group can be

considered a matter of perception, or identity, which is then 'upheld' by the relevant systems. This has ramifications in contemporary work arrangements, as the shift in the way work is constructed impacts upon the structural and cultural systems in place to uphold occupations as well as issues of identity. This will be considered after the introduction of professions.

Professions form a subset of occupations. They have:

> *"(1) abstract, specialised knowledge, (2) autonomy, (3) authority over clients and subordinate occupational groups, and (4) a certain degree of altruism"* (Hodson and Sullivan, 2012, p. 260).

As professions are a subset of occupations, they are also socially constructed. However, what elevates professions above some occupations is the addition of knowledge, autonomy, and authority. This then brings into question what knowledge is required by professions, how and by whom this knowledge is recognised, and how this translates into autonomy and authority over clients and subordinate occupational groups.

Autonomy in the new world of work is discussed in a future section so here the initial focus is on exploring the other three elements of the definition of professions. Traditionally, professionalism was considered a sign of quality and traditional professional status brought with it esteem and trust, specialist knowledge, authority over clients, high degrees of autonomy, and reinforced legitimacy (Sennett, 2006; Egetenmeyer, Breitschwerdt and Lechner, 2019; Cross and Swart, 2020). Professionalism was therefore considered in terms of its role in society and was linked to protected autonomies, regulated case treatment, and stable professional identities (Noordegraaf, 2016; Egetenmeyer, Breitschwerdt and Lechner, 2019). This could explain why people assume a professional identity as it can fulfil a need for autonomy and belonging (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018).

Professionalism is founded on *(1) abstract, specialised knowledge* acquired through time and effort but requires economic support and social organisation, in the form of, for example, chartered associations of occupations, to function and allow the professionals themselves the *(2)* autonomy to control their work (Freidson, 2001; Egetenmeyer, Breitschwerdt and Lechner, 2019). Traditionally, professionals may have maintained their *(3) authority over clients and*

subordinate occupational groups by forming and restricting access to standardised professional bodies and thus turning a profession into a 'closed shop' (see Freidson, 2001; Anteby, Chan and DiBenigno, 2016; Bellini and Maestripieri, 2018). Additionally, there were professional / managerial divides (Noordegraaf, 2016) which created sufficient tension between the professional and the organisation, for example along lines of individual and organisational autonomy (Smets *et al.*, 2017). This was formerly reconciled by Mintzberg's (1979) recognition of the 'professional bureaucracy' which allowed for a discrepancy between *professionals in organisations* and *professional organisations*. In essence, professionalism was protected (Noordegraaf, 2020). Regarding *(4) a certain degree of altruism,* Becker (1962) claimed that the label of professionals does not reflect the manner in which professional bodies attempt to monopolise their work as these 'protected autonomies' can be considered a method to protect those within by restricting access and consequently enhancing the value on the market of professional status (Saks, 2016). Professionals therefore serve their own interests rather than the wider society (Saks, 2016) which contradicts the *(4) certain degree of altruism* in the definition given above, which is similar to the ethos of professionalism that Freidson (2001) argued for.

It is argued that the changes to how work is organised and performed since 1990 has led to an 'organisational turn' in the study of professions (Hinings, 2005). It is worth considering whether professionals are in a stronger position now than previously. This would also suggest whether a professional identity is likely to be adopted or rejected. On the one hand, some researchers would suggest professionals have a worse position than previously. For example, while there may be a growing significance of professions (Saks, 2016) and their skills and knowledge maintained (Evetts, 2011), it is argued that professionals have become regular employees under traditional market forces (Noordegraaf, 2016; Egetenmeyer, Breitschwerdt and Lechner, 2019). These market / bureaucratic processes, such as growing corporatisation, marketisation, and shifts in state positioning, can lead to internal 'restratification' and ultimately 'deprofessionalisation' (Saks, 2016) and mean that professionals' position has weakened. Professionalism is about 'control', but it is disputed whether modern professionals have control over their work. Matthews and Onyemaobi (2020) do not consider journalists to be in control of their own work, while Thornton and Ocasio (1999) claim professional logic lost out to market logic in the publishing industry. As such, control, and therefore power, has been

consolidated in organisational arms. That is, professional work has changed as societal conditions (Bellini and Maestripieri, 2018) and organisational contexts (Noordegraaf, 2016) have changed, demonstrating that even "… professional work cannot escape the implications of neoliberal policies and managerialism (Noordegraaf, 2016, p. 787)."

On the other hand, some researchers consider that "professions like accountants and lawyers are now important economic actors in their own right (Saks, 2016, p. 171)." The use of the term 'actors' suggests professionals have control and agency to shape their own working environment and chimes with the earlier definition of occupations, of which professionalism is a subset. Bellini and Maestripieri (2018) claim that more people than ever identify themselves as 'professionals', which suggests this is attractive.

However, these arguments are generally based on professionals within an organisation rather than those operating in non-standard work arrangements. This leads to difficulties when considering professionals in non-standard work arrangements, as the type of self-categorisation as a professional implies similarities to other ingroup members with regards to values, beliefs, and attitudes (Piening *et al.*, 2020), which seems rather difficult given the almost unique circumstances each independent worker operates in. It is also not clear whether membership to these ingroups pertains to those with the same organisation, occupation, or employee status. Traditionally, individuals use social comparison to show how their own group is distinct from comparable groups (Piening *et al.*, 2020) which is necessary for positive self-esteem. The difficulty of doing so in the new world of work may provoke a sense of bewilderment and isolation and brings into doubt the merit of identifying with a distinct professional group.

It is important to consider the above definitions of jobs, occupations, and professions in the context of contemporary work arrangements. Contemporary work arrangements are categorised by attempts to break work down into the smallest components which can then be sold on a task basis rather than fixed-function labour, considered necessary to provide flexibility in a dynamic era of constant change (Bell, 1996; Sennett, 2006). This reduces costs associated with the traditional employment contract such as social contributions, minimum wage obligations and other such restrictions (Crouch, 2020), and in general weakens the

employee's position and allows organisations to easily replace workers. This has an impact on how workers view themselves and their jobs, allegedly leading to the breakdown of homogeneous forms of identity (Young, 2023).

In sum, identities help individuals to make sense of themselves and the world. They are not fixed and are constantly renegotiated. In recent times, jobs, occupations and professions have undergone rapid changes. Together, this leads to the question of whether a professional identity is desirable in the new world of work.

The next section looks at how non-standard work has moved away from standard work, not only in terms of hours worked and so on, but the way the work is structured. It then discusses the rise of neo-professionals to meet the contemporary work environment.

The above offers a very traditional definition of professionalism. With the growing importance of different modes of work based on changing work–life preferences (Smets *et al.*, 2017), the vague definition of career, and the rise of the knowledge economy, this 'professional bureaucracy' seems somewhat outdated. In many areas, this is no longer valid as the rise of self-employment puts control for organising work firmly in the hands of the workers. Cross and Swart (2020) argue that current debates on professionalism are still couched within organisational terms and thus neglect a growing group of professionals by failing to take into account the fact that many of them are self-employed.

What is useful about Cross and Swart's (2020) research is that professional validity is constructed through an understanding of professionalism that is based on *employment mode*, rather than *knowledge domain*, and thus contributes to a wider understanding of who may be considered a professional. It also reinforces the idea of employment status as a modern form of labour segmentation. Traditional notions of professionalism focus on '(self)controlled content' (Noordegraaf, 2016), suggesting the importance of control, or autonomy, to professionals. With the aforementioned changes to professionalism, images of professionalism are shifting, bringing with it increasing pressures (Noordegraaf, 2016), whether for better or worse, leading to what may be termed 'post-professionalism' (Noordegraaf, 2016) or 'neo-professionalism' (Cross and Swart, 2020). Neo-professionalism is

based on the concept of professional fluidity, and this forms the main component of the following discussion.

Cross and Swart (2020) show that, outside of organisational boundaries, a strategy of professional fluidity is pursued, identified by two key mechanisms: (i) the way in which legitimacy and validation are established; and (ii) the flexibility shown and required. Regarding (i) the way in which legitimacy and validation are established, the lack of an organisational employer shifts the focus onto clients and collaborators to a much greater extent. This completes the move away from Mintzberg's (1979) 'professional bureaucracy'. That is, professional validity is based on legitimacy through reputation rather than belonging to a specific professional body alone. Cross and Swart (2020) argue that relations with clients and collaborators have replaced the function of organisations in achieving validity and legitimacy, with a negative impact on individual autonomy. This affects the interaction of knowledge and power (Mosonyi, Empson and Gond, 2020). Regarding (ii) the flexibility shown and required, while many workers have relatively higher levels of commitment to their profession and occupation than their organisation, professional status is relative, and individuals adapt to market demand (Anteby, Chan and DiBenigno, 2016).

Traditionally, professionalism helped to inform identity and projected a certain image to clients (Evetts, 2011), but the type of work performed by professionals is changing. Professionally fluid individuals need to perform not only work that is traditionally seen as professional, but also administrative work which would have previously been 'beneath' professionals (Cross and Swart, 2020). This is cognate to Petriglieri *et al*.'s (2018) self-defining and maintenance activities respectively, where the latter may be considered a job demand. However, it also has identity implications as identity aspirations can be fulfilled through autonomy.

Professional fluidity, then, requires individuals to become bricoleurs (discussed in depth later) in the sense of 'making do' and recombining available materials in a creative manner so that their legitimacy and validity is established with clients and collaborators together (Hodgson, Paton and Muzio, 2015; Visscher, Heusinkveld and O'Mahoney, 2018). Individuals are defined not by their activities or who they are, but by their relations with others in the market (Anteby,

Chan and DiBenigno, 2016). Professional fluidity moves beyond trait-based understandings or a focus on control; jurisdiction and competition leads to a professional status that is relational and co-constructed in collaboration with others (Anteby, Chan and DiBenigno, 2016). Despite the stressed importance of the relational element, the understanding of how professionally fluid individuals connect to other individuals and other occupations in underdeveloped (Anteby, Chan and DiBenigno, 2016).

Cross and Swart (2020) identify the change from traditional forms of professionalism to professional fluidity, characterised by workers being able to adapt and respond to the market which in turn drives and defines their value. Value is created and sustained through 'work episodes' (Subramony *et al.*, 2018) which reinforces the need for skilled, non-standard workers to continuously work on their professional identity. This is dependent not only on earning potential and social recognition but also on their own discipline and the opportunity to continue working, however realistic that perception is (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Thus, a stable identity is lost in the new world of work. Accordingly, multiple jobholders, or 'bricoleurs' see this mode of work, that is, professional fluidity in the form of independent work for multiple organisations, not just as a rational means of economic survival but as part of their identity, although little is still known about how they present themselves and justify their work choices (Visscher, Heusinkveld and O'Mahoney, 2018). A study of an ostensibly homogenous professional group such as TEFL workers can give insights into the prevalence of traditional professionalism and/or the contemporary neo-professionalism based on professional fluidity which this research intends to do.

The aim of my research is to focus on TEFL teachers, rather than teachers in the classical sense. Understandings of how TEFL is practised are still at an initial stage with calls for more research (Hawkins and Norton, 2009; Abednia, 2012). Nevertheless, as it is considered that teachers serve as a useful example of the direction in which professions have headed since the organisational turn and the increase of marketisation (Day, 2002) and as there is existing research on Teachers' Professional Identity (TPI), it is felt that much of the research may transfer across to TEFL workers. Day (2002, p681) remarks "… 'being a professional' is still seen as an expectation placed upon teachers which distinguishes them from other groups of

workers." Hence the following section includes much research on the identity of teachers, and this is applied to the context of non-standard work arrangements.

Teachers construct their professional identities relative to their context and the opportunities it provides, personal experiences, and professional goals (Priestley, Biesta and Robinson, 2015). Teachers' professional identity (TPI) is the most important indicator of teaching behaviour (Assen *et al.*, 2018). TPI has three characteristics: multiplicity, which acknowledges the multiple sub-identities of a teacher's identity; discontinuity, which declares that TPI is not fixed and often changes: and sociality, which refers to external conditions such as educational policies, educational programmes and colleagues. As a researched example of the importance of sociality and context, public school teachers have been found to have a lower sense of identification and a perception of less support than private school teachers (Honingh and Oort, 2009). More broadly, the sociality aspect is particularly important in non-standard workers as they do not have an organisation to fall back on for social support.

Teachers as a group have been characterised by a strong vocational and professional commitment and many find meaning in their work through a strong sense of moral purpose (Day, 2002). It is claimed that, from a sociocultural perspective, even learning to teach is primarily a process of professional identity construction rather than knowledge acquisition (Varghese *et al.*, 2005). Due to the high investment in time and energy which could have been used for non-work-related activities, there is a bigger crossover in teachers' professional and personal identities than in other work groups so that these professional and personal identities may merge into one (Nias, 1989, as cited in Towers and Maguire, 2017). Multiple contextual factors converge uniquely in each teacher, delivering an individualised professional identity (Rosenfeld, Yemini and Mamlok, 2022) but struggling to reconcile these different identities can lead to an identity crisis (Towers and Maguire, 2017). This has a heightened importance in non-standard work arrangements where workers may operate across numerous occupational fields and thus have many distinct identities to reconcile.

Kelchterman (1993) identifies five interrelated dimensions which intertwine teachers' professional and personal identity while also suggesting they both evolve over time. The five dimensions are: self-image, how teachers describe themselves as teachers; self-esteem, their

evaluation of their own abilities, good or otherwise; job motivation, what motivates them and why they choose to stay or leave their job; task perception, how they define their jobs and what it entails; and, lastly, future perspective, their expectations for their future job development. These will be explored in more detail below within the context of non-standard work arrangements.

Self-image refers not only to how teachers describe themselves as teachers but how they believe others perceive them. This can be considered more broadly than just for teachers, for example, in terms of managers, "the extent to which participants saw themselves as 'professional' was inextricably linked to how others saw them. The importance of appearing credible, not only to clients but also to professional peers (as well as to oneself), came up time again in the data (Cohen and Mallon, 1999, p. 342)." This enhances the importance of the relational element of professional fluidity that Cross and Swart (2020) argue for.

With respect to non-standard work arrangements, particularly piecemeal work such as in the gig economy, each work task contains "… self-images and implications for identity" (Fine, 1996, p. 112). Since self-image and self-identity are reflected in work, broken-down tasks may reflect a broken-down identity (Anteby, Chan and DiBenigno, 2016). Nevertheless, previous assumptions that one's true identity is singular may be unwarranted (Caza, Moss and Vough, 2018) and indeed multiple sub-identities are part of a teacher's professional identity (Legrottaglie and Ligorio, 2017). One must accept that an individual has multiple identities and to allow them all to co-exist, before ultimately harmonising (Caza, Moss and Vough, 2018), otherwise those with multiple work identities may struggle to reconcile their identities. One must first determine who one is and then help others to see this. But the characteristics of non-standard work arrangements make it difficult to maintain a coherent work self (Ashford, George and Blatt, 2007; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). These workers must continually address issues of identity as they constantly change jobs, and maybe occupations, while also assuaging doubts of professional identity while not working (Bennett and Hennekam, 2018). Further, transient work and career path uncertainty create an identity challenge on their own (Caza, Moss and Vough, 2018).

Self-esteem is discussed in detail under 'good' work later and is close in meaning to self-actualisation (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). Here, it is it used to refer to the evaluation of oneself as a teacher where pupils, both in terms of their results and their relationship to the teachers, are the most important determinants (Kelchtermans, 1993). This is interesting when compared to neo-professionals, for whom clients and client relationships are the key determinant to professional validity. However, teachers' self-esteem has been severely impacted by educational reforms (Day, 2002). This professional identity crisis has resulted in experienced teachers leaving the profession for reasons such as high workload, seeking a better work/life balance, discipline problems, large class sizes and low morale (Towers and Maguire, 2017). In addition to what is considered as unrealistic demands on teachers, there is an increasing negative public perception of teachers (Towers and Maguire, 2017). The pressure of accountability leads to a lack of autonomy and control over their work and an increasingly burdensome workload leads to a lack of work–life balance and a perceived lack of support from leadership. Both are inextricably linked to their sense of identity as teachers (Towers and Maguire, 2017). It is not known how this transfers to non-standard work arrangements, specifically to teachers, which presents a gap in the literature.

Job motivation is also discussed at length under 'good' work. Here, it is worth adding that changes in a teacher's role and responsibilities, for example more demands as has been common in the British education system (Day, 2002), leads to lower job motivation (Kelchtermans, 1993).

Next is task perception which refers to how teachers define their jobs and what it entails. As with identity in general, this can shift over time and is also perceived differently at different stages of career. It is suggested that teachers who cannot reconcile their different identities are most vulnerable to quitting. As teachers leave at a higher rate in their first five years of teaching, particularly important given low recruitment numbers, it might be argued that longer-serving teachers have a more durable professional identity. Other research has shown that older teachers have a stronger vocational and ethical commitment than younger teachers, who place more value on work-life balance (Troman, 2008). Teachers leaving or contemplating leaving their profession have 'spoiled' identities resulting from and in alienation from the values of their institution (Towers, 2017). That is, there is a disconnect

under Kelchterman's (1993) task perception label between what a teacher believes it the way to teach and the way the teacher is coerced to behave in practice (Towers, 2017).

The last dimension of Kelchterman's (1993) teaching identity is future perspective which is discussed at length in the section on self-realisation under the broader context of non-standard workers.

While the above pertains to teachers' professional identity, it is largely based on teachers with standard work arrangements. Many forms of non-standard work arrangements mean that workers are not only in charge of their work but also sourcing it. This leads to the development of two identities, that of their profession and that of the entrepreneur (Albinsson, 2018). The result may be a hybrid identity, or two which are separate but complementary (Albinsson, 2018). Some may be necessity-driven entrepreneurs and insist they are different from the typical entrepreneur, viewing the pure pursuit of money as morally inferior but working in this way to sustain their self-defining activity (Albinsson, 2018). However, there is an acknowledgement that they couldn't be successful without these entrepreneurial skills (Albinsson, 2018). These entrepreneurial skills need to be learned but are not often taught, at least not in line with the professional activity. Moreover, this type of entrepreneurial activity can be viewed positively by some, as it gives them control over the whole business process, whereas others may find it tiresome and time consuming, reducing their resources for self-defining activities (Petriglieri et al, 2018).

Similar to the way independent workers must balance identities related to both their work and their work arrangement, Sachs (2000) identifies two forms of professional identity for teachers, namely entrepreneurial and activist. The former follows compliance and the external regulation enforced on teachers whereas in the latter teaching and student interests are still at the fore so that it may be considered more values based. This seems particularly salient given the conditions for many TEFL workers in non-standard work arrangements such as the gig economy and brings about the issue of reconciling multiple identities once more.

A large body of research has shown that identity can be multifarious and is constantly changing. People negotiate identities to fulfil needs for uncertainty reduction, belonging and

autonomy while, on the other hand, they also resist and relinquish identities because of the restrictions they impose, the way they may cast people in a negative light, and the need to transcend boundaries of the self (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Adult identity is largely a function of career movements within occupations and work organisations (Becker and Strauss, 1956). In organisational contexts, workers trial temporary solutions to adapt while organisations try to manage identity, often with the aid of technology (Bellesia *et al.*, 2019). While threats to an organisation's identity impact on an employee's (Piening *et al.*, 2020), having no organisation results in a stronger need to form one's own identity independent of an organisation. Organisations typically serve as identity workspaces so those in the new world of work must seek different sources of stability, which influences identity construction (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018) and can lead to a loss of agency, purpose and identity with no sustained sense of self (Sennett, 2006). Without an organisation, security, self-esteem and legitimacy are missing and identities are rendered precarious and personalised (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Insofar, establishing one's own identity in the new world of work is not only necessary but also desirable in the sense that even a false identity may also help to protect people from anxieties and so experience their precariousness as tolerable (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). The precariousness of work leads directly to the precariousness of identity and this is an issue that can never be entirely settled (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Autonomy also means every personal choice workers make carries not only a financial interest, but also ego and identity implications (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). As such, the only alternative is to find strategies to first cope and then thrive in this precarity. Nevertheless, the self-employed see themselves as daring and unconventional with the chance for empowerment (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018; Bellesia *et al.*, 2019), self-expression and self-development (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018) as they continually re-claim and revise their identities (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). People equate occupational prestige with self-direction and autonomy rather than with money or power (Sennett, 2006) although the relation between working at non-standard jobs for a long time and investing in other life roles is poorly understood (Fournier, Lachance and Bujold, 2009). These workers view organisations as secure yet deadly places and see their direct exposure to the market as a source of learning, their vulnerability as a marker of courage, and their struggle less of a product of circumstances and more of a personal choice (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). In doing so, they also develop an

entrepreneurial orientation; supported by the capabilities of technology, they are able to expand their identities (Bellesia *et al.*, 2019). This calls into question what professional identity means to the extent that (Bellini and Maestripieri, 2018) propose to refocus the discourse about professionalism on the process of differentiation and the increasing heterogeneity it is bringing about, within and between professional groups.

Identity work is the process of mutually constituting a self-identity which is coherent and distinctive in lives which include various social identities (Albinsson, 2018). In general, non-standard workers, particularly multiple jobholders and gig workers, must understand and practise what can be termed 'identity flexibility' (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). This grows slowly over time and incorporates synthesising all the fragmented elements of identity to produce multiple identities that sit harmoniously together and can be called on when necessary. The exposure to precarity may indeed help to buffer gig workers against potential career setbacks, as they are used to envisioning and perhaps enacting alternative career identities (Vough and Caza, 2017). Understanding and embracing this identity flexibility can also buffer workers against feelings of insecurity and inauthenticity while between jobs (Caza, Moss and Vough, 2018). Lastly, as identity is co-constructed, and successful work in the gig economy depends on others more so than in traditional work arrangements, identity flexibility requires validating reactions from others (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). This may require gig workers to seek out feedback.

In sum, the development of a professional identity is conceptualised as a negotiation between an individual and the reality of their surroundings where the main tool teachers utilise to construct their professional identity is agency (Rosenfeld, Yemini and Mamlok, 2022). There is no known research of the agency TEFL workers have over their own work and thus their identity construction is not understood.

2.2.8. Impact of Non-standard Work Arrangements on Career

Traditionally, career has historically been associated with long-term employment, upward mobility, and professional identity within a stable organisational context, where success was measured by tenure, promotions, and salary (Hall, 1976; Arthur, 1994). However,

globalisation, digitalisation, and the rise of non-traditional work arrangements have rendered this conception increasingly obsolete (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). As more individuals engage in gig, freelance, or project-based work, it becomes necessary to revisit and redefine what constitutes a career. Despite the growth in research on contemporary work arrangements, their impact on career and job outcomes is not well understood due to inconsistent findings (Petitta & Ghezzi, 2025). Nevertheless, there has generally been a shift in the way scholars have come to view the construct of career, moving from an employer-centric model where commitment and performance may be key markers, to an employee-centric model where personal career outcomes supersede job outcomes and the individual is expected to exercise more agency in managing their career success, and loyalty to the organisation is less important (Wiernik & Kostal, 2019). In other words, objective career success (e.g., pay and promotions) has become less relevant (Verbruggen, 2012) and subjective career success, such as feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment (Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999), should be put under greater scrutiny (Lo Presti et al, 2018). As such, contemporary perspectives have redefined career as a sequence of experiences and identities over time that are self-directed, value-driven, and not necessarily bound to one organisation (Hall, 1996; Briscoe, Hall, & DeMuth, 2006).

A lot of research explores the dimensions required to foster one's own career outcomes. However, this does not take into account that these individuals are not operating in a wholly employee-centric environment. This suggests that although individuals may consider themselves able to construct and manage their career and enhance subjective career success, based on factors such as personal satisfaction, meaning, and growth, even when objective markers such as salary and job titles stagnate (Verbruggen, 2012; Enache et al., 2011), the wider environmental attitudes and thus conditions are not aligned to this, leading to what Li et al (2022) describe as a "mismatch between measurement and theory" (p.287). For example, Direnzo & Greenhaus (2011) warn that constant job searching may reduce engagement, satisfaction, and organisational loyalty. Often employer- versus employee-centric attitudes are considered a zero-sum game, so that both cannot be satisfied (Brisco et al, 2006). However, Li et al (2022) suggest that this is a false dichotomy, and the reality is a blend of the two approaches and that attitudes which adopt this blend are likely to lead to

more successful outcomes. It nonetheless require individuals to take agency over their own career outcomes.

To support this understanding, two central concepts have been identified, namely the protean career orientation (PCA) which emphasises self-direction and personal values over institutional loyalty (Hall, 1996, 2004), and the boundaryless career orientation (BCA) (Arthur, 1994) which emphasises mobility and adaptability across organisational and professional boundaries (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Arthur, 1994; Briscoe et al., 2006; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019). However, not all workers have equal access to self-directed careers. As Li et al. (2022) note, while contemporary career theory assumes an employee-centric world, external constraints such as labour market discrimination or care responsibilities limit this freedom. So, while freelancers and gig workers exemplify the boundaryless and protean ideal as they create their own paths, define success on their own personal terms, and rely on professional identity rather than employer affiliation (Lo Presti et al., 2018), this comes with trade-offs such as weaker organisational support, unstable income, and a need for high self-regulation and continuous skill development, creating a mismatch between theory and reality, disadvantaging workers who lack resources to be 'career agents' such as vulnerable or marginalised groups. For example, women, minorities, and immigrants often face systemic barriers in career development, including limited access to networks, mentorship, and advancement opportunities (Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019). This has not been mediated by new technologies, since although digital platforms may provide new opportunities, they do not inherently eliminate structural inequities (Berg, 2016). Indeed, the discussion above on duality / dualism in the traditional workplace is echoed in the 'New World of Work' between those who have not only skills and knowledge but also professional and personal support networks which can be leveraged to their benefit, and those who do not. This runs deeper when the concept of career is considered as job outcomes are not the same as career outcomes (Li et al., 2022), so those who prosper in securing good jobs are still not developing a good career in the traditional sense.

For gig workers, success may not be reflected in promotions or pay but in autonomy, purpose, or professional identity. However, the absence of structural support raises questions about long-term sustainability and fairness. There is a paradox of the concept of career in the gig

economy which can be explored through the shift in the psychological contract. The traditional employer-employee psychological contract has eroded and workers are now expected to continuously develop their skills (Rothwell & Arnold, 2005), manage their own employability (Lo Presti et al., 2018), and align with an entrepreneurial mindset even in non-entrepreneurial roles by acting as act as owners and agents of their own career (Sammarra, Profili, & Innocenti, 2013). This new deal privileges autonomy and flexibility but burdens individuals with career insecurity and burnout, especially in gig or short-term work contexts. The gig economy presents a paradox as workers engage in work but often do not have a "career" in the traditional sense. There is no clear advancement path, no organisational support, and often, no retirement plan.

In conclusion, the concept of career has evolved from a linear, employer-managed trajectory to a dynamic, self-directed journey. While this shift empowers some workers, it also marginalises others, particularly in the gig economy where the promise of autonomy often masks the reality of precarity. The emphasis is very much on individual agency and subjective measures of success to redefine what career means today. As the labour market continues to shift, the concept of career must be reframed to accommodate fluidity, self-direction, and non-linear progression. This includes recognising portfolio careers composed of diverse roles and experiences, the importance of narrative and personal branding in constructing career identity, and the need for new institutional supports that cater to non-traditional workers. This new conceptualisation aligns with Hall's (2004) protean career model, where success is defined by internal values and self-assessment rather than external benchmarks.

2.2.9. Conclusion

The aim of this section has been firstly to present the status of the literature *apropos* non-standard work arrangements and secondly to look at professional identity after the 'organisational turn'. With the rapid change in organisational structures, established theories are no longer as relevant as they once were (Barley and Kunda, 2006) and distinctions for classifying work in the past, such as job duration, no longer appear useful, impeding our knowledge of these new arrangements, and the classification of diverse work arrangements as contingent lead to generalisability issues (Cappelli and Keller, 2013).

It has been shown that the definition of these work arrangements is unclear, with some definitions based on impermanence and others on control. A hierarchy of non-standard work arrangements has been proposed. This suggests that all non-standard work arrangements are less desirable, which seems unlikely, as it would imply all non-standard workers do so involuntarily. Part-time work is the most similar non-standard work arrangement to standard work. However, even part-time work deviates greatly from standard work in terms of inferior conditions for pay, benefits, and career prospects. Other forms of non-standard work such as multiple jobholding and the gig economy have been introduced and these are also poorly understood and defined in the literature. This makes it difficult to understand the impact of these work arrangements on workers' experience, identity, and career. Some recent research has attempted to classify gig work and delineate it from other non-standard forms (cf. Watson *et al.* (2021), Cropanzano *et al.* (2022)). Although it could be argued that TEFL workers are gig workers, the term 'non-standard workers' is preferred. Nevertheless, due to the growing importance of the gig economy, this research is still considered useful here.

Further, workers are often left with " … untenable dichotomies about old and new careers" (Cohen and Mallon, 1999, p. 335) on the back of sweeping statements that non-standard jobs are largely bad, offering lower pay, less reliable hours, and fewer advancement opportunities (Kalleberg, 2000). Thus, the obfuscation of the terms reduces the ability to conceive the different forms of non-standard work. From an academic perspective, it is necessary to empirically examine distinct types of non-standard employment (Ierodiakonou and Stavrou, 2015). Moreover, given that existing frameworks tend to group all such alternative arrangements together, comparisons among alternative arrangements are few and far between, although ethnographic studies suggest that that there are significant differences among such arrangements (Cappelli and Keller, 2013). As such, a study on a homogenous occupational group with heterogeneous work arrangements such as this research will contribute greatly to the literature.

2.3. The Experience of Non-standard Work Arrangements

The next section moves on from the previous section's definitions, scope of terms, examples of different types of non-standard work arrangements, and professional identity and explores the experience of non-standard work arrangements. Focusing on the experience of non-standard work arrangements and particularly gig work means emphasising how it feels to work in the gig economy, touching on the day-to-day realities and feelings that may occur such as autonomy, isolation, pressure, or satisfaction. The section begins by considering the push and pull factors of working in non-standard work arrangements. It goes on to consider differences in workers who voluntarily and involuntarily hold these work arrangements. Afterwards, there is an extensive discussion on 'good' and 'bad' work. This is done by exploring the experiences of non-standard and gig workers. Positive experiences of gig work include perceived autonomy and control (De Stefano, 2016; Wood et al., 2019), task variety, skill utilisation, and skill development (Kassi & Lehdonvirta, 2018), and a sense of entrepreneurial identity (Sundararajan, 2016). Negative experiences of gig work include an overall feeling of precarity and exploitation (Wood et al., 2019), emotional labour and stress brought on by customer ratings pressure (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016), algorithmic control, and a lack of transparency control (Wood et al., 2019), as well as stress from a lack of job security and benefits (Berg, 2016), and financial uncertainty and overwork (Graham et al., 2017), as well as loneliness and isolation (Huws et al., 2017). Nevertheless, it is not a clear dichotomy of 'good' and 'bad'. For instance, it is not clear whether the 'bad' factors listed above such as precarity or overwork result in stress, nor that 'good' elements of gig work such as autonomy or skill development are experienced as positives emotionally. So, experiences such as work-life "blur", for example in the context of flexibility, could be 'good', or they could become a burden, as, without set hours, some workers struggle to disconnect (Bajwa et al., 2018). This is discussed specifically within the context of each of the subsections. The subsections here are aligned to the work of Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) which focuses on cultural workers' experience of non-standard work. Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) work was identified in the literature by snowballing from Ashford et al. (2018). It was chosen because it offers a more comprehensive list of 'good' and 'bad' elements than similar literature. So, while Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) work is focussed on those in the cultural industries, their list of elements that make up 'good' and 'bad' work provides a framework to discuss the context of this thesis, namely the *Experience, Identity and Career of Professionals in Long-term, Non-standard Work Arrangements.* The subsection headings are therefore composed of

specific elements of Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) list of factors, such as work-life balance versus overwork or autonomy versus powerlessness, and where necessary there are others drawn from wider literature, such as feedback and the relational and emotional challenge of non-standard work arrangements. The section is also strengthened by relevant research into teaching as a profession, albeit not specifically TEFL as little research exists here. This second part of the literature review also ends with a conclusion.

2.3.1. Push and Pull Factors

This section aims to explore the reasons behind why workers may choose to work in non-standard work arrangements. The assumption as introduced above that full-time employment is 'better' or 'preferable' to non-standard work arrangements may not reflect reality. For instance, many self-employed workers view their work as a long-term career (Watson *et al.*, 2021) rather than a transient interim and some gig economy workers do not consider their work a job at all. This leads to considerations about why workers would want to work in non-standard work arrangements.

Further to past research on push and pull factors in traditional work arrangements, there is a growing literature on these factors in non-standard work arrangements so much so that the question of compulsion versus choice is critical in determining the kind of satisfaction that non-standard workers are likely to derive from their various assignments (Brown and Gold, 2007). In the context of contemporary work arrangements, pull factors, usually positive, internally-driven choices that influence one's actions, may include enjoyment, autonomy, or a desire for a flexible work schedule whereas involuntary push factors may reflect economic circumstances based on a lack of income or inability to find permanent employment in the traditional job market (see, for example, Cohen and Mallon, 1999; Barrett and Doiron, 2001; Brown and Gold, 2007; Keith, Harms and Tay, 2019). In the literature, there are many examples of workers in non-standard work for economic reasons or because they cannot find another job and want to avoid unemployment (Brown and Gold, 2007; Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett, 2017; Albinsson, 2018; Raeder, 2018). Across the board, Fevre (2007) records that around 29% of non-permanent employees in the UK do not actually want a permanent job.

Some research makes a distinction between the minority of high-skilled workers who choose to work independently versus low-skilled workers, the majority, who feel forced into non-standard work arrangements such as the gig economy (Ravenelle, 2019), and who usually earn less than peers in traditional work (Kaine and Josserand, 2019). However, no adequate definition of skilled workers in the gig economy is given (see also Stoepfgeshoff, 2018). It is generally considered that more skilled workers with higher levels of social capital are able to leverage their skills to create voluntary and desirable work arrangements (Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett, 2017) and this informs their decision to work in non-standard work arrangements. As a specific example, in their research on non-standard academics (NSAs), Brown and Gold (2007) found that pull factors were more than twice as likely as push factors, implying respondents have chosen this type of employment relationship, although they also state most NSAs have mixed feelings about their current position. As another example of leveraging skills, freelance translators enjoy higher levels of autonomy and control over their working conditions than other comparable self-employed groups, largely because the nature of their expertise and their relationship with clients create inelasticities in the supply of their skills. The more successful are then able to use their market position to exert substantial control over areas like pay and deadlines (Fraser and Gold, 2001). This contrasts with the research of Cappelli and Keller (2013) introduced earlier which suggests control is the discerning factor in work arrangements and those in non-standard work arrangements have little control over their work. The lack of a traditional career structure means that many translators have actively chosen freelance work and even those who were originally forced into it would not now take an in-house job (Fraser and Gold, 2001). It can be concluded that labour market characteristics are a key factor in determining differences in working conditions between various groups of portfolio workers (Fraser and Gold, 2001) and more research is needed on skilled occupational groups to better understand how voluntary their work arrangement is and the impact of this on their identity and work experience. Further, there are differences in attitudes and behaviour across not only different professions but also different types of non-standard work arrangements which require further research (Broschak, Davis-blake and Block, 2008). This research includes a homogenous occupational group under heterogeneous work arrangements so will contribute to the literature.

Within non-standard work the type of work arrangement may also infer the level of voluntariness (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004). This was discussed as the hierarchy of work arrangements. In general, the literature suggests that volition should lead to more positive experiences as it means workers can benefit from job resources whereas involuntarily being a non-standard worker may exacerbate job demands, for example the financial pressures of needing to earn money in precarious work arrangements (Watson *et al.*, 2021). Returning to motivations for non-standard work, the concept of push and pull factors as opposite, contradictory factors may be wholly wrong. Voluntariness and involuntariness may be two separate constructs and not as expected dichotomous. Motivations such as enjoyment, growth and flexibility should be positively related to life satisfaction (Keith, Harms and Tay, 2019). Research shows that individuals who involuntarily pursue temporary work are less satisfied with different aspects of their jobs, while voluntary choice is unrelated to satisfaction (Ellingson, Gruys and Sackett, 1998). These researchers argue that there is no direct link between contingent workers' volition and their performance. In contrast, it is suggested that "traditional" temporary workers' performance is particularly sensitive to attitudes such as satisfaction and commitment, but that their task performance is higher than that of "boundaryless" temporary workers who enjoy their contingent status and expect to frequently change jobs (Marler, Woodard Barringer and Milkovich, 2002).

Individuals who voluntarily choose or prefer contingent employment contracts often have more positive organisational experiences than those who are performing contingent work because they cannot find permanent employment (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004). Nevertheless, simplifying to push and pull factors to explain work modes may be "overly reductionist and fail to account for the complexities of this career transition" (Cohen and Mallon, 1999, p. 339). While this is a useful insight, it is based on the assumption that these workers are transitioning into non-standard work arrangements rather than having always worked in them as may be the case with many workers. Nevertheless, Adler (2021) suggests analysing job preferences along three dimensions of value: utility, identity, and commitment. Utility indicates the benefits of a job measured in both extrinsic rewards, such as time and money, ostensible 'push' factors, and intrinsic rewards, including creativity and fulfilment, usually considered 'pull' factors. In this sense, it seems one can *add* intrinsic and extrinsic

rewards together, rather than having to choose one or the other so that working in non-standard work arrangements could be due to a combination of both push and pull factors.

It is also worth highlighting some research on job satisfaction that demonstrates perceptions of job satisfaction are influenced by tendencies to see the world in a generally positive or negative light (Zickar, Gibby and Jenny, 2004). Other research has shown that, while all workers may acknowledge the challenges of the gig economy, only some will emphasise the positives arising from these challenges (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). This implies some people are just happy or not and job satisfaction follows, irrespective of the job.

In sum, more research is needed to understand the antecedent factors that mean some workers voluntarily choose non-standard work arrangements (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022).

The next section leaves behind push/pull factors and voluntary status and looks at the impact of the change to contemporary modes of work, non-standard work arrangements, on how work is perceived and experienced. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) consider dimensions exploring working conditions and experiences grouped into the following three categories: pay, working hours and unions; insecurity and uncertainty; socialising, networking and isolation. Their research suggests that experiences are at best highly ambivalent (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010). Ashford, Caza and Reid (2018) consider the following structural dimensions of difference from the 'old' world of work to the new: financial instability and job insecurity; work transience; career path uncertainty; physical and relational separation; and autonomy. Four of the five points from Ashford, Caza and Reid's (2018) list seem to be clearly negative. However, the function of autonomy is slightly more ambiguous. This opens the debate of whether autonomy is 'good', that is desirable, and leads to a larger debate on the concept of 'good' and 'bad' work. This constitutes the next section of the literature review.

The following section tries to understand and differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' work. Academic research on work conditions and attitudes to work has generally been conducted based on the 'standard employment relationship' (Woodcock and Graham, 2020). This means that the way we evaluate whether a job is good or bad is based on criteria relevant to standard

employment. Related to this, and perhaps as a consequence, it has been projected that good work is that which closely aligns with standard work and bad work is aligned to non-standard work. This is based on the premise of standard contracts which allegedly ensure permanent employment. This means that while employment contracts are necessarily asymmetrical and prescribe an unequal relationship of authority in favour of organisations, these inequalities could be reduced by endowing employees with certain rights (Crouch, 2020). These rights were reinforced through collective bargaining via unions, and provided workers with basic conditions such as stable, full-time jobs with fixed working time and pay, while the risks of negative outcomes, such as lack of work, poor working conditions or illness and accidents, were mitigated by organisations on the back of the welfare state (Woodcock and Graham, 2020). While these rights should extend to ensuring the equal treatment of employees who work in non-standard arrangements (Botero *et al.*, 2005; Ierodiakonou and Stavrou, 2015), and there are European Union directives to this end (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004), these rights are not universally recognised and certainly not universally applied (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004).

The movement of union derecognition (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010) may also be significant as unions' associational power is inferior to that of modern organisations' (Wood, 2016). The diminishment of unions can therefore be seen as cognate with bad jobs in both standard and non-standard work arrangements. Workers without collective representation are almost 50% more likely to have substandard conditions than those with (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004) and, as those in non-standard jobs are less likely to be represented, they have inferior employment conditions. Non-standard workers may lack representation because union membership is workplace or employer based (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004; see also Brown and Gold, 2007) or because the uncertain nature of freelance work, worries about where the next short-term contract will come from, and the need to move between organisations, means unions find it more difficult to recruit such workers (Heery, Conley, Delbridge, & Stewart, 2000 as cited in McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004). Nevertheless, the benefits accrued from strong union representation are not just financial but also psychological, with a lack of union representation contributing to anxiety in freelancers (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010).

Union derecognition could have contributed to the accelerated workplace individualisation (Wood, 2016), albeit nearly fifty years ago Braverman (1998) had already lamented weakening unions at the hands of capitalists. Nevertheless, isolating individuals has certainly weakened their bargaining strength. After the death of a gig economy worker, due to ignoring an illness for fear of missing work, the company in question offered the workers a choice: "they could become normal employees, with rights to sick pay, paid holidays and a pension, but being paid a lower rate for their deliveries" (Crouch, 2020, p.2). In this instance, the workers chose to retain their independent status, forgoing future benefits for a higher payoff in the present although the reasons behind this decision are unclear.

Leaving behind whether union derecognition contributes to bad work, there is a large debate within the cultural industries literature on what defines 'good' work. Research on job quality is typically based on full-time employment and as yet there is no comparison to non-standard work arrangements (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004). As such, analysis of job quality for non-standard work arrangements is performed based on parameters for standard work. There is therefore a research gap to be filled of understanding job quality for non-standard workers which this thesis aims to address. Returning to the current literature, in their research on cultural workers, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) consider 'good work' as providing good wages, good working hours, high levels of safety, work–life balance, security, autonomy, interest and involvement, self-esteem, self-realisation, and involvement / social interaction. These describe the process of the job. Additionally, in terms of product, it is important for good work that output is good quality and contributes to the common good. These are summarised in the table below and the following section unpacks each of the elements of good work in more detail with a particular focus on those in non-standard work arrangements.

Table 1: Conceptualisation of 'Good' and 'Bad' Work

	GOOD WORK	***BAD WORK***
PROCESS	Good wages, working hours, high levels of safety	Poor wages, working hours and levels of safety
	Security	Risk
	Work-life balance	Overwork
	Interest, involvement	Boredom
	Sociality	Isolation
	Autonomy	Powerlessness

	Self-esteem	Low self-esteem and shame
	Self-realisation	Frustrated development
PRODUCT	Excellent products	Low-quality products
	Products that contribute to the common good	Products that fail to contribute to the well-bring of others

Table adapted from: Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011, p. 39)

2.3.2. Work Contract

The first terms in the table can be considered under the work contract. These are good wages, working hours, and high levels of safety. Union representation also appears here but has been covered earlier. Arguably, work-life balance and security also belong here but they are considered separately. In a similar vein to Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010), Brown and Gold (2007) discuss five given aspects of contract, namely pay, length of contract, hours, timetabling, and training, and further studies consider bad work to have bad characteristics such as low pay, no access to health insurance and pension benefits, and an overly-long length of working day as exploitation factors (Kalleberg, Reskin and Hudson, 2000; Philp and Wheatley, 2011). Non-standard workers, especially those with no union association, are particularly vulnerable to these bad characteristics. The most important contractual factors in how workers consider their work are how much they work and how much they get paid (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010), which resonates with Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) good wages, along with good working hours and potentially work-life balance for how much people work. In their research, Brown and Gold (2007) found that the most common area of improvement was indeed timetabling. However, almost half of Brown and Gold's (2007) sample stated that they had been unable, or had not needed, to improve upon any aspect of their employment at their current institution.

In terms of non-standard work arrangements, particularly the gig economy, pay, financial instability and job insecurity create a viability challenge. The nature of this unpredictable work leads to highly variable income, cycles of feast or famine, and concern about basic income continuation (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018) so that the self-employed are constantly wary of idleness, distractions and market fluctuations (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Other research finds a desire to secure long-term contracts, not only for the regular income it

provides, but for the desire to belong (Cohen and Mallon, 1999). This leads to the suggestion of an ideal where freelance work is combined with some form of part-time employment (Cohen and Mallon, 1999), akin to one traditional understanding of multiple jobholding, 'moonlighting' (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). In the gig economy in particular, this is not possible. In terms of working hours, being a flexible worker in the cultural industries essentially means working longer or unsocial hours, taking onboard additional responsibilities, relocating according to company demands and prioritising work committing over personal commitments (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010). For timetabling, working during non-standard work time undermines intrinsic motivation, a key driver of work persistence and well-being (Giurge and Woolley, 2022) which implies that non-standard workers have 'bad' work.

2.3.3. Work-life Balance versus Overwork

The next point on the list of good work is work-life balance versus overwork. A key way that this manifests itself is through flexibility. From the organisational perspective, flexibility is a tool which can increase organisational power (Standing, 2011). Conventional management models such as Atkinson's (1984) Flexible Firm or the Resource Based View (Lepak and Snell, 1999) have at their core, where resources are strategically used to gain competitive advantage (Ierodiakonou and Stavrou, 2015), a group offering functional flexibility. A range of other flexibility mechanisms include numerical, wage, employment, job, skill, and temporal flexibility, most of which are employer-controlled (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004; Sennett, 2006; Standing, 2011; Wood, 2016). Cropanzano *et al.* (2022) summarise these into three types of flexibility: numerical, financial and functional. As is common in organisational studies, much of this research has been conducted on full-time employees and research is lacking on certain types of alternative work arrangements such as gig work (Keith, Harms and Tay, 2019). Nevertheless, Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett (2017) identify three dimensions of flexibility specific to non-standard work arrangements: flexibility in the employment relationship, flexibility in the scheduling of work, and flexibility in where work is accomplished. The latter, flexibility in where work is accomplished, does not necessarily seem to be constrained to just non-standard work arrangements. For example, the advent of COVID-19 has only accelerated the number of people working from home, including those in 'standard jobs'. This was mentioned earlier when discussing the inadequate definition of standard work

as "… performed at an employer-owned location …" (Broschak, Davis-blake and Block, 2008, pp. 3-4). While flexibility in the employment relationship can affect both organisation and worker in positive and negative ways, flexibility in the scheduling of work is largely positive or negative depending on who is in control of this scheduling.

Greater work scheduling flexibility ostensibly allows various non-standard workers to craft their work schedules around their personal life schedules (Watson *et al.*, 2021). However, workers' experience in non-standard work arrangements depends on whether the flexibility is controlled by the organisation or the worker: under the former, the worker experiences significant challenges; under the latter, the worker's experience is more positive (Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett, 2017). Wood (2016) denotes these as manager-controlled flexible scheduling (MCFS) and worker-controlled flexible scheduling (WCFS) and states that flexible scheduling cannot be both manager-controlled and worker-controlled, despite any employer's insistence to the contrary. This differs from Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett (2017), who suggest some combination of the two may be possible. Wood (2016) argues that schedule flexibility is an important element of job quality and, by extension, work-life balance. While Giurge and Woolley (2022) suggest there is an overly positive portrayal of increased work schedule flexibility, Wood (2016) suggests MCFS can be beneficial for work-life balance in some groups, namely those who have few other time-bound commitments, such as students or those transitioning to retirement. How tightly this aligns with voluntariness in non-standard work arrangements is not clear, especially considering that a marker of success is being able to reject work, for example due to bad scheduling (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Wood (2016) also states that all workers have a negative perception of MCFS on job quality, and that MCFS is detrimental for work-life balance. Wood (2016) suggests not all workers can benefit from WCFS and this split may again be connected to whether the non-standard work arrangement is voluntary or not. For example, some workers may voluntarily choose non-standard work arrangements because they have scheduling flexibility. It may be expected that MCFS and WCFS are cognates of non-voluntary and voluntary participation in the gig economy respectively, especially given flexibility as a tool for power and the role power plays in autonomy, a major antecedent of job commitment, which is discussed later in this literature review.

2.3.4. Interest, Involvement versus Boredom

The next point on the list of good work is interest, involvement versus boredom. Here, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) extend the concept of good work beyond solely contractual aspects, and herein the list becomes arguably quite subjective. Interest and involvement, for instance, are not the same as job satisfaction, making their inclusion on the list of good work contestable. One could be quite satisfied with one's job, for example with contractual elements such as wages and work-life balance, and therefore may not want work which is interesting, itself a subjective measure. This would align with some groups accepting MCFS as stated above. This may be explained by the differences between work satisfaction and engagement. Engagement goes further than satisfaction so that it will answer these three questions positively: do you like it here?, do you want to stay? and do you want to go that extra mile for the organisation?, whereas the answer to the last question is unimportant for satisfaction (Taylor and Woodhams, 2012, 2016). Work engagement is the mental state where employees feel full with physical energy (vigour), are enthusiastic about the content of their work and the things they do (dedication), and are so immersed in their work activities that time seems to fly (absorption) (Bakker and Demerouti, 2016). It should also be made clear that this is not intended as criticism of Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), and indeed their list of good work is not designed to say that all elements must be present to constitute good work; their list has been adopted as a framework to explore work experiences of non-standard workers. It is therefore necessary to supplement their list with other models which can help to understand satisfaction and engagement.

Antecedents to satisfaction and engagement could be explained by Meyer and Allen's organisational commitment model which comprises three factors; affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1991; Meyer and Allen, 1997). Affective commitment looks at the extent the individual identifies with the organisation; continuance commitment focuses on the individual's need to continue working for the organisation which may lead to a distinction between "desire to stay" and "inability to leave"; and normative commitment is based on societal expectations of being committed to the organisation and possibly going "over and above" at work (McDonald and Makin, 2000). There are clear parallels to engagement here: affective commitment: do you like it?; continuance

commitment: should you (can you) stay or go?; and normative commitment: will you go the extra mile? Higher levels of affective commitment are positively related to job performance and promotability, whereas for continuance commitment this relationship is negative (McDonald and Makin, 2000). Note that these are for full-time employment relationships, and their validity for non-standard work arrangements is not clear.

Affective commitment for non-standard workers such as gig workers is impacted as there is no organisation to commit to. This may explain the claim that non-standard workers tend to only have a transactional psychological contract, rather than relational, with their employing organisations (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). For those who work via an agency, as it often the case with TEFL workers working via language schools, workers' commitment to the organisation is based on the perceived organisational support from the organisation, and commitment to the agency is based on the perceived organisational support from the agency. Relationships with agencies can be strengthened through 'reinforcement', and those that do so tend to be better paid by the agency (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). It has been suggested that a certain 'spillover' effect exists (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004). However, this triangular relationship can lead to a conflict of interests which puts the worker in a position of 'balancing' where one relationship is weakened to sustain another (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). An example could be a worker receiving more work from the agency, overburdening him- or herself, so that it compromises the quality delivered to the firm. Nevertheless, these triangular relationships are poorly understood (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022) and how this translates to multiple jobholders, potentially operating in multiple organisations and via multiple agencies, that is, multiple triangular relationships, is unknown.

Continuance commitment may be linked closely to voluntariness and push/pull factors, while normative commitment seems to be the most difficult to map across to non-standard work arrangements. As stated previously, 'going the extra mile' can be futile in transactional, non-standard work arrangements as this 'good will' is not passed on to the next job (Kaine and Josserand, 2019).

Another way to look at whether jobs are good in the sense of workers being interested and involved or bored is to consider the models that look at the interface between jobs and

individuals. Often, these form a basic 'system' so that there are a certain range of input factors, some intermediate process phase, and some final outputs. The outputs are the desired outcomes from work and include factors such as high-quality work performance and low absenteeism and turnover (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). However, while these factors may be measurable, and are elsewhere shown to be beneficial to organisational performance, other output factors are less clear, such as high internal work motivation and high work and job satisfaction. An example of such a model would be the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) (Hackman and Oldham, 1975).

The Job Characteristics Model (JCM) tries to understand which job characteristics an organisation can establish and foster to produce better job outcomes. There are five 'core job characteristics' which must be present to ultimately lead to positive work outcomes. The five core job characteristics are skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback from job (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). They inform critical psychological states which then produce the final job outcomes such as high internal work motivation, high job satisfaction and high-quality work performance. Models such as the JCM look at how to improve working conditions as a means to the end of improving the organisation. However, this model has its limitations. For instance, the impact of relationships, teamwork, and social context on job satisfaction and performance is not considered. Moreover, it presents employee engagement in the form of an organisational problem. That is, if the organisation can strike the right mix, employees will do a good job. This largely ignores any potential intrinsic motivation along with situations where workers are satisfied but not engaged and strips the worker of any agency in general. Furthermore, many studies which use these types of models present largely structural and static pictures of work content within each occupation (Anteby, Chan and DiBenigno, 2016). Not only the fact that these models are designed around possible organisational, rather than individual worker, interventions, but also a changing definition of work bring into question whether this is apposite to describe the new world of work with its piecemeal tasks. Looking from a worker's perspective, the difference between organisational commitment and job involvement (Moynihan and Pandey, 2007; Singh and Gupta, 2015; Rai and Chawla, 2022) needs to be highlighted, with the former compromised by the nature of non-standard work arrangements without membership to an organisation, such as those in the gig economy. Gig workers may have no organisation to

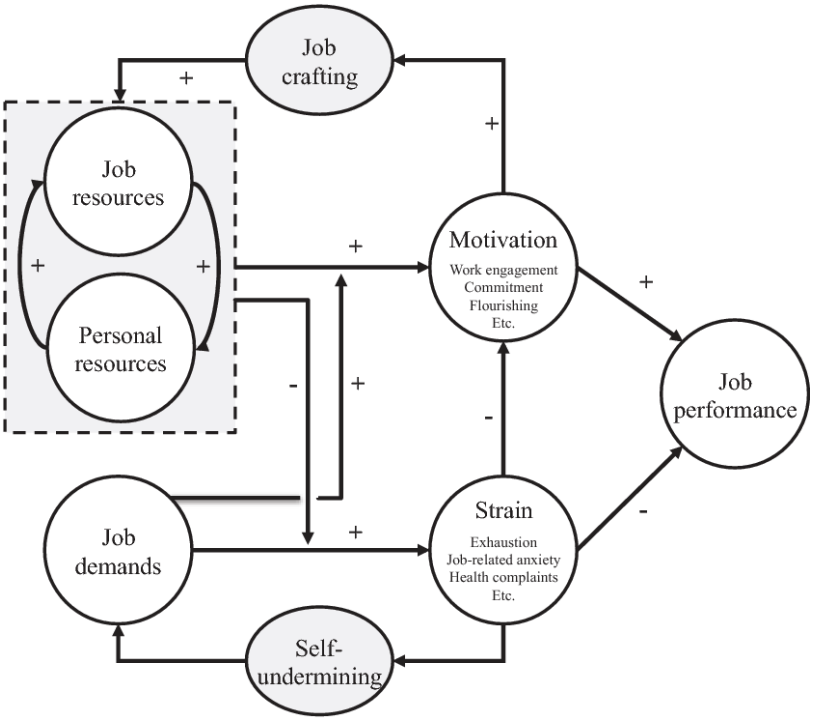
commit to *per se*, at least not in the classical sense, whereas they may still have high job involvement, that is, a high identity with the work they perform. For example, it has been found that non-standard workers view their work as "an avenue for self-expression (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018, p. 136)."

Another systemic model which includes motivation as integral to the work process is the Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R model) (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). This model is an occupational stress model based on the availability of both job demands, such as alienation, emotional labour, and underemployment, and job resources, such as autonomy, social support, performance feedback, and task identity (Keith, Harms and Long, 2020; Watson *et al.*, 2021). In a later paper, the founders of the model, Bakker and Demerouti (2016), assert that all job characteristics can be considered either a job demand or job resource. Resources can take the form of job resources or personal resources, such as optimism and self-efficacy. Personal resources refer to the beliefs people hold regarding how much control they have over their environment. It is proposed that personal resources can play a similar role to job resources.

This model differs from the JCM as its focus is on employee wellbeing rather than exclusively on job commitment. In general, demands are negative indicators of wellbeing and resources positive. The JD-R model suggests that the balance of workers' resources and demands influences their job motivation and job strain respectively, ultimately impacting work and health outcomes (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). That is, motivation occurs when resources outweigh demands, and job strain when demands outweigh resources. Having more job resources and personal resources positively influences motivation and work engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) and through this engagement predicts other ratings of extra-role performance (Bakker, Demerouti and Verbeke, 2004). On the other hand, exposure to many job demands may expend and exhaust the positive impact of resources, with a direct impact on health and wellbeing (Watson *et al.*, 2021). It can therefore be considered that job demands and resources instigate two very different processes, namely a health-impairment process and a motivational process (Bakker and Demerouti, 2016). It can be considered that demands and resources are potentially cognate to Petriglieri *et al*.'s (2018) maintenance and self-defining activities. In terms of the model's relevance to this thesis, Bakker and Demerouti

(2007) suggest that the many other job-organisation models may not be relevant for all work arrangements such as non-standard work arrangements, whereas theirs is, and Watson *et al.* (2021) apply the JD-R model to the gig economy as it includes a wide range of working conditions. The figure below summarises the JD-R model.

Figure 1 The Job Demands and Resources (JD-R) Model



The job demands-resources model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2016)

As some resources and demands may be provided by the organisation, such as pay and job security, and organisational control over the work process respectively, the balance of demands and resources in non-standard work arrangements, particularly those without a fixed employer such as multiple jobholding and the gig economy, is different to standard work. Depending on the specific circumstances, this may put gig workers under pressure to either increase, or at least maintain, their resources, or to reduce their demands. A stress on its own may not be much, perhaps going unnoticed or ignored, but over time can be overpowering, causing physical or psychological harm and can be known as a 'creeping strain' (Kahn *et al.*, 2018). Ashford, Caza and Reid (2018) suggest two broad groups of capabilities, emotional and cognitive, to deal with these demands. Petriglieri *et al.* (2018) propose a 'personal holding environment' of connections to routines, spaces, people, and purpose to form personal and

work identities and to help to interpret emotional tensions as sources of learning and growth. This holding environment itself is precarious and must be continuously 'cultivated'. Whether this creates a larger cognitive or emotional load on individual workers, and thus becomes a demand in itself, is unclear.

As job demands require sustained physical and/or psychological effort they are associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001). However, this presents potential problems when trying to align demands with bad work and resources with good work, since sustained physical and/or psychological effort may be required to realise 'good' work characteristics such as self-realisation and interest/involvement. However, job resources may stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (Bakker, 2011; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). So, it could be considered that self-realisation is both a demand and a resource, which contradicts the proposition that "… all types of job characteristics can be classified in one of two categories: job demands and job resources" (Bakker and Demerouti, 2016, p. 274). In this sense, while the end may be 'good', the means may be demanding or detrimental, which brings about problems with Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) model as work-life balance is 'good' and overwork is 'bad'. However, this may be explained by Bakker and Demerouti's (2016) Proposition 3, which states that job resources can buffer the impact of job demands on strain. This is probably over-analysis, and job resources such as autonomy, skill variety, performance feedback, and opportunities for growth (Bakker and Demerouti, 2016) do tend to line up with, and even enhance, Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) 'good' characteristics.

In sum, many models focus on finding the right combination of elements that make work interesting in order to lead to commitment or engagement and ultimately performance. The JD-R model goes further and considers how resources and demands impact not only workers' job commitment but also well-being. Furthermore, workers who have many job resources available can cope better with their job demands (Bakker and Demerouti, 2016). This begs the question of whether one can *create* job resources. This is considered under job crafting and is discussed later in this literature review.

2.3.5. Autonomy vs Powerlessness

The next item on the list of good work is autonomy. Autonomy is a structural characteristic of the new world of work (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) identify two broad ways of discussing autonomy, namely *workplace autonomy* and *creative autonomy*. Workplace autonomy is the "degree of self-determination that individual workers or groups of workers have within a certain work situation" (p. 40). Creative autonomy is the "degree to which 'art,' knowledge, symbol-making and so on can and/or should operate independently of the influence of other determinants" (p. 40). Young (2023) suggests that 'creative autonomy' is the most important. It is argued that some creative workers, such as gamemakers, are tied to their desire to achieve creative autonomy and not workplace autonomy (Young, 2023). This is not to say that gamemakers are completely autonomous in how they make games; rather, they make-do with the available working conditions, labour practices, and industry norms to negotiate their own practices (Young, 2023). However, while this may fit a creative industry such as gamemaking, it is not clear how this fits with TEFL, where the role of creative autonomy is dubious. As this is only relevant to specific types of work such as the cultural industries, this is not pursued here. Instead, it is more fruitful to return to discussing workplace autonomy.

As well as being on Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) list of good work, many traditional organisational models, discussed below, include autonomy as an integral element of employee satisfaction. Hackman and Oldham's (1975) Job Characteristics Model (JCM) includes autonomy as one of five 'core job characteristics' which inform critical psychological states and then produce certain job outcomes such as high internal work motivation, high job satisfaction and high-quality work performance. For them, job autonomy refers to "the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the employee in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out" (Hackman and Oldham, 1975, p. 162). This definition comprises both autonomy over scheduling, discussed under 'flexibility' earlier, and autonomy over work procedures, discussed directly.

Many definitions are very similar to this concept of autonomy over work procedures, where the opportunity to participate in decision-making at work also appears. For example, in definitions such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development's (CIPD) (Purcell *et al.*, 2003), Morgeson & Humphrey's (2006, in Watson *et al*., 2021), and Martinaitis, Christenko and Antanavičius' (2021) definition of work complexity. The Self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan, Deci and Olafsen, 2017) also includes autonomy and defines it as the feeling of a sense of willingness and choice. This definition diverges from those above, however, as it additionally includes the element that autonomy is not intended to mean being wholly independent of others (Deci and Vansteenkiste, 2004). Consequences of autonomy include autonomous motivation, which results in improvements in performance, wellness, and engagement compared to when a person is told what to do (control motivation) (Van Assche *et al.*, 2018).

Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) list of good work juxtaposes autonomy with powerlessness and the idea of these as opposites is supported by others. Power, which leads to autonomy, can be defined as control over valued resources, with control the ability of organisations and/or managers to obtain desired behaviour from workers (Williams, Lopiano and Heller, 2022). This is *direct control. Direct control* is one of two strategies that organisations may use to exercise control over workers, the other being *responsible autonomy* (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011).

Responsible autonomy affords the worker more freedom, via status, authority, and responsibility, in order to harness the adaptability of labour power to meet the organisation's objectives. It involves the effort to align the worker's ideals to the organisation's (Friedman, 1977 in Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). Power also increases identification with one's workplace and role and may lead to the pursuit of the organisation's goals as their own (Williams, Lopiano and Heller, 2022). However, power derived from hierarchy is not the same as power as a psychological state (Sturm and Antonakis, 2015; Tost, 2015). So, while power provides freedom (Williams, Lopiano and Heller, 2022), as well as increasing feelings of autonomy, optimism, and personal control (Fast *et al.*, 2009), it is worth considering what type of freedom. Cohen and Mallon (1999) describe freedom as having two components: the freedom *from*, for example bosses, departments, and organisations more generally; and the

freedom *to*, for example create, develop, manage. So, 'freedom from' may signify freedom from direct control, and 'freedom to' could be a combination of responsible workplace autonomy and creative autonomy. It may be noted that the essence of the argument is organisations *granting* responsible autonomy to individual workers rather than workers being able to obtain this through their own status. However, this may fit with the idea that autonomy is relationally determined (Deci and Vansteenkiste, 2004).

It has been researched that autonomy and control over work are vitally important for a teacher to maintain if they are to stay in teaching (Hunter-Quartz *et al.*, 2016). More generally than teachers, in terms of why organisations would opt for responsible autonomy over direct control, there is a large debate which is well worth reading in Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) about whether cultural workers, who are often in non-standard work arrangements, are actually 'free' due to the autonomy in their work, or whether they are merely granted this autonomy to get them to perform precarious work. Banks (2007, p. 55) argues that the perception of autonomy is exactly the behaviour that allows for the precarious work environment to perdure: "to be (or appear to be) in control of one's destiny is what encourages workers to endorse the systems put in place to expedite flexible production".

The models introduced above were originally intended for employees in organisations, so their effectiveness when talking about independent workers who do not experience the relational psychological contract between employer and employee is unknown. It is unclear to what extent these different powers and freedoms are understood and experienced in the context of non-standard work arrangements. Workers do not have a traditional boss to answer to but may be under pressure exerted by others. It can be considered that this understanding of autonomy is control. Control emerges in almost all research on alternative work arrangements (Kalleberg, 2000) and Scott and Davis (2006) claim that *all* matters of interest to management scholars relate to control. Yet there has been no systematic analysis of how control differs across the various non-standard work arrangements for governing economic work, the mechanisms imposing such variation, or how such variations may shape the attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes for the individuals, managers, and organisations engaged in arrangements characterised by variations in control (Cappelli and Keller, 2013). The new world of work necessitates a different application of control.

Non-standard work arrangements, where workers tend not to be employees, make traditional control measures as envisaged by the likes of Taylor, that is, cognate to direct control as discussed above, rather difficult (see Sennett, 2006). Managerial control can, to a certain extent, be replaced by surveillance and rating systems which not only monitor workers but also give feedback, rankings and ratings (Gandini, 2020). Another method is to externalise the risk that a lack of control brings by transferring it to workers (Bodiroga-Vukobrat, Pošćić and Martinović, 2018). This leads to self-management which exacerbates the detachment of the organisation from responsibilities to those it controls (Sennett, 2006). It also reinforces the theory of work arrangements as a type of labour force segregation.

Gig workers generally have higher levels of autonomy and independence than those in organisations (Donovan, Bradley and Shimabukuro, 2016; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018), and their rationale for doing gig work is often related to the autonomy gig work affords (Watson *et al.*, 2021). There is plenty of research on independent workers which suggests that having high discretion over the tasks one performs, including how and when one performs them, will increase the meaningfulness of the work (Hackman and Oldham, 1975; Donovan, Bradley and Shimabukuro, 2016; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Indeed, many choose this work style explicitly to gain this freedom (Ashford, George and Blatt, 2007; Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett, 2017), and some even cite maintaining that freedom as a reason to avoid working in organisations (Caza, Moss and Vough, 2018). Some can choose how, when and even what work to do (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018) but they often need to meet the transient demands of transient jobs, control systems whose relevance is ephemeral, or multiple control systems to match their multiple simultaneous gigs (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). Individuals being wholly responsible for their own short- and long-term economic success has been dubbed “radical responsibilisation” by Fleming (2017, p. 693). However, it is not clear whether this autonomy is always good. Often these choices are made under significant financial duress (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). This would point to a conflict between levels of autonomy and other aspects of ‘good’ work such as good pay and job security. It may also indicate that too much autonomy can be detrimental to a worker’s experience.

In sum, autonomy, and its related factors of control and power, appear constantly in the literature, and are starting to be explored in relation to non-standard work arrangements. Nevertheless, the picture is far from clear cut and further research is needed on non-standard worker's experiences of autonomy.

2.3.6. Self-esteem vs Low Self-esteem and Shame

The next point on the list of good work is self-esteem versus low self-esteem and shame. Work can enhance or diminish our sense of self-esteem as well as others' respect for us and recognition for our work (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). Jobs which offer opportunities for control, creativity and challenge can enhance self-esteem, even in low-status occupations (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). Conversely, when workers are estranged from their work, as may happen in non-standard work arrangements such as multiple jobholding and the gig economy, their self-esteem is damaged (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). This may suggest forms of work with little autonomy inherently undermine self-esteem. It also suggests that self-esteem occupies a very delicate position where other aspects of work, such as autonomy or alienation can severely impact self-esteem. Self-esteem can arguably be seen as both a resource and a demand, depending on the balance of these other aspects of work. At the same time, self-esteem can be seen as an output of other work factors such as autonomy and contractual status. In terms of non-standard work, Cropanzano et al. (2022) have produced twenty-four propositions for future research on gig work. One of these proposes that "… gig workers may experience more self-directed negative emotions (e.g. self-directed blame, shame) than standard workers" (p.499). If correct, this again suggests that non-standard work is inherently 'bad' as it constitutes bad elements such as shame. However, this has not been discussed in the literature and is an area my research aims to explore.

2.3.7. Self-realisation vs Frustrated development

The last major point on the good work list is self-realisation, which Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) admit is a controversial point. They discuss self-realisation in terms of a sense of fulfilment and purpose which brings meaning into workers' lives and permits development

over time. This is important for good work, especially when sustained over time. The main connected concepts are career, vocation, and calling. Firstly, vocation and calling will be discussed before moving on to career.

In general, much of the literature on non-standard work arrangements has been based on the assumption that they are undertaken involuntarily out of necessity (Adler, 2021). However, a large group of workers seeks work that is personally meaningful and aligned with their values, passions, and strengths, making independent work attractive (Kelly, 2015, as cited in Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett, 2017). This may be considered their vocation or calling. In an example of pull factors for artists, Menger (1999, as cited in Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010) finds three main explanations: firstly, a sense of a 'calling'; secondly, they haven't considered the likelihood of failing; thirdly, artistic work brings nonmonetary, psychological rewards, associated with autonomy, community, the possibility of self-actualisation, and potentially high degrees of recognition, even celebrity. Further examples of cultural workers sacrificing more financially secure jobs for reasons of self-realisation include jazz musicians in London intentionally foregoing more reliable work to maintain their creative freedom (Umney and Kretsos, 2015, as cited in Adler, 2021) and workers in music, television, and magazines accepting substandard pay, hours, and security to pursue career autonomy (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010).

Cultural workers seem torn over the precariousness of their work, bemoaning the mental and emotional states produced, but also resigned to insecurity, and prepared to speak of it as necessary and even desirable, almost a badge of pride or marker of identity. As such, some workers will choose to remain in bad jobs rather than take good jobs because it aligns with their professional identity (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010; Adler, 2021). In order to cope, some spread the risk by working in multiple sites to supplement income (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010)**.** As a word of caution, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) suggest that this 'pleasure in work' can lead to self-exploitation, a feature of modern professional work.

Adler (2021) similarly suggests there are two key approaches to explain why workers accept bad jobs; either they try to maximise their income but have limited options or they place a higher value on the meaning of their work and therefore accept bad working conditions in

exchange for greater personal fulfilment. While these two approaches emphasise different types of rewards, both assume that job preferences reflect an effort to maximise some combination of extrinsic and intrinsic utility (Adler, 2021). In general, the literature tends to oppose economic success and creative fulfilment, which may represent a false dichotomy. It also brings into conflict different elements of good work. For example, whether good pay should take precedence over self-realisation. Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs clearly places self-actualisation – the desire to be the best one can be - at the top of the pyramid. However, this can only be achieved when other factors, such as safety and security along with physiological needs, are taken care of. Insofar, the importance of self-realisation may be overstated.

As the vocation and calling concept has been discussed above, it is worth returning to the other concept of self-realisation which helps sustain good work over a longer period, namely career. Career is a concept (Becker and Strauss, 1956) that may be seen as a social construction (Cohen and Mallon, 1999) and efforts have been made to differentiate types of career path such as ascending or descending, interesting or uninteresting (Fournier, Lachance and Bujold, 2009). The existence of 'job ladders', not only promotion and career opportunities, but also the prospect of substantial increases in pay, security, and social status, represent one of the defining differences between good and bad work (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004). In line with other work-related factors, the organisational literature on careers presents largely dualistic conceptualisations of traditional and non-traditional careers (Cohen and Mallon, 1999). Non-standard work arrangements such as the gig economy offer a lack of clear, available, and relevant career paths (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). This would suggest that non-standard work arrangements, with a lack of career focus, are 'bad'. However, such research may not be relevant for the new world of work at all. For example, Keith, Harms and Tay (2019) suggest the antecedents for changing jobs in standard work may not apply to the way workers change jobs in the gig economy, where such changes have a high frequency. Watson *et al.* (2021) go as far as to suggest some gig workers may not consider their work a job, let alone a career, but at the same time suggest many self-employed workers view their work as a long-term career. Although somewhat a paradox, this may help to demonstrate the full range of perceptions gig workers have of their work arrangement.

In conventional career models, personnel move from less to more desirable positions as they gain in age, skill, and experience, acquired within an organisation so that hand-in-hand with career development belongs a sense of loyalty to the organisation (Becker and Strauss, 1956). On the whole, thriving at work allows people to demonstrate adaptation that progresses their careers (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005). In that sense, the timing of changing jobs may create a psychological stress which varies depending on career type and there is always the risk of being 'frozen' at a certain level (Becker and Strauss, 1956). This may help to explain the curvilinear relationship of age and part-time work (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022), a seemingly preferable non-standard work arrangement.

So, while it is said that traditional careers restrict creativity and initiative and create an unhealthy dependence on organisations (Cohen and Mallon, 1999), one could argue that the severance from organisations also severs their significance in building a traditional career, making individuals active participants in the construction of their careers which may then produce a sense of empowerment and control over their future (Cohen and Mallon, 1999). This is another example of the increased autonomy independent workers have over employees. In Brown and Gold's (2007) research, non-standard academics displayed a lack of concern for this career development. This may be due to the high level of qualifications and experience of academics as a group, and their self-starting nature, reflecting the importance of status (Brown and Gold, 2007). That is, they are not a group that an organisation would seek to exercise direct control over, rather offer responsible autonomy. On the other hand, contingent workers do not receive the same development opportunities as permanent employees nor training in matters as essential as safety training (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004). As development is intrinsic in self-realisation, it is necessary to discuss education, training, and development in the context of non-standard work arrangements.

Modern (Western) society is based around the idea of a meritocracy (Littler, 2017), with education and training ostensibly open to all. The way skills are recognised in society is crucial. In one approach, the Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1962), individuals must weigh up whether the investment in education and/or training is worth the payoff of expected higher wages (Fevre, Rees and Gorard, 1999). It relies on employers recognising and remunerating the newly acquired skills. Here again the tension between different aspects of good work is

apparent. Traditionally, specialisation tends to be more highly valued in society (Abbott, 1988; Leung and Ng, 2014), but this may be wholly the wrong way to approach organisational theory in the new world of work as specialisation alone is a poor long-term strategy due to the constantly changing conditions and demands (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). The central premise here, akin to upskilling, is that those in highly-skilled occupations will less likely be exposed to 'bad' work conditions (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004). For instance, investment in skill development can also mitigate feelings of job insecurity in agency workers (Håkansson and Isidorsson, 2015).

There are further limitations to the Human Capital Theory such that, firstly, not all educational or learning programmes of equal status have equal content, so that equal programmes may not deliver the same quality to all learners; secondly, not all programmes of equal content have equal status so that an employee may study alone to the level of the programme but this is not recognised as it is not accompanied by a recognised certificate; and, thirdly, these skills are seen as static, that is, they do not depreciate over time despite the advent of new technologies and working practices (Autor and Handel, 2013). Sennett (2006) goes as far to suggest that skills are not a durable possession, implying a constant need for retraining, also suggesting that in the skills society many educated workers have seen their jobs migrate to other places in the world. This is essentially the polarisation *and* upskilling hypothesis, with Sennett (2006) concluding that other skills are needed, that is, an enforced change in occupation. This again brings us back to the concept of the neo-professional.

In any case, changing jobs, whether within the same occupation or not, invariably requires new learning or training. Organisations may provide specific in-house training (Fevre, Rees and Gorard, 1999), not only for jobs on lower levels but also for higher positions (Becker and Strauss, 1956), which may train employees precisely for their job, but may also only serve to embed them within the organisation, making it difficult to take their new skills elsewhere. How this plays out for multiple jobholders is not known. For non-standard workers, who generally have more autonomy, the choice over training and development is independent of any organisation.

Self-realisation, or self-development, involves learning new skills. In multiple jobholding and the gig economy, workers need to acquire new skills as not having the necessary skills can cause workers to miss out on work (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). Non-standard workers, who are generally excluded from in-house training such as talent management programmes (McKeown and Pichault, 2021), cannot depend on employers for the development of needed skills as employers may neither want nor be able to offer relevant training (Davis, 2016; Kuhn, 2016). Nevertheless, these skills, or rather, their formal recognition in the form of qualifications, are often merely proxy measurements for actual skills that employees need on the job so that the skills taught in education and training can be seen as existing to measure an individual's potential to carry out a task rather than ability. Sennett (2006), however, claims that the interpretation of the word 'skill' is as that which rewards potential ability rather than past achievements. So, while many jobs may require extra education, a claim Braverman (1998) made in the 1970s and echoed through the need for 3- or 4-year degrees required for jobs throughout the 80's and 90s and indeed today (Killam and Weber, 2014), and we currently may have more qualified workers than ever before (upskilling theory), these workers may not actually be better equipped for work or have the skills employers require. Therefore, they may need to carefully consider the benefits of such training and may indeed reject the training (Cohen and Mallon, 1999). Again, this has parallels with the neo-professional idea of professional fluidity.

In order to get a 'gig', workers must adapt to the market which requires building up a good network of relations to anticipate and prepare for the coming changes in skills demanded (Cross and Swart, 2020). In modern society, we often equate talent with personal worth (Sennett, 2006) but in the gig economy, personal worth may be determined by impersonal judgments (Sennett, 2006). As getting paid for gigs is seen as validation of self, this has consequences for identity and self-esteem (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018) which may largely be formed by the value judgments of others. Therefore, to get gigs, highly-skilled workers need to appreciate what distinctive, professional skills make them different from competitors (Bellesia *et al.*, 2019) and, to differentiate themselves, highly-skilled gig economy workers must self-advertise, with a considerable investment of unpaid time (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Workers need a multitude of common skills and individual skills. The platform offers a variety of job opportunities (Bellesia *et al.*, 2019) but this may be

inappropriate for high-skilled workers who may be more likely to remain in their niche rather than use the platform to source any kind of work possible. On the other hand, it is considered that workers may now occupy a space *between* occupations (Ibarra and Obodaru, 2016), requiring them to combine their skills in new ways (Damarin, 2006). To be competitive now and in the future, workers may undertake a number of strategies, such as job crafting, bricolage, or stretchwork and these are discussed next.

Job Crafting in the context of the JD-R model means manipulating the balance of demands and resources so that they are more favourable for the individual worker in realising personal or work goals (Tims, Bakker and Derks, 2012). This may be task related or relationship based. For example, one could decrease task demands by reducing workload, or increase relationship resources by, for example, seeking social support (Watson *et al.*, 2021). A concrete example may be how substitute teachers seek feedback on their performance from more experienced teachers, thus increasing their resources (Watson *et al.*, 2021). Feedback is discussed later in this section. Tims, Bakker and Derks (2012) suggest these changes in the balance of demands and resources may bring work in line with individual characteristics. There may also be the knock-on effect that this proactive process of job crafting strengthens perceptions of autonomy and control, essential for job satisfaction and ultimately contributing to organisational effectiveness. The substitute teacher example shows the parallels to TEFL teachers, and it is therefore interesting to investigate whether and to what extent TEFL teachers can job craft, especially in a non-standard work arrangement.

Bricolage means combining old skills in new ways (Duymedjian and Rüling, 2010). This is necessary to meet the market requirements of the new world of work. Thriving in the gig economy can be connected to learning at work (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005, p. 538). Learning agility refers to the ability "to come up to speed quickly in one's understanding of a situation and to move across ideas flexibly in service of learning both within and across experiences" (Derue, Ashford and Myers, 2012, p. 264) and is considered part of an individual's overall ability to learn (Eichinger and Lombardo, 1994). Individuals with high levels of learning agility can learn new skills quickly and repackage previously-acquired skills in new work contexts (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). It is possible to stimulate the process of bricolage and it is critical for resilience in this environment (Williams *et al.*, 2017). Workers who display learning agility are

more resourceful (Sonenshein, 2017). With success in the gig economy much more ambiguous and uncertain, necessary behaviours for moving forward are resilience, persistence, bricolage and proactivity (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). These factors can all be seen as resources. This suggests an ability to job craft.

The next term to introduce is stretchwork. O'Mahony and Bechky (2006) suggest that contract workers encounter a career progression paradox. In order to progress, contract workers attempt to build new skills by taking jobs in new areas, but employers prefer workers with experience, leaving it difficult to imagine how, where and when these workers will develop the necessary skills outside of an organisation. A practice of 'stretchwork' is suggested, where new work largely overlaps old but with a small new element (O'Mahony and Bechky, 2006). While this shapes perceptions of work and progress in their careers, it could be argued that this career progress is ultimately slower because of the type of workers' work arrangement.

2.3.8. Feedback

For the last point in this section, it is important to discuss feedback. Although it does not feature in Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) good work list, feedback from the job is one of the five core characteristics of the JCM model (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). As such, it is a characteristic that should not be overlooked and can have an impact on job performance outcomes. It also links to identity construction.

In the new world of work, where qualifications may not be recognised or understood, and where the supply for work often outstrips the demand, image management influences not only whether one is hired (Gorman, 2005; Rivera, 2015) but also how one's performance is assessed (Reid, 2015). As seeking feedback is a crucial activity in image management (Ashford, De Stobbeleir and Nujella, 2016), by extension it affects performance and employability. Feedback can be gathered either by asking others for it directly (inquiry) or inferring a feedback message (monitoring) (Ashford and Cummings, 1983). Those that understand the role of feedback and seek it proactively can better manage the image presented to the marketplace (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018).

In the new world of work, it is unknown how much feedback workers receive. However, as the work process is often transactional, that is, the focus is only on the work outcome and not the work process, Cappelli and Keller (2013) suggest that such workers are more likely to actively need to seek out feedback. They may also engage more closely with clients to get their 'buy-in' as they are otherwise not directly involved. From another perspective, these workers may also be able to 'exercise voice' more than standard employees since they are not under the same directive control (Cappelli and Keller, 2013). Nevertheless, within non-standard work arrangements, the lack of a rigorous feedback structure and its impact on work outcomes needs to be investigated which is part of this research.

Receiving feedback may be more important in the gig economy due to the detachment from an organisation and consequent lack of regular internal feedback in the form of annual appraisals and so on (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). Therefore, gig workers who seek out feedback proactively from those with whom they interact should be better able to manage their image and grow over the span of their careers, allowing them to thrive. Empirically examining this proposition will be critical for future research and is incorporated in this thesis.

2.3.9. Relational and Emotional Challenge

This section draws on the body of literature which suggests a relational element is important to identity construction (Piening *et al.*, 2020) and work experiences (Dutton and Ragins, 2006). The importance of relatedness is reflected by its use in multiple models, such as the Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000, 2004) where it is a key component for growth and development, and the JD-R Model where 'strong work relationships' are a job resource (Bakker, Tims and Derks, 2012; Tims, Bakker and Derks, 2012). Under Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) good work there is the dimension 'sociality versus isolation'. They consider the merits of sociality to be friendship, solidarity, cooperation and shared enjoyment and interest, drawing on earlier research to suggest that coworkers can provide meaning at work. They prefer the term sociality over membership. Membership, or lack thereof, is one of the four elements that comprise Cropanzano *et al.*'s (2022) definition of gig work. As "a natural preoccupation of human beings is the desire to connect with others, to make contact, to make connections, so as not to remain isolated" (Boltanksi and Chiapello, 2018, pp. 111–112), this

suggests that membership, an important element of not only work but being human, is inherently missing from the gig economy and, by extension, other forms of non-standard work. This is likely to have an identity and emotional impact. Ashford, Caza and Reid (2018) suggest there are many elements of organisations that independent workers may miss such as loss of a sense of community, stability, and predictability. Regarding teachers, a strong teaching community can strengthen autonomy and task identity and task perception (Widodo and Allamnakhrah, 2020). Cross and Swart (2020) claim that the relational element is transforming the work professionals do, the way they conduct their work, and consequently their professional identity. In this respect, independent workers may need to find a way of substituting, or at least compensating for the loss of 'membership' to an organisation and the relatedness this brings. Petriglieri *et al.* (2018) suggest gig workers need to create personal holding environments, which include establishing connections to people, although it is not clear what this should look like nor how it should occur. It is therefore necessary to explore how independent workers compensate for an absence of organisational support, which is the subject of the next paragraph.

Workplace social support is a critical resource related to workers' success on the job and exists at the group / co-worker, supervisory, and organisational level (Watson *et al.*, 2021). It is known that the use of alternative arrangements alters the social context of work which plays a critical role in shaping the behaviours and experiences of workers (Cappelli and Keller, 2013). For example, senior colleagues may act as career mentors or role models, and their absence may mean independent workers miss out on development opportunities (Grugulis and Stoyanova, 2011). Indeed, socio-emotional support from other organisational members is positively related to contingent workers' organisational commitment (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004). This commitment may be based on a phenomenon called "anticipatory socialisation".

Anticipatory socialisation suggests that those outside of a group but willing to join, for example, contingent workers desiring to join an organisation, will behave the way expected from a member of said group and will even have a higher organisational commitment and job satisfaction. However, an important antecedent is that there must exist the realistic expectation that membership will be granted, that is, that a 'standard' job offer may be forthcoming (McDonald and Makin, 2000; Broschak, Davis-blake and Block, 2008). This

represents a change from a transitional psychological contract (Rousseau, 1990) to a relational one. However, it is not clear what obligations either organisations or workers may feel here. Further, this does little to explain the commitment of those without the opportunity to transition to full-time employment. For example, non-standard academics were less than effusive about the benefits of their employment status. They expressed some anxiety over isolation, irregular income and lack of pensions and benefits (Brown and Gold, 2007). It may also imply that they are actually motivated by this goal of full-time employment rather than the type of work they are performing, especially since DeCuyper et al. (2009b as cited in (Broschak, Davis-blake and Block, 2008)) found that temporary agency workers had lower levels of job satisfaction and affective organisational commitment compared to permanent employees due to increased feelings of job insecurity and lower perceived employability. Further issues for non-standard workers include anxiety over isolation, irregular income and lack of pensions and benefits (Brown and Gold, 2007). One consequence is that they are less likely to engage in extra-role behaviour than employees (Broschak, Davis-blake and Block, 2008).

Although models based on non-standard work arrangements are much fewer, those that do exist also include a relational element. For example, Ashford, Caza and Reid (2018) talk about the relational challenge in terms of loneliness and 'front stage' work, which requires the necessary relational behaviours of relational support management and relational agility in order to thrive in the new world of work. This implies that individuals in the new world of work should independently improve their relations with clients and this can be associated with emotional labour. The absence of traditional employment means that occupations and the communities formed around them may become increasingly important to workers' experiences (Anteby, Chan and DiBenigno, 2016). While the rise of co-working spaces may indicate that workers are trying to bridge the void of physical separation from others (Garrett, Spreitzer and Bacevice, 2017), teachers do not inhabit a working space suitable for sharing.

In the new world of work, workers are forced to establish vital relationships with other independent workers with similar skills, potential clients, supporters, and employers (Alacovska, 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018; Schwartz, 2018). These must be sustained through their voluntary actions and interactions. For independent workers'

ability to survive and thrive in the gig economy, they must forge ongoing relationships through formal and informal interactions (Caza, Moss and Vough, 2018). Formal networks consist of organisations to guard members' professional interests but may also exist in freelance contexts. For example, musicians can be firmly or loosely connected with others and thus alerted before others when potential new gigs arise (Albinsson, 2018). These workers must maintain community relationships by collaborating on projects, offering advice and feedback, and providing voluntary and reciprocal support (Osnowitz, 2006; Alacovska, 2018; Schwartz, 2018). Whether workers are comfortable or not with the "complex, layered work identity they develop over time" (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018, p. 27) is not clear, and the aloneness that the gig economy provokes may be considered identity work in its own right (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018).

The lack of organisational support impacts not only the psychological contract with organisations but also the individuals themselves. They may suffer from work alienation, a clear demand in the JD-R model (Watson *et al.*, 2021). This refers "to the worker's estrangement or distancing from the products of their labour as well as the society which that labour is supposed to be servicing" (Keith, Harms and Long, 2020, p. 18). This has cognates with the JCM's task identity. Indeed, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) discuss work alienation but ultimately adopt the term 'isolation' for bad work. One can imagine how this plays out in non-standard work arrangements where work often takes place in isolation. As an interviewee of Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011, p.156) noted: "you don't talk to anyone and you don't see anyone," which can be "crippling" as it has a powerful impact on motivation.

In efforts to sustain relationships, compounded by the aforementioned loneliness and lack of organisational support, gig workers are forced to promote themselves and require a network of social contacts (Sennett, 2006; Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018; Bellesia *et al.*, 2019). This fits with the JD-R model's resource 'workplace social support' which could arguably be considered both a maintenance activity and self-defining and Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011, p.155) warn against the dangers of "networking masquerading as socialising." In the gig economy, individuals are often pressured to become their own "brand" (Vallas and Schor, 2020) with their success dependent on the ability to develop and promote their own brand image (Hennekam and Bennett, 2016; Vallas and Christin, 2018). That is, the contacts which lead to

contracts rely on sociability (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010). The need to constantly sell themselves requires a positive, confident self-presentation (Butler and Stoyanova Russell, 2018). This socialising, on the one hand, can enable workers to cope with the insecurity and precariousness of creative work (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010). On the other hand, the blurry lines between socialising and networking, pleasure and obligation, freedom and constraint, can become a burden so that workers feel they are 'never off'; all hours are work hours, and they are even unsure about the authenticity of the relationships they make (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010).

Nonwork relationships, such as those with families and friends are important. These relationships can provide a number of resources that help one to feel positive about work and can help to reduce the pressure of the gig economy (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). For example, financial security provided by a spouse (Cooper, 2014) or emotional support from a friend. However, despite the increased importance of these relationships in the gig economy, the nature of the system often pushes people to work first with an ensuing detrimental effect on these important relationships (Rowlands and Handy, 2012).

The next section moves from exploring the relational challenge to the emotional challenge of non-standard work arrangements. Emotional labour can be defined as "emotion regulation performed in response to job-based emotional requirements in order to produce emotion toward – and to evoke emotion from – another person to achieve organisational goals" (Grandey, Diefendorff and Rupp, 2013, p. 18). Grandey and Gabriel (2015) suggest emotional labour comprises three elements; emotion requirements, emotion regulation, and emotion performance. Emotional labour is predicated upon a disparity between emotions perceived inwardly and expressed outwardly. This emotional regulation may involve suppressing, faking, or intensifying emotions while at work (Grandey, 2000). Emotional labour is related to emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and negative health outcomes (Grandey and Melloy, 2017) but is necessary in all jobs that involve interpersonal interaction and is particularly heightened in the new world of work where future work may depend on the cultivation and maintenance of personal relationships (Watson *et al.*, 2021).

The emotional stress and emotional labour of being constantly evaluated, seeking work from clients (Gandini, 2019) and being forever "for sale" can seep into one's self-image (Storey, Salaman and Platman, 2005; Lane, 2011), reducing self-confidence (Sharone, 2013). There is a tremendous emotional labour from constant networking. This can lead to isolation from colleagues and one's profession with long-term consequences as well as a lack of career development opportunities (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010; Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). This adds to the sense of isolation already experienced via the need to be constantly online and ready to work, along with the usual physical separation of gig work. Petriglieri *et al.* (2018) propose a 'personal holding environment' of connections to routines, spaces, people, and purpose to form personal and work identities and to help to interpret emotional tensions as sources of learning and growth. This holding environment itself is precarious and must be continuously 'cultivated' (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018).

Organisational socialisation shapes people's identities and emotions and helps to buffer them from negative emotions such as anxiety (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). Being self-employed produces a greater variety of emotions, more extreme emotions, and more frequent oscillations between emotions (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). The precarious gig economy may produce anxiety or fulfilment (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018) and the heightened sense of emotions, both positive and negative, can stem from poor communication with the platform, career uncertainty, and fear of losing gigs (Kaine and Josserand, 2019). Workers struggle to maintain motivation in changing working conditions (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). Still, scholars have yet to fully explore emotions outside of the conventional organisational structure (Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018), let alone understand the personal resources needed to survive (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018). Keith *et al.* (2020) proposed that some gig workers may be more susceptible to certain demands and resources due to the nature of their specific type of gig work; however, they do not extensively describe these differences. The question remains how TEFL teachers perceive, experience and negotiate risk and precarity in the context of their work.

Further research on gig workers and their psychological contracts has recently been called for (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). As multiple jobholders have highly diverse work arrangements and

multiple employment relationships, they have a specific psychological contract for each (Panos, Pouliakas and Zangelidis, 2014). That is, different psychological contracts for different jobs. As contingent workers may not have a relational psychological contract, a large proportion of routine work behaviours may be considered to be 'organisational citizenship' (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004). On the contrary, the lack of inherent job security which constitutes an absence of a relational psychological contract can have the knock-on effects for organisations of loss of loyalty and unpaid effort (McDonald and Makin, 2000). It is found that multiple jobholders experience more stress and more continuance commitment to their primary job but similar levels of affective commitment and job satisfaction across the board. This is irrespective of their attitudes towards multiple jobholding itself so that although the psychological contract is derived via the employment relationship, it is entirely subjective. The psychological contract is related to both the employment relationship and to the individual, but research has not assessed the relative importance of both (Raeder, 2018). It is, then, unknown how workers' psychological contracts may differ when working several smaller jobs, as opposed to having a clear primary job, with Raeder (2018) claiming that other jobs can compensate for obligations not fulfilled in one job. Multiple jobholding has not been linked to the psychological contract (Raeder, 2018). However, psychological contract obligations vary more between employment relationships than between individuals (Raeder, 2018). It is therefore necessary to consider motives when investigating multiple jobholding (Zickar, Gibby and Jenny, 2004). TEFL workers in the gig economy provide an opportunity to do so.

In sum, regarding the relational and emotional challenge, present research suggests that relationships are paradoxically more important but more difficult to cultivate in non-standard work, and non-standard workers experience more emotions, more extreme emotions, and more fluctuations in emotions.

2.3.10. Conclusion

In general, despite a lack of standardisation over what 'standard' and 'good' mean, standard, that is full-time permanent jobs, have been seen as good jobs and non-standard work arrangements as bad, although this represents somewhat of a false dichotomy (Cappelli and Keller, 2013). Nevertheless, McGovern, Smeaton and Hill (2004) suggest a clear link between

contractual status and job quality where a range of non-standard work arrangements offer poorer conditions than the permanent full-time equivalent. Further to this, they find a discrepancy in the type of non-standard work, with permanent part-time workers the least disadvantaged and full-time fixed term and temporary workers exposed to the greatest number of bad job characteristics. This creates a hierarchy of non-standard work arrangements, with some 'better' than others.

Most research on understanding why people work 'bad jobs' is based on those who take bad jobs out of necessity (Adler, 2021). However, a large group of workers seeks work that is personally meaningful and aligned with their values, passions, and strengths, making independent work attractive (Kelly, 2015, as cited in Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett, 2017). Note this is based on the assumption that non-standard work arrangements are bad and traditional arrangements are good. Another consideration is the distinction between work precarity and general economic precarity – some non-standard workers may have human capital in the form of not only education but also wealth that permits them to pursue riskier careers or even to work willingly under 'bad' conditions (Adler, 2021). This also has repercussions for the voluntariness of non-standard work participation. If a portion of individuals either do not consider this work a job or do not rely on this as a primary source of income, certain constructs typically examined in the organisational sciences may be less relevant. For example, past research on other types of alternative work arrangements often examines constructs such as organisational commitment and job satisfaction – particularly in relation to full-time employees. Such constructs, however, may not be relevant to gig work, as such workers may not consider their engagement in the gig economy a job and have limited-to-no contact with the employer, supervisors, and co-workers. Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) suggest considering 'success' as a consequence of a correct balance of well-being which then ultimately allows us to flourish over time. What determines whether work is perceived as good or bad, then, is the degree of control over these elements.

The new world of work has also had an impact on professionalism in terms of how it is perceived and its role in society and work. This 'organisational turn' has led to the rise of the neo-professional and the enhanced role of relationships in determining knowledge and job competence and ultimately job success. This also changes the approach to development and

career building that workers undergo, and strategies include job crafting, bricolage and stretchwork. Employers try to retain skilled workers by offering relatively higher wages and better fringe benefits (Källstrom, 1999). Higher levels of human capital, as well as increasing age, reduce the risk of having a bad job (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004). Individuals often feel an obligation to repay the investment the organisation has put into their training, even if this is not explicitly stated in the contract of employment (McDonald and Makin, 2000). Training, or the availability thereof, may directly impact job motivation and work commitment. Contingent workers do not generally receive training due to their intransient status which may affect their attitudes, such as job satisfaction and commitment, as well as their behaviour and, ultimately, performance (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004). As non-standard workers are generally less skilled, they are more likely to have bad jobs that are poorly paid, lack fringe benefits, and are not part of a formal career ladder (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004). However, some skilled workers may be able to exploit the additional autonomy afforded to them, for example, in choosing their own training and development opportunities. As such, training can exacerbate the differences felt by non-standard workers between themselves and others in standard employment arrangements. In general, while it may be clear that workers need to develop their human capital, it is unclear how non-standard workers navigate their career and whether the concept of career is considered by them important (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018).

This has a big impact on identity. While identity is always fragmented (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011), it becomes increasingly important for non-standard workers to be comfortable with potentially having multiple, irreconcilable identities due in part to their need to work across multiple jobs and occupations.

3. Research Methodology and Design

As outlined in the first chapter, the aim of my research is to understand skilled workers' experiences in non-standard work arrangements, their perception of their professional identity, and how they view and plan their career.

Based on the above research aims, the following research questions have been derived:

- How do TEFL workers ensure job quality and immediate success while planning a career in non-standard work arrangements? (viability challenge)
- How do TEFL workers understand / experience their professional identity in the context of non-standard work arrangements? (identity challenge)
- How do TEFL workers perceive, experience, and negotiate risk and precarity in the context of their work? (emotional challenge)

This chapter looks at the research methodology and design. A specific research plan is developed for the current research to answer the research questions. First, the approach to research philosophy with the author's philosophical assumptions is introduced, followed by an overview of the research methods used in this research. The research design is then presented before a discussion about the role of the researcher with regards to integrity and ethical considerations is included. The following section is the data analysis. As mentioned in the introduction, the data analysis is based on Clarke and Braun's (2013) Interpretive Thematic Analysis and each of the six stages is outlined here with reference to how the process was followed in the research for this thesis. Next, the Creative Analytical Process (McMahon, 2016) is described and justified. In this thesis, it takes the form of creative nonfiction, and four composite vignettes are produced which reflect the different themes derived from the iterative data analysis. These four vignettes are presented in the form of interviews, and due to its large scope, given its own separate chapter to more easily retain an overview. The rich data is presented in an interview format. Lastly, a short summary of the research methodology section is provided.

3.1. Research Philosophy

Explaining the research philosophy before describing the methodology and the research design is recommended (Crotty, 1998). The term research philosophy refers to a system of assumptions and beliefs about reality and the development of knowledge. Through this understanding, the research questions can be explored through a meaningful research process. A consistent and well-thought out set of assumptions establishes a credible research philosophy, which supports the methodological choice. This research adopts an interpretivist philosophical stance, grounded in a subjectivist ontology and relativist epistemology.

It is the author's philosophical assumption that reality is socially constructed through culture, artefacts, and language. This is deemed a subjective ontology where ontology refers to our view of the concept of reality (Easterby-Smith, 2008; Cunliffe, 2011; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Under a subjective ontology, social reality, meanings, discourse and knowledge are all contextual so that any claim to truth "[...] is always the product of social construction and therefore relative" (McAuley, Duberley and Johnson, 2014, p. 270). That is to say that in taking this ontological position, the researcher assumes that social reality is socially constructed, meaning that the world is understood through individual and collective interpretations shaped by cultural, linguistic, and social contexts (Crotty, 1998; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Reality, in this view, is not a fixed, external entity to be discovered, but one that is co-constructed through lived experience and interaction. As there is no objective reality to study, researchers explore subjects' social and, in the case of this research, work-related realities via interpretation of language, symbols, and texts (Cunliffe, 2011).

Having explained above the ontological position of subjectivity, that is, that there is a complex and rich reality which is socially constructed and comprises multiple meanings, the researcher's epistemological position is now discussed. Epistemologically, this study takes a relativist approach, rejecting the notion that knowledge is objective, measurable, or generalisable across contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The author considers that theories and concepts can be too narrow and simplistic and therefore emphasises narratives and interpretations to show understanding and constitute knowledge (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). As subjective positions cannot be measured against one another (Agger,

1991), social reality and knowledge are not generalisable, but offer contextualised understandings (Cunliffe, 2011). Indeed, attempts to generalise these different realities would lead to a loss of understanding of the context under scrutiny. As such, knowledge is seen as context-bound, interpretive, and shaped by meaning-making processes, privileging participants' subjective experiences. This aligns with the idea that the role of the researcher is not to discover universal laws but to interpret how individuals construct their own realities (Schwandt, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Management research has a lack of consensus regarding epistemology (Tranfield, Denyer and Smart, 2003). For example, some voices consider knowledge an objective, transferable commodity but this has the impact of separating knowledge from human action (see Patriotta, 2003) and this does not fit the researcher's philosophy.

Together, this ontological and epistemological position can be considered under the paradigm of interpretivism (Cunliffe, 2011). Interpretivism underlines that humans, since they create meanings, are different from physical phenomena, and studies these meanings (Crotty, 1998). Through interpretivism, it is understood that the same organisation viewed through the lens of different stakeholders may produce different perspectives (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) and reflections (Cunliffe, 2011). Thus, interpretivism is appropriate for exploring the key themes of professionalism, work identity, work experience, and career which may be based on different types of work arrangements to the extent they may produce different realities and understandings of the workplace (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The interpretivist paradigm is appropriate for this research because it seeks to understand how skilled professionals—specifically TEFL workers in non-standard work arrangements—make sense of their professional identity, experience, and careers. The scope of the research project is exploratory, reflected in the open research questions using 'how'. An exploratory study can be used to clarify understanding of a phenomenon (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). This paradigm supports in-depth exploration of complex, contextually situated phenomena that cannot be reduced to quantifiable variables (Cunliffe, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). As the purpose of interpretivist research is to create new, rich understanding and interpretation of context and social worlds (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) this paradigm is deemed correct for this research. To further support the adoption of these philosophical assumptions for this research, the author's ontological and epistemological

assumptions are in line with others who have conducted similar research (Schinke *et al.*, 2016; Hings *et al.*, 2018).

An overview is given in Table 2. Table 2 (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) has been provided to show the ontological, epistemological and axiological perspectives of interpretivist and to reaffirm that this is the correct method for this thesis.

Table 2: Interpretivism Research Philosophy in Business and Management Research

Ontology	**Epistemology**	**Axiology**	**Typical methods**
Complex, rich, socially constructed through culture and language. Multiple meanings, interpretations, realities Flux of processes experiences, practices	Theories and concepts too simplistic Focus on narratives, stories, perceptions and interpretations. New understandings and worldviews as contribution	Value-bound research Research is part of what is researched, subjective. Researcher interpretations key to contribution Researcher reflexive	Typically, inductive (but may be abductive). Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative methods of analysis, but a range of data can be interpreted

Table Source: (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019)

Next, the role of the researcher is considered. Our knowledge is driven by our fundamental interests (Johnson and Duberley, 2000), rendering author-induced biases inevitable, and leading to potential quality issues. The role of the researcher and ethics within the research process are referred to by the term axiology. This deals with questions surrounding researchers' handling of both their own values and those of the participants (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). In interpretivism, axiological questions arise due to the link between researcher and subject. This leads to the so-called double hermeneutic where the researcher's voice is inside the research (Cunliffe, 2011), such as through their own decision-making and value judgements (Ozanne, 1992). That is, the researcher, through his or her knowledge,

interprets rather than objectively observes the participants (Cunliffe, 2011). In interpretivist research, the researcher is not a detached observer but a co-constructor of meaning, making it critical to acknowledge and manage self-bias throughout the research process. Unlike positivist paradigms, interpretivism accepts that complete objectivity is neither attainable nor necessarily desirable (Schwandt, 1994). However, this recognition demands a disciplined approach to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research. There are potential drawbacks as well as benefits to having 'insider status' in qualitative research (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2018). There is a risk that the whole research will be designed along a predetermined research agenda instead of exploring the issues as experienced by the participants (Smith & Sparkes, 2016 as cited in Hings *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, managing self-bias is not only an ethical imperative but also a means to enhance rigour.

In the case of this research, the researcher has experience of working in the field of TEFL and thus enters the research with *a priori* knowledge of the subject. It is hoped this will facilitate the collection of rich empirical data. However, researchers may try to limit the bias in their own inferences (Cunliffe, 2020). Guba (1981) argues that it is impossible for the inquirer to remain neutral and suggests the inquirer should seek to find an 'optimal' distance between themselves and the phenomenon. One widely adopted strategy is reflexivity, where researchers engage in ongoing critical reflection about their positionality, assumptions, and influence on the research (Finlay, 2002). This includes maintaining a reflexive journal to document personal reactions, preconceptions, and evolving insights during the research process (Ortlipp, 2008). A related technique is bracketing, drawn from phenomenological traditions, which involves the deliberate identification and temporary suspension of one's own beliefs and prior knowledge to reduce their impact on data collection and interpretation (Tufford & Newman, 2010). While bracketing does not imply erasing subjectivity, it fosters an awareness of it, enabling a more authentic engagement with participants' perspectives (Tufford & Newman, 2010; Fischer, 2009). Within this research, the researcher kept a reflective journal which was regularly reviewed. Furthermore, the researcher was able to suspend his own beliefs and knowledge within the interview process. For example, the researcher asked each participant how they know what to charge, and most participants divulged how much language schools pay, which was already known to the researcher. To further this example, the researcher also asked the participants how the pay had changed in the time they have

worked as a freelancer in TEFL, knowing very well in advance what the answer would be to this. Clarifying questions were also used to ensure that the answers had been provided by the participants, and not the researcher.

With respect to this research, each participant was given an overview of the research before consenting to an interview and, to avoid personal bias, I did not provide any further details about myself (in terms of work experience) until the end of the interview. I also made sure to avoid leading questions and ask clarifying questions where necessary. After the interview, participants were provided with the transcript to verify its accuracy. This 'member checking', where participants review and comment on findings, enhances credibility by offering alternative lenses and reducing reliance on a single interpretive frame (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These are methods to ensure 'trustworthiness', which in qualitative research can act as a substitute for the 'reliability' of quantitative methods (Mertova and Webster, 2019). By combining reflexive practices, bracketing, and transparent methodological rigour, interpretivist researchers can navigate the inherent tension between subjectivity and scholarly integrity, turning potential bias into a site of critical insight rather than distortion, strengthening both the credibility and depth of interpretivist inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is important due to the involved role of the researcher as discussed in the following paragraph. A sample of the interview questions can be found as Appendix C.

The literature contains numerous approaches to strengthening trustworthiness in this type of research. In a seminal work, Guba (1981) suggests four aspects to trustworthiness: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. These can be mapped to the following rational and naturalistic terms respectively: truth value as internal validity (rational) or credibility (naturalistic); applicability as external validity / generalisability or transferability; consistency as reliability or dependability; and neutrality as objectivity or confirmability. An example of trying to establish credibility would be through persistent observation. This helps the researcher to understand what is and is not important to that environment and can be evidenced through the keeping of journals, for example (Guba, 1981). An example of transferability would be theoretical, or purposive sampling. The aim of this is to uncover as many differences as possible so that the maximum range of information is accrued (Guba, 1981). A method which covers both dependability and confirmability would be triangulation,

where data is collected from a number of different perspectives (Guba, 1981). In this research, as explained in more detail later, the researcher ensured the collection of a number of different perspectives by actively scrutinising the demographics of those interviewed and by finding further participants with intentionally different demographics. In this case, the revision and review during data collection provides a good example of the bracketing put it place, since bracketing should occur iteratively, throughout conceptualisation, data collection, analysis, and writing, so that emerging biases can be continuously surfaced and managed (Tufford & Newman, 2010). More modern works contain largely the same ideas. For example, ensuring trustworthiness through transparency, methodic-ness, and adherence to evidence (Yin, 2011). Yin (2011) further states that attempting to eliminate bias and adhering to evidence will strengthen the validity of the research. "A valid study is one that has properly collected and interpreted its data, so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world (or laboratory) that was studied (Yin, 2011, p. 78)." Validity can be strengthened not only through the acknowledgement of rival interpretations of phenomena but also by recognising the impact this has on the initial interpretation (Yin, 2011). However, this adopts the term 'validity' to describe naturalistic research methods, which Guba (1981) had carefully separated, and so Guba's original work is preferred. These methods given above to ensure trustworthiness were all done within this research, as detailed in the research design section.

Further ethical issues are embedded throughout this methodology chapter where their position is more natural in the discussion.

3.2. Research Methodology

The next section looks at the research methodology. While ontology and epistemology as introduced above consider philosophical issues about the nature of reality and knowledge respectively, methodology is concerned with the method of data collection and form of analysis we use to generate knowledge (Cunliffe, 2011). The section, therefore, discusses the chosen inductive approach to theory development and qualitative research via narrative inquiry.

An inductive approach has been chosen although, in practice, very little research is purely inductive, as a literature review produces intellectual preunderstanding, and personal commitments and knowledge of the subject produce personal preunderstanding. An inductive approach entails theory generation based on the context in which events take place (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) and tends to let the data lead to the emergence of Concepts (Yin, 2011). It is therefore deemed appropriate here, as it is both in line with the research philosophy and the research aims. Indeed, an inductive approach is most likely to be informed by the interpretivist philosophy and is appropriate for this research as the thesis entails theory generation based on the context in which events take place (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). This research will begin by collecting comprehensive and rich data to enable the exploration of the phenomena and identify themes and patterns. An overview is provided in the following table.

Table 3: Induction approach – from reason to research

Logic	In an inductive inference, known premises are used to generate untested conclusions
Generalisability	Generalising from the specific to the general
Use of data	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns and create a conceptual framework
Theory	Theory generation and building

Table Source: (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 153)

This research adopts a qualitative research method. Qualitative research stands for any data collection technique or data analysis procedure that uses non-numerical data, where meanings are derived from images and words (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019) and ordered to realise themes, forms and patterns to produce rich and detailed data about small numbers of participants (Klenke, 2016). Qualitative research usually focuses on the meaning of real-life events, not just the occurrence of the events (Yin, 2011). Qualitative research may refer to stories of individuals' lives or behaviour (Corbin and Strauss, 1990) as is the case in this research and relies on a natural research setting to establish human elements such as trust, rapport and sensitivity (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Further,

the social construction of meaning implies multiple meanings are possible so that clarification with participants is necessary (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The qualitative method therefore complements the researcher's philosophical assumptions. For this research, although some data may be collated in tabulated form for convenience, there is no foreseeable infiltration of quantitative data, and all data will be collected via semi-structured interviews. This is a mono method qualitative study. Due to the limited scope of this research, a cross-sectional time horizon is used. The research method employed in the key literature works examined in this research such as Petriglieri *et al.* (2018), Ashford, Caza and Reid (2018) and Bellesia *et al.* (2019) is inductive and this alignment further reinforces the methodological choices.

It is not the intention of qualitative research to prescribe a theory in advancement of empiricism so that, for example, a cause and effect relationship may only be ascertained *a posteriori* (Cunliffe, 2011). Rather, qualitative research attempts a shift from purely scientific method and technique to a craft (Cunliffe, 2011). There is no single approach to qualitative analysis but concept formation, elaboration, and understanding apply throughout the process (Charmaz, 2012). On the one hand, this has opened up many possibilities to explore organisational life, while on the other it has raised questions about what good knowledge is, and what legitimate methods and valid theories are (Cunliffe, 2011). The organisation and management literature has increasingly incorporated a variety of qualitative methods, including narrative inquiry (Cunliffe, 2011). This is discussed below, along with methods for ensuring good knowledge.

Narrative inquiry has grown significantly in the last few decades (Mertova and Webster, 2019). It provides a way of allowing researchers to investigate how participants explain their experience through their own stories (Mertova and Webster, 2019) and is often undertaken by methods such as interviews. The goal of narrative analysis is to uncover common themes or plots in the data (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narrative is a tool for the transfer of knowledge. It represents an appropriate way to convey meaning as it draws together shared worldviews with the purpose of working towards an outcome that makes sense (Patriotta, 2003). Further, narrative can be used to explore critical events while retaining a holistic overview, something that other research methods do not, and is therefore appropriate for discussing the

complexities and subtleties of human experience (Mertova and Webster, 2019). As such, a narrative inquiry strategy is well suited to not only the researcher's philosophy, but also the research aims of this thesis with key themes of work experience and identity.

Qualitative research, in the form of narrative inquiry, is therefore coherent with the previously expressed interpretive philosophy and inductive approach for the proposed research.

3.3. Research Design

This section looks at the research design. While on the one hand, qualitative research does not have any fixed types or categories of designs, on the other, strong research design helps strengthen the validity of the results (Yin, 2011). This section focuses on how the research was constructed, by explaining the processes behind the literature search and review, participant recruitment, the semi-structured interviews, and the interview questions. There is also a discussion about data collection units in the context of this research. Data Analysis is included in a separate, subsequent section for convenience as it has a large scope.

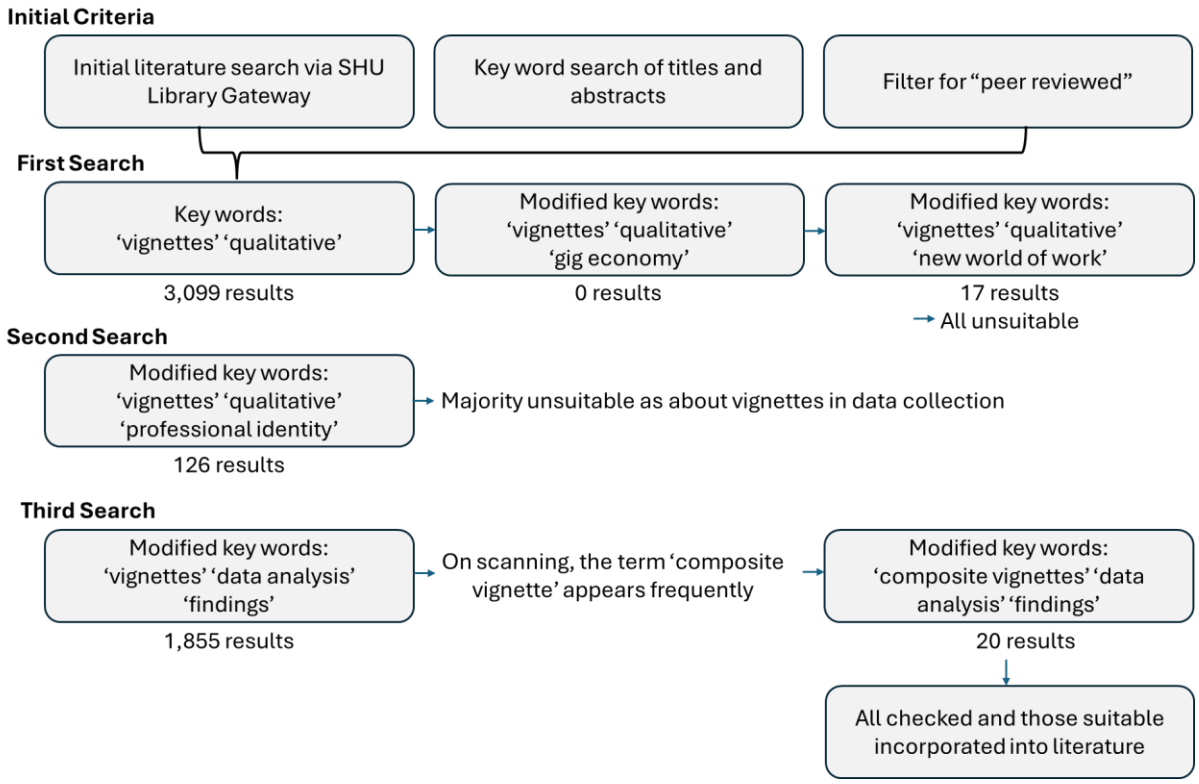
3.3.1. Research Methods Literature Search

The following section details how the literature search was conducted. Below is an indicative example of the literature search for the research methods element of composite vignettes. The rationale for choosing composite vignettes is explained in chapter 3.4.2. A similar process was followed to generate literature for the initial literature review. It was considered whether to document that at the beginning of the literature review chapter, although it was felt superfluous to document the process twice and so it appears here.

The method of selective literature was chosen (Yin, 2011). This method allows the researcher to define a new study relevant to the research at hand (Yin, 2011). This was deemed appropriate based on the research design. That is, to offer a new perspective on a multidisciplinary topic (Torraco, 2005 as cited in Russ, 2017).

The initial literature search was conducted via SHU Library Gateway using key word searches of titles and abstracts, with added restrictions where appropriate. Additionally, all literature used was filtered for "peer reviewed" to ensure quality. A suitable example of a typical search process would be that for composite vignettes. At the time, the importance of 'composite' was not known to the author. Inputting the words 'vignettes' 'qualitative' into the SHU Library Gateway returned some 3,099 results. As an initial filter, this was deemed unmanageable, so the next entry included the words 'vignettes' 'qualitative' 'gig economy'. This returned no results and was thus modified to 'vignettes' 'qualitative' 'new world of work' which returned 17 results. However, on closer inspection none of these were suitable. A further search for 'vignettes' 'qualitative' 'professional identity' returned 126 results. However, on reading some of these, it became clear that the vast majority of these eluded to the term vignettes in its use in data collection rather than data presentation. Therefore, the terms 'vignettes' 'data analysis' 'findings' were input which returned 1855 results. On scanning some of these, the term 'composite vignettes' appeared frequently. (Note, vignettes and composite vignettes are described in detail in the Data Analysis section). A last search using 'composite vignettes' 'data analysis' 'findings' was then performed, returning 20 results. These were then inspected for their appropriacy and those suitable were incorporated into the literature used for this research.

Figure 2: Example of Literature Search: Specific Search for Composite Vignettes for Data Analysis



3.3.2. Semi-structured Interviews

In terms of the research instrument, semi-structured interviews were used. It is appropriate to use semi-structured interviews to explore different meanings, perceptions, and interpretations within the ontology and epistemology described above (Cunliffe, 2011). The research interview can produce substantial new knowledge to a field (Kvale, 2011). It provides participants an opportunity to explain their experience and understand their world in their own words and construction (Kvale, 2011). Qualitative interview research has few common methodological conventions (Kvale, 2011) and semi-structured interviews are non-standardised, requiring classification into categories (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). In a typical semi-structured interview, the researcher has a predetermined list of themes and potential questions, identified from the literature review, and an interpretivist approach renders the order of the questions irrelevant, with omissions and additions based on what message the participants want to deliver and how they understand the topic as well as the interviewer's interpretation of the participant's input (Kvale, 2007). The interviewer can lead

the interviewee towards certain themes without proffering a personal opinion (Kvale, 2011). This was the format that this research undertook. While there was a basic question sheet with questions derived from the literature, provided as an Appendix E, the order of questions was deemed largely irrelevant; questions were added or omitted based on the direction the interview was heading in, which, as much as possible, was driven by the participants rather than the researcher. Semi-structured interviews offer the structure for comparing distinct interviews covering the same topics or even using the same questions (Edwards and Holland, 2013). Data is collected and analysed simultaneously so that the research design may be constantly adapted to support emergent relevant data and this data is interpreted by coding participants' responses (Ozanne, 1992; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Recording data immediately also reduces the need for triangulation (Yin, 2011). It is therefore an appropriate research methodology for my research objectives. This consistency of approach further strengthens the research credibility.

The next section looks at data collection and sampling. Yin (2011) states that qualitative data collection usually comprises multiple data collection units where one unit may be, for example, one interview with one interviewee. By contrast, a study group with multiple participants would be considered one unit. Further, there are also different levels of units. For example, a broader level such as field setting and a narrower level, often participants. In this research, the broader level may explain the different work arrangements and can be populated at the narrower level by the relevant interviewees. As the relationship between broader and narrower level is relational not absolute (Yin, 2011), this permits cases where narrow units may overlap or be otherwise awkward to assign. This was the case where one participant declined to be interviewed on the grounds that she no longer worked in TEFL, but did provide a useful written testimony. This was not included in the main data analysis but is referred to when discussion the limitations of this research in chapter 5.4. The relationship between the level of the data collection units and the main topic of a study then becomes important (Yin, 2011). In this research, the main topic of study is the work experience and professional identity of TEFL workers in various work arrangements. As such, the broader level of work arrangements could be considered segregated so that those in self-employment and the gig economy may provide a different contextual understanding to those in TEFL in full-time employment. Nevertheless, the impact of the former on the latter means the latter's

experiences are still relevant and indeed this rival view of work in TEFL may serve to reinforce the trustworthiness of the work by considering various experiences and perspectives.

Figure 3: Population, Target Population, Sample and Individual Cases

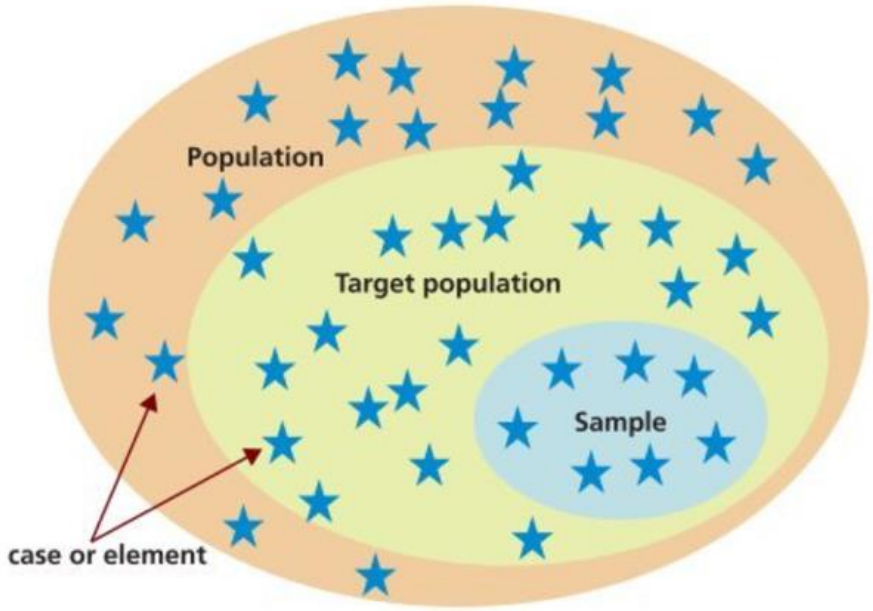


Figure Source: (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019, p. 296)

In terms of sampling and participants, the population is TEFL workers, the target population is TEFL workers in Germany, and the sample is the participants interviewed. A census, collecting data from all elements of the population, is wholly impracticable in this instance: as TEFL workers are not required to formally register in order to work, as for examples doctors do, there is no place where a record of their numbers is kept. Indeed, it is claimed the selection of the sample may offer more accuracy than a census (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

In line with qualitative research, and following institutional ethical approval, the samples were chosen in a deliberate manner, known as purposive sampling, in order to yield the most relevant and plentiful data (Yin, 2011). This was also in line with similar research (Hings *et al.*, 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018; Crocker, Chard and Duncan, 2021). The participants recruited were "included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 156). Equally important, the selection of these units should seek to "obtain

the broadest range of information and perspectives on the subject of study" (Kuzel, 1992, p. 37, as cited in Yin, 2011). Nineteen interviews were conducted with the process documented in the next paragraph. Those working in TEFL across a full spectrum of work arrangements were considered. This has the function of also improving validity due to the potential for differing understandings and experience based on work arrangement. In the end, the nineteen interviews generated repeated insights, suggesting the research had been maximised (Guba, 1981), and thus ensuring saturation (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). A further written testimony, where the respondent had previously worked in TEFL but left, was also collected and retained as it offered useful insights as is referred to in the limitations of this research (chapter 5.4).

For the interviews, TEFL experts were sought. As such, it is necessary to clarify what makes an expert. Baer (1986) looks at this through the lens of professional expertise, rather than defining an expert per se. Broadly, expertise can be analysed by one of three categories. Firstly, by input, for example, years of training or work experience. Secondly, by output, such as number of patients cured, students passed exams etc. Thirdly, by social impact, for example income, professional accreditations, social status and so on (Baer, 1986). This recognition by peers and within the professional community serves as a form of social validation (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993). Baer (1986) offers criticism of each of these three points of analysis, arguing instead in favour of 'professional substance' through professional standards which is where the "… two elements of expertise – the substantive and the evaluative – are joined (p. 536)." Nevertheless, these are methods of analysing expertise rather than defining what expertise is.

Baer (1986) suggests that his discussions on the characteristics of professional expertise can provide insights into the attributes of expertise. Baer (1986) defines professional expertise as "… the command of a complex body of knowledge and/or technique (p. 534)." This professional expertise consists of mastery or esoteric and abstract principles and organisation into a theory. This aligns with definitions of an expert, for instance, as "…someone with comprehensive and authoritative knowledge in a particular area not possessed by most people (Caley et al, 2013, p.232)." As expertise is based on knowledge, Baer (1986) opens up a discussion of who is able to evaluate knowledge. It is couched in knowledge and autonomy, and Baer draws on research by others such as Bell (1996) to discuss professional expertise in

the context of organisational versus professional autonomy, a debate which is discussed at length in Freidson (2001).

Throughout the literature, there are other core elements of expertise that appear. These are domain-specific knowledge (Baer, 1986; Chi, Glaser & Farr, 1988), expert performance based on experience (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986) and deliberate practice (Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Römer, 1993). Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) describe an expert as someone who "no longer relies on analytic principles (rule, guidelines, maxims) to connect their understanding of a situation to an appropriate action; rather, they have an intuitive grasp of situations based on deep tacit understanding." According to Eraut (2000), professionals develop tacit knowledge and intuitive judgment as they gain experience. This allows them to make decisions quickly and efficiently, often without conscious deliberation. Ericsson et al. (1993) emphasize that expert performance is the result of sustained and deliberate practice over a minimum of ten years, rather than inherent talent or general experience.

In sum, an expert in a professional context is typically defined as an individual who possesses a high level of competence, specialised knowledge, and extensive experience within a specific domain. This definition includes both cognitive mastery and the ability to apply knowledge effectively in real-world, often complex, situations.

Despite long-held debates about experts and expertise, these were applied 'surprisingly late' to teaching (Goodwyn, 2017, p.2). While labels are applied such as 'Highly Accomplished Teacher' in the US, 'Chartered Teacher' in Scotland, and 'Advanced Skills Teacher' in England and Australia, Goodwyn (2017) mentions that not only does the term 'expert teacher' not exist, but that the purpose of recognising these teachers also differs vastly. This again refers to the professional versus organisational / institutional expertise debate, discussed at length in Freidson (2001). Goodwyn (2017), in applying a generic definition of expertise to teachers, defines expertise as based on five components: characteristics, skills and knowledge; consistent reproduction of high levels of performance; experience; "mental organisations of their experience that make them superior to equally experienced peers (p.3)"; and deliberate and varied training and practice. It is noticeable how similar these categories are to those

given above for expertise. Nevertheless, Goodwyn (2017) argues there is no consensus as to what good teachers are.

Returning to this research, experts are qualified for interviews if they fulfil the following criteria: they have the relevant information; they can give precise answers; they are willing to conduct an interview and are available within the time frame (Gläser and Laudel, 2010). However, experts do not necessarily have an answer to all questions. Questions can therefore also be skipped during the interview (Gläser and Laudel, 2010). Initially, the eligibility criteria for participation were thus: (a) be working in non-standard work arrangements with at least the majority of their work from TEFL; (b) have a minimum of five years relevant professional experience in addition to the appropriate qualifications. These boundaries were designed to increase the credibility and transferability of participants' responses (allegedly, it takes 10,000 hours to become an expert (Chlupsa, 2017) so 40 hours per week * 50 weeks * 5 years = 10,000 hours). The choice of five years was strengthened by other research as this represents somewhat of a threshold in traditional teaching in the UK where the rate of attrition is highest in the first five years (Towers and Maguire, 2017). Therefore, those having worked over five years in this manner are more likely to remain in the profession which helps to answer the research question about their long-term career planning. However, this does have the disadvantage that you miss out on a large group of people with less experience and those who may have worked in TEFL but left. With this in mind as well as participant recruitment mor generally, and although it is difficult to assess 'expertise' based on limited online profiles, the initial eligibility criteria was expanded upon as detailed below.

The first eight participants were self-selected through personal contacts who then subsequently volunteered to participate in the interviews, with an initial snowballing effect, in line with Yingling and McClain (2015), driving interviewee recruitment. However, this predictably returned a rather too homogeneous demographic group, namely male participants with a narrow age span and long experience. There was the risk of the researcher influencing the research process because of the personal contacts. This also introduced an increased likelihood that participants may know each other, thereby raising concerns around confidentiality, anonymity, and potential social desirability bias. These issues are particularly relevant in qualitative research where data are often rich and detailed, and the context may

be recognisable (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015). To address these concerns, several ethical safeguards were put in place. Firstly, all participants were provided with a comprehensive information sheet outlining the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Participation was strictly voluntary, and individuals were assured they could withdraw at any time without consequence (British Psychological Society [BPS], 2021). Secondly, care was taken to anonymise data during transcription and analysis. Pseudonyms were used, and any potentially identifying information was either removed or altered. Additionally, participants were informed that while the researcher would maintain strict confidentiality, absolute anonymity could not be guaranteed if participants recognised each other's experiences or context (Wiles et al., 2008). Thirdly, all data were stored securely in password-protected files and encrypted storage systems, in accordance with institutional data protection policies and GDPR regulations (European Commission, 2018). Fourthly given the personal connection to initial participants, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal to track potential biases or influence in the recruitment or interpretation of data. Reflexivity was particularly important in managing dual-role relationships and ensuring participants felt no obligation to take part due to prior acquaintance (Berger, 2015). Lastly, the study received approval from the relevant institutional ethics board, which reviewed and approved the strategies for managing familiarity among participants and researcher-participant relationships. By clearly communicating these ethical safeguards and continuously reflecting on their implementation, the research aimed to uphold the integrity and trustworthiness of the study, while respecting the rights and dignity of all participants.

Having found the initial eight contacts via personal contacts and snowballing, it was decided to seek further participants who were not known to the researcher. As seen in the first review of the data collected from these eight interviews, experience in terms of number of years worked did seem to play a part. This can perhaps be considered in terms of Goodwyn's (2017) classification of expert teachers, discussed above, where experience makes up just one of five elements of expertise. That is, number of years' experience was not necessarily an indicator of being a 'good' teacher. This is in line with other research on expert teachers (Lachner, Jarodzka, & Nückles, 2016). It can be said that the initial eligibility criteria too stringently focussed on experience as a proxy for expertise. Therefore, a range of years of TEFL experience was actively sought for upcoming interviews to further investigate the impact of years'

experience on working in TEFL. By broadening the eligibility criteria to include other elements of the definition of expertise, the reliability of the research was not negatively impacted, and the validity was arguably strengthened. Additionally, as the first round of eight interviewees comprised only male participants, it was decided to actively seek female participants in the next round of interviewees and a wider age range where possible (that is, where known).

An alternative recruitment method was sought with the immediate focus on finding female participants with a variety of years' experience rather than a minimum of five and with no personal contact to the researcher. MELTA, or Munich English Language Teachers Association, is an organisation which posts job offers, news and events such as Christmas parties for those working in the field via its website (*MELTA*, 2024). Moreover, the website has a page which enables teachers to upload their own profile. It is thus an ideal source of potential participants who fit the target population. While this may be considered to some degree convenience sampling (Yin, 2011), this was to a large extent unavoidable as this was seen to provide access to a large number of suitable participants. It should be considered that not all TEFL workers in Munich are on the website, and thus the inclusion here suggests some kind of willingness to be represented on the website. This may therefore skew the representativeness of the data. For example, perhaps other TEFL workers are not on MELTA because they do not have the time because of work or other time constraints. This would then likely impact their work experience and identity. By extension, this logic can also be applied to willingness to be interviewed so that the collection of interviewees may be representative of those who have fewer time constraints, with implications on how they view their work arrangements and experience.

Nevertheless, on 5 January 2022 there were 80 such profiles on MELTA. Of those 80, 61 were identifiable via a name and the remaining 19 contained no usable information and were thus dismissed. From the 61, another three were without contact details and also not considered. Further, profiles where it was implied that TEFL was not the main source of income, or they were not in non-standard work arrangements were also discounted.

As was seen in the first round of eight participants, the number of years work experience did seem to play a part in professional identity and building a career. At this stage, the impact of

experience was considered by using reflective notes from a personal journal. A journal was used to record progress and specifically any adjustments with the aim of staying true to the research's intentions and thus preserving the integrity of the research (Yin, 2011). Therefore, the minimum requirement of five years' experience was dropped and a range of years of TEFL experience was actively sought in order to further investigate the impact of years' experience on working in TEFL. Additionally, as the first round of eight interviewees comprised only male participants, it was decided to actively seek female participants in the next round of interviewees. Although gender can be a sensitive subject, this was not directly asked in any interview. In the participant recruitment stage, gender was inferred via either the name and/or accompanying photo on the MELTA profile. This restricted the number of potential interviewees down to 30.

In order to keep the contacts manageable, it was decided that ten emails, sent randomly to ten of the remaining 30 potential interviewees, would be an adequate number to send out in one batch so that interviews could be quickly arranged immediately after the initial contact. Random here should be understood not as in intending to use a random sampling method to extrapolate the findings to the lager population (Yin, 2011), rather as a contrast to convenience sampling. That is, to avoid convenience sampling, no differences in participants other than gender were prejudiced. The MELTA website itself uses an algorithm to randomly arrange its profiles so that each time you click on the website anew, the profiles are in a different ordinal arrangement. In this sense, I was able to choose profiles 1 – 10 on the given occasion I clicked onto the MELTA website. This removed any personal bias I may have had in selecting participants.

By the following week, two contacts had been established from the ten initially contacted with one of those already interviewed and the other interview lined up for the following week. On Friday 14 January 2022, a second, follow-up email was sent to the other eight potential participants as a second invitation to an interview. An example of these two emails can be found as Appendix C. Simultaneously, ten new potential participants were contacted via the same means as the first email above. In this group, particularly those with a relatively limited experience were sought as experience was a factor which seemed to influence identity in this field. The uptake was surprisingly high, and, in addition to a minimal snowballing effect with

some recruited participants suggesting potential others, participant interviewees nine to nineteen were found.

Interestingly, some of the potential participants replied via email that they work in TEFL but not on a freelance basis, that is, some of them were full-time employees. This was contradictory to the original intention to only interview those in non-standard work arrangements. Nevertheless, it was considered whether to include these in the research and concluded that this would offer an enrichment of the research quality due to the variety of broader-level units. The idea that the prospective interviewees could contribute something purposeful to the research, rather than just being conveniently available, also helped to counter the negative effects of snowballing (Yin, 2011). While there is no specific number of units required, larger numbers can generate more confidence in the study's findings (Yin, 2011). After around sixteen interviews it was felt that the data collection and analysis stopped generating new themes, signalling theoretical saturation (Cohen, 1969; Corbin and Strauss, 1990). However, as the last few interviews had already been arranged, they were conducted as planned.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant on a one-to-one basis. Interviews were conducted by the author live via zoom video calls. It had not been the original plan to conduct the interviews via zoom and this was wholly a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns restricting face-to-face access to participants. Nevertheless, Sparkes and Smith (2014, as cited in Schinke *et al.*, 2016) propose that online video interviewing has various advantages over in person interviewing. Among these, it is proposed that when the participants and researchers are not sitting physically in the same room, participants might feel more comfortable to disclose information than when face-to-face with the interviewer.

The situation was exacerbated, indeed forced, by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, and therefore it was not a choice to conduct online interviews. Nevertheless, it is worth briefly considering the pros and cons of online interviews vis-à-vis in-person interviews. Lobe et al (2022) have produced a recent systematic literature review, where "goal is to provide a systematic comparison of the practical considerations involved in choosing between

in-person interview formats and their online equivalents (p1)." They suggest that in-person interviews have always been seen as the 'gold standard', noting that this has been an unquestioned assumption. Their review comprises five different areas for comparison: logistics and budget, ethics, recruitment, research design, and interviewing and moderating.

Lobe et al (2022) note some key disadvantages to online interviewing are: lack of visual clues; requirements for digital technology and digital skills; potential selection bias based on these requirements; potential privacy and security issues, for example, if interviewed in a public place; and ethical concerns around participant distress. Some of these issues were anticipated by sending out a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix A). Participants were also informed at the time of interview that they could pause or terminate the interview at any time and/or withdraw their consent, before, during or after the interview. In one instance, after the initial introduction, a participant requested to turn his camera off for the remainder of the interview which was naturally granted. Another participant was not able to send the consent form back as he did not know how to generate an electronic signature. However, verbal consent is a suitable alternative (Khan & Raby, 2020) and was obtained and recorded in this instance. In terms of potential selection bias, there was no bias that would not have already been present in selecting the participants from MELTA during the COVID-19 lockdowns. That is, the online nature of the interviews did not add any extra layers of restriction to selection. On the other hand, the online format enabled those with kids, cats, care duties, those housebound and those outside of Munich to participate, which otherwise may not have been the case. Potential privacy and security issues were largely negated by the circumstances of the COVID-19-induced lockdown where almost everybody was at home and not in a public location such as a café where they could be overheard or disturbed. Along with the aforementioned steps regarding consent, transparency in the form of sending the verbatim script afterwards for verification, as well as making the video recording available, were designed to assuage ethical concerns around participant distress. One disadvantage of face-to-face interviewing which could also contribute to participant distress is that it may foster an implicit demand to conduct the interview, even if the participant feels uncomfortable, whereas online interviews can be terminated instantaneously, and quite impersonally, with the click of a button (Lobe et al., 2022). Although Lobe et al.'s (2022) research was aimed at those making a choice between online and face-to-face interviews, using the cons of online interviews as somewhat of a checklist serves to make the interview design and delivery more robust.

The recordings were saved directly to the author's computer, rather than a cloud. The initial decision to store interview data on a personal device rather than the University's designated cloud or institutional storage systems was made due to practical constraints during the early phase of the study (e.g., remote working conditions in another country and being self-employed at the time and thus only having my own personal device). Further, at the time, it was not university policy that all work must be stored on the university's server. Nevertheless, the data was stored with a clear understanding of the ethical implications, and precautions were taken to ensure data protection aligned with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and institutional ethical standards (European Commission, 2018; BPS, 2021). Specifically, Device Security and Data Encryption, meaning only the researcher had access to the device and the data was fully encrypted, with only the researcher knowing the passwords (Israel & Hay, 2006), were implemented to safeguard the data and comply with ethical standards.

The observation in my viva of this bad practice prompted a deeper reflection on data security practices and reinforced the importance of institutional storage solutions. On reflection, the use of a personal device presents ethical vulnerabilities, particularly around confidentiality, accountability, and institutional transparency (Wiles et al., 2008). While no data breaches occurred, this experience emphasises the importance of adhering strictly to best-practice data governance protocols to protect participants' rights and maintain research integrity. For future research, I will ensure data is stored solely on university-approved platforms from the outset.

Returning to this research, all acquired data by the researcher including consent forms and files of recorded interviews were stored in an external drive locked in the researcher's private locked home office. That is, data connecting participants' true identities and their contributions to the research under pseudonyms were held separately to maximise the protection of the participants. Blank examples of these forms can be found as Appendix A (Participant Information Sheet) and Appendix B (Participant Consent Form). Upon reaching the seventh year following original data collection date, the researcher will at that time destroy all materials that were gathered as part of the research. These are necessary courses of action to assure the integrity of the participants who have placed a significant degree of

trust in the researcher and the research effort. Nineteen interviews were audio-recorded with handwritten notes being made concurrently. A further potential participant was not interviewed but provided written information on her experiences. She also provided written consent to her participation. However, as she represents someone who has left TEFL, she is not included in the data analysis. Reference is made to her and the group she represents in the section on limitations of this work (chapter 5.4).

In total, there were 21.5 hours of recorded interview data collected from the interviews, lasting, between 40 and 90 minutes, with an average length of 68 minutes, hundreds of pages of handwritten notes during the interview, and over 200,000 transcribed words.

Table 4: Full Participant List

Participant Number	Pseudonym	Nationality	Ethnicity	Gender	Age
#1	Oscar	Irish	White	Male	40
#2	Paul	Irish	White	Male	47
#3	Brian	Irish	White	Male	*(40s)*
#4	Rich	English	White	Male	40s
#5	Gerald	American	White	Male	50
#6	Dave	English	White	Male	*(60s)*
#7	Mark	Greek	White	Male	37
#8	Simon	Australian	White	Male	*early 40s*
#9	Geraldine	Irish	White	Female	*(60s)*
#10	Alison	Maltese	White	Female	38
#11	Carmen	American	White	Female	*(late 50s)*
#12	Megan	English	White	Female	*(early 30s)*
#13	Louise	English	White	Female	*(mid-30s)*
#14	Leanne	Canadian	White	Female	*(early 30s)*
#15	Sarah	American	White	Female	55
#16	Cheryl	English	White	Female	*(50+)*

#17	Leonard	American	White	Male	nearly 70
#18	Jennifer	American	White	Female	*(30s)*
#19	Justine	French	White	Female	*(mid-20s)*

Source: Researcher's own creation

Note italics and brackets indicate this information was speculated by the researcher, and ethnicity and gender were inferred rather than stated directly. This table was originally used solely in order to keep a list of participants. However, at the coding stage of the data analysis, it was used to try to identify whether any demographic markers such as nationality, ethnicity, gender or age played a part in shaping participants' experiences of the work and work arrangement.

3.3.3. Interview Question Guide

The interview is a uniquely sensitive and powerful method for capturing the experiences and lived meanings of the subjects' everyday world (Kvale, 2011). Although there are few standard rules or common methodological conventions, the research interview is a specific type of conversation with a power asymmetry towards the interviewer (Kvale, 2011). The interviewer defines the structure and purpose and has control over subject choice. The interviewer leads the subject towards certain themes, but not to specific opinions about these themes (Kvale, 2011).

As advised by Kvale (2007), interview questions should be evaluated with respect to both a dynamic and a thematic dimension, where dynamic refers to the interpersonal relationship in the interview, and thematic the production of knowledge. In this sense, the dynamic element matches with the philosophical assumptions that the researcher cannot be detached from the research. Despite having a loose interview guide based on the research aims, the qualitative interview attempts to obtain descriptions that are as comprehensive and presupposition-less as possible of important themes of the interviewee's world (Kvale, 2011). Questions will differ when interviewing for a conceptual analysis of the person's understanding of a topic, for spontaneous descriptions of the experienced world, or for coherent narratives. The

development of the interview may require new thematic questions, and dynamic questions may be needed to stimulate the subjects to talk about their feelings and experiences. The interviewer cannot be impersonal and has to contribute towards better responses and the production of knowledge (Kvale, 2011). The goal of achieving thoroughly tested knowledge can be achieved through careful questioning and listening.

This research takes both thematic and dynamic dimensions into account. The thematic research questions were listed on the interview guide, functioning as a basic question sheet, while dynamic questions were incorporated into the interviews spontaneously as required. The structure of the interview was broadly designed as follows: an introductory section with the aims to establish that the participant met the criteria and also to relax the participant; a section on the work arrangement including details about contracts (although not sensitive details - e.g. pay was discussed but participants were directly assured they did not have to say how much they were paid, although several volunteered the information, instead they were asked how they know what to charge); next there was a section on professionalism. This included questions such as how the participants know they are doing a good job and delivering quality as well as questions about career development; this was followed by a focus on identity and self, for example if participants thought there was anything specific which made them do this kind of work in this work arrangement; lastly, at the end of every interview the participants were offered the chance to discuss anything else which they may consider as relevant. The questions were designed with both the initial research questions and the insights from the literature review in mind. For example, the questions about pay and work conditions were based on the research on contractual elements by Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) and Brown and Gold (2007). As a second example, autonomy appears in many models described in the literature, and this was raised through questions such as “Do you have enough work? Are you able to pick and choose, reject work?” and “How do you find good work?”. For one final example on professionalism and professional development, questions such as: “How do you know you are doing a good job and delivering quality?” and “How do you keep up to date with the job?” were asked with the potential follow up questions “Do you get regular feedback?” and “Is the format desirable?”. An example interview guide can be found as Appendix E.

The purpose of a research interview is to produce substantial new knowledge to a field about the phenomena investigated, and any changes in the interviewed subject are a side-effect (Kvale, 2011). However, in this case this is not expected as the research is considered low risk from an ethical perspective. The ethics procedure is given below.

3.3.4. Ethics

The research strictly followed the guiding principles outlined in the "Research Ethics Policy and Procedures" by University Research Ethics Committee (2017) of Sheffield Hallam University. The research also conformed to all legal requirements and was carried out in accordance with commonly agreed standards of good practice such as those established in the declaration of Helsinki (The World Medical Association, 2013). These widely accepted principles are categorised as: beneficence and non-malfeasance (concern for the interests of the participant prevail over the interests of research); integrity (the research should be scientifically sound and contribute to knowledge; informed consent (participants must be informed of the methods, aims, anticipated benefits and potential hazards of the research); confidentiality (data protection legislation must be followed); independence and objectivity (researchers should be able to justify the conduct of their research from inception to publication). All the above were adhered to in this research and are addressed in detail at various other points of this thesis.

The interview questions were submitted to the university's ethics committee for consideration. The approval was granted, and the research is classified as low risk. Before the interview, all participants were informed about the nature of the research via a Participant Information Sheet. They were also requested to sign the Participant Consent Form, covering the collection, analysis, and presentation of the interview data. An example of each can be found as Appendix A (Participant Information Sheet) and Appendix B (Participant Consent Form). In order to ensure external confidentiality, the participants' identities and any organisations mentioned in the interview were anonymised in the final report (Tolich, 2004). The participants were informed of this in advance of their taking part via a consent form which they then signed. The participants were also informed that they could, at any time, withdraw their participation along with their consent for me to use their input. The interview setting

incorporated an opening section aimed at relaxing the participant and establishing trust (important for both internal and external validity), competence and personal relevance. Internal confidentiality, that is, if the participants in the study can identify each other in the final report, was ensured by anonymising all participants (Tolich, 2004). At no time during data collection were other participants referred to be either their real name or allocated pseudonym. However, in one case where there was a snowball referral, a participant was aware that somebody she knew had also been interviewed. No details of the other interview were mentioned to reduce the potential influence of the researcher on the interviewee's responses. No major cultural difficulties were encountered as all participants were either native English speakers or fully fluent in the language and their country of origin was nearly always within the Anglo sphere, ensuing a cultural 'closeness', which is important for the way participants open up and the type of information they may divulge (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010). On viewing the participant list, a few exceptions can be seen. Participant 10 was brought up bilingual English-Maltese, and participant 7 is listed as from Greece. However, this participant was raised by an American mother and English is his first language. Lastly, participant 19 is French, although this was unknown to the researcher going into the interview. Although, as described above, gender was inferred for participant recruitment purposes, no specific demographic data was requested or discussed in the interviews apart from the occasions when participants themselves referred to characteristics such as their age or gender (Tolich, 2004). The researcher is aware that he has categorised all the participants as 'white' ethnicity. While this could lead to the sample being considered biased, it is felt the main aims of the thesis are not compromised here. For example, the only mention of ethnicity in the interviews was that of 'native (English) speaker'. Nevertheless, future research may consider ethnicity in more detail.

3.4. Data Analysis

The following section focuses on the data analysis and comprises two phases: firstly, an Interpretive Thematic Analysis (ITA); and, secondly, Creative Analytical Process (CAP) in the form of nonfiction composite vignettes.

3.4.1. Phase One: Interpretive Thematic Analysis (ITA)

An Interpretive Thematic Analysis (ITA) (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Braun, Clarke and Weate, 2016) was chosen for the first phase of data analysis in order to identify and interpret patterns across the participants' interviews. As it is a well-defined tool, Interpretive Thematic Analysis is unusual in the canon of qualitative analytic approaches (Clarke and Braun, 2013) where there is no standardised way to ensure academic rigour in studies of this nature (Crocker, Chard and Duncan, 2021). It is a flexible analytic tool easily explicable to informed wider audiences, making it suitable for applied research (Clarke and Braun, 2013) and there are examples of its use for analysis in research on sport (Schinke *et al.*, 2016; Hings *et al.*, 2018; Crocker, Chard and Duncan, 2021), social work (Coholic *et al.*, 2020; Price *et al.*, 2023), as well as a precedence in using this approach to discuss teachers and their identity, albeit not TEFL workers (Towers and Maguire, 2017; Widodo and Allamnakhrah, 2020).

Thematic analysis provides two techniques to identify patterns or themes within data: an inductive approach and a theoretical/deductive approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In an inductive approach, the themes are strongly linked to the data themselves (Patton, 1990). That is, the meaning is derived from the data. Based on this approach, "if the data have been collected specifically for the research such as via interview, the themes identified may bear little relation to the specific questions that were asked of the participants" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83). In contrast, a theoretical or deductive approach tends to be driven by the researcher's analytic or theoretical interest in the investigated area. An inductive approach is preferred here as it is felt a deductive approach would lead to confirmation bias and only looking at the data for the 'answers' to the research questions and not the production of new knowledge which the researcher considers the essence of such research.

Before discussing the Interpretive Thematic Analysis in more detail, it is necessary to establish what is understood by the term 'theme'. A theme is defined as "something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Ideally, a theme should appear across the data set, but frequency does not imply importance and so there is no appropriate answer for how often or what proportion of the data set a theme needs to occur

to be considered prevalent, let alone crucial (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis offers the flexibility that allows researchers to determine themes and prevalence in many ways. It is therefore recommended to use consistent methods of identifying themes in a particular analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Moreover, themes can be identified at two 'levels', namely semantic and latent (Boyatzis, 1998). The semantic approach identifies superficial or explicit themes so that participants' comments are taken more at face value. By contrast, the latent approach tries to read between the lines to examine the underlying assumptions, ideas, conceptualisations, and ideologies. These are theorised as informing or shaping the semantic content of the data. Ideally, the analysis involves a progression from description, where the data have been organised and summarised, to interpretation, where there is an attempt to theorise implications and meanings (Patton, 1990).

The following looks more fully at the Interpretive Thematic Analysis. It is six-step process (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Braun, Clarke and Weate, 2016). The first step involves familiarising oneself with the data; in this case by transcribing verbatim the recorded data, reading and rereading these transcripts along with handwritten interview notes, and listening to the interviews' zoom recordings for both verbal and non-verbal inferences into the meanings of both the interviewee and the interviewer (see Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999). In this case, the researcher kept a 'cover sheet' with key participant details, the semi-structured interview question guide and annotated key responses during the interviews. The transcription of the interviews necessitated multiple viewings of the recordings and ultimately produced some 200,000+ words written verbatim and all interviews were watched on a separate occasion purely to observe any non-verbal clues such as body language or tone of voice which may have been missed during previous viewings.

The second step is to provisionally code the data with first and second level themes and subthemes. Coding helps to identify the semantic content of the data that appears prevalent to the researcher. Codes are also described as "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). The following steps need to be conducted: creation of categories based on, for example, research questions; division of texts into units for the analysis, based on questions for example; extraction of important information from the units which help to

answer the research questions; Sorting the extracted information into the categories (Gläser and Laudel, 2010). This categorised and structured information base can then be used for further analysis and to answer the research questions. As the data is being organised into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005), the process of coding is considered as part of the analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). However, there are several differences between the coded data and the themes to be developed in the next phase. Themes are normally broader, and themes are where the interpretive analysis occurs (Boyatzis, 1998).

The following provides an example of how the composite characters were 'discovered' based on the interview responses of the individual participants. In this example, the response of several participants to the question of whether they have enough work and whether they could have more is similar so that they can be grouped together. The answers were broadly "yes, and I can turn down work because I don't want to do more." In the end, they were considered similar enough to lead, in part, to the formation of the same composite character, in this case Margaret. These quotations are taken directly from the interviews and the same process was in place for the other composite characters but is not included due to the large scale.

Responses to the question: "Do you have enough work? If so, could you do more?".

- "*I don't really work. I don't teach business English 'normally' but I have a lot of colleagues who work for the big companies like Siemens or Allianz or BMW and I dabbled in that but I'm perfectly satisfied to teach general English right here in my neighborhood. I mean you probably know what the* VHS [Volkshochschule, like a community college] *is. People complain [about the low pay]. It's enough for me but I'm a retired person now and so I have a pension and I kind of do it for fun*," (Leonard, participant 17).
- "*It's out there, it's definitely out there. The one [job that I rejected], I mean, if you want to know, is … I just did not like that person at all and I felt in a very luxurious position to say "oh gosh, you know, your ten lessons are over and I am so sorry I'm just booked out for the next … until I retire, basically". I don't know, if I were 25 and starting I might*

be more interested in building a career, there, but I just turned 55 and I'm sort of sailing towards the harbor, if you know what I mean," (Sarah, participant 15).

- "*Yeah. I don't do that much work because I choose not to, I don't have to financially, so I pick and choose, yeah … I think I'll stay on in TEFL, yeah. I haven't got any huge career plans*," (Cheryl, participant 16).
- *"Next semester, if, despite COVID, everything happens then I'll have enough work, 'cause I don't want to have too much work,"* (Dave, participant 6).
- "*So, I've done different things but partly I'm just … I'm married and my husband has a good income, so that's a really good way of supporting myself. And I actually had intended to do that, like, forever, and just … and you know do things that interest me, or that are meaningful for me, but then at some point I said, around the time that I chose to do the CELTA, I thought "OK, now I actually want to do some work in which I have a like a job and umm… right, what was the question, I've already forgotten. I'm sorry!* [question reiterated – Do you have enough work?] *I could definitely find a lot more work than what I have been doing lately, which is very little*," (Carmen, participant 11).

The table below is based on the initial coding process, an example of which is given directly above. As can be seen, it is colour-coded so that each colour represents one of the four composite characters used in the vignettes (as explained in more detail later). The example serves to demonstrate that due care was taken to ensure the composite character was not solely drawn from one individual. As can be seen, some participants, in this case Sarah, Geraldine and Gerald, overlapped with other composite characters. Please note that the table represents the final formation of composite characters. At stage 2 of the Interpretive Thematic Analysis, this was not fully clear.

Table 5: Formation of Composite Characters

Composite Character	Interview Number	Pseudonym	Composite Character	Main Source of Work
Margaret	16	Cheryl	Margaret	VHS (Community College)
	17	Leonard	Margaret	
	6	Dave	Margaret	

	11	Carmen	Margaret		
	15	Sarah	*Margaret*	*Stuart*	
	9	Geraldine	*Margaret*	*Stuart*	
Amanda	14	Leanne	Amanda		Full-time Employment
	12	Megan	Amanda		
	18	Jennifer	Amanda		
	19	Justine	Amanda		
Frank	3	Brian	Frank		Language Schools
	1	Oscar	Frank		
	2	Paul	Frank		
	7	Mark	Frank		
Stuart	5	Gerald	*Margaret*	*Stuart*	Private Businesses
	4	Rich	Stuart		
	8	Simon	Stuart		
	10	Alison	*Margaret*	*Stuart*	
	13	Louise	*Margaret*	*Stuart*	

Returning to the Interpretive Thematic Analysis, the third phase is about the broader level of themes. In other words, during this phase the researcher has sorted the different codes into potential themes and assembled all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. The researcher considers the relationship between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). That is, looking for themes relevant to TEFL workers' experience of their work arrangement and professional identity. This led to the separation of the Stuart character from the initially-coded Frank character so that they become two distinct 'types', each reflecting similar participant experiences (Hings *et al.*, 2018) and an example is given directly below. Inevitably, a number of themes which emerged related to the literature examined and the questions which had been asked (Towers and Maguire, 2017), but one must be careful not to allow the data analysis to follow a predetermined research agenda, hence the application of inductive thematic analysis.

Based on Hani Morgan's (2022) article, "Understanding Thematic Analysis and the Debates Involving Its Use", itself derived from research by Braun et al. (2019) and Braun and Clarke (2022), there are three broad types of coding approaches within thematic analysis (TA). In terms of this research, the Coding Reliability Approach can be discounted immediately as it is based on a postpositivist ("small q") paradigm aligned with quantitative principles (Morgan,

2022) that does not fit neither the research philosophy nor methodology. The remaining two are Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Coding Reliability Approach. Reflexive Thematic Analysis assumes a fully qualitative ("Big Q") paradigm, the coding is inductive and flexible, and codes and themes emerge from the data (Morgan, 2022). The main themes are conceptualised as shared meaning-based patterns that reflect latent or interpretative meanings (Morgan, 2022). This embraces researcher subjectivity and reflexivity as a strength rather than a bias (Morgan, 2022). However, it can lack transparency or replicability for those expecting standardised procedures (Morgan, 2022).

Codebook Thematic Analysis, on the other hand, assumes somewhat of a mid-point between qualitative and postpositivist. The coding is semi-structured, uses a pre-developed codebook but still values researcher interpretation (Morgan, 2022) and therefore is still appropriate for use within an interpretivist paradigm. The themes are typically domain summaries, but with room for interpretative depth (Morgan, 2022). However, this can be criticised as it can restrict the emergence of unanticipated insights and limit theoretical richness (Morgan, 2022). While each approach offers unique strengths and limitations depending on the study's goals, philosophical orientation, and analytic needs, Morgan (2022) emphasises the importance of consistency in approach and awareness of epistemological implications when choosing and applying a coding method in thematic analysis.

With respect to this research, it is acknowledged that there are elements of both Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Codebook Thematic Analysis, both of which are compatible with the research philosophy. In the research, regarding Codebook Thematic Analysis, the semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that some of the discussion points were pre-defined, with the impact that some of the responses may have been anticipated in advance. This feeds into the coding. Nevertheless, while the questions for the semi-structured interviews may largely have been pre-defined, there was still plenty of scope to go off topic and follow the discussion, leading to latent or interpretative meanings (Morgan, 2022) in line with Reflexive Thematic Analysis. For example, a purely Codebook Thematic Analysis could not have anticipated and thus not allowed for the differences between, for example, Stuart and Frank, and therefore would not have been able to code these accordingly. To go into a specific example, all participants were asked why they think organisations specifically choose

them for work. The responses of the participants who came to represent Frank were based around making themselves 'better' (e.g. more qualified, more competent) than others within the TEFL field, while the responses of the participants who came to represent Stuart's showed a willingness to expand outside of the realms of TEFL and to acquire news skills in other domains. This therefore created a difference in the coding of their responses, so that it became clear that Stuart was adapting to market requirements in the form of the neo-professional (Cross and Swart, 2020), leading to intra-occupational development via stretchwork and job crafting. A purely Codebook Thematic Analysis may not have uncovered this and therefore this research also includes elements of Reflexive Thematic Analysis such as the researcher's conceptualisations.

The following gives two examples of how a group of similar quotations have been compiled together to find a theme and to help isolate responses which led to the formation of the Stuart character. In this case, the examples help to show how the Stuart character has responded to market requirements by undergoing professional fluidity, akin to the neo-professional (Cross and Swart (2020), with various strategies such as stretchwork and job crafting evident.

A) Stuart – Example of Understanding and Adapting to Market Requirements a la the Neo-professional

- "*I've been a long time in this field and things have changed a great deal. There are much, much higher expectations today than there were back then, much higher. Once upon a time, you know, just the mere fact that you were native speaker and you spoke English everybody said 'Oh my God, that's great', um, you know, kind of like from the horse's mouth, which of course is a good thing but it seemed to be enough, it impressed people. It doesn't impress people anymore*," (Geraldine, participant 9).
- "*You're a language expert who needs to have the business knowledge to be able to be a sounding board and consultant to them. Sometimes you're also a psychologist to some degree, even though we're obviously not qualified. You hear about the bitchiness between, let's say, one CEO and the other CEO. You also very much have to become a teambuilder, if you've got people from different departments. You very much become somebody who has to facilitate communication between departments, between*

management levels and low levels. You've got to manage the expectations. I think certainly the value of a good business English teacher as a freelancer is drastically underestimated in many companies," (Simon, participant 8).

- "*In fact, this is why I had started this branding exercise because I wish to revamp, I wish to brand myself better, and present myself, even though I am professional, I feel I don't necessarily present myself online as professionally as I wish to in order to get more clients and more regular clients*," (Alison, participant 10).
- "*I try to pitch myself, well, above average, let's say, for corporate work because I do believe I can offer a more integrated and varied service to the employees than something like a chain school*," (Stuart, participant 4).
- *"… if I look at myself, I've actually got a lot to offer when it comes to teaching. I didn't want to do the standard teaching, I really want to do the business English because of my background – I knew that was my unique selling point. So, my business background, as a native speaker with the CELTA qualification, are actually, really, you know, I learned how to do it, and that's why I then went into this,"* (Louise, participant 13).

B) Stuart – Example of Adapting to Market Requirements Leading to Intra-occupational Development via Stretchwork and Job Crafting

- "*I guess from my point of view it's just … I've always been the sort of person who has always kept on adding on, adding on, adding on. So, if I need anything I go and get it. I either attend some sort of a workshop training or I've, you know, the internet today of course is a great help, but because I've done a lot of training in other areas that help to promote communication skills like nonviolent communication or like in, um, other sorts of interpersonal-type trainings that has equipped me also for being able to follow along with people's needs, being able to identify them and see them and the response to them, on the skill set itself teaching presentations or teaching listening skills or teaching what is writing or whatever that's just the skill that I've learned and that I can do … In my case I went on to do a ton of other stuff. So I went very deep into communications skills, intercultural skills and business skills in general and started my own company called Integrated Business Communication which actually meant that*

all these ideas of teaching a language plus communication plus culture so that was the integrated aspect. Up until that point I had more or less worked for other businesses, other companies who employ people like me, well they didn't employ me, you know, but took me on a freelance basis, the way that system works," (Geraldine, participant 9).

- *"I see most TEFL teachers as needing to market themselves significantly - differently and better - towards business skills or communication skills and not just language skills and that's something that from my work with the various publishers and teacher training sessions with the various publishers that our feedback from companies is 'yes, we need people to be more than just English teachers'. Which we have been, but we need to market it better*," (Simon, participant 8).
- "*I've always done so many things. So, I describe myself as an editor, writer, and teacher. So, current … I mean currently I'm on maternity leave so I'm … I had … I didn't want to do anything but I'm still doing … I still always end up doing something because I'm a freelancer and because I find it difficult to say 'no' and because I like it. So, at the moment, what I do … what I'm doing is proofreading, um, voiceovers, creative writing and journalistic writing, and teaching*," (Alison, participant 10).
- "*I do a little bit of translation work and I do the occasional bit of copywriting and that kind of thing. I don't do so much work for schools now. Most of the work I do is directly to the end customer if you if you know what I mean. And it's with existing customers that I offer additional services*," (Stuart, participant 4).
- "*I also teach writing, I teach songwriting, I do a lot of teaching and, you know, the cultural studies, intercultural competence, stuff that's really interesting to me. But I like to teach in English other things and to incorporate my TEFL stuff*," (Gerald, participant 5).
- Drawing on her experience of 12 years in international sales: *"They could talk to me using their own sort of lingo and I understood what they were talking about and so, not all the time, we weren't talking on eye level, but I had a good understanding of what they were doing and what they needed and how that company worked and I think that was very, very attractive to companies when I was sort of presented to them,"* (Louise, participant 13).

The fourth phase is about theme refinement and ensuring that the selected themes fit into the broader narrative and provide a compelling story. The extracted data that will be used in the data findings can now be identified (Coholic *et al.*, 2020). Two levels of reviewing and refining themes are involved within this phase. The first level involves the review at the coded level and the second level involves reviewing the entire data set. A 'map' of the analysis is produced and the validity of the themes is considered here (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Without the map, it may have been easier to only consider a few, more 'forceful', or extreme, voices. For example, participants 3 and 14, Brian and Leanne respectively, provided many strong comments and it was important that other, similar voices were considered to make sure the themes were not just outliers and represented all nineteen participants. An example of part of the map has been included here. Please note that the map is rather small. A larger version has been attached as Appendix F.

The table below shows one part of the coding which took place as part of the Interpretive Thematic Analysis. This table specifically relates to how the participants felt about earning money in non-standard work arrangements. It should be noted that this is only for this particular part of the map. The first-order concepts were direct quotations taken from the interviews. The lower-order theme is the interpretation of the quotation. The higher-order themes were derived from the lower-order themes. The last column displays the main work arrangement or source of work. This supports the actual theme as it is this difference in work arrangements which underpins the participants' experiences, as understood through their original quotations. That is to say, for example, that Louise is willing and able to work in private businesses, who pay more, because she is able to specialise.

Table 6 Excel Sheets Including Initial Coding Process

DBA Excel Sheets June 2025.xlsx

Returning to Interpretive Thematic Analysis, the fifth phase is about giving an appropriate label to key themes and preparation of the vignettes. The 'essence' of the overall and individual themes should be identified (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once the themes are fully established, the final phase begins.

This phase of thematic analysis involves the final analysis and write-up of the report. The analysis should provide a logical, coherent, non-repetitive, concise, and interesting story on the data across and within themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, composite vignettes via the Creative Analytical Process (CAP) (Spalding and Phillips, 2007; McMahon, 2016) were developed. This is covered in more detail in the following section.

Table 7 summarises the six stages of the Interpretive Thematic Analysis and is designed to provide a succinct overview of the process.

Table 7: Interpretive Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic "map" of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Source: Braun & Clarke (2006)

3.4.2. Phase Two: Creative Analytical Process (CAP)

The final themes as discovered in the above process served as the foundation for the Creative Analytical Process (McMahon, 2016), more specifically in the form of the subset of creative nonfiction. Phase two of the analytical process thus represents the transition from analyst to narrator where theory is shown rather than told through stories rich in subjectivity and complexity (Schinke *et al.*, 2016). This method allows the large quantities of qualitative data empirically gathered to be presented in an accessible form which is useful to practitioners and details theory and applied practice (Denyer and Tranfield, 2006). Through the use of carefully selected quotations, narratives are developed that bring to life the phenomena (Schinke *et al.*, 2016).

The Creative Analytical Process was formed in order to tackle the "crisis of representation" which led to a "misrepresent[ation of] human experience, in particular inadequately presenting or describing the experiences of those we study (McMahon, 2016, p. 303)." The Creative Analytical Process allows readers to 'witness' the experiences of others (Ropers-Huilman, 1999, as cited in McMahon, 2016), giving researchers insights not available through other research methods (Richardson, 2004, as cited in McMahon, 2016). That is, vignettes align with the Creative Analytical Process by presenting research through stories that show rather than tell. Further, the Creative Analytical Process produces a stronger bond between the emotionality of the research and the reader by utilising the reader's subjectivity (Smith & Sparks, 2009, as cited in McMahon, 2016). McMahon (2016) concludes that the Creative Analytical Process is a method of inquiry relevant to all disciplines, particularly qualitative

research that looks at experiences. In this respect, it is consistent with the research philosophy and fits with TEFL workers' experiences of their work arrangements.

Creative nonfiction is a research technique and a form of creative analytic practice, grounded in research data and focused on unique, incidental, and emergent occurrences of experiences, and the significance of everyday life to create rich understandings of key findings (Ely *et al.*, 1997; Smith, Mcgannon and Williams, 2015). It uses creative writing techniques so that the vignettes are "fictional in form yet factual in content" (Smith, Mcgannon and Williams, 2015, p. 59). This has the impact of resonating more deeply with the reader and can enhance reader accessibility since the narratives are potentially easier to follow and more engaging for readers, especially non-specialist audiences (McMahon, 2016). The use of creative nonfiction also aligns with the philosophical assumptions underpinning this study, namely that reality and knowledge are subjectively created and experienced on an individual level. In this sense, creative nonfiction mirrors the subjective reality assumed by the researcher and was therefore chosen to understand the TEFL workers' experiences. The use of vignettes in the research is theoretically and methodologically grounded since vignettes allow the presentation of nuanced, context-rich experiences while preserving the subjectivity central to the interpretivist paradigm (Ely et al., 2005). Vignettes can also offer a more comprehensive portrayal of thematic patterns than fragmented quotes alone (Spalding & Phillips, 2007). Moreover, the vignette creation process can reveal contradictions or overlooked themes during synthesis, prompting further analysis.

Nevertheless, there are some drawbacks to using vignettes. Firstly, combining voices risks blurring individual uniqueness and underrepresenting minority perspectives (Schinke et al., 2016), leading to a potential loss of nuance. This also raises concerns about authenticity as readers may question the factual integrity of stories presented as coherent characters, even when grounded in real data. There is also the question of Interpretive subjectivity as the researcher's decisions in narrative construction introduce a layer of bias. While this may provoke questions of verisimilitude and dependability, it is important to remember that the creative nonfiction undergoes a rigorous, followable process and is grounded in real data collected in the participant interviews. This is also further mitigated through reflexive practice and bracketing. In this research, the words the composite characters used are all derived from

the participants, and the researcher has not added any personal, subjective content, rather only linked together different quotations to produce a coherent narrative. This also reinforces the ethical anonymity of the research since synthesising participants into composites enhances confidentiality and reduces risks of identification. It is expected another researcher would be drawn to the same, rich quotations, although it is feasible the interpretation could differ. However, without clear guidance, this could mean that readers might interpret vignettes as literal accounts rather than constructs of composite experiences. As already mentioned, there is a lack of consensus regarding epistemology in management studies (Tranfield, Denyer and Smart, 2003). However, this epistemological diversity is a feature of social science, and rather than an affliction of management research, and can be considered or argued to be necessary.

In conclusion, the use of vignettes in the research is theoretically and methodologically grounded based on the ontological and epistemological position, the aesthetic and emotional resonance allowing the reader to engage deeply with the material, the integration of complexity, and the alignment with the Creative Analytical Process. While this approach presents certain limitations, particularly in terms of generalisability and potential interpretive distortion, these are acknowledged and addressed through transparent documentation, reflexivity, and rigorous coding.

All narratives are filtered through the consciousness of the writer, necessarily producing subjective matter (Ely *et al.*, 2005). Vignettes are " … narrative investigations that carry within them an interpretation of the person, experience, or situation that the writer describes (Ely *et al.*, 2005, p. 70)." Vignettes allow a restructuring of complex information in order to provide a more vivid narrative and can be used for a variety of functions such as introducing characters, foreshadowing events to come and presenting meaningful occurrences (Ely *et al.*, 2005). Significance is imbued through the written work itself and the researcher's need to understand. "Vignettes, then, are portraits created through condensing and compiling (Ely et al., 2005, p. 73)." Snapshot vignettes provide a single, contextualised picture to represent a complete phenomenon whereas a moving vignette depicts a flow of events over time and may comprise multiple sections dispersed throughout the report, and a portrait or characterisation vignette allows the writer to establish a character while getting to know the subject (Ely *et al.*,

2005). Shorter vignettes may be compiled to produce a larger, moving vignette, often with a juxtaposition of characters to show contrasting narratives on a phenomenon (Ely *et al.*, 2005). The construction of vignettes not only helps to explain the research, it can also reveal gaps and contradictions that need to be addressed (Ely *et al.*, 2005) as well as different understandings through alternative analytical lenses (Schinke *et al.*, 2016). This was the case in my research, when analysing the responses of the individual participants who made up the same composite character Frank on the issue of low, unchanging pay, the responses ranged from indignation to apathy. This only became apparent on composition of the vignette and led to further analysis to find the dominant position, held by the majority, on this issue. In this research, a composite of snapshot and moving vignette is adopted. This allows the vignette to slowly develop the character by exploring the relevant phenomena, while also attempting to 'contain' the phenomena within the vignette. For example, the composite character Frank should be seen to become increasingly frustrated with his work as more and more details are revealed.

Composite vignettes compile a number of voices into a single, synthesised narrative in order to demonstrate patterns of many people (Spalding and Phillips, 2007). They may use invented story elements to emphasis prevalent themes and deliver a more powerful, all-encompassing shared account (Spalding and Phillips, 2007; Schinke *et al.*, 2016). Nevertheless, direct quotations from participant interviews are used to ensure authenticity (Smith, Mcgannon and Williams, 2015). Vignettes are often crafted from multiple data sources (e.g., interviews, observations) and represent realistic, contextually-rich narratives that reflect patterns or themes in the data. However, although Vignettes as Composite Narratives Grounded in Data it is important that they maintain the voice of individual respondents. Even when synthesised, the vignettes draw directly from participants' actual words, experiences, and stories, ensuring their voices are the foundation of the vignette. Moreover, to maintain the authenticity of individual perspectives, the vignettes are constructed using verbatim data in order to preserve the original voice of respondents through direct quotes or linguistic features (e.g., tone, phrasing), even within a constructed or composite narrative. Further, when constructing vignettes, the researcher has attempted to ensure ethical responsibility. This means an ethical responsibility to honour the intentions and meanings expressed by individual participants.

This can be achieved by avoiding distortions, anonymising appropriately, and being transparent about how the vignette was built from real voices.

With that in mind, the vignettes can highlight complexity or ambiguity in the data, and can be constructed to reflect contrasting viewpoints or experiences, representing diversity and tensions which formed the basis of the four composite characters. Composite vignettes should not be read as a series of quotes or stories from different participants but as independent accounts, in this case from four composite characters in relation to experiences within TEFL. Further, while some authors have chosen to denote direct quotations by the use of italics (Crocker, Chard and Duncan, 2021), it was felt that this would distract the reader from the narrative as a whole. As such, the complete composite vignette was left in an italicised font, including the linking components that were added to ensure the fluidity of the narrative.

When vignettes are used in data analysis (rather than collection), they serve as analytic tools to synthesise, illustrate, and explore themes, but are rooted in the voices of individual participants. Their construction draws directly from verbatim data, reflects diverse perspectives, and undergoes reflexive scrutiny to ensure that respondents' meanings, experiences, and language remain central and faithfully represented in the final analysis. In this research, there has been a significant reflexive construction process where the creation of analytic vignettes has involved a reflexive and iterative process involving continuously checking back with the data to ensure that the representation remains faithful to what participants said and meant.

The four 'types' of TEFL workers identified in the thematic analysis above were then taken as characters for the composite vignettes. In line with other applications of composite vignettes (Schinke *et al.*, 2016; Hings *et al.*, 2018; Crocker, Chard and Duncan, 2021), each vignette begins with a third-person, short description of the characters' personal and situational details to 'set the scene' and enhance readers' visualisation and connection with each character. A description of the progression of our interview and the interviewer's thoughts are punctuated by a series of 'internal monologues' from the characters. These are designed to evoke

emotions through a vivid imagery of the characters while retaining the authenticity due to the grounding in real collected data.

Throughout the development of the vignettes, a reflexive process (Cunliffe, 2020) was undertaken to reflect upon the composite content and fit with the themes identified at stage one of the analysis (Hings *et al.*, 2018). For example, while ostensibly it seemed Sarah fitted more with the composite Margaret character, there were many elements of her experience and identity that fitted with the Stuart character as well.

3.5. Summary

The author assumes a philosophical position of ontological relativism and epistemological interpretivism. The rationale for this philosophical positioning can be explained as follows. Firstly, it aligns with the research aims, the central aim of which is to explore how workers experience and interpret their professional lives, thus demanding a research approach that embraces depth, complexity, and personal meaning (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Secondly, the philosophical positioning is appropriate due to the exploratory nature of the research. The research questions are inherently exploratory, introduced by how "How do TEFL workers…?", and these are therefore better addressed through qualitative, inductive strategies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thirdly, there is methodological congruence. The use of narrative inquiry, interpretive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and the Creative Analytical Process (McMahon, 2016) is epistemologically consistent with interpretivism, as these methods facilitate subjective understanding and reflexive interpretation. Lastly, concerning reflexivity and axiology, the research acknowledging the researcher's positionality as an insider in the TEFL profession. To mitigate bias and ensure research integrity (Finlay, 2002; Tufford & Newman, 2010), the study adopts bracketing and reflexive journaling In line with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) concept of trustworthiness, and the researcher is transparent about how personal values influence the interpretive process.

Moving on, a consistent and well-thought set of assumptions establishes a credible research philosophy, which supports the methodological choice. The methodology employed uses an

inductive, qualitative approach. These are compatible with each other, with the philosophical assumptions, and in line with authors of similar research. In summary, the ontological and epistemological positioning of this study reflects a coherent, theoretically grounded commitment to understanding human experience in context, central to interpretivist research.

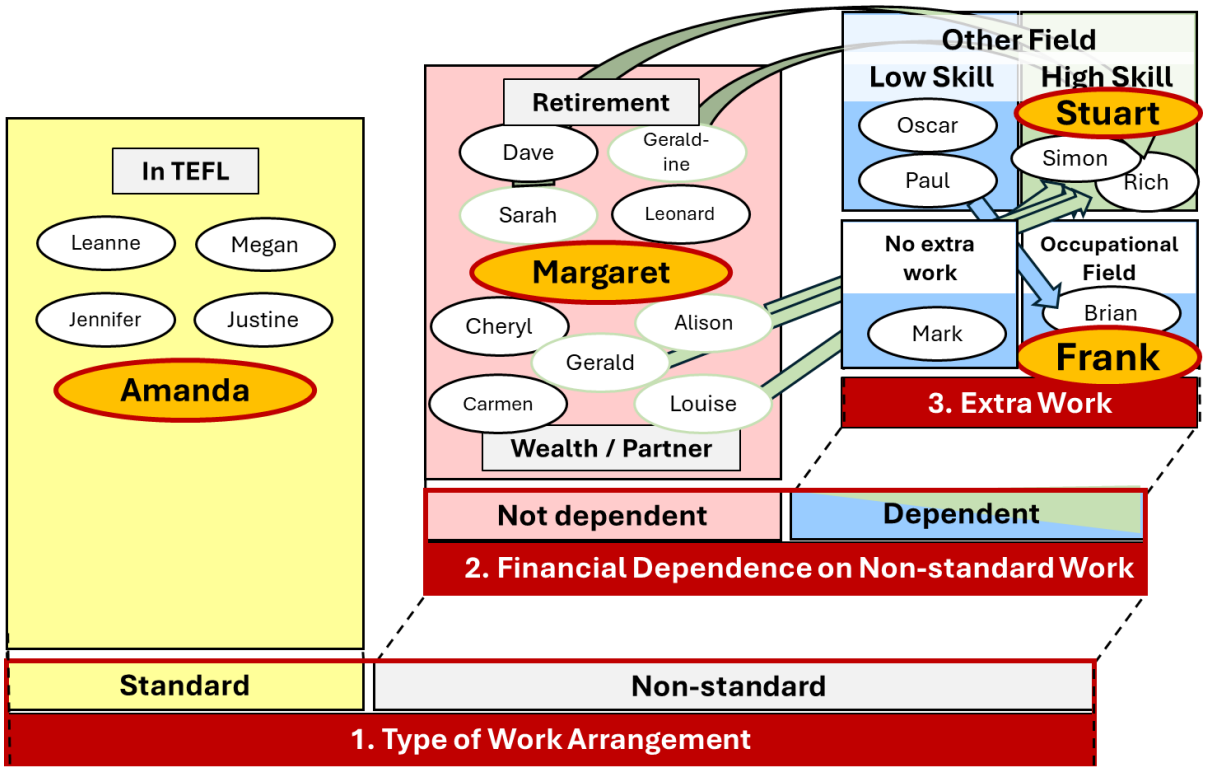
The role of the researcher cannot be ignored, and many measures were taken to prevent compromising the integrity of the research, such as considering ethics. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling. After 19 semi-structured interviews and 1 written statement, totalling some 200,000 words of data collection, it was felt that saturation had been achieved. This data was then analysed using the six-step Interpretive Thematic Analysis, before the data was presented using composite vignettes, a form of the Creative Writing Process.

4. Composite Vignettes

The previous chapter concluded by detailing the thematic analysis process and the academic background and rationale to the Creative Analytical Process. This chapter turns the analysis into a creative nonfiction narrative in the form of composite vignettes. The four different profiles identified in the data analysis are turned into four main characters who each have their own composite vignettes.

The figure below shows how the four main characters were identified. While the figure is rather simplistic, the data analysis was not. For example, the table does not depict anything that will help to answer the research questions. Nor does it show in any detail how Frank and Stuart are different from one another. The analytical rationale based on the coding was shown in the previous chapter, and the vignettes should help the data come to life, making it particularly accessible for the reader (McMahon, 2016), and providing a clearer picture of participants' experiences.

Figure 4: Overview of Origin of Composite Vignettes



Please note: This figure should be read from the bottom up. That is, the first consideration is the participants' type of work arrangement, either standard or non-standard; the second consideration is the financial dependence on the work, whether the worker is or is not financially dependent on the non-standard work; and, thirdly, it is considered whether the participant undertakes any other work, be that within the occupational field of TEFL or in an unrelated field which may be low skilled or high skilled. As one would expect, using these three basic considerations is a massive simplification as the reality is much more complicated and complex. As such, the arrows are included as indicative that participants could be included in more than one box. For example, although Geraldine has reached retirement age and could give up work financially, she does not want to and continues to pursue extra, high-skilled work outside of the occupational field of TEFL. Equally, Paul undertakes both low-skilled work in another occupational field and does extra TEFL-related work such as exam invigilation. The intention of this figure is to provide an overview of how the four composite vignettes were identified. The composite vignettes are those in orange.

The following section moves onto the four vignettes. The format is as previously described. Firstly, there is a brief overview of the character's profile. The 'normal' text format represents the actions, thoughts and comments of the researcher and is designed to frame the narrative. Indented and in italics is the contribution of the participant. As such, both researcher and participant adopt the first-person form. It should be made clear that the vignettes are designed to introduce the four characters and present the themes in a superficial way for context only. A more detailed analysis of these interviews vis-à-vis the literature is to be found in the Findings section within the next chapter.

4.1. Margaret

Introduction to Margaret

Margaret has recently reached statutory retirement age in Germany and therefore was not allowed to continue in her full-time employment. She has many years' experience of teaching in TEFL. She does not want to give up working although she does not necessarily need the money her TEFL income provides. Her main source of income is the *Volkshochschule* (similar

to a community college). She offers an insight into professional teacher identity and what it means to keep working when not under pressure to do so.

The key themes which arise from the interview with Margaret are the importance of community / relatedness via *Volkshochschule* and MELTA and meeting other people, the ability to accept and reject work, and a strong sense of teacher professional identity

Meeting with Margaret

I meet with Margaret on zoom as arranged. We start with a quick hello before I thank her for reading and filling in the consent form and I remind Margaret that we can stop the interview, and she can withdraw her consent at any time. This ethics procedure was conducted in every interview. Margaret is very polite but there is a little bit of awkwardness in the virtual air as we have never met before and perhaps the stuffy formalities do not help. However, we engage in a little small talk, and she starts to relax. I start by asking her how she got into TEFL.

> *Well, I have done quite a lot of things in my working life but for the last twenty years I have been teaching English. Last year I reached retirement age and had to stop working full-time. Now, I teach on a freelance basis. I'm perfectly satisfied to teach English in my neighbourhood. I live in the city centre, and I can walk to work. I thought about giving up, but I love it. I'm a born teacher. I love teaching. I enjoy it and being a teacher is part of my identity. You have different roles in life: wife, mother, friend* et cetera*. I am a teacher, that's my identity. It is part of my life, part of me. I don't have to teach; I don't need the money anymore. It's hard to find a stop point if you enjoy your work.*

Margaret describes teaching as one part of her identity along with other aspects. She seems to have accepted her multiple sub-identities and integrated them harmoniously. The fact she continues to work without needing to implies that her teacher identity sustains her existence to some degree.

I ask Margaret about her current work arrangement and what it is like to work as a freelancer.

> *Freelancing, for me personally, is about the flexibility. In my life I've never had a nine-to-five job with a five-week holiday per year sort of situation. So, I don't think I could do that. I wouldn't want to do that, not at this stage of my life anyway. So, to go back … Yes, I have, I'm lying, I'm lying. When I taught in France, I had a contract. I worked on contracts for about six years, so then I only had five weeks holiday year. I wouldn't like to go back to that. I like the flexibility and the freedom to pick and choose how much I work, when I work, and if I want to take a few months off I can.*

Margaret defines her professional identity in terms of the flexibility of freelancing to the extent that not only has she forgotten the six years of contract work as she initially positions her identity as a freelancer, but, when she remembers, it is an *admission*, that is, "I'm lying". I get a strong sense of teaching identity combined with or perhaps in conflict with the "flexibility and freedom" that her work arrangement offers her.

We pick up on the flexibility that freelancing offers, and Margaret discusses this in more detail.

> *You know, you pay through the nose for the social insurances, your* Krankenversicherung *[health insurance] and the* Rentenversicherung *[pension fund] that you're supposed to, or you have to pay into as a freelance teacher, and this is my own justification. It's like, if I'm going to be freelance one of the benefits has to be that I can pick and choose my customers. And, you know, I just kind of think that's why I'm freelance - you pay through the nose for all the social insurances you have in Germany when you're freelance and it has to be worth something. I'm going to pick and choose as long as I can. When you're employed by someone, you certainly can't pick and choose your customers.*

This is quite far from teaching as an integral part of her identity. Now, we have moved to juxtaposing the freedom and flexibility to turn down work with the expensive costs of the

German social system, as though being able to pick and choose customers, therefore rejecting work, was some kind of recompense for a difficult socio-economic environment. Margaret means flexibility in the number of hours worked rather than scheduling flexibility. However, normally one might expect that you must work *more* to offset expensive living costs, whereas Margaret actively highlights she works *less*. She repeats herself, which could be a moral position she has adopted vis-a-vis the social system, with freelancing her 'resistive' strategy and uses the word ‘justification’ for her choice of this work arrangement.

I am very interested at this point about how Margaret moulds her work around her lifestyle, and we start to talk about the number of hours worked.

> *I don’t think you can have a career in TEFL. It’s extremely difficult to make a living as TEFL is not paid very much. I’m not doing this to make a million dollars. I take it six months by six months, year by year. If I were between 20 and 35 and needed to work straight away it would be difficult due to the lack of available work. If you're only doing these* Volkshochschule [community college] *or even private one-and-a-half-hour lessons, I just don't see how that's possible to do 40 hours a week. Finding 40 hours per week at the beginning would be virtually impossible. For a freelance teacher out there, especially a parent, it could be a big challenge. If I were a single mom, and this was the only income in the family, I honestly don't know how you would do it, not the way I'm doing it, definitely not with the* Volkshochschule *lessons. I can see it if you're doing private lessons or doing work with the university or something and you have a certain number of classes a day. I don't do that much work because I choose not to, I don't have to financially, so I pick and choose.*

This reveals the difficulty in getting enough paid hours per week, particularly at a single employer, in this case the *Volkshochschule*. It also reveals the underpinning assumptions she has about the meaning of 'career' which seems to be precedented on a traditional 40-hour week and thus incompatible with contemporary work arrangements. The fact she links this to age also suggests this is particular to her identity.

I wonder if her rate of pay affects her number of hours worked so I ask Margaret how she knows what to charge.

> *I hate writing bills; I hate charging people. That's why I love working with* Volkshochschule*, so I don't have to deal with it. The* Volkshochschule *gave me a number, which is a standard number, and I tend to just accept. I've never fully been through a contract before signing, I don't even remember them. I tend to not pay attention to all these bureaucratic details; I just go into a kind of shut down. I'm very happy to just sign. People complain about the* Volkshochschule *pay but it's enough for me. I'm retired with a pension, I kind of do it for fun. I love my job. I also love the* Volkshochschule*. It's a great organisation, a great democratiser. My colleagues are well trained. I'm proud to work for such an organisation.*

Margaret separates the teaching from the non-teaching aspects so that neither pay nor the contents of her contract are deemed worth checking, let alone improving. This could indicate a bad fit between her professional identity, and the service ethos of professionalism, and the economic logic of charging for labour. I get the feeling it is just the case that Margaret's teaching identity takes precedence above the rate of pay and contract, but it is not clear if this is *because* she is financially secure or *irrespective* of that. Viewing the *Volkshochschule* as a great democratiser implies Margaret has strong relational ties to the *Volkshochschule.*

I ask her about working there and elsewhere, finding one's own work, and how that affects pay.

> *If people approach me for private lessons, I never really know what to charge. I've had heard you can charge €1 per minute but it's hard for me to comment on. I'm sure you can. I feel if I'm going to be charging someone, I don't care if it's €30 or €60 or anywhere in between, I have to be worth that for them. And I want to do a proper job, I want to be able to have measurable goals that we can measure, that they can reach, I want them on board with that, and I just still feel like that takes such an investment in time and energy. But you know how it is, the 90-minute lesson takes at least 90 minutes prep if it's*

someone new, and I just didn't feel like I had the mental capacity to do as good a job as I felt I would need to do for private lessons like that. I find the prep very stressful. I don't know, if I were 25 and starting, I might be more interested in building a career, but I'm sort of sailing towards the harbour, if you know what I mean. Not feeling like I need to start my own business. I haven't got huge career plans. I do end up earning a lot less for the same number of hours due to all the extra kind of free hours I have to invest.

Margaret reveals she could get more work *and* at a higher rate, without having to solicit the work herself. Here, not only does Margaret reject non-teaching issues, such as finding work and reading contracts, but also related teaching duties, such as planning and goal setting, because of the "investment in time and energy". She implies her typical hourly rate is low due to the non-paid hours she invests in her work, further exacerbated in circumstances where certain clients require even more planning. When she speaks of 'earning a lot less' it is, however, unclear if she means teaching, or TEFL, as compared to other jobs, or is rather referring to the non-standard work arrangement she has. There seems to be a tension between her professed strong teaching identity and a reluctance to perform teaching tasks required to do a "proper job". However, it could also be interpreted that doing a 'good job' requires a high investment in time and energy, which Maragret does not have, let alone somebody striving to work 40 hours per week and therefore there is an incompatibility between getting enough hours to financially survive and doing a good job. In Margaret's case, she would rather invest unpaid hours or reject work rather than do it badly which suggest professional pride. This also suggests Margaret feels she does do a good job in the work she chooses to accept, reinforcing her identity as a teacher. She also couches this in terms of career building, suggesting it requires a lot of time and energy investment which she is not prepared to give and considers the way to make a career in TEFL is to start your own business. This may suggest working for an organisation, such as the *Volkshochschule* is devalued. Margaret also seems to suggest that one cannot make enough money, and hence a career, by working in a non-standard arrangement with just one organisation. This implies a need for multiple jobholding. It also reinforces the notion that 'career' for Margaret is something with internal coherence, perdurance, and is an outcome of conscious and rational progression and decisions.

As it comes across as important to Margaret, I ask her how she knows she's doing a good job.

> *My students keep coming back! If I give them what they need, I feel that's quality. During COVID, the fact that they kept coming back meant that my classes continued. Nothing was cancelled because of me. There's no formal feedback in place at the* Volkshochschule*. If the students are polite, it is an indicator that everything is going well. If you get offered more work, it is proof you're doing a good job. In other places there are various forms to fill in, depending on the employer. This is a formal thing they have to do, nobody pays attention to it, but I specifically ask to see them.*

This shows there are little or no formal feedback structures in place at the *Volkshochschule*. Margaret seems to have little formal engagement with her place of employment, startling given her earlier declaration of the *Volkshochschule* as a great democratiser. I return to ponder her earlier use of the phrase 'proper job' and wonder if she considers her work at the *Volkshochschule* as a 'proper job'. Knowing she is doing a good job stems not from the feedback she actively seeks out that she otherwise may not have received, but from getting more work as well as student re-enrolment and good behaviour, lack of organisational trouble, and her own 'gut feeling' of pride in what she does. This seems an odd proxy for quality, and I wonder if her comment "*Nothing was cancelled because of me"* is rooted in professional pride, or relief. As she is not financially dependent on the work, I infer the former.

As formal feedback from the organisation is not forthcoming, I wonder about her growth and developmental needs and decide to ask her how she develops professionally.

> *I have successfully completed the DELTA* [Diploma of English Language Teaching to Adults, a level 7 qualification, equivalent to a master's degree]. *There is also a ton of training offers for those interested. The* Volkshochschule *offers teacher trainings for free, which can be really helpful. I've also attended conferences, one in particular was extremely interesting. I love attending workshops, I've had two this weekend.*

Given that Margaret is reluctant to take on some new teaching jobs due to the investment of time and effort, it is quite surprising that she has undertaken the DELTA. Margaret does not say too much about it, and I am keen to ask Margaret how she manages to keep up to date with all the training and events.

> *If you do your CELTA* [Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults, a typical minimum requirement for securing work, and equivalent to Level 5, i.e. a diploma of higher education (DipHE) as regulated by Ofqual (The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation)] *at the* Volkshochschule *you get free membership to MELTA* [Munich English Language Teachers Association]. *It's great being a member. You get your listing on the website, you may get contacted for jobs via MELTA, there are seminars and meet ups, and at the beginning they help you to get set up, for example by helping freelancers with their tax declarations. They have roles in the organisation such as chairman, secretary and so on, and you can run for this office. It doesn't pay anything but it's good for the resume. I contribute to the quarterly magazine by writing articles and I used to organise the proofreading. I also met another teacher there who was doing the same course as me, which was a nice, supportive experience.*

There is a contrast between Margaret's professed lack of interest in engaging with the monetary sides of her work and her role at MELTA. Although her role at MELTA takes precedence over earning money, it is not clear whether this is due to a growth need, either personal or professional, or a relational need as she mentions both.

I contemplate the importance of MELTA as an institution and ask Margaret whether she would recommend MELTA to other TEFL workers.

> *For me, if someone is asking what are the pros and cons of each job, I would definitely say the pro is working with people - you do that. The con is that you're an island. So, for any new teacher, I would definitely recommend*

> *finding some sort of network that you can be involved in. That's sort of the downside, I would say, to teaching, well to our kind of teaching* [teaching on a freelance basis], *is that you don't have colleagues as such. My work is a way of keeping in contact with people. It's not just a job.*

The type of work arrangement, freelancing, impacts on her satisfaction with the job. However, this is compensated by the fact that the job itself (not the work arrangement) provides social contact, important to Margaret. There is a certain dependency on MELTA, which offers teachers the chance to exchange ideas with colleagues, reinforce self-confidence, and more generally just to socialise. In many ways, MELTA ostensibly operates for Margaret like a *de facto* employer.

I ask Margaret what the people and the atmosphere at MELTA are like.

> *The seniors have been there for years. Younger people are bright and lively, after a few years they disappear.*

This may imply that MELTA has a different function for different people. For some, like Margaret, it offers a sense of community which is otherwise missing from their work arrangement. On the other hand, for others, "younger people", MELTA must perform another function as they leave after a few years. This is not, however, clarified during the interview with Margaret.

At the end of our interview, Margaret is quite effusive, thanking me for the experience. This is somewhat of a contrast to the cautious opening, but I feel she has warmed up and enjoyed the opportunity to analyse her work experience in this manner.

4.2. Amanda

Introduction to Amanda

Amanda is in her mid-thirties and a mother of two young children. She now has a full-time job in TEFL at a university. She previously worked in TEFL as a freelancer and thus can offer an

insight into how an individual can perceive the same job differently depending on the work arrangement.

The key themes which arise from the interview with Amanda are comparisons between full-time employment and freelancing, a love of teaching but not freelancing, and how to get out of the latter, security and precarity, autonomy / control over workflow, and progression / feedback.

Meeting with Amanda

I meet Amanda on zoom, and we go through the ethics procedure. She is very amiable and seems ready to tell me her life story if I ask for it. Because she is so comfortable, I feel even more relaxed, so we jump straight into it, and I ask her how she got into TEFL.

> *I always wanted to get into teaching. I decided to work in TEFL to support myself financially while I was studying in Germany. It paid more than babysitting and waitressing, which I also did. Later on, after a year of freelancing in Spain, I moved back to Munich and worked here as a freelance in TEFL for about five years before getting a full-time position at a university.*

For clarification, I ask Amanda if she still works in TEFL and if it is her main way of earning a living.

> *Yeah, it's my main way of earning a living and I'm very lucky I have a full-time contract at the university, which is gold dust and it's open ended.*

Before our interview, I had not actually known that Amanda had a full-time job in TEFL at a university. When I recruited her through MELTA I thought she worked on a freelance basis as this had been stipulated in my original Participation Information Sheet. Nevertheless, this presented an opportunity to get a comparison between the different work arrangements, so I wanted to continue the interview. I note that she used the words “lucky” and “gold dust” and I wonder if that implies that she perceives full-time employment as secure.

I ask Amanda how she would compare freelancing to full-time employment.

> *In Germany, and I'm sure in other places as well, your responsibilities as a freelancer are quite high. So, the amount that you would be paying into health insurance, and the amount that you should be paying into pension, responsibilities that I think a lot of freelancers when they're starting out don't even know about … it's a trap that a lot of freelancers do fall into. And that works when you're working in Germany for a couple of years but once you get past working here for a while these things begin to find you. Honestly, I signed up to start a master's degree to get health insurance because that was how terrible freelancing in Munich was. I mean, the German systems, they're very protective when you're in them but if you haven't quite found a way to get inside of those systems it can be hell, right?*
>
> *I did about five years as a freelancer in Munich and that was often … I mean the teaching itself was fabulous, I really enjoyed the teaching, but making it as a freelancer in Munich was less fun, I won't lie, particularly since my now husband, who I was also with at the time, was also a freelancer. He was forced to accept undesirable work which only ended when I got a full-time job at the university. It really did take one of us getting that more stable situation in order to rescue the other person out of it as well. I've seen a job dog walking which pays more than TEFL.*
>
> *I have an acquaintance, who is a German language teacher, in his fifties, who had to live in shared accommodation with three other freelance German language teachers due to the low earnings. We began to feel … we need to get out of this. Where can we take this career now? I simply couldn't afford my living expenses solely on teaching. Only very, very few teaching positions were full time, most of them are on freelance basis. And so much unpaid work goes into preparing a class that I ended up earning only just above minimum wage after taxes. Now, I'm paid to read. As another example, a freelance friend of mine, working for BMW, could only get a loan if he were full-time*

> *employed, even if that meant on less money. In Germany, self-employed is worse than unemployed.*

Amanda has gone into great detail. Firstly, the 'trap' of unknown costs that 'find you'. She framed it like a warning to new freelancers and I infer Amanda was afraid of working in this work arrangement because of all the unknown obligations. Amanda's solution was to start a master's degree, which she did not mention in connection to growth via education and training, rather to get help covering the bills as she could not afford her living expenses on teaching alone. This is significant, as she describes TEFL as a career in the sense of the profession, rather than the work arrangement. However, she also mentioned 'career' in terms of being able to afford living expenses, suggesting a similar understanding to career as Margaret. Secondly, her work arrangement impacted her partner as well. As they were both freelancers, one of them needed the 'stability' of a full-time job to 'rescue' the other. Amanda must have been under incredible pressure, and her feelings of relief but also vehement rage against freelancing were palpable to me, even via zoom and several years after her change to full-time employment had occurred. The indignance with which she compared her professional field to dog walking was a severe blow to her self-esteem but did not diminish her self-identity as a teacher. She spoke of 'fun', which also informs about her concept of 'good work'. The story of her German teacher friend exacerbates the existential dread Amanda felt as a freelancer. Thirdly, she takes a more macro perspective by offering the cultural perception that in Germany, being self-employed is worse than unemployed. The nature of self-employment as precarious and unstable is structurally reinforced in Germany through the friend and the loan story.

I try to play devil's advocate here and see if it is indeed possible to thrive in freelance TEFL work, asking Amanda about issues such as pay and number of hours.

> *At the time when I was last freelancing, I definitely had enough work. The challenge was trying to reduce the lower paid work and exchange it for higher paid work. One class I taught paid very well, that was teaching Business English for a big company. But I only got that job through pure luck, all the other classes I taught were at the* Volkshochschule*. They were a lot of*

fun but didn't pay too much. And also the fact that, with freelance, hours tend to be quite bad in terms of the time of the lessons. You can tell I don't have a very positive view of that whole experience.

I also successfully applied at a language school and tried to guarantee a minimum number of hours. She offered me a position, well, the opportunity to freelance, and I asked if she could guarantee me 20 hours. And then I didn't hear anything. I talked to the coordinator at the Volkshochschule *and she said, "we don't have any classes available right now but if you want to develop a workshop, I'm open for ideas". I suggested something and it was a hit.*

Amanda reveals the job is fun, as did Margaret. However, that is not enough to keep Amanda in this work arrangement as it does not offset the poor pay. This can be contrasted to Margaret, who actively turns down higher-paid work. For Margaret, pay is subordinate to professional identity, whereas for Amanda this is the opposite. Amanda downgrades 'position' to 'the opportunity to freelance', suggesting a hierarchy of preferences for work arrangements. Although we may assume professional TEFL workers freelance in order to give themselves a high degree of flexibility, this is not the case, as Amanda here is clearly dependent on others for work and the scheduling does not fit her own requirements. Paradoxically, although there is no guarantee of classes, one can suggest new ideas for classes or lessons to the *Volkshochschule*, and these may be accepted. In this way, perhaps a sense of autonomy is indeed prevalent in this work arrangement.

I ask Amanda about her experience of looking for full-time positions.

I've seen contracts, for example, a pregnancy leave, you get six months, if you're lucky. I got a five-year contract at the University of W____. When you see everybody struggling with freelance, and trying to set money aside … it's hard, it's really difficult to get out there. I was looking for a permanent position and I just could not find anything. And I was really discouraged. I thought, well, I have a master's now, I have experience at ____ [a respected

institution], I thought, wow, you know, I'm going to get a good job. And I couldn't find one.

Amanda cannot leverage her extra qualifications to get a job, suggesting a lack of recognition: either it is wrong qualification, or qualifications do not make a difference to securing jobs. In any case, extra qualifications have proven fruitless to her potential career development. Amanda also seems to associate 'good job' with full-time employment.

I try one more time to see if I can get some positives of freelancing out of Amanda and ask her how the differences between freelancing and full-time employment manifest themselves.

I had a lot of co-workers, fellow teachers at the time, and you could always tell the difference between those of us who were in families where freelancing was the main source of income versus those of us who were in families where they had a partner who was working full-time in a regular salaried position. These people were able to kind of freelance with a lot less worry because at least there was stability coming from one half of the family, whereas those of us who were not in that situation, there were some serious struggles. The single-best option for me was to get out of freelancing.

In my position at the university, I also get the luxury of speaking with other teachers and being able to collaborate. Somebody walks by "hey what did you do today?" "Oh, yeah, I had this lesson today, it was fabulous", "let's exchange ideas". And that's something that in freelance you don't get because you're always travelling, and you don't really get this sense of community and I think it's very important for teachers to bounce ideas off of each other because that's how you learn and how you grow. We have a tight staffroom, people help each other, which provides a source of improvement. It's hugely beneficial. Freelancing is a more isolated, solitary business.

You also get long, paid holidays in full-time university employment. There is more work, not just teaching but also project work with other colleagues, but

this is suitably remunerated, whereas if you freelance for them, it's well, slavery, I guess.

I am quite astounded by Amanda's use of the word slavery, so I check to confirm.

Well, yes, because they expect you to do as much work as a salaried employee, but you don't have any of the perks. So, yeah. They expect you to do a lot of marking, I mean, it depends who you are working for, but some universities don't even pay you a little bit extra for all the hours you spend marking essays, for example.

For clarity, she explained that this was only freelancing in universities whereas freelancing in businesses did not bring with it the same level of unpaid work for corrections and so on. Amanda compared freelancing to full-time employment in TEFL, the same work but a different work arrangement, so unfavourably that she said you could see who was a freelancer or not just by the visible manifestation of the stress they were under. While she describes university work as a 'luxury' because of the contact with colleagues, freelancing, with its lack of community, stifled learning and growth, and the extra unpaid hours was considered 'slavery'.

I switch tack and ask Amanda how she felt when she got her full-time job.

It was like heaven. It is the greatest job in my life. I have an office. All my colleagues are thankful not to be in the swamp of freelance teaching. I wanted to avoid freelancing at all costs. I would have carried on because I loved the job, but it wasn't something I wanted to do. Honestly, I always wanted to be a teacher. I love the job, I love teaching. I'll always be teacher. Now, I'm a proper teacher. I mean, when I say about proper job what I really mean is just a job that is more … what would be a good word here … more compatible, I guess, with the German way of doing things. I mean it was a lot easier to meet these financial responsibilities rather than freelancing not being a proper job. We definitely worked very, very hard as freelancers and we took our work very, very seriously as freelancers. It just often felt that we

were out of step with where we needed to be, I suppose, in order to live securely. The day I signed up here I never had to worry about my health insurance contributions again, I didn't have to worry about my pension contributions, all of that is automatically taken care of, so a lot of the burden, the financial burdens of being a freelancer and administrative burdens of being a freelancer sort of just disappeared at the very beginning.

I ask Amanda for a concrete example, here.

In terms of paid maternity leave, looking after a sick child and thus staying off work … if I'm a freelance then I just wouldn't earn the money.

The contrast between 'heaven' and 'swamp' is indicative of the profound impact of the work arrangement on how Amanda experiences her work. What stands out here is Amanda's use of the word 'proper'. She considered herself professional as a freelancer as she took her work seriously, but this view of freelancers is perhaps not shared by others. In particular, Amanda suggests that freelance work is not viewed as 'proper' professional work, with the differing institutional framework in Germany for full-time employees and freelancers leading to a financial and administrative burden for the latter. In this case, and although Amanda tried to repudiate this, perhaps considering full-time employment as 'proper' is not only about financial security but also functions as an informal criterion for what is understood as 'professional' work.

I want to know what the work, rather than the work arrangement, at the *Volkshochschule* was like.

When I started at the Volkshochschule*, it was "OK, B2 English general class, here's the book and we can't guarantee that you can take the next class". I took over from a woman that was leaving, but it was also very rigid, and I'm used to teaching my own things and they gave me a book and they said you have to stick to this book. And they had CDs that you had to play, and you had a whole selection of things that you had to follow. And for me it was so boring. So, she* [from the Volkshochschule] *came to observe me once at*

> *F_____ and I didn't stick to the book at all, I just had a couple of things, warm up activities, whatever I thought was worthy in the book. And then I did my own kind of take on it and it worked fabulously. I mean, it really was wonderful. At the end she chastised me because I didn't follow the book and she also said that I should have pushed other classes, like being almost a salesperson, which I did not appreciate, because that's not my job. But she wanted me to say "oh, if you're interested, we also have a C1 conversation class, it's a Tuesday night at 7". That's not me. I like to also think about my own topics, what's current, what are the students interested in, and kind of mould it around their needs, and I wasn't used to that.*

Not only was Amanda expected to use a textbook, which she took as an unworthy encroachment on her professional autonomy, she was 'chastised' for not selling more courses. This is in stark contrast to Margaret's description of the *Volkshochschule* as a 'great democratiser. Amanda took it as an insult, suggesting that non-teaching actions such as sales do not belong to her understanding of being a professional teacher. This may fit with the altruistic component of professionalism.

I go back to what Amanda had said about being lucky to get a five-year university contract.

> *They need to offer you a permanent position otherwise you essentially have to leave the state. There was a woman working, she was an excellent employee, great co-worker, everyone loved her. And when it came time to, in the middle of the semester, to get our contracts renewed, she got dropped, and everyone was like "what?" and there was nothing the boss could do about it because they would have to offer her an unlimited contract and they couldn't, the funding wasn't there. So, she was out, in the middle of the semester. And, I have to say after that, I think the department, really, was hurting, because she carried a lot of work. I think this rule was made to protect people, but it actually hurts people in the end. So, yeah, it's too bad.*

This brings into focus Amanda's polarised view of full-time employment (luxury / heaven) and freelancing (swamp / slavery). It implies that full-time employment offers such a relief from the burden and precarity of freelancing that the inherent job insecurity and temporary escape of full-time employment (Amanda mentioned university contracts between two to five years) is wholly ignored, perhaps even forgotten about. This may mean the impact of Amanda's capable and well-liked senior colleague losing her job was even more devastating as full-time work had been put on such a high pedestal. The knowledge that even full-time work arrangements in TEFL are insecure may also impact on self-esteem – she says the department was 'hurting'. TEFL workers, with both professional and academic qualifications, consider themselves 'lucky' to be able to work in their professional field and this may not be the case for other professions.

I suggest to Amanda that she wasn't lucky to get a full-time position, it was down to her experience.

> *I don't see myself as experienced, I've just been doing it a while.*

This was her conclusion, despite almost nine years of professional work experience up to that point. There seems to be some critical point, or threshold, where individuals either continue in freelance TEFL, or leave, by either getting a full-time position in TEFL or otherwise. This may be linked to notions of career. This could also be considered the point when they become a 'proper' teacher. Whether this can only be done by finding a more secure work arrangement is not clear.

I contemplate and then question whether Amanda's earlier struggles could have been down to something else, such as being related to her gender or age, or, based on the above, experience.

> *It's a really interesting question. I don't know. I think probably anyone, whether they're a woman or a man or young or old, may be more or less adept at taking on these roles, or may be more or less socialised to do so successfully, so I don't think being a woman or being a man of a certain age*

is the only factor, there. I mean at the time, too, I was a bit younger. I mean, that was now ten years ago when I first started out in Munich, I was in my 20s still, so I think part of it too is also getting established, as a younger woman and whatnot, but in any case, it [the struggles of being freelance] was definitely humbling.

To confirm, I ask Amanda about whether she had suffered from gender differences.

No, nothing. I mean at the university it's a bit different. The students that I teach are young men, and they don't always take too well to being told what to do by a young woman, so you do have to set your authority from the first class. I'm sure it's one of these things that does level out over time, at least in terms of the gender aspect, but I think when you're just getting started … I mean, I've definitely been in a lot of rooms with a lot of guys looking at me being like 'why am I listening to you, of all people?'. There are definitely some other aspects. That being said, I do think, to a certain degree, that being a younger woman in certain spaces meant having to prove myself more. Yeah, I do think that. And it wasn't being a woman, it was being a young woman, that was the issue. I needed to prove myself more. Not in the kindergartens, in the preschools, not when I was doing after-school training of kids, but it was very different in a business context. It's definitely different when you're a young woman talking to you an elder participant.

What is interesting is that she began by saying gender made no difference, preferring to focus on her 'humbling' work arrangement, before going on to highlight an important example of how gender completely changes her job. Amanda intimated on more than one occasion, especially in light of being taken seriously by businessmen, that her gender could be perceived negatively, stating she had to 'prove' herself more and set her 'authority' in the first class. There seems to be a bigger investment of emotional labour based on gender here and it is not necessarily clear what toll this has taken on Amanda, nor what resources she has used to deal with this.

We move on from this observation and I'm interested to see what other issues and perceptions influence professional identity and I ask her what other people say when she tells them what she does.

> *When I tell people I am a teacher they always ask, "how much holiday do you have?". Nobody respects teachers. It's easier as a teacher to do extra hours and nobody notices it. You always have creative ideas but at some point, you have to stop. You have to know when to work, prepare and relax. You could work every day until midnight because as a teacher you always have homework. Some people don't think TEFL is a proper career, they think people just use TEFL as a way to travel. People also think just because you're a native speaker implies anyone can teach. If you want to take a career in TEFL seriously, you can get frustrated with those who don't.*

Amanda has such a strong professional teacher identity but at the same time feels her work is not respected. I ask Amanda what exactly she means with her last comment.

> *When I started in TEFL there were other workers who were not qualified teachers. This lowers the pay threshold for everyone. Other professionals would get more. It shouldn't be like that. I'm a professional, I shouldn't be looked down upon.*

Amanda considers TEFL a profession but compares it unfavourably to others. Not only is teaching looked down on, TEFL seems to carry an even stronger negative perception as anyone can do it. This perception is only exacerbated by the reality Amanda expressed that non-qualified teachers are also working in the profession.

I am keen to understand what Amanda thinks about MELTA and so I bring it up.

> *I attended regular MELTA meetings, and my impression was that most English teachers were expat women who had followed their husbands to Germany and taught English as a little side business. None of the English teachers I met*

depended financially on their own job. Most of them only worked part time, teaching one or two classes a week. One reason I stopped going to a lot of the MELTA things, because I just thought, you know, this is my Saturday afternoon and I'm not actually learning anything new here, because with teaching there are lots of new things you could implement but a lot of the time the wheel has already been invented. I mean, the offerings just aren't as interesting anymore. I think they're very good for teachers who are getting on their feet, who are really interested in the technical aspects of teaching. And so it just doesn't feed me in the same way anymore. Yeah, that's exactly it. And that's not to speak badly of it, I think that all of this training is really, really important for the teachers that use it, it's just I am paid to read.

Despite TEFL being a profession that requires academic and professional qualifications, there is this preconception that any native English speaker can do it. This is not an irrational fear or resentment from TEFL workers that others are trying to take their jobs, this preconception turns to reality and manifests itself through unqualified workers joining the industry and thus weakening the standard of teaching while also lowering the pay, as these transient workers are often willing to accept less. Amanda's outgrowing of MELTA may also imply that her growth needs are being met by her full-time position, and she does not need to source these opportunities for growth herself. As Amanda mentions MELTA meetings on Saturdays, it may be that her relational needs are met through her work during the week, in contrast to Margaret's, although this is inferred rather than directly implied.

The idea of reaching a certain threshold with freelance TEFL appears so that it seems MELTA is good for getting established, but after a certain point as a learning institution it becomes redundant. It instead becomes a place for people to socialise, as in Margaret's case, but Amanda is more dismissive of this, valuing the free time as more important. Although Margaret and Amanda both have strong teacher professional identities, they have a different understanding and prioritisation of their multiple sub-identities.

I just have one topic, feedback, left on my question sheet, so I steer Amanda onto that.

> *I'd love to have an observer a couple of times. We don't have anything, unfortunately. I tried to introduce something a few years ago so that we had kind of a system where people went and observed other teachers' classes to just kind of see what other people are doing, how they're doing it with things you could improve on, give constructive feedback, things like that, but nobody jumped at the opportunity, I'm afraid. For written feedback, like evaluations, we have a system in place, but I prefer to concentrate on my own Needs Analysis, which I use to turn into full reports.*

Even in a formal institution such as a university, there is a lack of credible observation and formal feedback system in place, so Amanda has tried to install one herself. She has created her own feedback forms independent of the university. This is very insightful into how Amanda thinks about her competence and how she wants to develop professionally but also reflects poorly on the formal structures in place within the university. It is also in stark contrast to Margaret, who relied more on informal feedback structures.

At the end of our interview, Amanda looks at me, at least as much as one can do so on zoom, and gives a smile and a sigh of satisfaction as though we had achieved something great together and as though she has been able to look back on her journey almost with a sense of pride at having navigated her way out of freelancing while staying in the profession she loves. I tell her I'll keep her informed of my progress and she says she'd love to read the final thesis. This comment feels as genuine and honest as the whole interview has been.

4.3. Frank

Introduction to Frank

Frank is in his mid-forties. He has previously worked in a lot of different places, in a lot of different jobs. Since then, he has worked consistently in TEFL as an independent contractor for a long while. He offers an insight into how he and his identity change over time under a relatively consistent work arrangement, with the main source of his work language schools.

The key themes which arise from the interview with Frank are language schools as a tertiary agency, securing work against other TEFL workers, networking, freedom from organisations and work-life balance, impact of COVID, and no MELTA so that institutional embeddedness / relatedness is missing.

Meeting with Frank

I meet Frank online and we engage in some small chit chat about our overlapping circles, although I am cautious not to compromise the integrity of our interview. We go through the ethics procedure, and I start by asking Frank how he got into TEFL.

> *After I left university, I was travelling in Australia when I met somebody working in TEFL who pointed out that you could earn more in TEFL than fruit-picking or working in a hostel. I wanted to keep travelling but needed to work as well and TEFL was the handiest, most convenient way to do so. You can come to continental Europe with a university degree and work straight off the bat. I never wanted to be a TEFL teacher. I considered it beneath me and never a career, just a stop gap until I got a proper job. TEFL teachers are often people doing a short-term gig before doing something else, using TEFL as a temporary stopgap. They cannot get another job, so they do this because the access point to TEFL is quite easy. In Munich people will assume that because you are a native speaker you are a good teacher.*

As Frank provides a strong negative emotional response to TEFL, I decide to concentrate on something else to avoid the possibility of causing him distress. I ask Frank if he does any other type of work apart from TEFL.

> *I also work as a Cambridge speaking examiner and do some proofreading and editing. I'm always looking for a variety, it is good to do something different.*

Frank has taken on a range of work related to his occupational field. In a way, Frank is job crafting and demonstrating a large amount of autonomy over his career. I ask why he does this variety of work.

> *Money. I couldn't survive without these extras. You need the extras.*

The opening of our meeting is incredibly rich in insights, but I find it difficult to understand Frank. He talks about working this job because it is convenient, but also beneath him, and he needs to do a lot of extra work, which he has found, related to his occupational background. The word 'extra' could imply that he sees TEFL as his main job and other work solely as a supplement. However, he does not give off a strong professional identity. TEFL is not the same as being a 'traditional' teacher, but I cannot imagine that somebody working in a school would compare their job to a fruit-picker. As Franks has seemingly low job involvement, I wonder whether it might be the work arrangement that is important to him.

I ask Frank what the appeal of this type of work arrangement is.

> *I've never been properly employed. I've always enjoyed working freelance, I'm independent and can make my own schedule. I have a lot of friends who work too long and never see their kids. This gives me more time with my family. I have no boss and no meetings. They leave you alone, I don't have to deal with any management wank. I like not having people over my head directing me. I guess I value freedom more than security.*

This is a long way removed from Amanda's value system, who would tolerate any working arrangement, even freelancing, which she despised, to be a teacher. Frank actively accepts the inherent precarity of this work arrangement because he values the freedom so highly. He alludes to the freedom from bosses and meetings rather than freedom in the sense of task autonomy. While I still want to know more from Frank about TEFL itself, I follow the conversation and ask Frank if there any drawbacks to this kind of work arrangement.

Acquisition is the hardest thing. I do a lot of my work through language schools - I'm lazy and this way I don't have to advertise. I find other work through networking and a bit of blind luck, it's just through word of mouth. It took a while to get some steady work. Networking is the most important thing in business. People fed me onto other jobs. During my early days I was 100% dependent on language schools for work. In the beginning, I accepted everything because I needed the money and work. Now, after twenty years, about 50% of my work is sourced via language schools. I charge much more to private clients, but I still need the language schools as I can't source 100% from independent sources. You work with *a language school, not* for *them as you are not employed by them, they are a "facilitator" or "middleman".*

Frank expresses an uneasy dependence on language schools for work although it comes at a literal cost as he cannot earn as much money through them as private clients. Frank also reveals the importance of networking which I want to come back to later. I ask him first about any particularly good or bad experiences he has had in acquiring work.

I had agreed a contract with a language school to teach three, ninety-minute classes a week back-to-back for a year. It was a big deal. I planned my work schedule around it. After about six weeks I arrived as usual at the company to teach as scheduled. They just told me the classes had all been cancelled. That was it. It was horrible.

Not only did Frank incur financial losses from this course, but he was unable to book other courses in his timetable as he had that slot reserved. He told me the language school also seemed to have no idea about the block cancellation. I ask him if he had any more significant experiences with language schools and he told me one time they had not paid him for work he had already done. I ask him how he dealt with this.

Please pay me. I had a contract but was not in a position to go to court if the company did not pay. Eventually, the company paid me several months later.

I ask Frank how he deals with the financial ups and down.

> *Blood, sweat, and tears. During COVID-19, language courses were not a priority for most businesses. There were periods then where work was practically non-existent.*

Frank explained that he had taken government subsidies. The contrast to Frank's earlier comment about freedom over security comes back to me. I want to find out how Frank manages to get enough work to keep going.

> *I have contracts with several language schools, so that I don't have all my eggs in one basket. My experience of teaching English is that it's simple economics – it's supply and demand. If the demand is there, and you are the supply, they'll take you. Even companies like B_____* [big language school]. *Their method is that they only have native speakers, but I know people who weren't native speakers, but they were available, they needed teachers, and they sent them there.*

Working for multiple employees raises questions of loyalty and identity, which I want to pick up again later. I ask how the language schools' pay has changed over the last ten years.

> *Not much if barely, maybe 2, 3, 4 bucks more. When operating independently of the language schools, you get an idea of what to charge, for example, from how much I pay for my kids' music lessons, but I've kept the same price for 6 years.*

I wonder if there is any reason for this.

> *I'm quite bad at negotiating. I usually ask them if they can offer more, and when they say no, I just do the work anyway. In the end, it's 'take it or leave it'.*

Frank has told me he works in a few universities on a freelance basis, so I wonder if he has a regular spread of work throughout the year.

> *There are less busy months. Before it was a worry. I don't get holiday pay, that's something I dream about! I still have a problem relaxing on holidays. I feel that I have to be working. That's my thing - I save money, always save money for my holidays and for a surprise from the taxman.*

Frank describes his work arrangement aligned with the definition of 'bad work' with poor wages, overwork, and low levels of job security. His work arrangement impacts not only on his engagement at work, but also negatively on his well-being to the extent that when he is not working he cannot enjoy his holidays.

I return to the relationship between Frank and language schools.

> *If I do a good job, they're more likely to pass work my way. There's no security at all in this. It's like Uber drivers with zero-hour contracts. There's no obligation for them to give you work. That's why I work a lot. I had an operation on my leg, I was severely restricted, but got an offer of eight weeks' work and had to take it just to get cash coming in. Freelancing is not conducive to a long-term lifestyle.*

Frank describes a certain powerlessness, another characteristic of 'bad work'. His situation mirrors that of well-researched gig economy workers such as Uber drivers and food deliverers. However, while they do not know where the next gig is coming from, one hour to the next, here, the time period is protracted to six months in-line with Germany's two annual semesters. The emotional distress caused by the precarity of this work arrangement can build up not over hours, but over six months. Out of semester time, Frank lacks sufficient work, but it is difficult to take on work then, because it may impact on his availability for the 'good work' during semester time. Frank is emotionally impacted, and his 'bad work' dominates his thoughts and his actions, leading him to take on work he should be rejecting on health

grounds, both physical, as the leg example demonstrates, and mental or emotional, as he takes on too much work, a demand which leads to stress.

I wonder what kind of autonomy he feels over his work and ask him about this.

> *You're not really the boss. I work for private institutions and their bottom line is the bottom line. Students are customers and you've got to keep them satisfied. If there is frustration with a certain student, I just grit my teeth and say "that's fine" because you don't want word getting back to the director that you're creating a ruckus. You have to just shut up and swallow it. I don't want the students complaining about me. At any time, a student can pick up the phone and complain. If you complain about your boss, you won't get very far.*

Frank offers an intriguing balance to his work arrangement. Although he is free from the 'management wank' he mentioned earlier, understood as meetings and boss interference, and he enjoys the scheduling as it gives him time with his family, he does not seem to be able to pick and choose what type of work he does, when, and how much, suggesting he has little control over it, along with the rate of pay, and the ebb and flow of available work. There are certainly some tensions in Frank's present work arrangement, so I wonder about his future and want to ask him firstly about feedback.

> *You find out if you're doing a bad job, the companies will tell you. You know you're doing a good job not just from standard forms that companies have participants fill out but from real feedback from students in the classroom. When you can make your own decisions, take the initiative, and proceed as you see best and take your feedback directly from the customer, that's the feedback I want to get.*

This is more encouraging as Frank directly links feedback with autonomy over his work, which he had previously implied was not there. The use of the word 'real' to describe informal feedback points to the growing, emergent role of the customer, and that fulfilling the

customers' demand is not as straightforward as the 'standard forms', which may be more closely linked to traditional notions of professionalism embedded within an organisation.

After discussing feedback, I ask Frank about training opportunities.

> *I had a job interview with a language school, and they said, "there are two weeks of training that you don't have to pay for." They tried to sell it as free training, but it was really two weeks without pay. I thought it was a 'no go', really, but people do it because that language school is a huge company and has lots of contracts. A friend went on the course and said it was a waste of time. There's also another training course that I do for one day every two years which I have to go to Berlin at my own costs for, but with guaranteed work afterwards. Well, it's not guaranteed in a contract, but Munich is the biggest IELTS* [International English Language Testing System] *test centre in Germany, so there is enough work out there. Some of these other courses are probably interesting and useful if you have the time.*

Frank seems to resent the fact that this training would come out of time he could use to earn money. The fact he does not have the time for training courses might suggest he has a stronger focus on the struggles in the present, rather than potentially improving his future. He is also sceptical of the training as a development opportunity. The training options he mentions both relate to making him more competitive within his TEFL occupation. You have to do the IELTS training course to be allowed to conduct the tests. In this sense, Frank is meeting the demands of the market as he can supply what it currently wants. However, he does not seem to be expanding his skillset, rather reinforcing it through qualifications, and the COVID example could indicate that he is not anticipating or keeping up with changes in market demands. It is not clear whether he does not want to or whether financial precarity forces him to consider the bottom line first.

I ask Frank how he feels about TEFL as a job and how he sees his future.

> *There's not a gush of pride. It's not a job that's going to change the world. Am I proud of it? Not really, I'd say I'm nonplussed by it. I've always wanted to do something else which is more intellectually engaging. I never really intended to get into TEFL but now I have made peace with myself. Nobody respects this job; you can't have a career in this.*

I ask Frank what he means by this.

> *Career progression is limited, very limited. It is the gig economy, full stop. Do I still want to be hustling at fifty?*

There seems to be a conflict in Frank. He intimates at notions of career but says this is not possible in the gig economy. In this sense, the gig economy has 'expanded', or moved 'upwards' from less-skilled work such as Uber driving, to include ostensibly professional work, such as TEFL, for which you need to be degree-qualified with an extra professional certification and then further qualifications to be an examiner.

At the end of our interview, Frank thanks me repeatedly. His sense of autonomy and his flexibility to adapt and find new opportunities within the TEFL occupation shine through. At the same time, it seems to me that our meeting has been almost cathartic for him, allowing him to air a lot of his grievances.

4.4. Stuart

Introduction to Stuart

Stuart is, in many ways, similar to Frank. He is also in his mid-forties. He has worked in TEFL as an independent contractor for a long while and at the same time has performed other types of work apart from TEFL on a similar, contractual basis. His main route to finding work is via independently sourced businesses. He offers an insight into the differences between TEFL and other types of work under a similar, independent contractor work arrangement.

The key themes which arise from the interview with Stuart are networking / self-promotion, training / development, impact of COVID, adapting to the market via inter-occupational growth - the neo-professional.

Meeting with Stuart

I meet with Stuart, as with the others, via zoom, and we go through the ethics procedure. He is very punctual and polite and tells me he is excited to see what kind of things I want to know. He almost seems a bit flattered that I have asked him to interview but I also get the sense he could be using the time otherwise. I start by asking him how he got into TEFL.

> *After I left university, I wanted to try living abroad and got into TEFL to make ends meet. I started teaching informally in Spain before coming to view TEFL as a potential career.*

I ask Stuart if he does any other work.

> *I'm always doing more than one job. Circumstances led me to realise I am like that. I'm happy like this now. I do translation work and copywriting when I get an offer I can't refuse, financially speaking. It can be a good source of income. It's nice to offer as an 'added value' kind of service. I also do some consulting on intercultural communications. Teaching can be a stepping-stone to other freelance work. In TEFL you earn pocket money, but it is a good foot in the door to find other options.*

I ask him how he would rank TEFL compared to the other things he does.

> *TEFL is middle to lower middle. I'd rather give time to other things. I don't want to increase the TEFL work I do, I want to be more creative.*

I ask Stuart why he doesn't just do the other things.

> *As a freelance, if you're not working, you're not getting paid. You need to fill in the gaps* [in work schedule], *but you have to find a balance between overworking and not working enough. Teaching is tiring, I couldn't do it full-time. I'm in my forties now. I feel it, it's high intensity work. I pump a lot of energy into the trainings that I give. Will I have the same energy for another twenty years? It's hard to find the sweet spot to do justice to the customers.*

I recall my interview with Frank, who also worries about overworking, feeling guilty if he rejects work. However, Frank focussed more on working too many hours, rather than the intensity of teaching. Here, Stuart talks about 'doing justice to the customers'. This could be inferred either that he wants to do this for intrinsic or extrinsic reasons, but I get the sense he means the latter due to the use of the word 'customers' to describe his students. He also uses 'value added' and 'service' which makes Stuart come across as very pragmatic and business orientated. This could suggest he sees his work more about making money than following a teaching vocation.

I ask Stuart how he feels about his current work arrangement.

> *I don't need the security of a full-time job, contract, that's just not who I am. I love the self-autonomy, the freedom to do things the way I want to and having nobody telling me how to do it.*

Stuart speaks positively about his work arrangement, so I decide to ask him about how he plans long-term and builds a career.

> *In TEFL, there is no long-term career progression. The industry, at least in Germany, is in decline. I know from the publishing industry that, in terms of the numbers of book sales, the publishers are fighting for market share and not to expand the pie. There are various threats to my position. The high cost of living in Germany means I have to pass this on to my customers. This has been more and more on my mind recently due to COVID. Germany is an 'online-allergic country', but courses are now online. Business leaders and*

managers see online courses as a program and think they do not need teachers as much. I'm now just a face on a screen and therefore more easily replaceable. Do I provide a competitive advantage in the online world? It's a concern, there are much cheaper alternatives, such as workers in less developed countries than Germany or digital tools for learning languages.

I ask him why he thinks companies choose him above somebody else.

In Germany, doing a good job is taken for granted, you're supposed to do a good job. I've become like Germans, more professional. Reliability, in the form of a good track record, gets me work. They're not jumping into the unknown. There are many unreliable teachers. I've picked up a lot of work where it did not work out with a different trainer. You can teach grammar well enough online. However, you cannot resolve communication problems and therefore you cannot go without teachers. In another job, I have more time with each group of students. I can give them the skillset they need for business, such as improving their LinkedIn profile or providing intercultural training, a clear place where things are growing.

Stuart gets jobs because of 'reliability', but I cannot estimate his professional self-esteem. I'm also interested in the way Stuart keeps referring to non-TEFL work, so I want to find out more about this.

I realised there are different things that I like to do. Teaching is one of them. Ironically, I always looked at teaching as something I did when I couldn't do something else. I was always, um, plagued by the expression of 'those who can, do, and those who can't, teach,' which I heard on a TV show when I was about 14 years old. Obviously, my opinion has completely changed now but teaching of language is not valued. I think the value of it is, of course, subjective but when people are exposed to all these situations where they can get an hour of, or 45 minutes, of TEFL training for 15 euro through an online platform or whatever, I mean, this is just not sustainable! It means that

you really need to market yourself as something very different from those offerings in order to achieve a higher price point. I charge more as a sign of quality but if you charge more, you better be worth it.

Stuart seems to have assuaged his negative view of teaching to some degree, although the use of 'plagued' implies an absence of self-esteem, almost shame. He mentioned this in the past tense and then switches over to others' perception of TEFL and seems to recover his professional pride by charging more to the client, reinforcing the self-belief that he is providing quality, a marker of 'good jobs'.

I want to follow up on this, so I ask Stuart how he knows he is delivering quality.

TEFL workers need to market themselves on business skills and communications and not teaching skills. Teachers need to be more than just teachers. They already are, but they need to market themselves better. This could lead to better pay, better all-round package of more classes, and more work during the day rather than out of office hours. For example, I have done extra qualifications in communications, intercultural competence, and non-violent communication. This has equipped me to identify people's needs. You have to be able to do and offer more - you need to prove your value added.

Although Stuart understands the precarious nature of his work arrangement, he is active in crafting his own career, finding new opportunities outside his occupational field of TEFL which are more fulfilling, as he can be creative (his word), but also more financially rewarding, satisfying both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for the job. This professional development comes completely from him so that he needs to be able to anticipate trends in the market to make sure the training he undergoes is useful to meet market demand. He also mentions a high amount of self-promotion required so I follow up on this.

When I started this job, 19 years ago, it was pretty tough. I did a lot of self-promotion, although this is not an aspect of the job I particularly enjoy; I don't have a sales gift. I did active face-to-face networking and generating

word-of-mouth by producing flyers and writing speculatively to companies to offer my services. I put a lot of time and effort into all this, but the production of flyers and emails was largely ineffective in terms of the investment of resources to pay-off. Far more effective was networking as a strategy to source work. How much promotion I do now is a question of how much work I can currently take on.

Stuart sees networking as hard work but necessary to source work, whereas Frank considers the way he finds his work as 'blind luck' and talked about asking around his network if he was short of work. Even more extreme, when Stuart had too much work and an offer came in, he was able to offer it to somebody in his network and take a 'finder's fee'. While Stuart cannot control fluctuations in the amount of work available, he is able to profit from having too much, while also adapting the amount of effort in self-promotion to fit. This effort to keep his work-life balance under control is a stark contrast to Frank's working when ill and stressing on holiday.

I ask Stuart about the impact of COVID.

I was able to offer other teachers not used to the internet training courses which increased my value. We've all had to adapt to COVID but I'm OK with that.

I ask Stuart to sum up what he feels about his work.

I really enjoy the process of being a trainer. I've not used a book for years. Work needs to be designed specifically for that group. It's much more emotional than other work because you're helping somebody. It's very positive, you know, you've got a very clear goal in front of you, and you're helping to achieve that. So, yeah, I definitely identify with it much more than a conventional job which is very 'I've got to make so much money in the year for the company I'm working for, I've got my KPIs I've got to meet. I don't mean that negatively, but it's very different.

Stuart's interest in his output helping others could be considered altruism and is a feature of good work. However, he does mention a high emotional impact of the job he does.

At the end of our interview, I have the feeling that both Stuart and I think he has done me a favour by participating. This is certainly right from my perspective, and I get the feeling that for Stuart it is straight back to business as usual after our interview.

5. Concluding Chapter

This concluding chapter 5 completes the thesis and comprises an extensive discussion of the findings of the research, followed by contribution to knowledge, and, as this is a DBA not a PhD, a more substantial contribution to professional practice, and a reflection on the limitations of this thesis and suggested potential areas for future research. Finally, a conclusion to the whole work is given.

5.1. Discussion

The following section aims to create a dialogue between the findings and the literature with regard to the three research questions. As outlined in the first chapter, the aim of my research is to understand skilled workers' experiences in non-standard work arrangements, their perception of their professional identity, and how they view and plan their career. The section is ordered so that each of the three research questions is addressed in turn. The three research questions restated are:

- How do TEFL workers ensure job quality and immediate success while planning a career in non-standard work arrangements? (viability challenge)
- How do TEFL workers understand / experience their professional identity in the context of non-standard work arrangements? (identity challenge)
- How do TEFL workers perceive, experience, and negotiate risk and precarity in the context of their work? (emotional challenge)

It is worth revisiting the definition of gig work which was taken for this work and seeing if this applies to TEFL workers. The definition chosen was from Cropanzano *et al*. (2022), who reviewed 243 articles and found 78 definitions of gig work, before fixing on their definition: "Gig work is labour contracted and compensated on a short-term basis to organisations or to individual clients through an external labour market" (p. 494).

From the literature review, four key attributes were used to identify gig work, namely membership (regular employee at an organisation), time (short timeframe of gigs), compensation (project or piecework basis), and means of connecting with employers (how

they sell their labour) Cropanzano *et al*. (2022). With the exception of those who had moved into a full-time role, none of the participants were members of an employing organisation. In terms of time and compensation, participants described gig work of a duration of as little as one or two hours. This was normally projected over a series of weeks, but not always: Justine did TEFL work cash-in-hand, Jennifer designed her own teaching classes that were one-offs, and Paul detailed losing work suddenly, despite having a contract with several outstanding hours. The comparisons participants made to describe their compensation were insightful. "It paid more than babysitting and waitressing" (Justine), "I saw an advert for dog walking that paid more" (Jennifer), while Paul compared TEFL work to hostel work or fruit-picking, albeit favourably. When asked how the pay had changed, most said rarely or not at all in the last decade. Regarding the fourth and final attribute of the definition of gig work, there were quite a few diverse ways of connecting with employers, but many described getting good work as 'pure luck'. Particularly the Frank character felt the stress of the precarity of the work arrangement: Oscar said "do I still want to be hustling at fifty?" and Brian said "it is the gig economy, full stop." Moreover, Amanda described getting a full-time job to "rescue" her from the "swamp of freelancing", described her current contract as like "gold dust". As she is doing the same work but under a different work arrangement, it suggests the work arrangement is what causes the difficulty, not the TEFL work itself. So, whether non-standard TEFL work is gig work or not is largely irrelevant, it is certainly perceived this way and comes with the associated precarity and stress of more typical examples of gig work. As such, there are often parallels drawn here between the TEFL participants and the literature on gig work, irrespective of whether the TEFL work performed qualifies under some stricter definitions of gig work.

5.1.1. Research Question 1 (Viability Challenge)

This section explores the question "How do TEFL workers ensure job quality and immediate success while planning a career in non-standard work arrangements? (viability challenge)." The first part looks at job quality and success through the understanding of 'good' work (see Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). It then moves on to discuss planning a career. The findings suggest that there are three main elements that will help to determine the viability of work in the gig economy, namely individual characteristics, particularly with regards to how the perceived autonomy/flexibility against security dichotomy is experienced; the propensity for

job crafting and similar 'growth / development' methods to plan a career; and the positive assumption of an administrative / entrepreneurial role in addition to the professional role.

Firstly, the concept of 'good' (see Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011) TEFL gig / non-standard work is considered from the perspective of the research participants and from the literature. The literature often tends to polarise 'good' full-time employment against 'bad' non-standard work arrangements (see, for example, Connelly and Gallagher, 2004; Cappelli and Keller, 2013). This is based largely on measures such as control or temporariness. The temporariness argument seems largely specious and difficult to reconcile with this research. For instance, assuming that non-standard work arrangements are 'bad', it would be expected that the participants would try to leave this form of work. However, many of the participants had been in non-standard work arrangements for ten or twenty years or all their working lives. Nonetheless, Leanne considered herself as "lucky to get a full-time job" as they are "like gold dust," even though these jobs are often restricted to two-year contracts. Leanne told a story of when one good employee lost her job at the end of the contract. This suggests that while full-time employment may be initially perceived as secure, it is in fact no more secure than non-standard work arrangements. "What is secure?" as Paul put it, especially considering the impact of COVID-19 where friends on full-time contracts had lost their jobs. So, the idea of a hierarchy of work arrangements based on temporariness (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004) seems incorrect. Another approach to 'good' work needs to be considered.

'Good' work as defined by Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) comprises autonomy, work-life balance, good contractual conditions such as pay, number of hours and safety, and self-actualisation, among other factors. This means that, by definition, non-standard work arrangements are at least partly 'bad' as there is no job security (as with many contemporary full-time jobs) and they do not have good contractual conditions such as compensation for sickness and contributions to pensions and health insurance. As Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) discuss, not all elements need to be present to make work 'good'. This leads to consideration of which elements of 'good' work are found in non-standard work arrangements and whether they compensate for those that are missing. This also points to a potential split in the participants' experience of their working conditions, which contributed to the different

composite characters from chapter 4. For example, the importance of self-realisation, which is discussed later.

Within non-standard work arrangements, the literature tends to create another dichotomy of high-skilled professionals who are able to leverage their skills and knowledge to get good working conditions versus low-skilled workers who cannot. However, on closer inspection, the link between high-skilled workers and good working conditions is not clear cut. Professional camera operators were found to be working 70 hours per week, journalists were under immense stress due to the precarity of their work brought about by market forces (Matthews and Onyemaobi, 2020; Thornton and Ocasio, 1999), whereas translators were able to take advantage of their niche skills to demands better conditions (Fraser and Gold, 2001).

With respect to TEFL work, although one participant mentioned TEFL is supply and demand, all the others discussed how their qualifications and experience were checked before starting work, suggesting that TEFL work is necessarily high-skilled and professional as it requires a specific body of knowledge certified through professional qualifications. Please note that the question of whether professional and academic qualifications were requested was an initial question intended somewhat as an icebreaker and, as nearly all participants said 'yes', it is not included in the vignettes in chapter 4. Nevertheless, the TEFL work that the participants perform is subjected to low-skilled work conditions (Ravenelle, 2019) such as those in the gig economy. One could speculate that the gig economy and gig-like conditions, which are most prevalent in low-skilled jobs, are moving higher up the ranking of skilled jobs. This would support the idea that all jobs can be 'gigged' (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022) and to some extent the idea that work arrangement is a form of labour segmentation (McGovern, Smeaton and Hall, 2004). This may seem to put an unnecessarily negative, 'dystopian' spin on the gig economy. However, it is worth considering that Watson et al. (2021) had suggested that some professional jobs, such as substitute teaching, may not be easily turned into gig work, whereas this research has shown that this is quite common in the relatively similar occupation of TEFL work. This thus leaves professionals more generally in an invidious position, as not all are or will be able to craft 'good' conditions for themselves. As TEFL work would fit the preferred definition of gig work given in this literature review (see Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022) and other definitions as well (Watson *et al.*, 2021) it is worth exploring whether non-standard TEFL work

be considered under Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) 'good', at least partially if not fully. While there can be no definitive answer drawn from the empirical research here, it helps to explain some of the differences between the four composite characters and reinforce the importance of individual characteristics in perceiving work as 'good' or not. The components of 'good' work which are important to them, and thus desirable from their work arrangement, depended on the individual: for Margaret, social interaction and to some extent self-esteem are important; for Amanda, autonomy (over work process) and security; for Frank, work-life balance and autonomy (freedom from e.g. bosses); and for Stuart, interest and self-realisation.

According to the literature, autonomy is part of the definition of professional work (Hodson and Sullivan, 2012) and is sought out by professionals. It is also prevalent in models of 'good' work and organisational models (Hackman and Oldham, 1975; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Deci, Olafsen and Ryan, 2017). Cropanzano *et al.* (2022, p. 499) propose that "[g]ig workers will be more satisfied with their jobs to the extent that (a) autonomy is high and (b) dependence on a single platform or employer is low." However, another of their propositions is "… this type of work is likely to be preferred to the extent that the individual values the autonomy, freedom, and flexibility provided by gig work." They also suggest that autonomy may be curvilinear, so that too much or too little autonomy could have negative outcomes, particularly on gig workers' health, and that the exact shape of this curve is affected by individual characteristics. Autonomy can be experienced in several ways, for example creative autonomy, autonomy over the work process, or autonomy over scheduling. This empirical research supports the proposal that too much autonomy can become a demand, but also that this varies wildly based on the individual: "Creativity is what stresses me the most," said Sarah, while others such as Alison and Frank actively sought out jobs that were more creative and challenging (creative autonomy). There was some consternation over the restrictions that language schools imposed on the way classes were taught, for example by using specific textbooks, possibly a form of direct control which forces teachers to forgo their autonomy and become 'page turners' to the extent that not using a textbook was seen almost as a source of pride (both workplace and responsible autonomy). Many others discussed the difficulty of either sourcing enough hours of work with a high degree of autonomy, or having sufficient resources, such as energy and time, to perform them satisfactorily as measured by their own

standards (autonomy over scheduling). It can be concluded that respondents have a complex relationship to autonomy, where, in some cases, either too much autonomy is actually negative or that some individuals want autonomy and others not. However, this is mitigated by personal circumstances. In the context of the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), autonomy seems to have a tipping point where it turns from a resource to a demand. This conclusion, however, is rather unsatisfactory in trying to holistically explain non-standard workers' experience as it reduces it to individual characteristics. Moreover, performing the data analysis for this research revealed distinct groups of people who were collected together not based on their personal characteristics (there were no apparent differences based on demographic factors such as age, race, sex/gender, or nationality), rather other factors such as their dependence on this type of work. This fits with another of Cropanzano *et al.*'s (2022) propositions that gig work is likely to be preferred depending on how the individual values autonomy, freedom and flexibility. This should also include conditions specific to non-standard work arrangements such as the possibility to say 'no' to undesirable work. As Frank and Stuart are exposed to the economic precarity of the gig economy, they have both ensured that they are not heavily dependent on one employer. However, this can lead to conflicts of interests between themselves, various employers, and language schools as gig workers operate in a workspace with individual responsibility but often with rules imposed by a platform (Bellesia *et al.*, 2019). In this research, there was some evidence of both reinforcement and balancing strategies (see Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022) and there was little evidence of anything other than transactional psychological contracts. Indeed, relational psychological contracts were sought out with individuals such as students or other TEFL workers who are not the employer. This supports the idea of the neo-professional where legitimacy and validation are established through clients and collaborators rather than an employer (Cross and Swart, 2020). In broader terms, it means that autonomy manifests itself in different ways which are of differing importance to different people. It also brings into question how much autonomy these non-standard work arrangements actually offer to skilled groups of workers such as the participants of this research as not all of them experienced workplace autonomy. This may support Banks' (2007) claim that workers think they are in control which actually enables them to be exploited.

In terms of securing immediate success in non-standard work, the factors of 'good' work pertaining to the work contract, good wages and good working hours, are particularly relevant. Gerald, a hybrid Stuart/Frank character, knows that by sourcing his own work, that is, offering TEFL directly to businesses rather than using a language school as a third party, he could charge up to five times what he makes via the language school. This implies that work through a language school is 'bad' work as it pays badly (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011) and begs the question why he does not totally break away from the language schools. While the literature claims that cultural workers often 'self-exploit' in pursuit of their ideal work (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011), Gerald states that he cannot generate enough work to break free from these 'bad' conditions completely. Other Frank characters, when asked why they do not source their own work responded as follows: Paul said "because I'm lazy," and Brian says he is bad at negotiating and just accepts what the language schools offer. Yet when considering why he does non-standard work, Mark says "I guess I value freedom more than security." So, while none of these reasons support the claim that workers self-exploit to follow job ideals, other factors such as freedom, or even a lack of self-esteem when negotiating, may explain the apparent self-exploitation. As a further motive, Paul discusses the positive impact on work-life balance of this work arrangement in the sense of more time with his kids although he also describes how the lesson times offered are inflexible and set by the language school. Potentially, these individuals assume they have their freedom, but have rules imposed upon them by the language schools around pay, number of hours, and so on so that a 'good' contract is subordinate to other 'good' aspects such as work-life balance. It also supports Wood's (2016) contention that work flexibility cannot be manager and worker controlled simultaneously. For instance, Jennifer said she would work at the VHS if they could guarantee 20 hours per week. They responded with indignation, saying they were coveted courses despite paying the least, and suggested she create her own course. This is another example of a worker needing to take full autonomy over the whole work process at the potential cost of a lot of effort and unpaid hours, which some may not want to do. It also puts a question mark over how much agency these workers have while reinforcing Petriglieri *et al.*'s (2018) claim that gig workers are constantly performing 'maintenance' activities, essentially working for free, which Margaret described as 'slavery'.

Moving on from job quality and immediate success to the next element of the viability challenge, planning a career, brings to the fore the propensity for job crafting and similar 'growth / development' methods.

As explained by Cross and Swart (2020), outside of organisational boundaries, a strategy of professional fluidity is pursued, identified by two key mechanisms: (i) the way in which legitimacy and validation are established; and (ii) the flexibility shown and required. This leads to neo-professionalism, which encompasses an ability to learn and apply new knowledge, diminishing the need for recognition of knowledge through traditional institutions such as universities, while at the same time highlighting the growing role of clients in discerning over quality, previously the preserve of professionals. This also highlights the importance of networking and building and maintaining relationships with clients. The relationship element will be covered in a later section. Here, the focus lies on understanding the strategies that workers have in place to emphasise their human capital and thus their work environment.

Learning new skills and/or knowledge appears in several models and theories such as the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman and Oldham, 1975) as skill variety, Furlong's (2000) definition of professionalism as incorporating knowledge, and Martinaitis, Christenko and Antanavičius' (2021) work complexity as non-routine tasks. New skills and knowledge need to be in demand. If not, this can lead to a sense of underemployment, a demand in the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). As under neo-professionalism the requirements of the clients drive the direction of an individual's work, the participants were asked how they knew which new knowledge they needed to acquire. One primary method was feedback.

Feedback from the job is one of the five characteristics of the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). Margaret and Frank described the formal feedback procedures in place in organisations as largely inadequate, suggesting you only hear anything if they are negative. This is not an environment which fosters a growth mindset and reinforces the fact that non-standard workers are not exposed to the same growth opportunities as standard workers with little chance of career advancement (Barrett and Doiron, 2001; Killam and Weber, 2014; McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004; Brown and Gold, 2007; Spreitzer, Cameron and Garrett, 2017). This makes self-realisation, a component of 'good' work, much more

difficult. This led to the instigation, most comprehensively from Amanda, of a system personally devised to elicit feedback. Feedback was then directly used to measure current performance. Being disinclined to rely on organisations' own feedback and the level of initiative shown in producing her own feedback forms show the importance to Amanda of doing her job well. As a component of 'good' work (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011), this form of self-realisation also suggests that 'good' TEFL work is available, but it is not inherent in the work itself, and certainly not in precarious work arrangements. In this instance, production of one's own feedback method can be considered job crafting (Tims, Bakker and Derks, 2012). Job crafting through feedback acts as a proxy to understanding how well one is doing one's job, but the way this is measured is completely different because the consideration of what a 'good' job is is different. This is done as a means to different ends: Amanda wants to be a good teacher, whereas Frank and Stuart are more concerned with being good at their job to maintain their work and potentially secure more work. Again, the work arrangement comes to the fore so that ostensibly the same job has a completely different task perception (see Kelchterman, 1993). It could also be argued that feedback is used to reinforce professional identity, especially in a context where there is an elevated threat of de-professionalisation.

Under non-standard work arrangements, growth through training and development are almost always the domain of the individual. These individuals may employ a variety of strategies to fit their own growth needs, such as training downtime, stretchwork, gig crafting and bricolage. Here, the empirical research shows a clear divide between Frank and Stuart and supports their division into separate characters. Two Frank characters, Oscar and Paul, both turned down training opportunities as this training downtime would have come at their own cost in terms of money and lost earning time. By contrast, many of the Stuart characters describe how they actively seek out further learning opportunities involving both training downtime and stretchwork as well as bricolage. These form their gig/job-crafting strategy. The full quotations to support this can be found in the research design section in chapter 3.4.1. Cropanzano *et al.* (2022, p. 499) propose that "[g]ig workers who engage in job crafting … will be more likely to choose the new 'gig' psychological contract compared to the standard workers." This research has shown that the words 'likely' and 'choose' may be a bit strong and should be tempered. For instance, a proposition that this research could support would be that gig workers who engage in job crafting will be more likely to thrive in the new 'gig'

psychological contract. This can help to explain why Stuart fulfils more or the criteria for 'good' work than Frank and is overall more positive about other elements of his work arrangement such as work-life balance.

In order to analyse the differences between Frank and Stuart, a theoretical model outside of the initial literature review may be necessary. In an academic thesis, new literature that emerges as a result of the study's findings should be incorporated into the Findings or Discussion section, rather than being retroactively added to the original Literature Review as the initial literature review serves to establish the theoretical framework and contextual background prior to the research being conducted, offering a baseline understanding of existing knowledge (Hart, 1998; Ridley, 2012). Including post hoc literature in the literature review can undermine the chronological integrity of the research process, potentially leading to confirmation bias or retrospective justification (Boote & Beile, 2005). Instead, referencing newly relevant or emergent literature in the findings or discussion ensures transparency in the evolution of the research and allows for a more authentic engagement with how the study contributes to and interacts with ongoing scholarly discourse (Silverman, 2020). This approach maintains methodological rigour and acknowledges the dynamic nature of academic inquiry.

Returning to the differences between Frank and Stuart, the theoretical model Achievement Goal Theory (Dweck, 1986) can be used. Frank's aim is to make himself more likely to get work by becoming an excellent teacher. As this is based on extrinsic needs, he does not follow a mastery approach, rather a performance approach. To do so, he practises stretchwork (O'Mahony and Bechky, 2006) by taking on new but related tasks, for example exam invigilation. This can be called *intra*-occupational growth. Stuart, on the other hand, is much more aware of market trends and therefore fits the neo-professional (Cross and Swart, 2020) ideal better. He is pragmatic and tailors his offer to market requirements. This combines the mastery and performance approach (Dweck, 1986), but, due to changing market conditions, means that much of his income potential lies outside of TEFL. He is happy to exploit this and sees his professional identity as a teacher as one of many sub-identities. This follows the neo-professional discourse of external legitimacy and validation, and professional fluidity. He plans his career through *inter*-occupational growth, realising the limitations of TEFL.

In addition to growth / development needs, much literature claims that gig workers must develop essential entrepreneurial skills to perform work that was previously done by experts, becoming an organisation of one (Saks, 2016; Albinsson, 2018; Bellesia *et al.*, 2019). Although less important than individual characteristics, and the propensity for job crafting and growth, this is the third element of the viability challenge, positively assuming an administrative / entrepreneurial role in addition to the professional role. However, the assumption of this extra administrative / entrepreneurial role may be a manifestation of autonomy that is undesirable. Workers may not have, and not want to develop, the entrepreneurial skills required to source their own work, produce their own invoices, engage in networking and so on. This may again come back to the work-life balance argument along with other individual needs which may explain firstly why some accept or reject gig-like work conditions and secondly thrive or struggle in these said conditions. It could be considered an example of where taking on the additional roles as part of stretchwork can clash with the undesirable aspects of autonomous career-driving. As this is both a viability and an identity challenge, to avoid duplication, it is discussed at length under identity challenge.

This paragraph recaps and summarises the above to provide a concise answer to the research question "How do TEFL workers ensure job quality and immediate success while planning a career in non-standard work arrangements? (viability challenge)?" This research has explored how TEFL workers ensure job quality and achieve what is referred to as immediate success within unstable, freelance environments. The framework outlined in Section 2.2.8 provides a theoretical lens for understanding how this transition occurs in response to the realities of non-standard work arrangements. Historically, career success was externally defined and measured through markers such as promotions, salary increases, tenure, and hierarchical advancement within an organisation (Hall, 1976; Arthur, 1994). However, for many TEFL professionals operating in freelance or gig contexts, these markers are no longer relevant or attainable. In response, individuals are increasingly redefining success on their own terms, often drawing on subjective measures such as personal growth, flexibility, autonomy, and meaningful work (Seibert et al., 1999; Lo Presti et al., 2018). As workers encounter the limitations of traditional pathways—especially the absence of promotions, organisational support, or job security—they begin to prioritise intrinsic outcomes such as job satisfaction, control over work-life balance, and alignment with personal values (Hall, 2004; Verbruggen,

2012). Due to the lack of career planning possible in non-standard work arrangements, immediate success, as conceptualised here, is aligned to Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) framework of "good work", where autonomy, creativity, and alignment with personal values compensate for the absence of secure contractual arrangements. For many TEFL workers, success is achieved not through linear career progression but through subjective measures of satisfaction, such as student engagement, flexibility of schedule, and perceived professional legitimacy.

In the TEFL gig context, "immediate success" often acts as a bridge between old and new career paradigms. It might include securing a steady stream of students, receiving high ratings, or achieving a desired level of income, short-term indicators that provide a sense of momentum or validation. While these outcomes may not correspond to traditional long-term career progression, they help individuals reframe what success looks like in the absence of institutional benchmarks. Over time, workers may find themselves increasingly valuing portfolio careers, varied experiences, or narrative coherence over linear advancement. This shift involves not only a change in what success looks like, but also a reframing of identity—from being an "employee climbing the ladder" to a "professional navigating a self-directed path." Planning a long-term career under such non-standard conditions, however, emerges as inherently problematic. The constant renegotiation of contracts, limited institutional support, and lack of traditional training or progression structures hinder any conventional model of professional development. To cope, TEFL workers often become bricoleurs, which involves constructing coherent narratives and strategies from fragmented opportunities. While this allows some to thrive, it exposes others to cycles of burnout or stagnation. Therefore, job viability is maintained through a combination of entrepreneurial adaptation and access to informal support systems. Immediate success is well-discussed in the text through the lens of "good work" (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011), where autonomy, flexibility, and meaningful work can compensate for poor contractual conditions. Planning a career is explored through "job crafting," "bricolage," and the assumption of entrepreneurial roles. The thesis shows that long-term planning is difficult in non-standard arrangements due to instability and lack of training support, but some workers compensate via professional fluidity and multiple identities. The findings suggest that there are two main elements that will help to determine the success of a worker in the gig economy, namely individual characteristics, particularly with

regards to how the perceived autonomy/flexibility against security is experienced; the propensity for job crafting and similar 'growth / development' methods; and the positive assumption of an administrative / entrepreneurial role in addition to the professional role, which may be a product of the two aforementioned elements.

Ultimately, the transition from traditional to personal markers of success involves a psychological and strategic reframing of what a career is. TEFL professionals in gig contexts must often reconcile the absence of organisational progression with the emergence of a more flexible, internally driven career model. This aligns with Hall's (2004) protean model and Arthur's (1994) boundaryless orientation, where success is defined through internal values, self-direction, and adaptability, rather than employer recognition or institutional structures. For individuals, this change represents not just a redefinition of outcomes, but a reorientation of identity, values, and long-term goals. The challenge—and opportunity—is to make peace with uncertainty while cultivating a sense of purpose and agency in one's own evolving career narrative.

5.1.2. Research Question 2 (Identity Challenge)

This next section explores the research question "How do TEFL workers understand / experience their professional identity in the context of non-standard work arrangements? (identity challenge)". The main conclusion is that a strong, traditional professional identity such as a teacher identity is not compatible with success in non-standard work arrangements where a neo-professional identity based on professional fluidity is required.

The literature suggests that standard workers, by having an organisation, have a ready-made identity workspace (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2010). As Relatedness, as defined in the Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2004), is considered a basic human need (Rigby and Ryan, 2018), this naturally puts added stress (Bakker, Tims and Derks, 2012) on non-standard workers. For non-standard workers, there are calls to establish an identity by creating holding environments which connect to routines, places, people, and a sense of purpose (Petriglieri *et al.*, 2018). Identity is constructed through stories, deemed narrative identities (Anicich, 2022). In this research, both Margaret and Amanda consistently declared themselves 'born

teachers' with Amanda suggesting she would "always be a teacher, even if it meant remaining a freelancer", which was also described as "the swamp of freelance teaching". In this sense, they show how telling stories which provide a sense of purpose reinforce their identities. Margaret also shows connections to the *Volkshochschule* (a place) which may also stand to reinforce her identity outside a traditional employment structure. Nevertheless, it is felt this only weakly conforms to Petriglieri *et al.*'s (2018) holding environments. This may be because that research, unlike this empirical research, was on a heterogeneous group of gig workers. More conclusive research is needed.

In another strand of literature related specifically to teachers albeit not TEFL workers, Kelchterman (1993) suggests there are five interlinked elements which comprise teacher identity, namely self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception and future perspectives. Task identity appears in the JCM, in Kelchterman's (1993) model of professional identity as task perception, and as a resource in the JD-R model. Task perception relates to how teachers define their jobs and the different aspects of their job. It shines a light on some of the problems TEFL workers have. There is a large disparity between the way they define their jobs and the way these jobs are perceived by others. Stuart declared that the role of the teacher was "drastically underrated". The TEFL workers explained how their tasks involved much more than just pedagogy, ranging from the need for other knowledge and skills, such as intercultural competence, managing difficult relations and so on, to classroom management. Simon also sees his job as not only teaching English, stating that he has developed a broad section of skills and business knowledge and has become a 'language consultant'. Alas, while more fulfilling, he concedes that it pays the same as "just a teacher". This chimes with Saks' (2016) definition of two types of professional identity: entrepreneurial and activist. TEFL workers are exposed to the precarity of the new world of work, forced to undertake an entrepreneurial role to merely survive professionally, and this clashes with the more values-based activist role. For those who were able to reject work, such as Margaret, the activist role was more prominent. For those dependent on the earnings from non-standard work, the entrepreneurial role is more important. Albinsson (2018) suggests that the dual roles of professional and entrepreneur can either be hybrid, separate, or complementary. This research would suggest that they are in competition with one another so that a high level of one equals a low level of the other.

In any case, this echoes calls in the literature for the self-employed to receive entrepreneurial training to be able to perform these maintenance activities. However, it does not satisfy questions of how, by whom, and when this training should take place. Moreover, as adopting the identity of an entrepreneur creates another sub-identity, some may reject this as it impacts the strength and equilibrium of their whole identity. However, it may be necessary to thrive in this type of non-standard work arrangement. Insofar, accepting and embracing the entrepreneurial identity is not just about identity, but also a strategic manoeuvre to put oneself in the best possible position to thrive in the new world of work. As Bellesia *et al*. (2019) suggest that developing an entrepreneurial orientation can expand identities, this research and the current literature align well.

In terms of self-image and self-esteem, one of the elements of good work, Margaret and to a lesser degree Amanda show confidence and acceptance of their teacher identity, but this can be argued to be linked to the lack of financial dependence on the work or the full-time employment work arrange respectively. The self-image and self-esteem of the research participants in non-standard work arrangements was often externally impacted, for example comments such as “just a teacher”, “little English teacher”, or “those who can’t, teach” were prevalent, alongside the poor salaries on offer from language schools and the *Volkshochschule*, the perceived flooded market, and the idea that anybody can teach, “you just need to be a native speaker”. These are aspects of depersonalisation, where workers are not perceived as individuals with idiosyncratic skills (see Anicich, 2022) and suggest that the ‘bad’ work conditions of non-standard work such as the gig economy negatively impact self-image and professional identity. This is similar to other forms of non-standard work, especially those via a tertiary agent or platform such as uber drivers or food deliverers (Anicich, 2022). This would certainly support one of Cropanzano *et al.*’s (2022, p. 499) proposals that “… gig workers may experience more self-directed negative emotions (e.g. self-directed blame, shame) than standard workers.” The emotional impact of this type of work is considered later on.

Despite the acknowledgement that the language schools earned money off them, charging as much as five times to the client as the workers received, the interviewees mentioned it would

not be ethical to take the language schools' customers. This professional value, or integrity (Hodson and Sullivan, 2012), was strengthened by the fact that other interviewees were not prepared to take on high-paying work as they wouldn't be able to do it properly, in the sense of justifying the price to the client. So, while these TEFL workers may adhere to the ethos of professionalism as advocated by Friedson (2001), in terms of remuneration, Stuart says these other tasks are not remunerated even though the responsibility may be greater, suggesting TEFL teachers are underselling their services, a form of underemployment, which is a job demand (Watson *et al.*, 2021). By contrast, many participants said they would not be prepared to perform work below their own standards, or to steal customers from language schools, which may show the altruistic element in the definition of professionalism (Hudson and Sullivan, 2012).

Although Kelchterman (1993) describes five interlinked elements which comprise teacher identity, related literature suggests that Teachers' Professional Identity (Assen *et al.,* 2018) is comprised of three characteristics, multiplicity, discontinuity, and sociality. For a coherent teacher identity, the multiple sub-identities need to be in harmony not conflict (Priestley, Biesta and Robinson, 2015; Assen *et al.*, 2018). Most interesting is the case of Frank, who has been considered to have weak professional identity. However, individuals who feature under the composite vignette of Frank spoke about the importance of work-life balance. This seems to be a major factor in their professional identity. Oscar said he liked to "switch off after work and have none of this management wank." Mark suggested his friends "work too much," and Paul mentioned an advantage of his work arrangement was that it gives him "more time with the kids". In this sense, Frank views his work arrangement positively as a method by which he can reconcile different identities so that his personal, familial identity is not negatively compromised by his professional identity. So, while Frank may have been maligned for 'weak' Teachers' Professional Identity, this actually contributes to a strong overall identity as he is able to reconcile his sub-identities.

Margaret spoke openly about how her teacher identity fits holistically to her own identity and self-image. However, her strong TPI seems to mean that her other identities need to be quite weak to allow for a coherent self. This is evidenced by the way she either rejects or cherry picks work. Further, it could indicate that teachers, whose strong professional identity seeps

into their personal identity (Nias, 1989, as cited in Towers and Maguire, 2017), may be a poor fit for the entrepreneurial requirements of this strand of non-standard work arrangements. This fits with other research mentioned in the literature review which suggests teachers may be an ill fit for gig-type work (Watson *et al.*, 2021) although the justification is totally different – the former argues teachers do not fit gig-type work based on issues of reconciling multiple identities, whereas the latter suggests an incompatibility based on the nature of the work carried out. In any case, non-standard work arrangements may require a compromise on professional identity as if this is too strong it may take the whole identity out of kilter. It seems that as Maragret does not want to compromise on her professional identity, she needs to make compromises elsewhere.

Discontinuity means that Teachers' Professional Identity is not fixed and often changes. These changes are in response to the teacher's environment. This can be taken even further in the new world of work so that one's identity with a certain profession can potentially be substituted to reflect a complete change of work. The need to pragmatically adapt to the work environment impacts on professional identity and this can be seen when Frank considers whether he will "still be hustling at fifty". This pragmatic approach is expounded by the third and final characteristic of TPI, Sociality. External conditions, such as policies, impact on TPI. Stuart spoke of his fears for the future of TEFL as an industry, stating it was "in decline in Germany", while also considering what his "value added" is. There is an impact on his professional identity, which ostensibly appears weaker, although 'flexible' may be a more appropriate word and fits in with the neo-professional description (Cross and Swart, 2020).

Another key part of TPI is the factors of assimilation and accommodation, where the former signifies adapting reality to the self-concept, and the latter signifies adapting the self-concept to reality. In essence, a chicken and egg situation emerges to describe the symbiotic relationship between professional identity and work arrangement – which one influences the other and to what degree? In Margaret and Amanda's case, assimilation is prevalent in that they manufacture their work arrangement around their strong teacher professional identity. On the other hand, Frank and Stuart come across as less committed to their teacher identity, and it functions as somewhat of a product of their circumstances, namely their work

arrangement, as is a ‘best fit’ to ensure a coherent identity based on harmonious sub-identities.

It could be argued that these negative external factors induced those participants (financially) dependent on their non-standard work to ‘prove’ they were good teachers by accepting low wages, performing extra work for free, demonstrating their own competence by soliciting self-initiated feedback, undertaking training and development to provide a bigger offer. In essence, to prove they were ‘better’ teachers than others in order to secure work. It should be clear how Margaret and Amanda have very strong teacher identities which are different from Frank and Stuart’s professional identities. What is less clear is how Frank and Stuart differ. Adler (2021) discusses job preferences in terms of three dimensions of value, namely utility, identity, and commitment, where utility can be described as intrinsic, for example fulfilment, or extrinsic, for example pay. Comments such as Margaret’s “I’m a born teacher” or Amanda’s “I’ll always be a teacher” signify a clear intrinsic utility so that there are clear cognates between job motivation and self-esteem / self-image. Directly by contrast, Frank’s realisation that he can earn more in TEFL than fruit-picking alludes to an extrinsic utility. Again, this is clearly reflected in the strength of the teacher professional identity. This may be a way to explain the differences in identity strength in relation to work arrangement. While Margaret and Amanda may be internally motivated, and thus, according to the Achievement Goal Theory (Dweck, 1986) follow a mastery approach, Frank certainly demonstrated external motivation, akin to a performance approach, as he described how he wanted to make himself better than others so he would be offered work, and prove he was reliable. Stuart, by contrast, exerted a mixture of both mastery and performance approach, suggesting a pragmatic approach which may help him to thrive in non-standard work arrangements. Maragret and Amanda’s strong teacher identity opposes Frank and Stuart’s weak teacher identity whereas Frank and Stuart have a stronger satisfaction (or tolerance) of non-standard work arrangements. This may imply that it is not possible to thrive in non-standard work arrangements while maintaining a strong teacher identity. The literature suggests worker characteristics such as whether the gig (non-standard) work is a primary or secondary source of income can impact workers’ experience (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). The same authors then propose that gig workers will have a different commitment to work than standard workers, namely one which is flexible and fluid. This corresponds to the neo-professional concept

(Cross and Swart, 2020), which is based on professional fluidity and seems to embrace Frank's, and particularly Stuart's, identity. It could be expanded to include some degree of professional identity fluidity so that successful non-standard workers need to be comfortable with having multiple professional identities which reflect their multiple job roles. The research suggests that traditional professional identity is inversely related to neo-professional identity.

To recap, this section explored the research question "How do TEFL workers understand / experience their professional identity in the context of non-standard work arrangements? (identity challenge)". TEFL professionals in this study confront substantial identity tensions arising from their exclusion from traditional organisational structures. The research demonstrates that workers must continually negotiate between a classical professional identity, rooted in institutional affiliation, credentialism, and stability, and a more fluid, market-driven identity predicated on client satisfaction, reputation management, and personal branding. This reflects a broader shift from traditional to neo-professionalism, wherein identity and legitimacy are established relationally through client networks and peer recognition rather than via organisational status (Cross & Swart, 2020). The composite characters, particularly Stuart and Frank, embody this transition, illustrating how individuals oscillate between alignment with the teaching profession and a broader self-conception as autonomous knowledge workers. Maintaining a coherent professional identity requires ongoing emotional labour and strategic identity work, often without the institutional scaffolding available to those in standard employment. There are many different strategies to reconciling the many different sub-identities produced by the new world of work. These comprise rejecting unfavourable work, not searching for work which may compromise one's work-life balance. The main conclusion is that a strong, traditional professional identity such as a teacher identity is not compatible with success in non-standard work arrangements where a neo-professional identity based on professional fluidity, is required.

5.1.3. Research Question 3 (Emotional Challenge)

This section explores the research question "How do TEFL workers perceive, experience, and negotiate risk and precarity in the context of their work? (emotional challenge)." The main finding here is that the claim in the literature that gig workers suffer greater, more extreme,

and more changeable emotions (Petriglieri et al., 2018) is supported as there were instances of workers hiding pregnancies and working when ill. Less important, supplementary findings are that gig workers undertake emotional labour not only to thrive, but also merely to survive in this work environment, and that negative self-directed emotions as suggested in the literature are indeed prevalent in the TEFL participants interviewed.

The literature suggests that in the new world of work, in order to avoid work alienation, a clear demand in the Job Demands-Resources model (see Watson *et al.*, 2021), workers are forced to establish vital relationships with other independent workers with similar skills, potential clients, supporters, and employers (Alacovska, 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018; Schwartz, 2018). There was the paradox that while many understood the nature of non-standard work meant that building relations was more important than in standard work, it also made it more difficult to build these relations. For example, with other teachers. This surely had an impact on them personally, as identities are relationally constructed (Sluss and Ashforth, 2007) and cannot be constructed in isolation (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2010). This was evidenced by almost all participants, who all claimed that networking and building relationships was the easiest way to get work as well as understand any necessary stretchwork. However, when reaching out to potential clients, the need to constantly sell themselves requires a positive, confident self-presentation (Butler and Stoyanova Russell, 2018). In this respect, Frank was not confident at doing this, which may exaggerate the differences between him and Stuart. Despite Stuart's ostensible success at this, it was described as "not a part of the job I enjoy", suggesting that, although necessary, this 'relational agility' (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018) building carries a large emotional toll. That is, Stuart's approach to networking to generate work supports the idea that the contacts which lead to contracts rely on sociability (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010), despite his recalcitrance.

In terms of being their own 'brand' (Vallas and Schor, 2020) with their success dependent on the ability to develop and promote their own brand image (Hennekam and Bennett, 2016; Vallas and Christin, 2018), many participants used Munich English Language Teachers Association (MELTA) as a platform to showcase their talents. There were some signs of 'anticipatory socialisation' (Connelly and Gallagher, 2004). However, after some time, MELTA had served its function, workers outgrew MELTA, and long-term membership became the

vestige for those looking for a social and relational connection to others. In this sense, MELTA became somewhat of an ersatz organisation and may Petriglieri *et al.'s* (2018) 'personal holding environment' of connections to routines, spaces, people, and purpose. This reinforces identity and provides an emotional buffer.

Being self-employed produces a greater variety of emotions, more extreme emotions, and more frequent oscillations between emotions (Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018). On a base level, participants described emotional labour (Grandey, 2000) in the form of being overly nice to students, language schools, and organisations: "If you're not nice to your boss, you won't get very far," as Dave said. However, they did also tell stories of how they had hidden details of their pregnancies, gone to work when seriously ill, and worried continuously on holiday and could not relax. These were all explained as consequences of their work arrangement, which corroborates Petriglieri et al.'s (2018) claims about the extreme emotions of non-standard work arrangements. It also leans to towards accepting two of Cropanzano *et al.'*s (2022, p. 499) proposals; firstly, that "… gig workers may experience more self-directed negative emotions (e.g. self-directed blame, shame) than standard workers," and secondly that "…[g]ig workers will show a tendency to 'over-correct' for income volatility, such that they will over-work when jobs are available in order to protect against lean times."

The extra emotional toll is clearly about the work arrangement and not the job of TEFL *per se*. For instance, Amanda described getting a full-time job to "rescue" her from the "swamp of freelancing", described her current contract as like "gold dust". There are mitigating strategies suggested in the literature. Cropanzano *et al.* (2022, p. 499) propose that "[g]ig workers who are able to develop strong alternative relationships, including those stemming from (a) networks of practice, (b) professional organisations, and (c) closer relationships to staffing agencies, will adapt mote successfully to the new psychological contract." Further, Cross and Swart (2020) describe two key mechanisms of professional fluidity; (i) the way in which legitimacy and validation are established, and (ii) the flexibility shown and required. This research has shown that membership to organisations, staffing bodies, and professional bodies is of varying importance to providing an emotional safety net and helping to secure work.

The next paragraph aims to conclude the third and final research question “How do TEFL workers perceive, experience, and negotiate risk and precarity in the context of their work? (emotional challenge).” The emotional landscape of freelance TEFL work is shaped by chronic insecurity, isolation, and a lack of structural validation. Workers often internalise responsibility for success or failure, leading to emotions such as shame, guilt, or diminished self-worth. At the same time, participants also describe moments of fulfilment derived from teaching itself, from flexible work-life arrangements, or from forming positive learner relationships.

However, the absence of stable organisational ties removes conventional buffers against emotional strain. The study finds that networks such as MELTA function as holding environments, offering community, recognition, and a sense of belonging. These structures are crucial for mitigating the affective toll of precarious work, especially as workers must continuously promote themselves, secure new contracts, and negotiate unpaid tasks such as planning and invoicing. The composite vignettes depict varying strategies for emotional coping—from Amanda’s reliance on student feedback to Margaret’s retreat from the professional identity altogether. The findings indicate that emotional resilience in such contexts is closely tied to both perceived self-efficacy and the availability of professional community. In sum, non-standard workers have a stronger need than standard workers to form relationships for both networking and emotional buffering purposes. Those able to do so are more likely to thrive in this environment. However, those who cannot do so may find themselves under crippling emotional strain as the demands of non-standard work outstrip the resources they have to cope.

The next paragraph is designed to pull the three challenges together to answer the research aim. The aim of my research was to understand skilled workers’ experiences in non-standard work arrangements, their perception of their professional identity, and how they view and plan their career. The use of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language offered the opportunity to explore the experience of non-standard work arrangements for skilled, professional workers in a very specific, homogeneous context. This was important as it was not clear from the current literature what happens when changes in the organisation of market relations generate challenges for professionals. The key findings relating to each of the three challenges can be thus summarised. In terms of the Viability Challenge, TEFL workers ensure job quality

and immediate success by embracing flexibility/autonomy, even if it involves emotional or financial trade-offs, crafting their work and assuming additional entrepreneurial responsibilities such as marketing or networking, and navigating the tension between 'freedom' and 'exploitation,' with success dependent on personal attributes like resilience or resourcefulness. TEFL workers face an Identity Challenge so that a traditional "teacher identity" often clashes with the demands of freelance work, successful navigation requires a neo-professional identity marked by adaptability, fluidity, and self-legitimisation through clients and networks, and reconciling multiple sub-identities is key to professional survival. Lastly, in terms of the Emotional Challenge, TEFL workers face emotional strain due to instability, invisibility of labour (unpaid preparation, invoicing), and stigma. Emotional resilience is linked to having "holding environments" like MELTA or personal networks and emotional labour (e.g., maintaining a positive brand image) and self-directed negative emotions (shame, guilt) are prevalent.

To conclude, the key findings show the incompatibility between non-standard work arrangements and a strong teacher professional identity; the support of the neo-professional thesis of legitimacy through clients and other relationships; and the notion that to thrive in non-standard work arrangements, individuals need to combine a mastery and performance approach which requires inter-occupational growth through recognising training and development ideas demanded by the market. In essence, to thrive in non-standard work arrangements such as the gig economy, one must be able to develop outside of one's profession so that a weak professional identity coupled with professional fluidity is necessary.

5.2. Contribution to Knowledge

As a DBA, the main focus is on the contribution to professional practice, which follows this section. Nevertheless, a contribution to knowledge is also necessary. With respect to this thesis, the production of 'new knowledge' as such is relatively limited. However, the research reinforces the current literature that work arrangement impacts work experience, particularly that precarious work arrangements foster emotional stress. It also goes further to suggest that work arrangement and professional identity have an interdependent relationship, with each one impacting the other so that a strong professional identity is inversely related to non-

standard work arrangements. Furthermore, according to this research, notions of career and career planning are severely impacted by precarious work arrangements. There are a number of strategies identified in the literature such as job bricolage, job stretching, and career crafting which were also in evidence in this research.

In addition to the above, the research produces a further contribution to knowledge as it is able to 'answer' some of the 24 propositions that Cropanzano *et al.* (2022) set out in their recent conceptual review of gig work. These were included in the Discussion section (chapter 5.1).

Overall, what this research does is to extend the current literature, as this research was performed on a homogenous professional group (TEFL workers) under heterogeneous work arrangements, some 'precarious', some not, and therefore differs from previous research such as those of different jobs in precarious work arrangements (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010; Ashford, Caza and Reid, 2018; Petriglieri, Ashford and Wrzesniewski, 2018) or the same job in the same precarious work arrangements (Fraser and Gold, 2001; Brown and Gold, 2007; Matthews and Onyemaobi, 2020).

5.3. Contribution to Practice

As this research is submitted in partial requirements for the awarding of a DBA, it is necessary to consider not only the contribution to knowledge but more importantly the contribution to professional (business) practice. As Contribution to Professional Practice takes precedence over Contribution to Knowledge in a DBA, this section is more detailed than the above section.

This research holds significant implications for multiple stakeholders engaged in the employment, regulation, and development of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) within non-standard work arrangements, particularly in the gig economy. The main stakeholders who may be interested in this research are educational institutions, policy makers and labour regulators, professional associations such as MELTA, and individual TEFL workers.

Firstly, educational institutions such as language schools and universities employing TEFL professionals are encouraged to reassess their reliance on short-term, zero-hour contracts. The findings demonstrate that while many TEFL workers value autonomy and flexibility, the absence of structured career development, stable income, and organisational support undermines long-term professional viability. Institutions can improve both teaching quality and staff retention by offering clearer progression pathways, pro-rated benefits for part-time staff, and professional development opportunities. Additionally, they may consider establishing internal mentoring networks or communities of practice to foster professional identity and support.

Secondly, the research provides evidence supporting greater regulatory oversight of freelance educational work which may be of interest to policy makers and labour regulators. Current practices, while legally permissible, often leave workers without social protections, amplifying precarity and emotional strain. Policymakers should consider extending labour protections such as mandatory social security contributions, minimum contract durations, or pension schemes to freelance educators who meet defined workload thresholds.

Thirdly, professional associations such as MELTA play a critical role in offering what the research identifies as “holding environments” that support identity, legitimacy, and emotional wellbeing. Overarching TEFL bodies or organisations as well as more local ones such as MELTA and similar bodies can extend their contributions by providing structured peer review mechanisms, certification renewal programs, or public showcases of teaching excellence. These initiatives would enable TEFL professionals to reinforce professional identity and professional expertise and gain recognition independent of traditional employment structures.

Lastly, the potential impact of the research on individual TEFL workers is discussed. The findings suggest actionable strategies for freelance professionals seeking to sustain meaningful careers in non-standard contexts. These include actively engaging in ‘job crafting’, developing multiple professional identities to meet varying market demands, and adopting entrepreneurial mindsets to manage client relations and promote services. Workers are encouraged to invest in networks, pursue visibility within the field, and adopt flexible yet deliberate career narratives to navigate the challenges of precarity.

In this regard, the study can, to some degree, help to explain some of the reasoning behind the current and ongoing strike action of university lecturers. For example, the University and College Union (UCU), which represents over 130,000 staff at further and higher education providers across the UK, has 'four fights', one of which is "the prevalence of casual contracts across the sector (either fixed-term contracts or contracts dependent on funding)" (Lewis, 2023, p. 8). The other three fights are pay offers, gender and minority ethnic pay gaps, and staff workload. The first and third were also discussed in this research.

The UCU has asked for "an agreed framework to eliminate precarious employment practices by universities" (Lewis, 2023, p. 19). A further demand is "nationally agreed action to address excessive workloads and unpaid work, to include addressing the impact that excessive workloads are having on workforce stress and ill-health" (Lewis, 2023, p. 19). As this research has shed light on the work experience of TEFL workers, who may share many aspects of their professional identity with university lecturers, it can be used to inform university and possibly governmental strategy on how best to work with and deal with non-standard workers and solve the UCU disputes. In general, the research conducted for this thesis falls in alarmingly sharp alignment with the UCU's argument. The researched TEFL workers, as with UCU workers, were exposed to unstable, transient contracts and complained of excessive, unpaid work which impacted on their physical and mental health. This research, therefore, provides a 'live' example of the UCU's claims and shows that the conditions UCU's 130,000 staff are exposed to is not restricted to further and higher education workers. As such, this research serves as an example of how these issues may affect a much larger group of skilled, professional workers. The UCU specifically mentions casual contracts. This research showed that this form of contract is directly linked via excessive workloads and unpaid work to workforce stress and ill-health, as the UCU implies, as there were significant differences within the same group of workers when working in 'standard' and non-standard work arrangements. This suggests that contractual status does indeed represent a form of labour market segmentation (McGovern, Smeaton and Hill, 2004).

In terms of the UCU's demands and subsequent strike action, failure to engage in the relevant discussions could see the further spread of unstable labour markets, characterised by

irregular, insecure and unprotected work, with consequences on work output quality. There is therefore a policy reason to engage with such research (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022).

Furthermore, the research can be of interest to language schools and businesses. As discussed in the literature review, a narrow definition of the gig economy includes the use of platforms to source work (see Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). This could potentially lead to more businesses putting their available work on such platforms, and consequently more workers finding more work via this method, meaning that language schools will need to change their approach to remain relevant. For example, language schools may need to source more than just teaching work to match the full range of skills many TEFL workers utilise to earn money as neo-professionals. The rise of digital platforms presents a challenge not just to language schools, but job agencies more generally. The neo-professional assertion that relationships and networks are imperative (Cross and Swart, 2020) was supported by this research. It is foreseeable that TEFL workers may be able to strengthen their relationships and networks with the use of digital platforms, which carries with it the usual risks and benefits of social media.

The research may also be interesting for education providers along with professional bodies. As this research discusses, the role of academic and particularly professional qualifications has change somewhat, and these have become less important in securing professional work. Where they are necessary, this may be only for a portion of workers' work. Workers therefore need to carefully assess whether they will help to secure work in the present or future, and are worth the investment of resources such as time, effort and money. Further, non-standard work arrangements are often accompanied by 'maintenance tasks' such as preparing invoices, searching for new jobs, keeping online profiles relevant and so on. The requirement for these entrepreneurial, 'company-of-one' skills may mean a change in the type of education available is necessary to make workers ready to be successful in the new world of work.

Lastly, the research can also be used by individuals at various points of their career who may be considering or about to start work in non-standard work arrangements. The research offers an insight into the experiences, skills required, and impact of this type of work on individual workers.

The Contribution to Practice section discusses the alignment of TEFL worker experiences with issues raised by the University and College Union (UCU), notably on precarious contracts, unpaid workloads, and job insecurity. For educational institutions (e.g., universities, language schools), the thesis can inform more sustainable staffing policies by highlighting how non-standard contracts affect worker wellbeing and professional identity. Schools might consider creating clearer professional development pathways for freelancers, offering part-time contracts with pro-rated benefits, or establishing mentorship networks to serve as "holding environments" for professional identity and emotional support. For policymakers, findings could support arguments for stronger regulation of freelance work in education—e.g., minimum contract lengths, mandatory sick pay, or pension contributions for freelancers working above a certain threshold of hours. For professional associations, such as MELTA, they could develop tools for identity reinforcement, such as teaching showcases, training, or peer feedback systems. These would provide much-needed structure and validation absent in freelance settings. For individual TEFL workers, the research outlines strategies to navigate the gig economy, including cultivating multiple professional identities, job crafting, networking, and engaging in entrepreneurial activities to sustain a viable career.

The research extends the literature on experiences in non-standard work arrangements and can be of interest to a range of groups such as individual workers from a variety of backgrounds, university workers, university policy makers, language schools and job agencies more generally, education policy makers, professional accreditation bodies.

5.4. Limitations of this Work and Future Research

This section begins with the limitations of this thesis before moving on to suggest further avenues for future research. For this thesis, there were 19 interviewees. A further written testimony was collected but not included in the data analysis. This person, given the pseudonym Zoe, declined an interview as she had previously worked in TEFL on a freelance basis but had left the industry to take up a full-time position in a completely unrelated occupational field. Nevertheless, she provided some insightful comments which follow here.

> *"The main reason for changing careers was financially motivated. I live in Munich which is a very expensive city and I simply couldn't afford my living*

expenses solely on teaching. Only very, very few teaching positions were full time, most of them are on freelance basis. And so much unpaid work goes into preparing a class that I ended up earning only just above minimum wage after taxes.

I really enjoyed teaching and I think I'm quite good at it. But it seems you need to work yourself up building a solid client base until you can actually earn a living. And I didn't have the patience for that. That's why I ended up taking a full-time employed position in a completely different field."

Zoe represents the group who have left the industry, despondent at the conditions in which this work takes place, and not generally part of this research. Not only is their experience missing here but also their sheer number. It is unknown how many people tried to 'make it' in freelance TEFL but did not succeed and therefore the interviewees from this study can only represent those who have remained. If one takes Zoe's comments and adds them to Amanda, one could suggest that those who experience and dislike freelancing get out of it, either by taking full-time positions, or leaving the industry altogether. However, this Zoe 'voice' is missing from this research as it is too far removed from the initial aims. Nevertheless, this remains both a limitation of this work and a potential area of exploration for future research.

Other limitations of the work include the role of the researcher and the impact of COVID-19. As I had prior knowledge and experience of the industry, this could have impacted the research at various stages while the COVID-19 pandemic led to the interviews being conducted online rather than face-to-face. Both these points have been addressed in chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design.

As mentioned throughout this thesis, there are numerous areas which require future research of which I would like to point out four. Firstly, more research could be conducted within this professional field. This study was based on TEFL workers in Germany, which, as mentioned by several participants, has a thriving TEFL scene with plenty of work opportunities and therefore the workers can be considered 'skilled economic migrants'. It would be interesting to explore whether the insights are consistent across other cities and countries. It would also be

interesting to conduct a study on TEFL workers in an English-speaking country. This would bring into play different social and legal contexts and also have the impact of removing the economic migrant elements which may impact TEFL workers' understanding and experience of their work. That is, the sociality element of Teacher Professional Identity would be examined through a new lens.

Secondly, it is also worth considering other occupations and professions which have undergone similar changes to their work arrangements (Noordegraaf, 2015; Smets et al., 2017; Spreitzer et al., 2017; Susskind & Susskind, 2015). This would help to understand whether TEFL workers' experience was specific to that profession or similar to other professions. More studies are needed on homogenous job groups under various work arrangements to understand the impact work arrangement has on work experience and professional identity where job and job tasks are otherwise relatively equal.

Thirdly, the majority of studies that have occurred have all been cross-sectional (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022). To fully understand the impacts of long-term work in non-standard work arrangements, not only with regard to work experience and professional identity but also career, there is a need for longitudinal studies. While non-standard work arrangements are nothing new, they are gaining more and more exposure in both the public eye and academia through the term 'gig economy'.

Fourthly, much of the research on gig workers has been conducted on their experience, as this research was. There is a need for more research from an organisational perspective on how to work together to best fit the needs of non-standard workers, for example on typical human resource topics such as hiring, compensation, and management, which may be expected to function differently to standard work arrangements (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2022).

5.5. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the author feels that his research has met the requirements of the DBA programme. The research adds to the growing canon of research on non-standard work

arrangements and confirms many of the previous findings, such as the increased emotional and relational challenges. It goes further than the current status quo of the literature by doing this through a homogenous occupational group in heterogeneous work arrangements. As the work was of great personal interest to the author, extreme care was taken to avoid the author's voice dominating the research. This was done by following Iterative Thematic Analysis. While to some degree the composite vignettes were steered by the author, this is wholly permissible under the interpretive paradigm and nevertheless all quotations were derived from the original recordings. It is felt that the research contributes not only to knowledge in that it deals with several proposed research areas, but also business practice, and there are clear suggestions as to where this research can be used in professional practice, with evident parallels to the ongoing university lecturers' strike. Lastly, the research suggests further areas for future research.

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Appendix A: Example of Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

1. **Project Area of Focus**

Work Identity and the Experience of TEFL Workers

2. **Legal basis for research for studies**.

The University undertakes research as part of its function for the community under its legal status. Data protection allows us to use personal data for research with appropriate safeguards in place under the legal basis of **public tasks that are in the public interest.** A full statement of your rights can be found at https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research. However, all University research is reviewed to ensure that participants are treated appropriately and their rights respected. This study was approved by UREC with Converis number ER31474090. Further information at https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice.

3. **Opening statement:**

You are being invited to take part in a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

4. **Why have you asked me to take part?**

You have been chosen because you are an expert! To qualify, you should satisfy the following eligibility criteria in order to take part in this study:

(a) be working full-time in TEFL with the majority of your work coming from that field;

(b) have a minimum of five years relevant professional experience in addition to the appropriate qualifications.

Experts have been chosen from my personal contacts along with the use of the MELTA website. If you know of anybody else who is suitable and would be willing to take part I would be grateful if you made them aware of my research. It is anticipated that 15-20 experts will be interviewed.

5. **Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide if you want to take part. A copy of the information provided here is yours to keep, along with the consent form if you do decide to take part. You can still decide to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, or you can decide not to answer a particular question.

6. **What will I be required to do?**

You will be invited to a Zoom interview. You will be asked some questions about your experience of working in TEFL and your work identity. I will make some notes on what you say and will ask further questions as necessary.

7. **Where will this take place?**

Due to Covid-19 restrictions the interview will take place via zoom.

8. **How often will I have to take part, and for how long?**

The interview is expected to last between 45 and 60 minutes. The shortest so far was 40 minutes and the longest 75 minutes but the average is around 60 minutes.

9. **Are there any possible risks or disadvantaged in taking part**.

We will be talking about your work experiences in TEFL. It is possible that you may talk about some negative experiences and feel uncomfortable. If you feel uncomfortable during the interview, we can take a break or stop completely. You are encouraged to say if you feel uncomfortable.

10. **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will shed light on your own experience in TEFL and those of others. There are no other monetary or health benefits from participation.

11. **When will I have the opportunity to discuss my participation?**

Once you have confirmed that you would like to participate, we will arrange a date and time to hold the interview. You will have the chance at the interview to ask any questions you may have. You can also decide not to take part in the interview. After the interview, we will have a debriefing where I will talk about the interview and the answers you gave me. You can also give some feedback. I will make a transcript of the interview conversation and send it to you and you can contact me if you have any more questions.

12. **Will anyone be able to connect me with what is recorded and reported?**

All the information that I collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. For example, in the final thesis you will be identified only by a number such as 'Participant 1'. No information which can identify you (name, organisation(s) you work for) will be included. You will not be able to be identified in any ensuing reports or publications. All data collection will follow GDPR and other legal requirements.

13. **Who will be responsible for all of the information when this study is over**?

I, the researcher, will be responsible for the information directly after the interviews. After the study is completely over, the information will be transferred from my computer to the

server at Sheffield Hallam University. The information will not be available publicly or on a public computer server.

14. **Who will have access to it?**

I, the researcher, my two supervisors, the examiners assessing the study, and the IT team at Sheffield Hallam University. It will not enter the public domain.

15. **What will happen to the information when this study is over?**

The recordings of the interview will be used only for analysis and for illustration in conference presentations and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. After a period of ten years the recordings will be completely destroyed.

16. **How will you use what you find out?**

The data is intended for the purposes of my DBA. The results may then be used in published articles in academic journals.

17. **How long is the whole study likely to last?**

The data collection will take place in the second half of 2021 and early 2022. The thesis should be finished towards late summer in 2022.

18. **How can I find out about the results of the study?**

I can happily make a copy available for you.

19. **Contact for further information**

If you have any further questions or need clarification on anything to do with my research, you may contact me any time at the following email address: Jonathan.W.Allott@student.shu.ac.uk.

You will be given a copy of the information sheet and a signed consent form to keep.

I would like to personally thank you very much for taking part in the project.

Details of who to contact if you have any concerns or if adverse effects occur after the study are given below.

Researcher/ Research Team Details:

I will try to make the interview as comfortable as possible. My only goal is for you to share the knowledge and experience you have. If, however, you have any complaints about your treatment you are free to contact the supervisor of this research, Prof Dr Jennifer Smith Maguire (J.Smith1@shu.ac.uk). If you still feel your complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction you can contact the Chair of the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Committee.

You should contact the Data Protection Officer if:	**You should contact the Head of Research Ethics (Professor Ann Macaskill) if:**
• you have a query about how your data is used by the University • you would like to report a data security breach (e.g. if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately) • you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data	• you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated
DPO@shu.ac.uk	a.macaskill@shu.ac.uk
Postal address: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WBT Telephone: 0114 225 5555	

Appendix B: Example of Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

AREA OF RESEARCH STUDY: *Work Identity and the Experience of TEFL Workers*

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

	YES	NO
1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.	☐	☐
2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.	☐	☐
3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher.	☐	☐
4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet.	☐	☐
5. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.	☐	☐
6. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes.	☐	☐

Participant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Contact details: _____

_____

Researcher's Name (Printed): Jonathan Allott _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Researcher's contact details:

Jonathan Allott, Email Address: Jonathan.W.Allott@student.shu.ac.uk

Please keep your copy of the consent form and the information sheet together.

Appendix C: Example of Emails Sent to Potential Participants

First Email (Sent Wednesday 5 January 2022)

Subject: TEFL Expert for Doctoral Research

Dear _____,

My name is Jonathan Allott and I am a TEFL teacher in Munich. Currently, I am in my fourth (and hopefully last) year of a DBA (Doctor of Business Administration) course and am looking for TEFL professionals to interview. So far, I have conducted eight interviews and would like to reach around twenty.

I saw your profile on MELTA and am very impressed by the range of your qualifications and experience and I believe you would fit perfectly for my research. I would therefore like to ask you if I could interview you via Zoom. The interview should take around 45 – 60 minutes and would concern your professional experience in TEFL.

I would be very grateful if you agreed and we could set up a Zoom interview.

If you have any further questions or would like any further information, I am happy to help.

I look forward to hearing from you.

With best regards,

Jonathan

Follow up email (Sent Friday 14 January 2022)

Dear _____,

This is Jonathan Allott again. I wrote to you last week asking if you would be interested in participating in my doctoral research titled *Work Identity and the Experience of TEFL Workers*. I would really like to hear your story. If you are interested, please feel free to respond to this email at any time and we can arrange an interview.

Have a great weekend.

Regards,

Jonathan

Appendix D: Example of Record Kept for Email Correspondence with Potential Participants

Please note names and email addresses have been coded or removed to ensure anonymity.

The information given in the table is that which was taken from www.melta.de before the potential participants were contacted for interview.

	Name	Email Address	Sex	Qualifications	Experience	Nationality	Other	Date Sent	Follow Up Email	Reply?	Interview?	Conducted?	Int Nr
1	alpha	removed	F			UK?	No longer in TEFL	05.01.22	14.01.22	Yes	Written		W1
2	beta	removed	F	CELTA		USA	bilingual (Mum Peru)	05.01.22	14.01.22	Yes	21.01.22		11
3	gamma	removed	F	CELTA		CAN	retraining - see her website - "Due to a professional transition into research and teacher training, this space is under construction. "	05.01.22	14.01.22				
4	delta	removed	F	many (not CELTA)	20+	IRE		05.01.22	14.01.22	Yes	12.01.22	12.01.22	9
5	epsilon	removed	F	CELTA (2009) Mark Powell one:one certificate BSc in French and German		UK		05.01.22	14.01.22				
6	zeta	removed	F	DELTA		UK		05.01.22	14.01.22				
7	eta	removed	F	yes (not clear what)	15+	UK or MALTA	freelance writer (and TEFL) for 15 years	05.01.22	14.01.22	Yes	20.01.22		10
8	theta	removed	F	CELTA	10+	CAN	13 years as a marketing manager for an international company specializing in the production of heavy lifting equipment	05.01.22	14.01.22				
9	iota	removed	F	MA TESOL and TEFL	5+	UK		05.01.22	14.01.22	Yes	19.01.22		12
10	kappa	removed	F	CELTA (2017)		USA	Germany since 1988	05.01.22	14.01.22				

Appendix E: Example of Questionnaire for Semi-structured Interviews

Name		**TEFL Qual? B/M/D? – show?**	
Participant #		**TEFL main job? Exp/yrs?**	
Nationality		**TEFL – Other jobs?**	
Gender		**Freelance / salaried?**	
Ethnicity		**Place Work – LS, uni, in-company**	
Residence		**Date:** / / 2022	**Time:**

Work Identity and the Experience of TEFL Workers - Interview Plan

1. **Welcome**
    a. Thanks for joining & signing the consent form (**CHECK!**)
    b. Invited because expert in the field of (TEFL) – I'll stick to TEFL not TESL/TESOL
    c. record video, transcript in a few days for approval. Stop interview & withdrawal.
2. **Background - Originally from _____ and you now live in _____, is that correct?**
    a. How long in TEFL? Qualifications for this? Asked to show for a job?
3. **Fundamentals of Job - Finding Work / Type of Work / Payment**
    a. TEFL is your main way of earning a living and that you work on a freelance basis?
    b. Do you do any other jobs? Or any other teaching? If so, why? Choice or forced?
    c. Enough work? Able to pick and choose, reject work?
    d. How do you find (good) work? Alone, LS? Contacts / network, W-o-M How much time? Invoices, travel, preparation etc. How do you feel?
    e. Pay – how do you know what to charge? Industry standard? you? customer? How has the pay changed?
    f. Type of work arrangement? Contract? How long? Secure? How feel about that?
4. **The Job**

a. How would you compare 1) TEFL 2) freelancing to other forms of work? FL v FTE, Freedom v Risks? Respect. Stigma
b. How has the job changed in the years you have been working in TEFL?
c. Apart from the teaching aspect, what other skills do you need for this job?
d. Why do you think companies choose you over other TEFL workers?

5. You - Professionalism / Professional Development

a. How do you know you are doing a good job and delivering quality? Get reg. fdbck? Is the format desirable?
b. How do you keep up to date with the job? Skills, training, development? Member of MELTA / other? *(Managerial, organisational, self-promotion, etc.)*
c. Work future - Do you plan to stay in TEFL? How do you plan your career?

6. Identity & Self

a. Anything particular which gives you the framework to do this kind of work? I could never do what you're doing" → why can *you*? I.e., deal with the ups and downs? 1) Personal characteristics, 2) partner FT employed, personal wealth, etc.
b. Please answer: Yes/No + because – Would you leave 1) TEFL 2) Freelancing right now if you could?

7. QUESTIONS / OBSERVATIONS FROM YOUR SIDE?

8. END

a. Thank you. Debriefing of interview & reason for DBA, full anonymisation / GDPR.
b. Next steps – transcript for approval, right to withdraw at any time.
c. Make available final thesis if interested.

Appendix F: Personal Reflection

Initially, I tried to model my reflection along the lines of Gibbs (1998), Kolb (1984), Driscoll (2007) or Jasper (2013). However, I found them too prescriptive and sequential. I also considered Brookfield (2017), which introduces the possibility of reflecting through four different perspectives, or 'lenses', but I felt these lenses detracted from my personal reflection as was needed here. Instead, I decided to write a personal reflection only loosely following the above models.

It seems like an eternity since I started this DBA. My motivations for doing so were a mix of personal and professional. I can look back and reflect now upon my childhood and see the way my family overvalued the commodity of intelligence, or at least knowledge. I have seen friends and distant family astounded by the vigour invested in our Christmases quizzes and the like. My wife, from a different culture, does not understand this obsession with learning trivial facts. From a young age, this is what learning meant to me – competing with others to know more. Moving on to more recent times, one of the DBA course lecturers once observed that I was rather belligerent and attributed this to the Barnsley miners' mentality. My grandfather, a miner, grew up on the same street as the late Michael Parkinson and despised him, purely on the basis that Parkinson's father had allowed him to go to the local grammar school, whereas my grandfather's father had not allowed his own son the same fate and my grandfather ended up down the local pit at 14. In many ways I feel like I have carried this same inferiority-indignation chip on my own shoulders, and this has fuelled my determination to acquire this doctoral qualification.

In many ways it is ironic that I have chosen a topic involving identity. Professionally, I have always felt totally comfortable as a teacher, including some 15 years working in TEFL. Nevertheless, despite several years as a freelance university lecturer, I was always told that I needed a doctoral-level qualification to get a full-time lecturer position. More fuel to the fire. Since I started my DBA, I have had both parents be diagnosed with cancer, and, via various methods – chemotherapy, operations, remissions – be thankfully given the all-clear. I have got married, had two children, moved country once, moved home four times, started a new job, acquired citizenship of another country, experienced Brexit from within the EU, and endured,

as everyone has, a world epidemic. As I have increasingly come to realise, time management is a problem for me at the best of times and while the above experiences are not intended as an excuse for the longevity of my research, I do hope the next few years will run more smoothly than the last.

I enjoyed the DBA course. The first two years of taught modules were very enriching, albeit at times I was a little bewildered by the contents – a *Europe in the World* module seems an odd choice for a course run by a British university with the backdrop of Brexit and the content did little to further my particular studies. Nevertheless, I have learnt a lot about my research topic and myself. I have been extremely lucky to have two amazing supervisors who have spent years trying to show me the wood from the trees and without them I would still be lost in the car park.

If I had to go back and do it all over again, I would. It translates very awkwardly into English, but as the German proverb states "*der Weg ist das Ziel"* (literally, 'the way is the goal', or 'the journey is the reward'). But please don't make me do it again.